

AN ANALYSIS OF THE TURKISH-TATAR POLITICAL ELITE OF DOBROGEA BETWEEN 1880-1930

ENACHE TUȘA*

Abstract. *After taking over Dobrogea governance from Russian authorities, Romanian administrative institutions that could retrieve the prerogatives of Ottoman administrative institutions were founded. In most cases, certain customs and traditions were maintained within Dobrogea space. Within the communal councils, ethnic realities were respected, many of the mayors nominated after 1878 being Turks and Tatars, according to ethnic structure. In Medgidia, for instance, Turkish and Tatar mayors were elected up to the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century. Many of the names of Turk and Tatar mayors, counselors and parliamentarians are well-known, as well as data concerning those officials who got involved in the administration of institutions and the ongoing process of Dobrogea politics.*

Keywords: *Homogenization, heterogeneous, Turkish toponymy, ethno-cultural mosaic, collective mental, ethnic groups.*

The geopolitical reconfiguration of The Balkan Peninsula in the second half of the 19th century irreversibly transformed the ethnic and political structure of the region after the founding of states like Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece. On the background of attempts at state and nation frame, political elites from the above mentioned states decided to homogenize and rebuild society in order to justify territorial claims that their political rulers hoped for. This process of homogenization has been realized through settlement actions of populations that belonged to one of the mentioned nations, both culturally and from an identity point of view. In some cases, less numerous ethnic groups have been settled and effectively assimilated into the nation and implicitly into its official culture, as in the cases of Greece, Bulgaria and, to a lesser extent, Serbia. Dobrogea was no exception and knew an extremely interesting demographic evolution. Within the

* PhD, Scientific Researcher, Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations, Romanian Academy, Bucharest; Lecturer, Faculty of History and Political Sciences, "Ovidius" University of Constanta, Romania; enachetusa@gmail.com.

present research, I have tracked the evolution of different ethnic and political identities in Dobrogea as well as charted the interference and interconnections between these populations – both across time and in connection with other identities involved in political, economic and cultural relations. Across the years, Dobrogea represented an important trading and commercial center between Occident and Orient – a fact which stimulated progress in the province, situated between the Danube and the Black Sea¹. As many populations have succeeded, over the years, through the Transdanubian province, we encounter a very heterogeneous, unique ethno-cultural mosaïque within Romanian space, entailing certain peculiarities in accordance with the spiritual and material culture of every community. That is why I underwent the actual scientific endeavor materialized in the present research, with an intention to submit to scientific scrutiny customs and traditions from Dobrogea. This varied cultural space penetrated the collective mental space of ethnic groups that have been living here for centuries. Such elements are represented by intra – and extra-community social relations, but also by communication between members of Bulgarian and Romanian groups belonging to this historical and geographical area that is part of both Romania and Bulgaria. Integration in a neighborhood, in a community or in any other residential space has been assessed through expansion of family and close relationships within these living and cultural representational areas. A negative correlation has been emphasized between identification with community and the dominance of social contacts in other spots. The spiritual culture of the Romanian people is very close to Bulgarian popular culture, as a result of long-term interaction and influences between the two communities. Realities of the Dobrogea political life, as reflected in its political printing press, were focused upon the local elite's intention to acquire political rights and to be represented in Parliament. The lack of political practice within Dobrogea's space was due to the lengthy Ottoman rule that did not allow for any local social and political manifestation. The officials of the Romanian government were mainly oriented towards the development of other elements of social life, such as economy or culture, as they considered that Dobrogea's population was not ready to understand the complexity of political acts. Soon after 1878, voices can be heard in the local press supporting the need and obligation of Dobrogea citizens to take part in Romania's political life. Although they admitted they were not directly involved in politics, they were trying to express, through different publications, their opinion on politics, justifying themselves: "*as Romanians, as people whose interests are closely related to anything concerning our country and mostly, because some of us have origins beyond the Danube*". "*We, Romanians from Dobrogea, surrounded by foreign nations, some of them fighting us and openly expressing their anti-Romanian feelings, we understand that here we cannot be liberal or conservative, we are simply Romanians and*

¹ Within the Treaty of Peace from Berlin article 46 had some specifications: "*the territory between The Danube Delta, including the way until the Black Sea at South Mangalia*" was reunited with Romania, *Documents concerning history of Romanian Independence War*, vol. 9, Bucharest, 1995, p. 377.

that is all". According to an author² Romanians are *natives and permanent* in this area since it was integrated into the Ottoman Empire, although they have been in minority all the time, and the respective author asserts that: "*we did not know too well the situation of Romanian elements in Dobrogea in the troubled times of the Middle Ages and mostly, in the first beginnings of the Turkish age; the documents are almost nonexistent and those that we have are few and too short, but we can conclude that Romanians have always been inhabitants of these places*"³. Marin Ionescu Dobrogianu, in reference paperwork for Dobrogea, asserts that that "*a Romanian essence must have existed in Dobrogea before its colonization with Romanian inhabitants who came from the left side of the Danube*"⁴. Constantin Brătescu shows in a study of those times that, as far as the continuity of Romanian population during the Ottoman domination is concerned, there were three distinct periods. As a result of massive 16th century Dobrogea colonization with Turkish-Tatar populations, Christian communities had to regroup on the Danube line where they had been staying for a long time, as well as in the region close to the Danube mouths where Romanian villages will be established that "*will have permanent residence*"⁵. In the 18th century, there are maps containing topic Romanian names, as well as showing the fact that Romanians were living on the right side of the Danube; a state of fact which can be inferred from the depiction of Romanian names belonging to settlements appearing in the maps mentioned above.

