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CULTURAL HERITAGE AND IDENTITY DYNAMICS IN THE TURKISH-TATAR COMMUNITY FROM DOBRUJA, ROMANIA

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## **Introduction**

This volume is the main result of an interdisciplinary scientific research, a team project supported by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS – UEFISCDI (project number PNII-RU-TE-2012-3-0077). It concerns an in-depth analysis of the cultural heritage and history of the biggest Muslim communities in Romania, the Turks and the Tatars, two of the loyal ethnic groups in the modern Romanian state, although there was a history of tumultuous relations between Romanian Principalities and the Ottoman Empire. As outcome of more than two years of fieldwork and synthesis of collected data, our book offers four perspectives on a topic much discussed today, i.e. ethnic groups.

Reuniting disciplines as oral history, cultural anthropology, historical archives, imagology, the texts form a contribution brought to all these fields, but also to the study of ethnic relations and ethnopsychology. It is distinctive, because on a sociocultural level, the book impact is given by its contribution to integration through understanding of communities different as origin, religion, traditions, ethics, survival strategies in the midst of a Christian majority. This effort aims at bringing innovative approaches in the investigation of cultural and social identity dynamic, seen as a transforming social process within communities. From a constructivist perspective, by this project we reveal several examples of mechanisms in identity construction process. For local and national authorities it can be used as a guide for improving interethnic relations, knowledge and acceptance of Otherness. The book provides a scientific and pertinent survey on representative issues for Muslim history and cultural heritage in southeastern Romania, in order to complete the scientific research bibliography of Tatar and Turkish communities in the Balkans.

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## Cultural Heritage and Ethnic Insularity\*

Since the beginning of the 1990s, like many other ethnic groups in ex-communist countries, Dobruja Tatars and Turks have engaged in promoting their own culture. Their goal has been two-pronged: firstly, to make it (more) familiar to the other ethnic groups alongside which they live, and secondly, to pass it on to the younger generations, by motivating them to preserve it in face of the increasing effects of acculturation.

Their cultural products, their worldview, the folklore, and the values which single out Turks and Tatars have become known to the general public, after 1989, especially thanks to two Unions, UDTR (The Turkish Democratic Union of Romania) and UDTTMR (The Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania). The state of Dobruja Turkish and Tatar culture became these organisations' main project. By presenting, cultivating and safeguarding their own spirituality, the Turkish Union and the Tatar Union justify, in many respects, their existence, their *raison d'être*. In this sense, their aim is to demonstrate that the groups they represent define themselves as strongly articulated cultures, the expression of a centuries-old otherness, as cultures integrated in the regional and national landscape, thus contributing and bringing colour to a multicultural society. The structure of both associations includes dedicated departments: the Committee for Culture (UDTR) and the Committee for Culture, Religion and Traditions (UDTTMR). "The preservation, perpetuation and valorization of traditions and customs; the development of the cultural identity of the Turkish community"<sup>1</sup> and "increasing the level of education of the Turkish-Muslim Tatar minority"<sup>2</sup> represent major goals for the representative institutions of the Dobruja minorities.

The Unions prove to be the institutions which are most deeply involved in managing the image of the two ethnic groups. They propose, initiate and support manifestations which draw on the culture and civilization of the Turkic populations of south-eastern Romania. Among the best-known ones, we can mention "Spring in the Community"<sup>3</sup> (which over time has established itself as an inter-ethnic festival, annually organized by the UDTR; in 2014, it was at its 13<sup>th</sup> edition<sup>4</sup>); The Festival of Turkish and Tatar Youth, Sport and Culture (launched in 2009, under the patronage of the UDTR and the UDTTMR, and supported by the Consulate General of Turkey in Constanța and by the "Dobrogea" Association of Turkish Businessmen); the Festival

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\* All four chapters of my contribution were never published elsewhere.

<sup>1</sup> Fedbi Osman, *U.D.T.R. – 20 de ani de activitate neîntreruptă*, in "UDTR – 20 de ani de activitate" (Fedbi Osman, coord.), Ex Ponto, Constanța, 2010, p. 3 - 4.

<sup>2</sup> "Despre noi", on The Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania website, available at <http://uniuneatatara.ro/despre-noi>.

<sup>3</sup> Initially, the event started from the meaning that the first season of the year carries in the Turkic world, namely that of reinforcing, of consolidating relationships among those who share the same beliefs. "The spring equinox represents the oldest folk festival in the Turkish world, being over 5,000 years old, and marking the new solar year." – Serin Gafar, *Primăvara Comunitară*, in "Hakses", no. 3 (129)/2006, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> S. T., female, b. 1965, interview conducted by Sînziana Preda in Constanța, September 23, 2013.



of Turkish Culinary Art<sup>5</sup>; annual exhibitions of weaving and embroidery; mother tongue summer camps; the "Sebat Husein" Tatar music festival (UDTTMR launched the first edition on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014<sup>6</sup>); the International Symposium "Education in the Turkish language"; the International Festival of Turkish-Tatar Costume, Dance and Song (at its 20<sup>th</sup> edition in 2014, it was initiated by UDTTMR and is supported by the Department for Interethnic Relations); free Tatar language lessons (within community schools opened by the UDTTMR); a Tatar history and civilization course launched by the Tatar Union in partnership with the "Ovidius" University in Constanța<sup>7</sup>); national contests on Islamic religion.

Such activities provide not only a source of hetero-identification, but also an opportunity for reflection: communities can assess the dynamics of their own folkloric output, their involvement in keeping it alive, and their efforts against museumified preservation. Manifestations consolidate intra-group relations and create a framework for the transmission of culture by formalizing practices which mostly pertain to family life. For instance, when woven fabrics and items of clothing are exhibited during annual gatherings organized by women's organizations (under the patronage of the Unions), this does not merely result in the publication of articles in the media or in the magazines "Haksess" and "Qaradeniz". Reviving "traditional Turkish craftsmanship, but also the old village gatherings"<sup>8</sup> intends to draw in community members who are only familiar with the stories told by the elders, not with the practical aspects of the craft. "We try [...] to teach young women in our community how to embroider or to sew traditional Turkish patterns, involving them in a prize competition every year."<sup>9</sup> The organizers' efforts are driven by a sense of mission, that of activating their ethnic cultural heritage. "It is our duty to preserve and showcase the rich colours and patterns of hand-made Turkish sewing"<sup>10</sup>.

