

ERNST CHRISTOPH SUTTNER, *Gabriel Bănulescu-Bodoni, a Romanian from Transylvania and Moldova in the Phanariote age*

**Abstract:** The author of this study, constantly focusing on church, cultural and political realities in the Romanian historical space in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries, outlines a detailed portrait of the metropolitan of Moldova and exarch of Muntenia, Gabriel Bănulescu-Bodoni (1746-1821). This prelate was born in Transylvanian Bistrița, in a family originating in Câmpulung Moldovenesc, and died in Chișinău, being then buried at Căpriana monastery, in Bessarabia. He was a representative personality of the Romanian church in the age, whose life, activity and work illustrate in a special manner several military and political events from the history of Moldova and Wallachia (the Russian-Turkish wars from 1787-1791, or the war ended with the peace signed in Bucharest on 16 May 1812, after which Bessarabia was occupied by Russia; the reigns of Alexandru Mavrocordat, Nicolae Mavrogheni, Alexandru Moruzi, Constantin Ipsilanti etc.).

Using Russian, German, and Romanian secondary literature and a few internal and external primary sources that are not easily accessible, the author describes the metropolitan's *cursus honorum*. After primary instruction in the Transylvanian schools, Gabriel Bănulescu-Bodoni continued his education in the Kievan Theologic Academy (1771-1773), and then in several Greek schools from Patmos, Smirna and the Vatoped monastery from Mount Athos (1773-1776). For a short while, he taught in the Principality of Transylvania (1776) and in Jassy (1777) and became a monk in Constantinople (1779), with the name Gavriil and continued his theological instruction in Patmos (1779-1780). He taught Greek in Jassy, where he functioned as hieromonk and preacher in the Cathedral of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova (1781-1782). Afterwards he became teacher at the Theological Seminary of Poltava, in Russia (1782-1784) being invited by Archbishop Nikephoros Theotochis. Soon afterwards he was recommended for the office of bishop of Roman, but the prince rejected him. For this reason he returned in Russia and became Rector of the Poltava Seminary (1786-1791). He was ordained vicar bishop of Akkerman (Cetatea Albă) and Bender (Tighina) on 26 December 1791, and Metropolitan of Moldova, on 10 February 1792, through the decision of the synod of the Church; he fell into disfavour of Prince Alexandru Moruzi, who sent him under arrest to Istanbul. He was freed at the intervention of Russia's envoy at the Porte. Then, he returned to Russia and climbed the ladders of church offices, such as that of Metropolitan of Poltava (1793-1799) and of Kiev (1799-1803). In 1801, Tsar Alexander I appointed him member of the Synode of the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1803 he retired and moved to Odessa, where five years later he was appointed Exarch of the Church of Moldova and Muntenia, at a time when the Romanian Principalities were under Turkish occupation). He was at the head of the metropolitan seat of Moldova until the Russian-Turkish peace from Bucharest (16 May 1812). In the summer of 1813, appointed by the tsar as archbishop of Bessarabia, with the seat in Chișinău, Gabriel Bănulescu-Bodoni developed an important pastoral and cultural activity organizing among others an Theological Seminary (gymnasium and seminary). He led and guided the clergy and the monasteries from Bessarabia, he built many churches and established a printing press. This press produced many books needed by Church services, some of which were in Romanian, most of them being

included in the *Bibliografia Românească Veche* (Romanian Old Bibliography) preserved nowadays in institutional collections from Bessarabia.

**Keywords:** metropolitan Gabriel Bănulescu-Bodoni, Moldova, Bessarabia, Russia, Phanariote age.