In 1641, the Ragusan traveler *Pietro Diodato Baksici*, was mentioning that, in the Dobrogea steppe area, Christians were living only by the seaside and on the Danube banks, certainly being rushed there by Moslem colonization. The traveler registers the presence of an Orthodox population in Babadag too, counting "*60 households with 450 souls*"⁶. Together with the testimonials consigned by foreign travelers to Dobrogea, we also have the contribution of the Turkish traveler *Evliya Celebi*, who crossed Dobrogea several times in the second half of the 17th century. He speaks about the Christians from Silistra, asserting they were in large numbers, occupying 10 suburbs of this town. He also mentions Ester town, where "*in the 1500 houses there were few Moslems*"⁷. Wallachians and Moldavians were dominant among the population of Hârșova and Isaccea,

² Dumitru Șandru, *Sheperds in Dobrogea*, The institute of National History from Bucharest, Bucharest, 1946 – where the author mentions the fact that despite all the Ottoman domination there existed Romanians in Dobrogea. The author fundaments this information relying upon surveys taken during 1910 and 1920 in all places of Dobrogea where there existed Romanian families.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

⁴ M. D. Ionescu, *Dobrogea at Dawn of the 20th Century*, Bucharest, Graphic Arts Publishing House, 1904, p. 323.

⁵ Gheorge Vâlsan, in *Romanian Idiom*, year I, Bucharest, 1927, pp. 145-148.

⁶ Gheorghe Vinulescu, *Piedro Diodato e la sua relazione sulla Moldavia (1641)*, in "*Diplomatarium italicum*", IV, Roma, 1939, p. 102, quoted by Tudor Mateescu in the above mentioned work at page 25.

⁷ Evliya Celebi particularly reminds one of the town of Tulcea, which had 600 houses, Romanian and Bulgarian; and also at Dăieni (*Daya-i Kebir – Daia Mare*). About this, the Turkish traveler mentions that it was inhabited by Muntenians and Moldavians, being a "borough looking like a big town". We found all these in the paperwork: *Foreign Travelers about Romanian Counties*, vol.VI, Bucharest, 1976, pp. 395-404,451,456.

Romanians being also present in some villages close to Babadag⁸ in the surroundings of this administrative, religious and military center of Dobrogea. However, in mid-18th century, we have information from the Turkish historian and geographer *Kiatis Celebi*, speaking about Gura Portița (*Portica Bogazi*)⁹ but also about the fact that the area was populated with Romanians and Bulgarians. Different news shows that, especially in 18th century and in the first half of the 19th century, Romanians in Dobrogea were not only a physical presence but also an economic one, through national activities, religious institutions, extremely distinguished cultural institutions. In a letter to the Baron of *Bourquaneir*, ambassador of France in Constantinople, sent by *Czajkowski*, agent of the Polish prince *Czartoryski*, we find out, among others, that Romanians from the northern part of Dobrogea, estimated at a number of 25-30.000, form the most numerous Christian ethnic group. In 1840, on the road from Constanta to Cernavodă, the famous writer *Hans Christian Andersen* noted in the Carasu valley both Romanian shepherds and peasants dressed in sheep waistcoat with hats of black felt¹⁰. Somewhere earlier, before the Danish referral to Romanians in Dobrogea, we have the works of Russian hieromonk *Partenie*. On a trip made in 1838 towards Christian places of the Orient, passing through Măcin, he observes that Christian peasants here are called “*Romanians and speak Wallachian language*”¹¹. Also, passing through Babadag, he states that the church here was burnt without any reaction from its inhabitants “*as the bishop is Greek and does not interfere*”. On his way to Constantinople, Dimitrie Cantemir speaks about Romanians among the inhabitants of the city of Silistra. Also, he demonstrates that in the village of Alibegu (*Alibeichioi*) from the Dobrogea steppe, the Turkish feudal lord has more than 100 Christians¹² working for him within a year. The French numismatist *La Motraye*, visiting Tomis-Constanta, reminded us that the city, really in ruins, was inhabited by a mixed population, most of them being from Moldavia, the term certainly designating Romanians, who called the settlement *Tomisvoara*. The same travelers, recording details concerning Romanians, speak about *citakii*, who used to live in the steppe of Dobrogea; and *Evliya Celebi*, the Turkish traveler, gives us an interesting explanation according to which they appeared

⁸ Tudor Mateescu, *op.cit.* p. 26 to check: *Turkish Chronicles concerning Romanian Counties*, excerpts, vol. II, drawn up by Mihail Guboglu, Bucharest, 1974, pp. 117-118.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 118.