Naturally, familiarization with the cultural heritage first occurs within the environment of the family and the community, long before the Unions come in. Their leadership position in managing a certain image of the cultural heritage (challenged by some members of the Turkish and Tatar ethnic communities, in the context of disputes for power), is explained, on the one hand, by the role they have taken on, and on the other hand, by the resources they have delegated to achieving this goal. Funding received from the Department for Interethnic Relations<sup>11</sup> allows them to

<sup>5</sup> Nurgean Ibrahim, *Filiala Cumpăna, gazda Festivalului de Artă Culinară Turcească*, in "Haksess", no. 10 (231)/2014, p. 18-19.

<sup>6</sup> On this occasion, women associations within UDTTMR branches prepared and distributed 1,200 packages for the participants, containing traditional dishes of the Dobruja Muslims (Borek pie and Kurabiye cake) – informal discussion with Fichiran Murtaza (resident in Mangalia), December 25, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Ghiulșen Ismail-Iusuf, *Drd. Metin Omer*, in "Qaradeniz", no. 9 (256)/2014, p. 24 (p. 24-25).

<sup>8</sup> Melec Amet, in Nurgean Ibrahim, *Expoziție de țesături tradiționale turcești*, in "Haksess", no. 10 (231)/2014, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> Melec Amet, in Nurgean Ibrahim, *Expoziție și concurs de țesături tradiționale turcești*, in "Haksess", nr. 10 (219)/2013, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Department for Interethnic Relations. Created in 2005, the institution is subordinated to the Prime Minister and its main mission is to elaborate "strategies and policies to preserve, state

organize cultural promotion activities which simple members of the minorities would not have the financial resources to undertake. From folklore-related events (featuring artistic, literary, musical works etc.) to awards for good results in mother tongue education, the Unions cover a wide range of manifestations of their respective cultures. They are also the ones which establish the canon of cultural products (most highly) valued by the ethnic cultures in whose service they have placed themselves. Even if this standardization may put certain cultural products at a disadvantage, it is highly unlikely that, without these two organizations, Turks and Tatars could exploit their cultural background the way they do today. Disputed by some, the patronage of the Unions ensures the continuity<sup>12</sup> of the Turkish and Tatar cultures, a form of protection which preserves their significance and integrity.

Regarding the vision on their own cultural heritage, the analysis of oral documents and of several papers (whose authors are Tatars or Turks) reveals two different types of discourse. On the one hand, there is an optimistic one which associates the post-1989 period with a series of opportunities for the reinforcement and development of cultural identity, since the mother tongue can now be studied (and is studied), the folklore is displayed on various occasions and in various places, the publication of papers in Turkish and Tatar is permitted, and so on. On the other hand, the pessimistic tone deplores the dangerous degree of enculturation, the levelling triggered by the consumerist society, the youth's apathy towards the genuine assimilation of the spiritual heritage received within the family. It can be noticed that the attitude of discouragement is not always characteristic of the elderly members of the community; at the same time, we cannot always ascribe to the young an attitude of confidence in the future of a powerful ethnic culture. The nature of these types of discourse also derives from the importance the culture of the Dobruja enclave holds in the lives of the members of the two ethnic groups. Just like ethnic identity does not represent (except in extraordinary circumstances) an everyday issue/topic, the situation of cultural identity does not normally generate debate, but only does so at certain times and in certain contexts. Perhaps this is why the activity of the Unions is far more visible, as compared to the actions and feelings of the community members. The organizations institutionalize the anxiety regarding the loss of traditions and formalize the call to action against the museumification of customs and for participation, thus aiming to preserve a living, internalized ethnic culture. This is especially important since some members of the community merely note at the level of discourse the regression of specific cultural practices, as a result of enculturation and acculturation.

The present study has highlighted that (only) some of the members of the two ethnic groups, alongside the unions, consider it a vital necessity to preserve the ancestral culture, whose substance has diluted rapidly over the last decades. *After us,*

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and develop ethnic identity for people belonging to national minorities" (website: <http://www.dri.gov.ro/en/>).

<sup>12</sup> Thede Kahl, *Does the Aromanian have a chance of survival? Some thoughts about the loss of language and language preservation*, in "The Romance Balkans" (Biljana Sikimić, Tijana Ašić, ed.), Institute for Balkan Studies, Belgrade, 2008, p. 129.

*what came with television...*<sup>13</sup> – *Yes.*<sup>14</sup> – *With the internet, with phones...*<sup>15</sup> – *Modernity came with...*<sup>16</sup> – *with laptops.*<sup>17</sup> The leaders of the Unions (and those who pay association dues), as well as those who are not associated with these organizations, understand the significance of supporting their own culture: it represents the fundamental component of ethnic identity, the site of the distinction between "us" and "them". The common cultural background sustains the cohesion of the group in the face of challenges or external influences, and provides to the young generations an understanding of how the community has evolved over time.

The exploration of the field of study has also highlighted the fact that the voice of community members challenges commonly held views regarding the tangible and intangible heritage. Oral sources outweigh written sources. They offer up-to-date, direct, sincere perspectives, more or less convergent among themselves or with the rhetoric of the Unions. There are certain practices which, over the course of the minorities' history, have become daily routine, and do not in themselves have a celebratory dimension – such as, for example, rituals related to the home, from cooking various dishes (specific to the Turkish and Tatar cuisine) to ablutions and performing the Namaz prayer<sup>18</sup>. These prove to be ancient, deeply rooted manifestations, and their associations with a certain ethnic context emerges only during fieldwork, in questions about ethnic identity, when cultural specificity constitutes an explicit object of the interest for outsiders (i.e. researchers). They are unspectacular, in comparison with events such as performances, exhibitions or commemorations, usually organized by the Unions. Neither does their ordinary character rival the practices surrounding holidays or the festive manifestations in the minorities' cultural yearbook. However, when set against the otherness embodied by the researcher, they emerge as the components of a specific cultural identity. Certain traditions are mentioned, described, analysed, especially in oral documents (the conversations with Tatar and Turkish interlocutors). One and the same tradition is framed differently by the Unions and by ordinary community members, contextualized differently and, most importantly maybe, placed in time and space in accordance with the narrators' own experiences.

