

ROMANIA, DOBRUJA, CRIMEAN TATARS AND PEOPLE AROUND THEM

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Abstract: This paper attempts to highlight some aspects of social and cultural history of the Crimean Tatar ethnic minority in Romania, as part of the western hinterland of the Black Sea, the south-eastern corner of Europe.

This research is based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis for which I used some documents which are part of the heritage of the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office), issues faced by the refugees during their refuge from the Crimean peninsula to the Ottoman lands, challenges following their settlement in the newly created state Romania, the assimilation process influenced by the nationalist discourse of the Romanian political elites reflected on newspapers of time owned by Constanta County Library „Ioan Roman”.

The body of the paper highlights some aspects of historical evolution of the Crimean Tatars living in today's Dobruja, Romania and provides details about their religion affiliation and demographic evolution based on Romanian official data.

The conclusion lines of this paper shows my own views on cultural bridges build up by the Crimean Tatars ethnic minority of Dobruja and emphasizes minority's struggle to protect its cultural identity.

Keywords: Crimea, Dobruja, Crimean Tatars, historical memory, the challenge of diversity.

1. Introduction

1.1. Argument and methods related to this research

It is a great pleasure for me to write this study dedicated to the Crimean Tatars of Dobruja, their origins, homeland and history, as I am a native Crimean Tatar borne in Dobruja, Romania.

This research is based both on quantitative and qualitative variables of some documents, which are part of the heritage of the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (*The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office*) and the Romanian National Archives County Departments of Constanta. Moreover, “*Analele Dobrogei. Revista societății culturale dobrogene*”, *Arhiva Dobrogei. Revista societății pentru cecetarea și studierea Dobrogei* are among the main periodicals contemporaneous to the historical events related with this study. Periodicals are owned by Constanța County Library “Ioan N. Roman”.

1.2. A short overview on the Crimean Tatar ethnic minority of Dobruja

This part of the paper contains data on the Crimean Tatars community of Dobruja, Romania: Crimean Tatars: Turkic-speaking people, affiliated to Muslim religion they are Sunni Hanefi, with their country of origin in the Crimean peninsula.

Although considerable research has been devoted to the history of the Crimean Tatars people, rather less attention has been paid to the history of the Crimean Tatars of Dobruja, Romania, to the study of their refugee and their day-to-day life. Recently, there has been growing interest in the social history of the Crimean Tatars and their runaway from Crimea has become an important aspect of their social history. However, less research was done about their runaway from the Crimean peninsula after the Crimean War 1853-1856, challenges they faced at the end of the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878, how they had to change their life and adapt to the new conditions in newly created Romania.

Alan Fisher in his study “Emigration of Muslims From the Russian Empire” [Fisher, 1999: 172] states “The Crimean Tatars began leaving their homeland in 1772 [...]. While it appears that many of the Tatars who left went to the Ottoman Empire, including the Danubian Principalities and Bessarabia, Ottoman sources have not surfaced which could corroborate these large numbers”.

The waves of refugees continued after the Crimean War, 1853-1856, and the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878. Many of the refugees with the support of the Ottoman authorities came by sea and were settled on the northern shore of the Black sea and on its western shore, in towns and villages of Dobruja.

1.3. The Crimean Tatars settlement in Dobruja and the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister’s Office (BOA)

In accordance with the documents of the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister’s Office (BOA) we can only estimate that there was a great volume of refugees. After the Crimean War, 1853-1856, some of the Crimean and Nogay *muhacirs* settled in Dobruja. Waves of refugees came by boat from Crimea and were settled in villages of today’s Dobrudja, which at the end of the 19th century carried the historical name of Danubian Vilayet [Tuna Vilayeti].