¹⁰ Nicolae Ciachir, Radu Ștefan Ciobanu, *Annexation of Dobrogea to the Living Area of Romanian State. Consecința The Consequence of Romanian Population Permanence on Dobrogean Land* (brochure), p. 162;

¹¹ Constantin C. Giurescu, *News about Romanian Population of Dobrogea in Medieval and Modern Maps*, Constanța, 1966; Teodor Mateescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27, 29. It is true that *Paul de Ales* makes some confusion considering Bulgarians to be the inhabitants of Macin and Iglita, realizing the confusion according to which all Christians from the right side of Danube are Bulgarians. But the Polish *Rafaël Leszeziwski* asserts that these are Romanians; the same partial confusion as in the Ragusan Baksici, who speaks about Bulgarians surrounding Babadag who, strangely speak Turkish and Romanian; why would they speak Romanian is still an enigma..?!

¹² These believed in a superstition related to the feast of Saint Foca, which was in use amongst Romanians in Dobrogea until almost nowadays. It is about the Romanians from that village, peasants depending on the local feudal lord. Dimitrie Cantemir, *The History of Ottoman Empire. His raise and his Falling*, translation by Iosif Hodosiu, Bucharest 1876, pp. 309-310; quoted by Tudor Mateescu in the paper: *Permanence and Continuity of Romanians in Dobrogea*, Bucharest, 1979, p. 27.

from “*Tatars, Bulgarians, Wallachians and Moldavians*”¹³. All in all, Romanians in Dobrogea managed to even preserve their own toponymics, that new Turkish official naming “*could not exclude; on the contrary, in some cases only double it, and in others event adopt it*”¹⁴. It has been found that out of the 3776 registered topic names, after 1878, in counties like Constanta and Tulcea, most were recent names, among which 367 were names of localities; 2338 (61, 89%) belonged to Turkish toponymy, 1260 (33, 34%) to Romanian, and a reduced number (4,67%) with different other origins¹⁵. A first classification of all these toponyms was realized by Al. P. Arbore. Such a category of toponymy designates populations found by the Turks in this area, or those established during the Ottoman domination: *Anadol-Chioi* (today a neighborhood of Constanta), *The Village of Anatoliei*, *Arnăutu-Chioi – The Village of Albanians*, *Laz-Mahale – the suburb of Laz*, *Vlah – Chioi and Vlahlar – The Village of Romanians*. Another category of toponymy refers to the inhabitants’ occupations: *Arabagilar-The Cartmen*, *Casapchioi-The Village of Butchers*, *Covangilar-Beekeepers*, *Dulgher-The Carpenter*, *Hamangia – Miner*, *Nalbant – The Horseshoe*, *Terzichioi – The Village of Taylors* etc. Together with the Moslems, settled in Dobrogea in the past centuries of Ottoman domination, other populations were established too, but their settlement involved a situational aspect and their staying here was in most cases, temporary. The permanent population in Dobrogea was the Romanian one. A second name given to the natives of Dobrogea is that of “*turcuians or turcans*” referring to Romanians under Turkish domination¹⁶. The existence of religious institutions, sometimes based on the foundations of ancient Christian basilicas, as well as the building and endowment of four monasteries, represents living proof of similarities with the situation of Romanians in Transylvania. Under the domination of another nationality, religion or language, tolerant with respect to their cult, Romanians from Dobrogea, not having the right to gather in an acknowledged national community, were organized in religious communities around churches and monasteries, which were thus turned into national cultural institutions and keepers of tradition. Other Bulgarian groups migrated into Dobrogea from the South, from the Balkan area. Bulgarians came into Dobrogea with a specific purpose, and it was to get land, this aspect being proved by the fact that Bulgarians avoided the Danube riverbank, which was frequently flooded¹⁷. Thousands of Bulgarians have migrated from Bulgaria to Basarabia. In other sources, Bulgarians appeared as

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 384.

¹⁴ Alexandru Arbore, *About the Ethnography of Dobrogea. Contributions to Settlements of Tatars and Turkish in Dobrogea*, Bucharest, Casei Școalelor Publishing House, 1920, p. 87.

¹⁵ Mustafa Ali Mehmet, *The History of Turkish in Romania*, Bucharest, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1980, p. 83; to see, Ibram Nuredin, *Moslem Community in Dobrogea, Highlights of Spiritual Life, Religious Life and Education in Maternal Language*, Ex Ponto Publishing House, Constanța, 1998, p. 142.

¹⁶ Gheorghe Dumitrașcu, *Contribution of Dobrogea Striving to Gain National Independence of Romanian People*, in *Scientific Paperworks. Social Sciences*. Philology, Institute of Higher Education, Constanta, 1978, p. 18; see, Constantin C. Giurăscu, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-7.