Another observation concerns the relatively uneven image of the cultural heritage, in the sense that some of its elements feature more prominently than others. For instance, culinary traditions, the way they unfold on the occasion of certain dedicated events or events that celebrate ethnic heritage, are much more appealing than narratives about heroes from ancient history. In an age which privileges the image, a mode of presentation that is as attractive as possible offers an easier, faster, more direct way to the object of knowledge. In the case of ethnic cultures, as

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<sup>13</sup> N. D., male, b. 1948, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> A. U., female, b. 1941, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Z. B., female, b. 1946, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> N. D.

<sup>17</sup> Z. B.

<sup>18</sup> The word comes from Turkish, where it means "prayer." Turkish and Tatar interlocutors use it to describe the cycle of the five daily prayers performed in the course of 24 hours. Prayers are necessarily preceded by a procedure of bodily purification by washing.

elsewhere, contemporary consumerist culture only brings out certain aspects, to the detriment of the ones that are less marketable. The current situation of the Turkish and Tatar cultural heritage is made difficult not only by globalization, but also by enculturation, which goes back several decades. For example, informal questioning regarding the culture of Dobruja Muslims will activate at least several clichés: Baklava, Turkish coffee, veils, shalwars, belly dancing, castanets (and the list can go on). "Chiburekki and Baklava, that's generally everything people know about the Turks in Romania."<sup>19</sup> "Chiburekki is a traditional Tatar pie, very tasty and flavourful, because of the hand-made filo pastry and of the spices mixed in the filling. The pie is with cheese or meat (beef or mutton)."<sup>20</sup>

In fact, the breaking up of the ancient compact communities and the migration towards the cities have intensified and expanded the assimilation of many elements from the majority culture. In the retrospective view of older narrators, cultural adaptation is seen as a major cause of the loss or degradation of ethnic specificity. Education in the language of the state had a powerful impact, and dealt a blow not only to orality, but also to a certain way of representing the world, the universe. (*What language do you use when you speak to your sister?*) – *Romanian. (Why?) – Because it's easier! You know how it is! You start talking the way you think. (So there is a difference between grandparents and grandchildren? I mean grandparents who speak Tatar also think in Tatar?) – Yes, at least my grandmother, she knew very few words in Romanian. (Can we say there is a Tatar way of thinking or...?) – No, but when you live in Romania, when you think, 95 per cent of us think in Romanian, right? So it becomes easier to express ourselves in Romanian.*<sup>21</sup> Changes in occupations, the transition from agricultural work to a fixed daily schedule, not only triggered changes in worldview, but also limited the time that could be dedicated to certain occupations specific to the two minorities. "The crisis of the 1960s...changed historical relations (the decline of certain economic branches caused the disappearance of certain occupations, certain values, and even lifestyles [...])"<sup>22</sup>. *My father rarely went [to the mosque] because of his working hours, so that, over time, I could say he became Romanian.*<sup>23</sup>

Some of those interviewed believe that the rhythms and the particularities characteristic of Turkish and Tatar life in the previous century have deteriorated. The change becomes obvious if one considers the transformations brought about by the

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<sup>19</sup> Camelia Cavadia, *Satul Baspunar - Muzeul lui Allah*, available at <http://www.jurnalulbtd.ro/articol-Satul-Baspunar----Muzeul-lui-Allah-5-1310.html>, accessed on December 15, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> "Târgul național de produse ecologice, tradiționale și naturale la București, 6-8 august" (August 6, 2010), available at <http://epochtimes-romania.com/news/targul-national-de-produse-ecologice-traditionale-si-naturale-la-bucuresti-6-8-august---86559>.

<sup>21</sup> A. I., female, b. 1977, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Guy Di Méo, cited by Narcisa Știucă, *Patrimonializare și salvagardare: definiții și concepte*, in "Cultura tradițională euroregională în context actual. Patrimoniul material/imaterial - modalități de conservare și promovare", Elena Rodica Colta, Emil Țîrcomnicu (ed.), The Ethnologic Publishing Company, București, 2014, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> F. T., female, b. 1974, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, August 22, 2014.

change in living environment (from smaller villages to larger ones or to commune seats, from rural to urban areas), by technological progress, by the abandonment of certain cultural models. (*What does your house, your room look like, if you have – not icons, other symbols...*) – *Yes, we do, we do.*<sup>24</sup> – *We do, yes. But mostly in the past, now we've Romanianized too.*<sup>25</sup> *In the past, this is how things were: when you entered someone's home, you greeted with 'Salam alekum'*<sup>26</sup>, *you said, 'Nice to see you.' And the answer was 'Welcome.' But now... it's not like that anymore. Today I've served you like in the old days when guests were welcomed, were invited to have dinner, we used to prepare soups, dishes, pies – this was before, now it's not like that anymore.*<sup>27</sup> Owing to the education they received and to their practice of traditions along the years, older people reproduce, to a certain extent, their forefathers' way of life, which is apparent mainly in their relationship with people of their own age, and less so with their offspring, who sometimes dismiss their behaviour as anachronistic.

The gradual changes in the Dobruja Muslims' traditional way of life had a more significant impact on their material cultural heritage. At the same time, the latter seems to have been influenced by neighbouring cultures to a lesser extent than the spiritual heritage. Over the last decades, some of its components have disappeared or have been eliminated, no longer needed in urban homes and even in the majority of the rural ones, once the world of the village was contaminated by the comfort learned in the city. The round table, used to serve food and placed in the room in such a way that the family could gather around it, once a household item, became a rarity. In some homes, it is still present, but is not used for eating – *it's quite uncomfortable* –, but as a stand for *when we lay out the pastry for pies*<sup>28</sup>. Our interlocutor does not pinpoint a specific moment in time when the destination of the object changed. She merely remembers that it happened at some point *after the Revolution*. The change in social and political circumstances also unleashed the desire to adopt new fashions and models, in the wake of an equally profound need for reform, which became possible after December 1989. Losing its role as a common piece in the furnishing of Muslim homes, the *kona* or *qona* can only be found nowadays in the so-called Turkish or Tatar rooms. Set up at some of the two Unions' branches, these miniature "post-museums"<sup>29</sup> (local museums) gather an eclectic assortment of objects with diverse functions, once commonly used in the households of Dobruja Muslims; important not in form, but in the content they preserve, these rooms act as the last strongholds of these remnants of traditional material culture.