For this study I used Crimean Tatars, even though in documents with the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister’s Office) they are named *Kırım ahalisi* and the Nogays are named *Nogay kabilesi* because alongside with the Crimeans there are many Nogays in Dobruja, even though the Romanian census never had a separate entry for Nogays (Ismail, 2017: 7). From the end of the 18th century after Russian annexation (1783) many of the Crimean Tatars started run away from the peninsula together with their families to Ottoman lands, which were more promising of safety and less risked life. There were many waves of refugees from Crimea to Ottoman lands, but for this study I choose the period between 1860 and 1877. For this period is difficult to obtain an accurate number of the refugees, as the runaway from the peninsula lasted for more than ten years after the end of the Crimean War. People run away by land and by sea as danger had not limits on the battlefield. In other words that was a period of struggle for survival. For instance my great grand parents from my brother came by land, but many of the refugees with the support of the Ottoman authorities came by sea and were settled on the southern shore of the Black sea or in its western shore, in towns and villages of Dobruja. In accordance with the documents of the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister’s Office (BOA) we can only estimate that there was a great number of refugees (Ismail, 2017: 75).

2. Some social aspects about the Crimean Tatars of Dobruja

2.1. Crimean Tatars of Dobruja and people around them

In this study I will try to find an answer to a question, which for many years was a challenge for me, as during the communist era we hadn’t had access to vital information regarding the history of Crimea and Crimean Tatars. We lived only with oral history, with stories narrated by our grandparents who practically had told us our history. The question is: What do we know about our nation, as long as we have only a memory of oral history and what can we say about our transformation from Crimean *muhacirs* to Romanian citizens after the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877?

It is still very difficult to answer to such questions as long as the political elites of Crimean Tatars of Dobruja are not interested in the real history based on documents with the Ottoman Archives.

However, it seems worthwhile thinking about how a Crimean Tatar of Dobruja, Romania, in the middle of the 20th century, would answer the questions “Which minority do you belong to? What is your mother tongue? What is your religion? Where is situated your country?”. While thinking about the ethnic consciousness, religious and historical views of the Crimean Tatars, Dobruja one should take into account the following considerations. First, not every

Crimean Tatar would answer to such straightforward questions, but such kind of questions, often are asked. Usually people are puzzled by their features and appearance, and would like to know more and even asked about their nationality or ethnic origins. In such situation a Crimean Tatar faced a difficult problem, because during the communist regime the term Crimean Tatar was to designate traitors and enemy. Thus, it is clear that on the verge of the 20th and 21st centuries we have problems defining our ethnic affiliation. Most of us, however, undoubtedly understood our connection with the Crimean Tatars from the Crimean peninsula both in terms of religion and culture. In general, it appears that for many Crimean Tatars of Dobruja, Romania this term has a confessional rather than an ethnic connotation.

2.2. The Crimean Tatar of Dobruja and historical memory

In particular, historical memory has the material embodiment in a territory, which in general is referred to as the “political landscape”. A. Smith defines it as as a territorization of memory, and he notes that to become a national, common memory it has to be connected to specific places and territory [Belitska, 2014:50].

The political landscape of Dobruja is composed of symbols related to different periodical times and also symbols of the Crimean Tatars, and one of the important factors is religion, which has a strong influence on the ethnic identity.

As the Crimean Tatars and Ottoman Turks share the same religion and language, for them the memorial space is represented by monuments, which epitomize the Ottoman period. There are some examples, as the tomb of Sari Saltuk Dede, Ali Ghazi Mosque built in 1610 by Ali Ghazi himself (Ayverdi, 2000: 15), Esmahan Mosque built in 1574 (Ayverdi, 2000: 42) by Esmahan, the daughter of the Ottoman sultan, Selim II (Uluçay, 2001: 40) and in 1864 Hünkâr Mosque during the reign of the Ottoman sultan Abdülaziz (Ayverdi, 2000: 39). There are many other mosques and school buildings, which can be considered as embodiment (Ibram, 2007: 170). Another way to incorporate the historical memory into the political landscape is the place name, which play a key role in creating the phenomenon of “imagined communities”.