¹⁷ Victor Morfeș, *The Swamp of Ialomita*, in *Annals of Dobrogea*, year V and VI, 1925, p. 34; Nicolae’s article to see, *La Dobrogea Roumaine*, Bucharest, 1919.

being a very glorious ethnic group, until they were completely defeated by the Turks in 1396¹⁸. Many of these Bulgarian ethnics have been forcibly taken by Russian armies to South Basarabia, deserted by the Tatars¹⁹. In the middle of the 17th century (more exactly in 1659) we can find Bulgarians in the notes of Catholic bishop Stanislav, among ethnicities populating Babadag too. Bishop Stanislav claims that in Babadag there were around 1700 Turkish houses and “*bulgarorum, graecorum, valachorum schismaticorum domus sunt 300 circiter, animae 2000 circiter*”²⁰. The trip of Macarie, Constantinople Patriarch from the second half of 17th century, in Dobrogea, specifies the name *Chiustenza* (Constanta) from where Macarie pervades the territory reaching “*in a small town of Bulgarian Christians called Iglitsa (today Iglitsa in the county of Tulcea) in the middle of the Danube*”; furthermore, Macarie narrates; “*There is a path on the land, under Moslem domination, but I have seen crosses raised on the waysides and on the tombs of this little town. There is a church in the town. Then, I reached in a town called Majina Matchin, on the Danube riverbanks, with 420 houses belonging to Bulgarian Christians. It is the last town under Moslem domination and it is part of Silistra pashalic. They have Turkish janitors and a kadi*”²¹. Precise data concerning the Bulgarian migration into Dobrogea are signaled at the beginning of 19th century, when 1200 Bulgarian peasants arrive, in 1809, close to Cocoşu Monastery, founded by “*mocans*” – shepherds – from Dobrogea. Other 1.500 Bulgarian peasants are mentioned in the Babadag area after the city of Tulcea has been occupied by Russian general Bulatov whose armies take this group of Bulgarians over the Danube²². Beliefs, customs but also myths related to the construction of a new building and its decoration by Romanians and Bulgarians prove their inter-ethnic complementary and local traditions²³. Because of this reason, we meet other common practices related to a certain tradition, like setting some objects at the house’s foundation in order to attract riches, or setting a wooden cross adorned with a towel and flowers on every layer of masonry until you reach the roof.

The magic symbolism of interior decorations was visible in the use of fabrics generically named towels (*ştergar*) by the Romanian population and *geaulâc* or *cevre* by the Turks and Tatars. One could see on these fabrics all sorts of common patterns like: *the tree of life, the tulip, the vineyard as a symbol of life, different geometrical figures*²⁴. These patterns can be encountered in all areas with Moslems and Romanians. At the end of the 19th century, surface dwellings

¹⁸ M. D. Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

¹⁹ The researcher Al. Arbore claims that respective groups were transported in great number, Alexandru Arbore, *Bulgarian Settlements*, in *Archives of Dobrogea*, no. V, 1916.

²⁰ *Monumenta spectantia historiam slavorum meridionalium* vol. XVIII also including *Acta bulgariae ecclesiastica*, apud. Alexandru P. Arbore, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²¹ *The Travels of Macarius Patriarch of Antioch written by his attendant archdeacon, Paul of Aleppo in Arabic*, apud. Alexandru Arbore, *op. cit.* p. 26.

²² Liubov Miletici, *Bulgarians from Dobrogea*, in, *Dobrogea Juna*, 1, no. 24, June 15, 1912, p. 2.

²³ Răzvan Limona, *Population of Dobrogea during Interwar times*, Harvia Publishing House, Tulcea, 2009, p. 125.

²⁴ Paulina Popoiu, *Anthropology of habitati in Dobrogea*, Oscar Print Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, p. 138; you can revise Răzvan Limona, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

replace half-buried ones and integrate some geographical features of exterior influence into Romanian space²⁵. Influences of the ethnographic regions of Oltenia and Transylvania had already reached Dobrogea through the peasants from the Oltenia Field colonized in the villages of Dobrogea, but also through Transylvanian shepherds who came with their flocks for wintering in Dobrogea. The mocans (shepherds), as I have previously mentioned, came to Dobrogea ever since 1877 and many of them did not leave anymore but settled in purely Romanian villages and imposed a certain type of house construction, specific to mountain areas, involving the use of stone that Dobrogea had plenty of. Most dwellings yet, were made from clay with water and chaff serving for house consolidation of these *houses of fence*; and were used, in a mix with horse droppings, to consolidate external walls, strengthened with wooden forks and wattles or reed bunches. Interior walls were smoothed with clay and painted for disinfection²⁶. In those times, there appears a new opinion trend in negotiations accompanying different interests between communities and citizens, which reflected the interaction texture of diversity and interculturality in Dobrogea. In this respect, Tudor Șoimaru said about Constanta in 1936: “*it was born out of coffee yeast, Oriental Aphrodite..... With a sherbet of roses and Turkish coffee with cream you have a unique philosophy. No drama, no soul equations. Oriental-like locations, where next to coffees, clients could play craps, backgammon or gordum and smoke tobacco for a relatively low price*”²⁷.