Beside *that little table, where we used to have dinner*<sup>30</sup> were the cushions placed around it, on the floor, but also cushions that imitated divans. Of various

<sup>24</sup> M. C., female, 78 years old, interview conducted by Melinda Dincă in Ovidiu, April 2014.

<sup>25</sup> I. T., female, b. 1932, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Ovidiu, April 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Phonetic transcription of the greeting "Selamun aleyküm". Often the Turkish interlocutors used the short form "Selam".

<sup>27</sup> M. C.

<sup>28</sup> N., female, 27 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, July 2013.

<sup>29</sup> They ensure the "symbolic consolidation of common solidarity" – András Vajda, *Folosirea contemporană a muzeelor sătești și a colecțiilor locale în județul Mureș*, in "Cultura...", p. 65.

<sup>30</sup> Female 1, group interview, conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.

shapes and sizes, they replaced chairs and evoked the comfort of the Eastern world, a concept adopted, nowadays, by several bars and coffee houses. *Mattresses were made of wool, they made them as large as that sofa [...]. Against the wall you put cushions, they were made of straw, they had to be sewed well to sit straight; they had covers – of satin, of flowery fabric, or plain – and on top you put some lace, like this, over them, to make them look nice.*<sup>31</sup> This item, typical of the home, helps narrators to set themselves apart from other locals and people in the region. *In a Tatar or a Turkish home, when you enter, you find the 'minder'. The minder is a sort of duvet, a cushion, but on which you sit on the floor. (You sit on the floor?) – Yes, you sit on the floor. That's how you know that you are in a Turkish or Tatar house.*<sup>32</sup> The word recalls the Turkish "minder", meaning "cushion". *So, these were specific to Turkish homes, you couldn't find them anywhere else.*<sup>33</sup> The agents of change are usually the young, those who were young when the political regime changed in 1989 and today's young, who import models from outside their place of origin. What is at work here is the classical opposition between societies driven by divergent interests, a conflict which undoubtedly affects autarchic communities, organized according to their own set of rules<sup>34</sup>, which they consider to be obsolete and incompatible with the modernization process.

*Everyone's modern, they've all modernized, they've done it, they got a big table and that's it, they've made it!*<sup>35</sup> The older ones introduced the modern items into their living space, sometimes at the insistence of their children or grandchildren, consenting more or less whole-heartedly to the benefits of progress and to urban aesthetics. It is not the disappearance of the objects themselves (the replacement of the old ones, traditional to the ethnic group, with other mass-produced ones) which stirs a reaction, but that of the familiar atmosphere, of the order in which the people grew up. "Chaque fois que change notre regard sur nous-mêmes, notre environnement et notre histoire, nous avons l'impression que l'ancien monde est tombé en ruine et que rien n'apparaît qui puisse le remplacer."<sup>36</sup> In the attempt to erase differences between urban and rural areas, with a view to improving (and modernizing) living conditions according to the standard set by the amenities available in the city, the material inventory of the two ethnic groups was partly lost and forgotten.

Acutely perceived nowadays, the phenomenon triggers not only an enumeration of objects, but also the recollection of a world which survives in personal memories, and for as long as the persons in question are alive. The young,

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<sup>31</sup> M. M., female, 63 years old, conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.

<sup>32</sup> S. M., female, 30 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, July 25, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> M. M.

<sup>34</sup> "[...] social systems organized for their reproduction, equilibrium, integration, what we nowadays call communities based on non-social principles, be they religious, traditional, or some combination of the two" – Alain Touraine, *Un nouveau paradigme. Pour comprendre le monde d'aujourd'hui*, Fayard, Paris, 2005, p. 137.

<sup>35</sup> M. M.

<sup>36</sup> "Every time our vision on ourselves, our environment and our history change, we have the feeling that the old world has fallen into ruin, and that there is nothing else to replace it." – A. Touraine, p. 13.

unfamiliar with the forms and meanings of the past, see them as obsolete, and remain oblivious to the loneliness of the most resilient preservers of cultural identity. At the same time, many of them admit their modest knowledge and practice of the culture of their group of origin, distinguishing themselves from the genuine, "true" preservers of traditions. *(Is there a room in the house meant for guests, or a 'good' room?) – Yes, there is, in true family homes, there is. (What is it used for?) – Nowadays, this kind of room can be found only in old people's homes, in houses where only the old people were left – the children are gone, they've moved to the city and their parents stayed behind, the family homes, in which you keep...which smell of naphthalene most likely, certainly, and in which the sweets are stored, because old people keep those sweets until they go past their sell-by date, until they have a guest, until the children visit, and that's where the guests are accommodated. (A room for guests. Does this room have another role?) – Weddings, baptisms and funerals. (The same room?) – Yes, well, all rooms are used, but mainly this one; this is where you pick up the bride; this is where you lay out the dead; this is where the important events take place.*<sup>37</sup> The guest room, the stone fences, the shalwars, copper coffee pots, etc., are now valued as elements that contribute to the continual reinforcement of identity, but they would no longer find their place in the households of Dobruja Turks and Tatars, and their present-day way of life. This is the belief of the very people who have used them for years and years. *They're obsolete now*<sup>38</sup>, *not even the old women have them anymore*<sup>39</sup>. Woven carpets (Kilim) or *hand-dyed rugs*<sup>40</sup> became collector's items rather than items for everyday use. Other objects, inherited from one generation to another, are lost because they are perishable. *Cups used to have no handles, like Chinese ones, they were round; but there are none left, I don't have any left either. The last one broke, they say it was my grandfather's. And now it's gone too. And then, cups appeared that had handles and whatever, coffee pots made of stainless steel...*<sup>41</sup>

From another perspective, we can note that the abandonment of certain components of one's own culture is rarely seen as matter of choice. Given the fact that it mainly occurred during a homogenizing regime in which otherness was either unacknowledged or annihilated<sup>42</sup>, we may state that the changes which took place in the consciousness of identity during that period contributed to the disintegration of the cultural heritage, in its various shapes. The reshaping of the habitus, of the group culture – by the more or less conscious adoption of influences from elsewhere – was not perceived exclusively as an intrusion. *We weren't interested, because we'd*

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<sup>37</sup> S. I., female, 18 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, July 2013.

<sup>38</sup> A. M., female, b. 1948, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, October 16, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> S. M.

<sup>40</sup> S. M.

<sup>41</sup> M. M.