The place names play a key role in religious believes, but also for their long lasting existence on this territory. By Royal Decree No. 4036, 7 Decembre 1929 published in Monitorul Oficial (*Romanian Official Gazette*) No. 274, 9 December 1929, villages name's were changed or translated into Romanian language (Direcția Județeană Constanța a Arhivelor Naționale, DJCAN, fond Prefectura Constanța, dosar 15/1930 (*National Archives County Departments of Constanta, Prefecture fund, File 15/1930*))

As mentioned after 1930, many villages changed their name and got a new Romanian name. Among many other villages there are some examples: *Aziza* now Saligny, *Terziköy* today Runcul, *Kalaköy* now named Capidava and many other villages. Some villages' name were just translated into Romania, such as: Sarica translated with Gălbiori, Karaomer translated as Negru Voda, Akbaş translated as Albești, Başpınar translated as Fântâna Mare and many others. Some villages as, *Aziza* was renamed Saligni, *Terziköy* was renamed Runcul, *Kalaköy* was renamed Capidava, *Kanlıçukur* translated as Grăniceru and many other villages. For some villages they just translated their name into Romanian, as: *Kara Omer* translated as Negru Vodă, *Akbaş* translated as Albești, *Başpınar* was translated as Fântâna Mare and many others (Ismail, N., 2015: 491)

2.3. The Crimean Tatars and their religion affiliation

The Crimean Tatars are affiliated to Sunni Hanafi religion. Regarding the distribution of Romanian population by their denomination there are some information by Census of 1992, which after six decades, for the first time gave detailed information about religious believes (Ismail,N., 2015: p. 490)

3. Crimean Tatars of Dobruja and socio-demographic challenges

3.1. Demographic evolution of Crimean Tatar minority during the interwar period

In Romania minorities have progressed culturally, as the Romanian regime did not try to culturally impose by depriving minorities of their cultural property. The existence of the Crimean Tatar ethnic minority in Dobruja area maintained the ethnic consciousness and self-preservation of the minority. Dobruja area comprises two large counties, Constanța and Tulcea. The compared study for the population of the interwar period, based on the census done by the Direction of Statistics from the Ministry of Domains, on the 1st January 1913, and the general census of the Romanian population from the 29th December 1930 organized by the General Statistics reveals that both in Constanța and Tulcea county the Crimean Tatar minority population was in decrease. According to the above table, the census data are relevant for the Crimean Tatar ethnic minority.

The Tatar element in urban and rural in both counties of Dobruja 1913 General census

Table no. 1

Nationality	Constanta county			Tulcea County			%
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	
Tatars	2,050	18,159	20,209	221	920	1,141	5.6%

Source: Arbore Al. "Contribuțiuni la studiul așezărilor tătarilor și turcilor în Dobrogea", *Arhiva Dobrogei. Revista societății pentru cecetarea și studierea Dobrogei*, vol. II, București, 1919

General census of the population, Romania 29 decembre 1930. Vol. II Nation, mother tongue, religion

Table no. 2

Nationality	Constanța County			Tulcea county			Muslims %
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	
Tatars	1,668	13,506	12,174	39	333	372	2.8%

Source: Institutul General de Statistică. Statistica populației, România, 29 Decembrie 1930, Naționalitate, limba maternă, Vol. II, *Monitorul Oficial*, Imprimeria Națională, București, 1938

Although difficult to track the two tables by comparing the statistical data of the Crimean Tatar ethnic minority of Dobruja, since the data submitted by Census of 1913 are not as extensive as data of Census of 1930, however we can conclude:

1. In 1913, there were 31,623 Crimean Tatar inhabitants located mostly in rural areas, while in 1930 in rural areas lived only 24,637 members.
2. In 1913, in urban area there was a total of 9,819 residents, in 1930 urban residents number reached a total of 9,975 inhabitants.

This study shows a slight increase in urban population at the expense of rural population due to the phenomenon of emigration from the countryside to the urban area. These mutations that occur inside the minority are generated by economic and social factors and by factors such as declining birth rates, increasing mortality. More recent data are given by the population census of 1977, and the population census of 7 January 1992.