Constanța and Dobrogea, generally, did not have any Moslem peculiarities: “*the inns opened by Greeks and Bulgarians or those from the Orient had “taraf” – band – members who played melodies specific to this ethnicity of Turkish arabesks (manele)*”²⁸. After 1880, the signs of interculturality are not limited only to meeting places, music or parties but also to papers of the local administration. “*At the meeting of Parish Council from March, 26 1881, under the patronage of mayor Panait Holban, in the presence of Hafuz Regep and counselors George Caridia, Ion H. Stoian, Odisea Despoti, Gebrail Frenchian, Zat Celebi (missing Abdul Selim and Solomon Japhet), is analyzed the error of contractor David Birnfeld concerning the contract on the city lighting [...]*”²⁹. According to research of documents from those times, we can see that the city was ruled and administered by representatives of several ethnicities, more precisely 12 ethnicities (Bulgarians included) existent in Dobrogea at the time, and there is information according to which: “*they represented all clerks in Dobrogea*”³⁰.

After the construction of the Cernavoda Bridge over the Danube, belonging to Anghel Saligny, Constanta becomes an embarking place for Istanbul. The places

²⁵ Argentina Bărbulescu, *Architecture, Peasant House, Village Churches*, Maria Magiru (coord.), *Dobrogea – Ethnographic Study – Local Romanians*, vol. I, Popular Art Museum, Constanța 2003, p. 81.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ Tudor Șoimaru, *Constantza 1936*, in Păuleanu Doina (coord.), *Constantza 1878-1928. The Performance of Late Modernization*, vol. 1, Arcade Publishing House, Constanța, 2005, p. 139.

²⁸ Nicolae G. Ionescu, *Euterpe at Tomis*, 1981, in Păuleanu Doina, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

²⁹ D.J.A.N. Constanța, file no. 1/1881, f. 14.

³⁰ Petre Grigorescu, *Former Times and Today, 1901* in Păuleanu, Doina, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

of display and offensive for new ideas and mentalities in modern Dobrogea were newspapers, administration, court, theaters, shops, salons, public markets, curative places. Time itself has a new signification and is associated to the idea of movement, exchange, profit, transactions, constructions and industrial improvements etc. The two juxtaposed pictures of past and future in traditional cultures tended to exclude themselves within the “*politically correct*” definition and desirable trend to modernize Dobrogea, as quite outdated and with great gaps on multiple levels. This solidarity had more motivations resulting from a communitary feeling of economic interests, from acculturate feelings, from religious or ideological constraint³¹. One of the most often used methods of socialization within a community was walking in the promenade area of the city. There are assertions according to which “*this exhibition of clothes and jewels and the meeting of youth that used to flirt with each other were needful for the intellectual evolution of the town*”³². We must notice that ethnic minorities in Dobrogea, such as: Tatars, Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Lipovens, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Jews kept their own culture; that in time this becomes an important element with its own special, cosmopolitan charm which it turns into a social change dimension. More than that, the ethnicities mentioned above defended their rights in different publications. For instance, the manager of the publication: “*The Star of Dobrogea, The Sheet of Local Interests*”, Basile Brănișteanu³³ publishes, among others, “*The Status of Macedo-Romanian Society*”³⁴, and in 1883 he donates 10 lei³⁵ for the schools from Macedonia. Other publications of minorities in Dobrogea appeared since 1896, such as “*Sadakat*” (“Loyalty”), Turkish weekly magazine, and “*şark*” (“The Sunrise”), Turkish newspaper with Arabian letters and irregular publication. Both of them were a plea for the rights of the Moslem population³⁶. Romanian press, but also that of ethnicities in Dobrogea, presented cultural life with all its manifestations: local and national events and feasts, visits of the royal family as well as other personalities of those times, the opening of some important cultural institutions, monuments. The starting of the first world conflagration stops culture publications for a while, their issues being resumed between the wars.

During the Ottoman domination, Romanians from Dobrogea considered school and church as institutions meant to reunite the community, to serve its interests and those of the entire nations. School and church have been the most important factors for spreading Romanian culture in Dobrogea. Written culture,

³¹ Ion Râșnoveanu, *Fashionable Preoccupations in Interwar Dobrogea*, in Valentin Ciorbea (coord), *** *Dobrogea 1878-2008 – Open horizons by European mandate*, Ex Ponto Publishing House, Constanța, 2008, pp. 437-439.

³² Ioan Adam, *Pitresque Constantza with Its Surroundings*, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1908, p. 35.

³³ It is not Macedonian as we tend to believe.

³⁴ “*The Star of Dobrogea. The Page of local Interests*”, year. I, no. 1, November 27th, 1879.

³⁵ The equivalent of two days effort of a worker with the bullock cart with 4 axes or 4 days of physical labor of a worker, as it appears in the documents of Central National Archives, Constanța Town Hall, files 16/1879, 22/1890 and content from Constanța prefecture, file 1/1905-1912.