<sup>42</sup> *We used to dedicate a Tatar dance to the [Communist] Party – in a poor village, that was accepted, but this was not the case in cities. 'But why Tatar?', I was asked once. 'Bring your Tatars to dance Romanian dances,' and this was the situation, yes. (What about now?) – Now we are free. I believe that Romania is going back to the democratic principles of before.* G. A., female, b. 1941, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, April 2014.

*already started to prepare for life, for...We were under communism, so we had another deviation [direction, A/N]. We changed direction and prepared for that time, those times, those days.*<sup>43</sup> Beyond the communities' openness towards the majority, there was the belief that it was necessary to adapt to the transformations triggered by the broader historical context. *We live in the century of speed, and everybody is aware of that, right?*<sup>44</sup>

Nowadays, at the apex of so many movements for the recovery of specificity, the members of Tatar and Turkish communities, like other ethnic groups, re-value things which they have abandoned over the past few generations – often under the influence of activities organized by the Unions with the purpose of safeguarding cultural heritage. "This heritage frenzy also results from the cultural crisis triggered by globalization, but also from the process of the industrialization and massification of culture...In contrast with the media and with cultural industries, heritage 'engenders a mystique of uniqueness and authenticity'." <sup>45</sup> The sense of losing the uniqueness of one's cultural identity triggers reactions and changes in mentalities and attitudes which, for some of the members of the two ethnic groups, translate into a growing interest in their tangible and intangible heritage.

Therefore, the situation of the cultural heritage oscillates between the intentions and actions of those who see it as a set of defining symbols for a certain identity and the attitudes of those who see adopting exterior models as the natural course of things, as an adaptation to modernity and its constraints. For the former, the ideal would be the inclusion of some of the elements of their culture in the UNESCO heritage<sup>46</sup>, as a way to protect them and in recognition of their global value, since *today, there is no difference at all! Because everybody is renovated the same way!*<sup>47</sup> *So no [Kilim rugs]: parquet floors! You won't find anything, not even those three-door wardrobes we used to have!*<sup>48</sup>

Other objects, considered to be "traditional"<sup>49</sup>, survive on the one hand due to the fact that their function has remained unchanged over time, and, on the other hand, because they are connected to another level of the two groups' identity, namely the

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<sup>43</sup> F. M., female, b. 1954, interview conducted by S. Preda in Mangalia, September 1, 2014.

<sup>44</sup> A. I., female, b. 1968, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 3, 2013.

<sup>45</sup> Guy Di Méo cited by N. Știucă, *Patrimonializare...*, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> Melek Osman, *Esențiale mărturii din viața musulmană*, in "Haksas", no. 4 (202)/2012, p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> S. M.

<sup>48</sup> A. A., female, 41 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, July 25, 2013.

<sup>49</sup> "In an approach shared by many nations, the object itself of the Romanian ethnology (more exactly ethnography and folklore) is 'folk culture', defined, in turn, by its 'traditional' character. These disciplines thus deal with what the 'traditional man' does and says, if he is still 'traditional'. His behavior and his products are then described and explained as being 'traditional'. Within this circularity of the concept of tradition, which defines as 'traditional' the actions of the 'traditional man', and the latter as the author of 'traditions', *tradition* names and explains everything, without itself being clearly named and explained." – Vintilă Mihăilescu, *Dificila deconstrucție a sarmalei. Discurs despre tradiție*, in Cristina Papa, Giovanni Pizza, Filippo M. Zerilli, in "Cercetarea antropologică în România. Perspective istorice și etnografice", Clusium, Cluj Napoca, 2004, p. 181.



religious one. *The nation* (ethnicity, A/N) means religion, according to some of the accounts<sup>50</sup>. Being a Turk or a Tatar inherently means being a Muslim – a trait which does not become obsolete, even when other identity elements have eroded. Religious practices and objects specific to religious ceremony have generally remained the same. Ceremonial objects include prayer beads (*tespi* – from the Turkish "tesbih"), the *marama* (veil worn by women while performing the *Namaz*/prayer), the Quran (*Kuran*), the prayer rug. *That small rug, yes, [for] Namaz, every Muslim must have one at home, like the Bible for you.*<sup>51</sup>

As a component of the folk costume, the *marama* (archaic word, derived from the Turkish *mahr*), used for festive events, is set apart, in the case of Turks and Tatars, according to its function and model. When used for religious purposes, this type of headdress was made of *white linen; only the part that came over the head was sewed*<sup>52</sup>. *Mahr* should not be confused with the headscarf worn in public, which marks the wearer's devotion for the Islamic belief. As *hijab*, it is mainly worn by women who came to Dobruja from Muslim countries; sometimes it is also adopted by Turkish women born here or by Romanian women married to Muslims who live in the region<sup>53</sup>. A headscarf knotted under the chin and partially covering the shoulders completes the outfit of older women when they participate in religious services or in certain gatherings (such as Iftar dinners<sup>54</sup>). *No, no, it's not compulsory, but when you live in the countryside – for instance here too, if you go to a memorial meal somewhere, you have to cover your head. Because where there is a religious service and there's reading from the Quran, you have to cover your head, because there is no service if the head is not covered.*<sup>55</sup> Especially worn in villages, the headscarf is not compulsory and should not be seen as an exclusive attribute of the elderly; it is always present in the wardrobe of women who have been on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Last but not least, the headscarf and the *marama* are different from the stereotype-

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<sup>50</sup> Z. B.

<sup>51</sup> Female 2, group interview, conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.

<sup>52</sup> S. B., female, b. 1938, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 2, 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Our field research revealed that the choice to cover the head is not always connected to marriage. On the other hand, for women belonging to the majority ethnic group who choose to wear the veil, this decision is related to their desire to fully integrate into the Muslim community, since ethnically and confessionally mixed unions are not universally accepted; for case studies in Romania, see Daniela Stoica, *New Romanian Muslims. Converted women sharing knowledge in online and offline communities*, in "Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam", Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska (ed.), University of Warsaw, Poland, 2011, p. 274 and the following.

<sup>54</sup> The word is used by Dobruja Muslims to denote the daily dinner that *opens the fast* (i.e. the Ramazan, the annual 30-day fast typical of the Islamic faith), namely the food usually eaten in the evening, after the hours of fasting. In the past, according to some accounts, dinner gathered together the family and close neighbours. Today, this tradition is preserved in the form of the Iftar dinners organized by UDTR and UDTTMR, which bring together guests from the community as well as various personalities.

