

The *Archiva Moldaviae* at the beginning of its journey

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Why a new journal? Why the *Archiva Moldaviae*? Will this fill a gap in our present knowledge? But it is likely that the question most in readers' minds will be connected with the term 'Moldova' in the title of the journal. Why Moldova? And which Moldova are we talking about: the Moldova that took shape in the Middle Ages, or the 'small' post-1775 and post-1812 Moldova? Are we also taking into consideration Bucovina in its entirety, in spite of the divisions of 1775 and 1940, the former benefiting Austria and the latter the USSR? Are we also thinking of Bessarabia, which underwent a like process in 1812 and 1940, with first Russia and then the USSR the beneficiaries?

As with any historical region, Moldova is at the same time both history and geography. The symbolic geography of Moldova is doubtless a fascinating subject, but our concern with it does not stop there. We are interested in this territory bounded by the Eastern Carpathians, the banks of the Cheremosh, Dniester, Danube and Milcov rivers and the shores of the Black Sea. We are interested in it because it has had a specific history, a specific identity – of which its inhabitants have been well aware! – for the greater part of its existence. We are dealing with the complex history of an area which has lain at the meeting-point of civilisations and of regional and European powers, which has most often been dependent on them in a variety of historical contexts, which experienced a brief period of expansion followed by heavy losses of territory, disputes with its neighbours, wars, invasions, occupations, minglings of population, internal upheavals, collective traumas, some economic development – although it has always been and remains under-developed in comparison with western Europe – and a measure of cultural inflorescence to which a number of factors made their contribution. It is high time for the history of this region to be made known and for the fog of politicising views to be cleared away.

But unless we set the history of Moldova in a European and above all in an eastern-central European context, our understanding of it will be limited and even distorted. For this reason, while our primary concern will be the history of Moldova and of the historical sources for that story – a choice we consider a legitimate one – there will also be room in the journal for contributions dealing with the history of neighbouring areas with which Moldova has had close ties

over the centuries and which have been or are currently part of many different sovereign states: Transylvania, Muntenia, Hungary, the Tatar-Mongol khanates to the north of the Black Sea, Poland, Lithuania, the Hapsburg Empire, Byzantium and the Sublime Porte, Tsarist Russia and the USSR, Romania, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, each with its short-term or longer-lived influence on Moldova.

The history of Moldova has been the subject of study for some hundreds of years, spanning the period from medieval chronicles (some anonymous and some attributable to known authors) to recent works. An impressive volume of studies and documentary material has thus accumulated, focusing particularly on the medieval period and the first part of the modern period; the latter part of the modern period and contemporary times are less well represented. Viewpoints have been, are and will no doubt continue to be diverse, often divergent and even polemical, as is natural.

The inhabitants of this territory have been and are in the main ethnic Romanians, but there are also significant ethnic minority groups, some of them concentrated in particular areas. The northern, eastern and south-eastern margins of Moldova in particular have been and are today areas of ethnic and cultural overlap. Bearing all these facts in mind, and taking it as axiomatic that our approach to the past must be a professional one, we have rejected reductionist perspectives in historiography. Historical research deserves better than to be harnessed to the bandwagon of either ethnocentric discourse (including of the national-communist variety) or Bolshevik-derived internationalist discourse, both of which have wrought havoc in the eastern half of Europe. Thus what we have in mind is a kind of history which will include the (different) experiences of the people who have lived in this region, of the institutions they have set up and administered, of the settlements (dozens of towns and thousands of villages) they have built and populated, and of their political, military, religious, social, economic, cultural and other links. Because it is important that we should know what happened, together with the how and the why, from precise factual issues all the way to those involving a broader perspective.