³⁶ Ali-Ekrem Mehmet, *From the History of Dobrogea Turkish*, Bucharest, Kriterion Publishing House, 1994, pp. 182-187.

bringing religious books from Muntenia, Moldavia or Transylvania since the 17th century or even earlier, proves that Romanians in Dobrogea knew and used handwriting. These were the first forms of expressing a political culture or even subordination towards existent authority in one moment or another in Dobrogea. If we took into account the high rate of illiteracy, it would be hard to establish this relation from the political point of view of the Dobrogea space, due to the fact that there are very few documents attesting this aspect. Yet, we have much information about a kind of political domination and subordination of ethnicities in Dobrogea, exerted by the Ottoman Empire which ruled Dobrogea until 1878. The awareness of political culture of the Moslem community emerged religiously (in relation to the Koran) and prescribed specific norms of submission of Moslem individuals but also of the members of other ethnicities.

Concerning the rest of ethnicities living in Dobrogea, they were submitted to some imperative of administrative order³⁷ but not being dominated by the religious spirit that motivated the Moslem population. The differences of relation of ethnic groups to political reality were influenced by a complex phenomenon with the following peculiarities: knowledge, religion, art, morality, laws and specific customs of every community. Thus, in the case of Christian communities, political culture had other significations, as there were real differences of social and identitary perception. The Ottoman Empire started to populate Dobrogea with Turkish fishermen, an ethnicity that started to shape an Islamic cultural model in the Razelm lake area, but did not manage to impose it; the Turks brought other colonists, among who were Arabians, Tatars, Gypsies and Laz³⁸. In this kind of relationship, the Gagauz seem to be closer to the Laz³⁹. Even within this context churches could be built, but without towers and bells, such as, for instance, at Ostrov or Aliman⁴⁰. Despite these aspects, in Dobrogea, under Ottoman domination, this process of ottomanization never functioned completely because the members of Christian communities sacredly kept their own traditions. In the 19th century, there was an attempt of modernization in Dobrogea, the Ottoman domination introducing a set of reforms (starting with Medgid-Abdul's reign) which organized Dobrogea into a margin country, turning weapons towards the enemy.

It is significant that, after 1878, the Turks did not send any commissioner to defend the rights of Moslem ethnicities in Dobrogea, completely trusting Romanians. More, Romanian politicians, like Mihail Kogălniceanu or prefect Remus Opreanu, have been decorated with high Turkish orders for their attitude towards Turks and Tatars in Dobrogea, under Romanian domination. The law from 1880, referring

³⁷ These necessities involved: obeying political dogms that Ottoman laws prescribed; the payment of taxes; faith and submission towards the Sultan.

³⁸ Ottomans translated ancient names into Turkish, whether giving new Turkish-Tatars names or keeping the older ones; anyway, they changed the toponymy in Dobrogea to the detriment of Romanian names, which remain however predominant.

³⁹ Ion Neicu, *The Country between the Danube and the Black Sea, 1878-1928. Thoughts for Future. Sketching of a monographic of human geography at the semi centenary of Dobrogea annexations*, Institute of Graphic Arts, Constanta, 1928, p. 20.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

to Dobrogea administration and to its framing within the Romanian constitution and in the Romanian State, shows a complete freedom and understanding of ethnic problems, as does the law from 1882, concerning agrarian properties and showing an understanding of all ethnic minorities. At the same time all cults of the ethnicities living in Dobrogea have been treated with tolerance and understanding, this explaining the existence of religious places representing protestant and catholic populations, churches of Bulgarian and Armenian communities, mosques and, not in the last turn, Israelite synagogues of Spanish and Occidental worship. After sketching this setting of the situation and ethnic realities within Dobrogea's space, it is necessary to remind our readers of the fact that it did not have a political culture, as such. The political life is completely absent right after 1878, this fact being determined by a long Ottoman administration imposing a proper political order, as well as by the absence of any rights for the inhabitants of Dobrogea across 31 years, until 1909. The absence of political life was probably motivated by the lower level of education of the inhabitants in Dobrogea but also by the Romanian State being afraid that many members of these communities could politically act against the Romanian spirit⁴¹. The most visible individuals in the political spectrum were the Romanians, followed by the Turks and Tatars; and then there came the Bulgarians as an element of ethnic configuration.

Another element introduced in our thesis, with the help of some theorists' analysis⁴² concerning the modernization of the state, is the cultural-institutional⁴³ imbalance. Actually the cultural values of individuals from a collectivity generate certain rules, creating institutions meant to guide their behavior and to strengthen these values. Thus, these institutions offer a structure and coherent order to the society where this process happens. Nevertheless, people create institutions relying upon cultural and ideological values (values including individuals' ideals) towards which a certain political model directs⁴⁴.