<sup>55</sup> A. M.

generating *feregea*. *The Turks wear it more. The Tatars never had the feregea.*<sup>56</sup> Several Tatar interlocutors indicated this object as an example of the difference between the mentality of Tatar women and that of Turkish women, the former being seen as enterprising, equal to men, wishing to abandon traditional gender roles and gain financial independence by getting a job. *We were always an open Muslim community: you won't see our women wearing (The feregea?) – We don't wear it, our grandmothers didn't wear it, God forbid! But... they're truly equal. And you can't force her. (So, women have access to education, equally...?) – Yes, of course! There are more women with higher education than men.*<sup>57</sup> *– Well, the first woman Member of Parliament, in 1917... was a Tatar.*<sup>58</sup> *– Yes, in the Romanian Parliament back then. So, it's... we are proud!*<sup>59</sup>

The desire to preserve or to eliminate certain elements of the tangible heritage of the Turkish or Tatar group, the repositioning of these elements within the house or on its premises, the changes in the function of objects, the attempts at conservation or repair, as well as the oral and the written discourse (formal and informal), all contribute to shaping a new material culture. Its components are, and at the same time are not the old-time ones. More or less preserved, they come from a past lacking in clear landmarks and generically indicated as "before", and their owners mostly describe the experiences they themselves, their families or their communities had with one or the other of the objects. Present-day generations, whose experience is limited to seeing the objects, add another layer to their intrinsic value by telling stories about the artefacts, narratives handed down by the older generations, who were in direct contact with the ancestors' heritage.

If the communist years "dis-encharmed" part of the ethnic material culture (seen as rudimentary, non-functional, simply no longer useful and/or aesthetic), post-socialism creates the atmosphere and proper conditions for "re-enchantment"<sup>60</sup>; this, undoubtedly, in the context of the historical minorities' desire to regain their own cultural identity as fully as possible. One of the practices that were initiated was to set up a heritage fund, collected by the Unions (via donations or purchases) from the owners, who mainly lived in villages. The rhetoric of restoring the "traditional" universe uses the objects to create the image of a past "as it was", but also one that is "quaint and innocent"<sup>61</sup>. "As a metaphor" or "as museumified artefact"<sup>62</sup>, objects recompose an identity imbued with nostalgia (usually in the discourse of older

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<sup>56</sup> Ş. R., female, b. 1931, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 5, 2013; type of veil which covers the head and the lower part of the face, worn by Muslim women and similar to the *niqab*.

<sup>57</sup> G. E., male, b. 1967, interview conducted by M. Dincă, S. Preda in Constanța, July 22, 2013.

<sup>58</sup> D. G., male, interview conducted by M. Dincă, S. Preda in Constanța, July 22, 2013.

<sup>59</sup> G. E.

<sup>60</sup> Liviu Chelcea, *Bucureștiul postindustrial. Memorie, dezindustrializare și regenerare urbană*, Polirom, Iași, 2008, p. 365.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 361.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*.

people) and with the sense of engaging in a rescue mission (in the discourse of Union members).

The cultural patterns that single out Dobruja Tatars and Turks are not recurrent in the narratives of the interviewees, most likely because interethnic boundaries have faded away. For the outsiders, it is easy to notice the specific character of a civilization considered, in the mentality of the majority, "Eastern"<sup>63</sup>, a feature with which some of our interlocutors also identify. *Our style is more Eastern<sup>64</sup>, they were doing oriental in the backyard (Oriental?) – They were dancing! (at the wedding, AN)<sup>65</sup>*. Without being explained, the Eastern element seems to be an intrinsic reference point for Turkish and Tatar culture in south-eastern Romania, a mark of their earlier existence within the borders of Ottoman Empire. "[...] we, Turks and Tatars, are also part of the East [...]"<sup>66</sup>. The concept – named as such and explaining a certain historical evolution – appears more frequently in the speech of the intellectual elite. Accounts gathered during fieldwork revealed the frequency of other cultural references specific to these groups (they became distinct especially at a deeper level of questioning; their coexistence with the *other* for a long time and the constraints of acculturation in the latter part of the last century have rendered ethical, religious and esthetical values less visible, but no less meaningful).

Cleanliness was indicated as one of the values in the Turkish and Tatar way of thinking, having its origins in their religious identity. *In Turkish homes, I remember that both my grandmother and grandfather used to say that it wasn't important if clothes were patched up, it was important if they were clean. A Muslim's home must be clean, that's part of our faith, our way of life.*<sup>67</sup> Strangers get acquainted with this way of life when they gain the trust of the community members and are invited into their private, personal space. *Some slippers for the guests, this is what I was taught. He shouldn't come in with whatever he's got on his soles from outside. Spiritual dirt even less than...yes, the dirt from the street.*<sup>68</sup> In Turkish communities of the Măcin region, this tradition is perpetuated, in a slightly changed manner, by replacing *Terlik* slippers<sup>69</sup> with regular mass-produced ones. The generations who have settled in the city tend to give up the custom, but, when in their parents' and grandparents' homes, they comply with it in order to humour those who

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<sup>63</sup> An exhaustive analysis of the influence of the "Eastern element (especially the Turkish-Tatar one)" on the territory of present-day Romania is undertaken by Lazăr Șăineanu, *Influența orientală asupra limbii și culturii române*, Editura Librăriei Socec & Comp., București, 1900, p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> N. A., female, 27 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, September 2013.

<sup>65</sup> S. M., male, interview conducted by M. Dincă, S. Preda in Bașpinar, July 23, 2013.

<sup>66</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea*, Ex Ponto, Constanța, 2011, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> N. C., female, 55 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, April 1, 2014.

<sup>68</sup> F. T.

<sup>69</sup> A type of knitted slippers, *made by hand, they were mostly used at dua, at services. Do you understand? At the...(At the mosque.) – At the mosque and when memorial meals were held...Even now, women, young and old, come to memorial services with them in little bags, with the slippers.* (F. T.). The Turkish word "dua" ("prayer") signifies the prayers said at memorial services.

believe in the authority of these archaic practices. *I don't know what it's like in other homes, but at our house, for instance, my mother can't stand it and instantly goes crazy when we enter with our shoes on (laughter)*<sup>70</sup>.