This region 'on the marches' is rich in both well-known and lesser-known historical phenomena and events. Different aspects of this history are being studied by a large number of researchers – Romanians, Moldovans, Russians, Ukrainians and Westerners – although coverage is patchy and some periods and areas of interest clearly remain insufficiently investigated. The motivations of these investigators are themselves diverse and range from those connected with national identity and politics to the purely academic; however, in the case of the majority of historians, political scientists, anthropologists and sociologists it is probably not possible to be categorical in this matter of motivation.

The difficulties confronting those who carry out research into the history of this area arise from a number of factors. The relevant sources – above all

those of an archival nature – are to be found in archives and libraries in Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Hungary, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Vatican City, France, Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, the USA, etc. They are in a number of languages: Old Slavonic, Latin, Romanian, Hungarian, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, German, Turco-Osman, Greek, Yiddish, etc. The scripts too are diverse: Cyrillic, Latin, Greek, Gothic, Arabic, etc. In other words, delving into the history of Moldova calls for extremely comprehensive knowledge in a range of academic fields and correspondingly wide competence in linguistics, palaeography and the management of archives. All this makes it even more vital that researchers should specialise, but also that they should communicate the results of their research in libraries and archives or in the field.

The fact of a largely shared history makes a common, open approach to the subject even more necessary and requires a dialogue between researchers whose areas of specialisation and views are different. The journal will promote the reconstruction of the history of this area in the context of eastern-central Europe, since it goes without saying that historical knowledge can advance only when there is comparison and reference to other regions. In a world in which knowledge – including historical knowledge – is coming to play an ever more important role that transcends borders and political divisions, it is vital that such vehicles for expression should exist.

Why is the *Archiva Moldaviae* being published in Iasi? There have in the past been other Iași-based attempts to start journals concerned both with historical research and with recording the work of institutions that produce and above all that maintain archives. Sadly, all these initiatives have proved short-lived, and the quality of the material published has sometimes been moot. Iași has played and still plays an important role in the writing of history in Romania. In addition, the city occupies a symbolic place that is recognised in Romania in general and in Moldova in particular. We like to think that it has both the potential for the carrying-out of high-quality historical research and the ability to attract to the project academic researchers from different parts of Moldova or even from beyond its borders.

The *Archiva Moldaviae* is not a local journal. Nor does this publication see itself as a journal belonging to Moldovans, even though it is particularly – but not exclusively! – the fruit of their labours. It will be appearing in Iași but addressing itself to a wider area, with the idea that in Romania, in the Republic of Moldova and in academic centres both closer to hand and further afield there exist major intellectual resources which can be involved in the process of making the history and archival wealth of the region better known, in the interests of a wider academic community. Consequently, the *Archiva Moldaviae* intends to make a contribution to advancing the study of the history of Moldova and of the documentary sources for that history in an eastern-central European context. Historical researchers based in this border-straddling area or interested

in it will thus be able to have an additional ‘meeting place’, will be able to make the results of their research better known, will be able to enter into a dialogue.

In general terms, the journal will have room for historical studies and for the presentation of sources. From a chronological point of view, articles on medieval, modern and contemporary history will be welcome, that is, from the beginning of the second millennium, particularly from the founding of the state of Moldova in the fourteenth century, up to the fall of Communism, with even excursions into the post-Communist period being accepted. From a thematic point of view, our scope includes political, military, social, economic, cultural and religious history, the history of ethnic and religious minorities, along with the history of international relations, especially as regards eastern-central Europe and the Black Sea region, and the relations of the Romanians, particularly the Moldovans, with the Slavs, most especially with the Ukrainians, Poles and Russians but also with the Southern Slavs, and with the Greeks, the Hungarians, the Turanians, etc. “Technical” studies in the fields of palaeography, diplomatic relations, genealogy, heraldry, sigillography, linguistics and historical geography, all vital for our sequential knowledge of the past, will be received with interest.