The difference between natural cultural values, natural institutions and ideological cultural values and institutions created by them represents an institutional cultural imbalance. The same thing happened in Dobrogea, due to the institutional system of the Ottoman Empire where there was a patriarchal political culture dominated by Koran that did not bring the wished changes. Or using Hofstede's terminology, the difference between *wished* values (natural) and values *to wish* (created)⁴⁵. Societies had the choice between natural order and afferent rules as well as rules imposed by created institutions. This choice appears from both the cultural-institutional imbalance and relational elements of

⁴¹ Georges G. Angelesco, *Etude sur La Dobrogea au point de vue de L'organization des pouvoirs publics*, Paris, Editeur Arthur Rousseau, 1907, p. 156.

⁴² It is the special contribution of the authors mentioned in the paperwork within anterior chapters that participated at the conference that made possible the issue of the paperwork *Origin of Regression in East Europe* coordinated by Daniel Chirot.

⁴³ Daniel Chirot, *Change in a Periphere Society*.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*, Second Edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, London-New Delhi, 2001, p. 21.

a model imitating and trying to define another, superior model. Within this process, there appears corruption, in all its forms, a situation that is given by the choice of a society or of a group that guides itself according to the rules of natural institutions and according to natural order, only within the institutional frame created upon a political model⁴⁶. The dominant group in a society will impose the institutional frame according to its own ideological preferences, as happened in the case of Ottoman administration in Dobrogea. The model applied by those administering the province imposed no other political orientation than the Occidental model, so there was a major institutional and cultural imbalance in relation to other groups from the province that had to conform to the dominant model. In this way corruption appeared within the system, an import manifested in Romanian politics and, by extrapolation, in Dobrogea⁴⁷. The imposition of a mechanism to eliminate corruption was necessary but this aspect has not been defined as a political priority, lacking any administrative consistency, for the simple reason that there were barely any clerks administering the services and not enough of them for the monitoring or discovery of the corrupted. In the biological background we can include those genetic features regulating vegetative life functions of a population. In the geographical environment we can include climate, soil type, possibility to produce/grow, types of borders. The last factor, claims Motru, is represented by institutional characters, understanding by this those “*manifestations belonging to the historical experience of a population that, through tradition, is constantly repeated during a long period of time*”⁴⁸. The conclusion of C. R. Motru is that “*the Romanian, through his inherent nature, is tenacious when working, also patient, conservative, traditionalist, but this innate nature has been perverted by a wrong institutional life, imitating foreigners*”⁴⁹. The last factor, claims Motru, is represented by institutional characters understanding those “*manifestations belonging to the historical experience of population that, through tradition, is constantly repeated during a long period of time*”⁵⁰. Customs, language, legal moral customs and certain national features can be found here. Peoples reaching a certain consistency of these institutional characters, says C.R. Motru, are capable of national culture, are peoples creating soul originality in the humankind history⁵¹. In conclusion, there is no strong institutional character, no unique spiritual finality of the society. On the other hand, at the beginning of the 20th century, in 1913, “*The New Romanian Journal*” underwent a survey in which European intellectuals were questioned with respect to Balkan events, with the wars in the background⁵². The non-perseverance of the Romanian is manifest in his reduced education and in school abandonment specific to interwar times. According to this model, the

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

⁴⁷ For this aspect to revise Peter Gunst in Daniel Chirot, *Origins of Regression in East Europe*, Corint Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004, chapter: *Agrarian Systems of East and Central Europe*, pp. 78-81.

⁴⁸ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Political Writings*, Nemira Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 79.

⁴⁹ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Psychology of Romanian People*...., p. 20.

⁵⁰ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Political Writings*, Nemira Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 79.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

⁵² Ion Bulei, *When the century is born*..., Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990, p. 13.

analysis can be extrapolated into the Dobrogea space, where it is completely valid. The validity of a political recipe that was taken to Dobrogea and brought specific institutional vices of the Romanians into this reminded space⁵³. Gaps in the Romanian political system overlapped over specific customs of the region and resulted in a corrupt administration that did not have, at least for the beginning, the institutionally necessary force to reform this new space acquired by the Romanian State after 1878. One of the main Romanian politicians of the times, Mihail Kogălniceanu, alleging historical, geographical and ethnographic motivations, expressed the conviction that the acquisition of a new territory by Romania was to bring a new political model into Dobrogea⁵⁴.

An important contribution to the study of national specificity is brought by Dimitrie Drăghicescu, concerning social determinism and its relation to the theory of national specificity⁵⁵. In this study I have tried to display some peculiarities of Romanian and Bulgarian ethnic communities that cohabited and influenced each other within the Dobrogea region. We think that this scientific endeavor can represent a starting point for other studies preoccupied by inter-ethnic and identity peculiarities. Customs, language, legal moral customs and certain national features can all be found here. Peoples reaching a certain consistency in these institutional characters, says C. R. Motru, are capable of national culture, are peoples creating soul originality in the humankind history⁵⁶. In conclusion, there is no strong institutional character, no unique spiritual finality of the society.