Cleanliness (of the person, of the home) also brings about the cleanliness of the soul and mind; the two states are strongly interdependent. *Cleanliness is half of our religion*<sup>71</sup>. Purification – first of all, of the body – is an obligation for the believers, not only when they go to places of worship but also when they perform each of the five daily prayers. The mouth and the nose have to be washed, *the right hand three times, the left hand three times, the head and feet as well.*<sup>72</sup> *Bodily hygiene is very important! In Turkish restrooms (in Turkey, AN), right, you saw that there was always a bowl with water...*<sup>73</sup> Cleanliness also functions as a mark of ethnicity in discussions regarding the need to create nursing homes for the elderly who belong to the two ethnic groups, sick people who refuse to become a burden for their families. Such an institution must be properly equipped, so that its residents may perform their religious rituals, the *abtes* (an alteration of the Turkish word "abdest", meaning "ablution"). Food prescriptions represent another reason why the Muslims of Dobruja would not live together with people belonging to other ethnic groups. *There, they cook with pork, pork meat, they can't keep hygiene...*<sup>74</sup> To the same category of body and hygiene-related practices belongs circumcision, a ritual whose local persistence is explained by the solidity of religious precepts, which are generally stronger than other types of teachings. Sometimes, the speakers make no distinction between the ethnic and the religious origin of an object. *We, Tatars, have traditions that must be performed, children circumcised, you know?*<sup>75</sup> The *sunnet*<sup>76</sup> is deeply imprinted in the fabric of the ethnic group and it is indicated as a tradition which separates the followers of Allah from the rest of the people. Traditions which originate in religion unite the Turks and Tatars of the former Ottoman province and still function, to a significant extent, as a barrier in the face of the constant process of cultural levelling. Deep rifts in the homogeneity of ethnic culture have occurred ever since World War II. *Haven't you noticed that we, Tatars, have Romanianized, we've been imitating you? We celebrate name days; we organize weddings...*<sup>77</sup> (traditional Muslim weddings started on a Thursday and ended on the following Saturday or Sunday;

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<sup>70</sup> N. M., female, 33 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Tulcea, April 4, 2014.

<sup>71</sup> E. I., b. 1975, male, informal discussion, September 4, 2014, Constanța.

<sup>72</sup> N. I., female, 55 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Female, 35 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014. For the bowl, some of the persons interviewed (Lumina, Murfatlar, Mangalia) used the word *kuman*.

<sup>74</sup> A. U.

<sup>75</sup> Z. B.

<sup>76</sup> The Turkish "Sünnet" is used by many Tatars and Turks to indicate the circumcision ceremony, which they consider to be to a certain extent the equivalent of the Christian baptism. Another term used (synonymous to the baptism practiced by the Romanian Orthodox) is that of "wedding": organized only for male children, the custom highlights gender roles, as they are still occasionally perceived and practised today, in Dobruja communities.

<sup>77</sup> Z. B.

another feature which is preserved today is that two parties were organized, at the bride's and at the groom's house respectively).

The teachings passed on by the forefathers, the models of behaviour, the view on man's place in the Universe, the way of relating with people from outside the community are all components of tradition. When an external factor (such as a husband/wife who belongs to a different religion) endangers this body of knowledge and information, the very ethnic identity is in question. Fears voiced regarding the increasing number of marriages with people of Christian (or in any case not Islamic) religion are the expression of discouragement in face of the penetration of a new axiological system which annihilates familiar traditions. The new practices sever the connection with the blood-related community, with the ancient wisdom, with the customs transmitted from generation to generation, with the most powerful anchors of the individual. *What is it like to have a Romanian daughter-in-law? – How could it be? We get along well, it's fine. (Aren't you worried about them?) – Mainly about my granddaughters, yes. Because there are some traditions. (That's why I asked...) – They are the ones who need to consider it, I said what I had to say. And more... I explained things to them, and... (You've done your duty.) – Yes, that's right. But love is strong... and this... puts an end to it! Yes! (I know, I know. On the other hand I also know it's difficult for you.) – Yes, yes, that's right.*<sup>78</sup>

If a partner of a different religion is easily identified as a potential agent of cultural alteration (which can be avoided before marriage), the adoption or slow penetration of customs from other cultures triggers general remarks (some of them bitter) upon the irreversible transformations in the inner life of one's own ethnic group. The most controversial example seems to be the penetration of models from Romanian culture into the rites of passage. On the one hand, several imams and some of the believers say that in Muslim countries memorial meals are not practiced, in contrast with the Dobruja enclave. Especially imams who come from Turkey (and Muslim countries) declare themselves in favour of eradicating Christian influence. On the other hand, traditions established over time cannot be deleted from the mentality of most local Muslims. Although only very few know the meaning of the days when the memorial meals take place, holding them is not a matter of debate. The ritual is very similar to that of the Christian funeral repast, with differences in terms of menu (and the prohibition of alcohol) and in terms of the participants (in the case of Dobruja Muslims, the food is served separately to the groups of men and of women).

In the past few years, some of the religious leaders who have come to Dobruja have insisted that – in keeping with Islamic principles – the slaughter of animals for the Kurban (holiday equivalent to Christmas) should be performed on the first day of the cycle of three (or four, in some versions) dedicated to this holiday. Some of the local imams, divided between the realities of the community (where numerous sacrifices take place before the start of the holiday) and the recommendations of their peers from abroad, are placed in difficulty, in fact, by the force of tradition. Tradition, less supported by the letter of scriptures, was consolidated not only by repetition, but especially by the fact that it "comes from the elders", an irrefutable argument. Changes made to the customs are puzzling to the

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<sup>78</sup> U. S. M., female, 54 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Tuzla, April 2014.

community, trigger negative remarks and suspicion, and are interpreted rather as an attack against tradition, which, at least to the older generation, seems unacceptable.