3.2. Some thoughts of Romania's ethnical structure from 1930 to 2011

When it comes to denoting origin by birth or descendent rather than nationality we have to agree with the Romanian historian A.D. Xenopol (Xenopol, D.A.: 1911), who stated "Each ethnic unity is the product of a combination of outstanding human elements or a mixture of these, changed by climate and geographical location, historical development and the influence to which it was submitted, so it constitutes a particularly to all the rest of mankind. And the fact that there is a difference, it is proved to us by the fact that each people speak a particular language, not understandable by other people, and it requires much effort to learn it, as to be able to use it. So, nature itself has put this natural barrier between peoples, forcing them to shape their life inside these barriers, and therefore linking human development of these smaller centers".

According to Census of 1930, 1956, 1966, 1977, 1992, 2002 and 2011, The ethnical and confessional structure of Romanian population by nationality is as follows: Romanians, Hungarians, Roma (Gypsies), Germans, Ukrainians, Lippovan-Russians, Turks, Tatars, Serbs (see Table no. 3). It is obvious that the national minorities represent approximately 10% of Romania's population, their linguistic diversity, and territorial distribution raise specific problems to be solved. Romania officially recognizes 18 national minorities, as follows: Hungarians (16 counties in Transylvania and Bacău county), Germans (14 counties in Transylvania), Lippovan-Russians (Brăila and Tulcea counties), Roma (Gypsies), Serbs (Arad, Timiș, Bihor, Sălaj and Caraș-Severin counties), Tartars (Constantza county), Turks (Constantza and Tulcea counties), Ukrainians (Suceava and Tulcea counties).

The ethnical structure of Romania's population, 1930 - 2011

Table no. 3

Year	1930	1956	1966	1977	1992	2002	2011
Total Inhabitants	14,280,729	17,489,450	19,103,163	21,559,910	22,810,035	21,680,974	20,121,641
Romanians	11,118,170	14,996,114	16,746,510	18,999,565	20,408,542	19,399,597	16,792,868
Hungarians	1,423,459	1,587,675	1,619,592	1,713,928	1,624,959	1,531,807	1,227,623
Roma (Gypsies)	242,656	104,216	64,197	227,398	401,087	535,140	621,573
Germans	633,488	384,708	382,595	359,109	119,462	59,764	36,042
Lippovan-Russians	50,725	38,731	39,483	32,696	38,606	35,791	23,487
Ukrainians	45,875	60,479	54,705	55,510	65,472	61,098	50,920
Turks	26,080	14,329	18,040	23,422	29,832	32,098	27,698
Tatars	15,580	20,469	22,151	23,369	24,596	23,935	20,282
Serbs	50,310	46,517	44,236	43,180	33,769	29,570	

Source: Recensământul Populației și al Locuințelor, Institutul Național de Statistică, 2011

The above-mentioned table underlines the fact that in today's Dobruja there are minorities as Lippovan-Russians, Tartars, Turks and others that are not mentioned in the table as Greeks, Italians and Albanians sharing together in good will and peace the same territory.

4. Sociolinguistic and cultural challenges with Crimean Tatars of Dobruja

4.1. Cultural challenges and right to culture

The cultural participation involves incentives for the parties involved, especially minority representatives. During the last decade or so, EU membership has been a strong incentive for greater cooperation between groups. The building of stable democratic institutions in order to fulfill membership criteria is a triggering factor. Economic aspects are probably the most important incentive. It should be emphasized during times of reforms the while achieving consensus through dialogue among groups and their interests, the national interest must not be ignored. On the contrary the achievement of national interests should reflect success in integration of minorities in society.

In accordance with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Recommendation 1201 (1993) on an additional protocol on the rights of national minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights, Section 3-Substantive rights, Article 7: Every person belonging to a national minority shall have the right to freely use his/her mother tongue in private and in public, both orally and in writing. This right shall also apply to the use of his/her language in publications and in the audiovisual sector.

The policy of the Romanian Ministry of Culture about the right to speak and be heard is supported by The Council of Europe on Cultural Policy "...promotion of cultural diversity, assertion of the multicultural perspective and of inter-cultural, and protection of the cultural identity of ethnic communities". The Romanian Cultural Policy supports the culture of the

Romanian minorities. There are some publications, as: Karadeniz, Caş, Renkler, etc., and in the media - Radio broadcasting station in Constanţa county, a Tartar / weekly program.