On the other hand, at the beginning of the 20th century, in 1913, "*The New Romanian Journal*" underwent a survey in which European intellectuals were questioned with respect to Balkan events with the wars in the background⁵⁷. For sociologist Gustave le Bon, the Balkans includes barbarian peoples (he gave examples like the Bulgarians and other uncivilized peoples). In le Bon's opinion, the mentality of these peoples was that of "*so little civilized hordes*"⁵⁸. For Kurt Bresysig, teacher at the University of Berlin, only Romanians could be distinguished among all Balkan groups because "*they had the advantage to possess a personality as a nation*"⁵⁹. Another famous Western intellectual, Ernest Scillere, blamed the Balkan peoples for having a weak, almost nonexistent participation in the general culture of mankind "*in the vanguard of which there is Europe with all its Occidental nations*"⁶⁰. An anthropologist, Giuseppe Sergi, thought that he faced some illiterate people and advised Romanians, Bulgarians and all inhabitants of the Balkans to send their kids to school, asserting: "*Imitate the Japanese people, who sent their kids in European and American schools to bring*

⁵³ Adrian Rădulescu, Ion Bitoleanu, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

⁵⁴ Dumitru Vitcu, *Recovery and integration of Dobrogea in România in Mihail Kogălniceanu's political vision*, in Mihai Lupu (Coord.) *Dobrogea – historical highlights*, Europolis Publishing House, Constanta, 2000, p. 80.

⁵⁵ Dimitrie Drăghicescu, *From Romanian People's Psychology*, 1907.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

⁵⁷ Ion Bulei, *When the century is born...*, Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990, p. 13.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹ *New Romanian Journal*, year XIV, no. 11, from September, 1st, 1913.

⁶⁰ Ion Bulei, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

back, together with science, also European civilization. And they managed to go so high that their mental products strive those of old Europe. You are at the gates of our schools, you can easily enter them and can, in this way, become equal with Western Europeans. Only in this way, Balkan peoples could aspire to the human ideal. I ask you to forgive me for my frankness”⁶¹. Probably, these scholars answered this survey and spoke from a perspective full of prejudices when discussing about the *Orient*. Probably, these individuals’ opinions started with approximate notions about the representation of Balkan space and that is why it was necessary to clarify some of the definitions of national specificity.

SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adam, Ioan, *Pitresque Constantza with its Surroundings*, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1908;
- Angelesco, Georges G., *Etude sur La Dobrogea au point de vue de L'organization des pouvoirs publics*, Editeur Arthur Rousseau, Paris, 1907;
- Arbore, Alexandru, *About the Ethnography of Dobrogea. Contributions to Settlements of Tatars and Turkish in Dobrogea*, Casa Școalelor Publishing House, Bucharest, 1920;
- Bărbulescu, Argentina, *Architecture, Peasant House, Village Churches*, Maria Magiru (coord.), *Dobrogea – Ethnographic Study – Local Romanians*, vol. I, Popular Art Museum, Constanța 2003;
- Cantemir, Dimitrie, *The History of Ottoman Empire. His raise and his Falling*, translation by Iosif Hodosiu, Bucharest, 1876;
- Chirot, Daniel, *Origins of Regression in East Europe*, Corint Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004;
- Ciachir, Nicolae, Radu Ștefan Ciobanu, *Annexation of Dobrogea to the Living Area of Romanian State. The Consequence of Romanian Population Permanence on Dobrogean Land* (brochure), p. 162;
- Ciorbea, Valentin (coord), *** *Dobrogea 1878-2008 – Open horizons by European mandate*, Ex Ponto Publishing House, Constanța, 2008;
- Dumitrașcu, Gheorghe, *Contribution of Dobrogea Striving to Gain National Independence of Romanian People*, in, *Scientific Paperworks. Social Sciences, Philology*, Institute of Higher Education, Constanța, 1978;
- Giurescu, Constantin C., *News about Romanian Population of Dobrogea in Medieval and Modern Maps*, Constanța, 1966;
- Hofstede, Geert, *Culture's Consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*, Second Edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, London-New Delhi, 2001;
- Ionescu, M.D., *Dobrogea at Dawn of the 20th Century*, Graphic Arts Publishing House, Bucharest, 1904;
- Limona, Răzvan, *Population of Dobrogea during interwar times*, Harvia Publishing House, Tulcea, 2009;
- Mehmet, Mustafa Ali, *The History of Turkish in Romania*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1980;
- Morfei, Victor, *The Swamp of Ialomita*, in *Annals of Dobrogea*, year V and VI, 1925;
- Nuredin, Ibram, *Moslem Community in Dobrogea, Highlights of Spiritual Life, Religious Life and Education in Maternal Language*, Ex Ponto Publishing House, Constanța, 1998;
- Popoiu, Paulina, *Anthropology of habitati in Dobrogea*, Oscar Print Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001;
- Rădulescu-Motru, Constantin, *Political Writings*, Nemira Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998;
- Vălsan, Gheorge, in *Romanian Idiom*, year I, Bucharest, 1927;
- Vinulescu, Gheorghe, *Piedro Diodato e la sua relazione sulla Moldavia (1641)*, in “*Diplomatarium italicum*”, IV, Roma, 1939.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.