The *Archiva Moldaviae* will thus encourage an approach to history that is professional and beholden to no one. It will have room both for detailed reconstructions of events, periods and biographies and for the large-scale putting into perspective of historical phenomena, so that they are invested with meaning. We do respect those who live in these regions, without regard to their country, ethnicity, race or religion. Yet it is our right as historians, archivists etc. to question what has been a complicated past and, whether or not by so doing we upset the convictions of individuals or of larger or smaller groups, to make known the results of our professional research activities. In a Europe in which borders still exist but no longer separate people as they once did, a Europe of free circulation from the Black Sea to the Atlantic and from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, ideas too can circulate freely and with great ease. And it is advisable, imperative even, that historians too should make maximum use of such an opportunity.

In our opinion there are no taboo subjects. Any and every subject is legitimate, and therefore a variety of opinions, traditional and unconventional, will find their rightful place in the pages of the journal, so long as they are methodologically coherent and soundly based on sources. These principles need all the more emphasis in that archives have for political reasons long been hard to access in the eastern part of the continent of Europe. Archivists in this region – possibly even more than historians – have been isolated from their counterparts in the West. Professional expertise has remained largely stagnant. In the same way, “isolationist” conceptions have continued to be observable in inter-institutional relations and in dealings with the public, above all with researchers.

The *Archiva Moldaviae* will reserve a significant amount of space for articles dealing with aspects of archive work and its methodology, and for descriptions of bodies of documents and collections of archives held both by public institutions and by individuals. The publication of previously unpublished documents that are relevant to the history of Moldova, of modern Romania and of Central and Eastern Europe in general, but specifically in connection with the two former areas, including in the form of pieces of more detailed documentary research, will bulk large in the journal, since it is our conviction that a profound understanding of sources and a correct system of interpretation are the two essential conditions for the grounding of any serious, intellectually legitimate piece of research.

The exercise of historians' and archivists' critical reflexes will be encouraged in the pages of the journal, in its debate, review and bibliographical notice sections, as will discussion between specialists who have different visions of the past and different views of the way our national archival heritage should be maintained.

As we have already made clear, our project is preponderantly concerned with history and archives. It is founded on certain modern ideas and concepts which explicitly include liberal values, the acceptance of the obligations of professional responsibility, the rejection of the instrumentalisation of history, and cooperation between historians and archivists, both those from the region and those from other areas but with an interest in the region. In other words, our values are those of professional, critical history-writing. The journal will encourage inter-disciplinary communication and the employment both of time-honoured methodologies and of innovative ones, for these can complement each other as we seek to extend our knowledge of the past.

Perspectives on history can be diverse. They depend on the quality of the sources, but also – and above all – on the values of those who make judgements upon the past. Dealing with the past may seem straightforward, but in reality we are talking about a complex intellectual enterprise. People often have trouble interpreting the present; how much more so the past! The pages of the *Archiva Moldaviae* are at the disposal of all who wish to present the results of their research based on the exploration of sources, particularly of those to be found in archives. There will be an emphasis on quality in articles, and for this reason the journal will make use of the system of peer review for the final selection of material to be published. A proper anchoring in the principles in use today in writing about history and a deep knowledge of historical sources are the necessary ingredients if one is to understand the past and communicate it in an intelligible way.

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The idea for this journal arose several years ago, from considerations of academic interest. For reasons connected with our various very full-time

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responsibilities at the institutions we are involved in, and with the need to bring together an editorial team and an academic advisory council, to gather articles from authors, to obtain financial support, etc, it is only now that it is making its appearance.

The *Archiva Moldaviae* is edited – entirely voluntarily – by a group made up of historians and archivists. Many specialists from Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Austria, France, Hungary, Great Britain and the USA have been involved in suggesting texts for publication, in the system by which material is selected and in the international advisory council. Thanks are due to all of them for their hard work and/or support!

The journal is to appear once a year. This is because we wish this publication to enjoy a long life and to be a vehicle for interaction among specialists in the field, with the aim of increasing the sum of knowledge about the history of Moldova and about the sources for that knowledge.