4.2. Sociolinguistic challenges

Currently, in Dobruja, the region where most of the Crimean Tatar speakers live the inhabitants number is somewhere around 19,000 people. In 2010 the Romanian Government promulgated the law by which the ethnic minority celebrates the official Day of Tartar language. Lawno. 256/2010 reads “... cultural events dedicated to this day are organized in the localities where members of the Crimean Tatar community live”. In accordance with Law no.256/2010, the official Day of Tatar Language will be celebrated in Romania on May the 5th in all rural and urban settlements with members of this ethnic minority, so especially in Dobruja. The official Day of Tatar Language is celebrated by cultural events, so public television and radio will have the mission of broadcasting the event by television and radio programs for minorities. Also, schools teaching Crimean Tatar language, as mother tongue and Islamic religion will organize cultural events dedicated to this day, but the Crimean Tatar community members do not have schools, teachers, community’s inhabitants number is decreasing. We welcome the European Union’s financial support for in risk minorities and endangered languages and we appreciate Romanian Government support of the official Day of Tatar Language, but the question that arises from this situation is: who has a financial gain from this?

5. Minorities and diversity dialogue

5.1. Definition of minorities and diversity dialogue

There are different cultural identity values for Christians and Muslims. For a Muslim a cross may have no significance at all, but for a Christian it is the symbol of his faith. Thus cultural identity is always situated in a given cultural context and what does not correspond to the context is often considered to be different, strange, and non-understandable. This means that diversity can never be designated as given and essential. From the example given above it is evident that perceptions of cultural diversity are both learned and continuously changing. Some values, customs, traditions and even attitudes are passed from generation to generation over the centuries, while other elements of the material and spiritual culture undergo quick changes (Petkova, 2006: 3).

Nowadays the process of globalization is a strong factor influencing the cultural identity of ethnic minorities.

5.2. Cultural diversity in the perspective of Dobruja, Romania

Geographical and historical conditions have made Dobruja a place of coexistence of various nations and cultures. Multinational character provided background for the creation of distinct systems of values and attitudes, characteristic to the representatives of different denominations inhabiting the western Romanian shore of the Black Sea. Nowadays, those who constitute the largest ethnic groups are members of Orthodox Churches and Catholic Church: Armenians, Greeks, Russian-Lipovans.

On the basis of the review of the features specific for orthodox and catholic cultures it can be predicted that the differences might be visible in relationships operating in culturally diverse regions.

5.3. Where are the Crimean Tatars of Dobruja today?

Over the last decades the ethnic minorities of Romania have been striving to redefine their political, social, educational and economic environments.

Today, the Crimean Tatars of Romania are organized in an association named *The Democratic Union of the Muslim Turkish Tatars from Romania* (U.D.T.T.M.R), which was founded on the 29th of December 1989.

In accordance with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) the Crimean Tatar language is qualified as severely endangered language. Public instruction of the Crimean Tatar community, from primary school up to high school or higher education is performed in the official language, namely, in Romanian language. The Romanian Ministry of Education supports a specific policy regarding the education for minorities in their mother language. In schools providing tuition in Romanian, children belonging to national minorities can study their mother tongue upon request. However, despite the Constitution, and the Education Law, despite the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Crimean Tatar children learn their mother tongue on special courses, delivered by the U.D.T.T.M.R on its premises.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

A diverse culture is a reflection of a changing world. In the laboratory research cultural diversity bring high value to government organizations. From cultural diversity benefits associations and organizations by creating a different environment where everyone has access to the same opportunities and challenges.

Educational tools in a cultural diverse environment should be used to educate everyone about diversity and its issues, including laws and regulations. Most institutions and organizations are made up of diverse cultures, so they need to learn how to adapt to be successful. The only advantage of cultural diversity indicated by the government institutions and organizations was better image.

As a conclusion I would like to suggest that diversity is neither a great asset (in terms of cultural identity) or a liability but definitely is closer to the first one because of its symbolic effect (the image of cultural community). Also, I would like to say that the Romanian Government guarantees minorities their rights but there is slippage between facts and acts and the best example is the lack of schools providing education in mother tongue.

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