Recommendations to eliminate foreign influences from the customs of the Dobruja Muslims do not target all the changes that have occurred over time, some of which are less evident or not considered to be a threat. Such changes are also apparent in the most important religious holidays of the calendar, the two Bayrams ("holiday", in Turkish), that is Ramazan Bayram (Oraza Bayram, Şeker Bayram) and Kurban Bayram. Changes have occurred due to the dissipation of the community and mixing with other ethnic groups: however, the actants involved do not notice the identity-related differences, captured by the charm of the event. (*Do young people still keep this habit of hand kissing?*) – No. *They come and indeed say 'Bayram kayırlı bolsın!' (Happy holidays, AN). We go out, we offer them sweets, but from what I've seen, they don't keep this... There are also many Romanians who go with the Tatars (For Bayram?)* – Yes, yes. (*Why?*) – *Because they're from, first of all, they're also children. They're friends and they're looking forward to it, 'Oh, it's Bayram, I'll come carolling with you.'*<sup>79</sup>

The festival of Kurban is singled out by its social dimension. Bringing together, spiritually, the dead and the living, it consolidates family relations, friendships, and builds bridges between social segments. Its initial significance seems to have been lost, as it was not mentioned during field interviews; religious leaders (imams, Mufti), especially when presenting the holiday to people outside the Islamic community, connect it to the episode where prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) is tested and must prove his adoration for the Creator. Present-day actants seem to be motivated by the necessity to repeat tradition, to reproduce the festive act as they inherited it from their predecessor. "[...] the beauty of the gesture that the Muslim believer is obliged to make in order to preserve traditions, customs and faith."<sup>80</sup> The episode of the animal sacrifice (wether/ram, calf) triggers and marks the transition towards the episode of the gift (that of the meat resulted from the slaughter). The gift supports and maintains the cohesion of the community, and animates the group over the several days which break the daily routine. Performed for the soul of the deceased or for health, the sacrifice creates a festive time, an opportunity for gatherings of the extended family, or for meeting friends, people whom throughout the year one does not get many opportunities to see. Generally, one of the components of the holiday is that of connecting people. The custom of the young visiting the older members of the community and honouring them is firmly established – for Dobruja Muslims – in the oral tradition, which has a normative function.

(*So this is like a duty, a moral duty...*) – Yes, it's a moral duty. *Children have this moral duty towards parents. (Go and visit the elders)* – Yes, Yes. (*And those who enjoy a high position within the community, as well, right?*) – First of all, the family and then the friends. (*When do you receive guests?*) – For example, the first day of Bayram, first of all we visit the parents-in-law. On his side! This applies to all families, that's the tradition. Then we go and visit my parents, then my sisters – because I'm the youngest child, I visit my sisters. (*And in the evening you receive guests*) – Yes! *In the evening I receive guests as well, because we've got friends,*

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<sup>79</sup> A. I.

<sup>80</sup> Mustafa Edip, in *Viața religioasă a comunității musulmane din Tulcea*, in "Hakses", no. 4(130)/2006, p. 14.

godchildren, people like that, who come! Because they also go from one place to another, and in the evening we... get together! Young people, let's say. This is how it happens. (And how long is one of these visits?) – For example, in the case of a mother, the visit would last for several hours. But when I go to my uncle's or my aunt's, for Bayram, an hour, an hour and a half, so a cup of coffee, some sweets, a meal and... – because there are many [people] to go to<sup>81</sup> – You won't be eating for the rest of the day!<sup>82</sup> – You won't be eating for the rest of the day! (laughter).

Family and close relative reunions have earned an important value recently, with the increasing mobility of population, given the limited time available to those employed. Animal slaughtering is still performed, to a great extent, in rural areas; thus, during that time, people who live in the cities go to their relatives in villages and dedicate some time to their loved ones. Since those who are abroad for work are not able to do this, their absence changes the canon of the event. *Eh! Now I don't cook that much anymore because I'm alone, but I used to prepare dishes, because I lived with my children, lots of us, we made cakes, baklava, sarayli pastry, the lot. I used to cook foods, sarmale, soup, steak...*<sup>83</sup>. Visiting the older ones/the elderly is almost an obligation, which needs to be fulfilled even if it was not possible to do so during the holiday itself. One explanation is the status of the elders in Turkish and Tatar culture, where they are considered to be the repository of wisdom and the keepers of traditions. *If the Bayram feast is over and you can't pay them a visit, you can also do it after Bayram! If you want to follow the tradition...*<sup>84</sup> Respect for parents, grandparents, and generally for all those visited, is expressed by a typical gesture (kissing the hand and taking it to one's forehead), accompanied, in some cases, by a gift. *(You always visit the older ones?) – Yes, yes. And you never go empty-handed, you must give them something. (Like what?) – A box of chocolates, a pack of coffee... whatever you want, what you've got.*<sup>85</sup>

Within families, in local communities, customs are practiced and/or remembered, depending on the intensity of one's interest towards the cultivation of ethnic and cultural identity. The trenchant attitudes of some Tatars and Turks regarding the intensification of the phenomenon of enculturation betray, on the one hand, the sense of losing one's cultural identity and, on the other hand, the existence of a core of individuals involved in preserving the spiritual heritage, and determined to stop its degradation. This counterbalances those who no longer make the difference between their own folklore and the folklore of the majority. *The Easter of the Dead, that is the Easter of the Blajin (kind-hearted ones), you have it as well...*<sup>86</sup> – *People go to the cemetery...*<sup>87</sup> – *Now, on March 21<sup>st</sup>, we celebrated Nawrez, that is the celebration of spring.*<sup>88</sup> – *On May 6<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate the Easter of the Blajin. For this*

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<sup>81</sup> S. M.

<sup>82</sup> A. A.

<sup>83</sup> A. M.

<sup>84</sup> A. A.

<sup>85</sup> Z. M., female, 64 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Tuzla, April 2014.

<sup>86</sup> L. D. C., female, 16 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, April 1, 2014.

<sup>87</sup> N. C.

<sup>88</sup> L. C.

occasion, we make *Kobete pie*<sup>89</sup>. You cook whatever you can.<sup>90</sup> Hidirellez festival, Saint George's day, in the old calendar, for the Romanians, and for us it's the coming of spring<sup>91</sup>, changed over a very short period of time from a seasonal, predominantly secular festival to one which implies the cult of the deceased. Stories told by interlocutors, similar up to a point, show mutations within the essence, the particulars of the holiday, which is largely up to the actants themselves. Within the powerful Turkish community of the Măcin area, Hidirellez, as a rural feast, gathered inhabitants to party, to sing, to pray for rain, to play children's games<sup>92</sup>. Young people were also the protagonists of the tradition in its Tatar variant; here they organized "wrestling competitions, or – in groups – boys sang *şân* ('wedding songs') and girls replied in unison. The elders – sitting Turkish-style, with legs crossed – were watching, while children were playing or running around."<sup>93</sup>

Today, this tradition – compared, intriguingly, to a lesser known tradition in Romanian folk culture, the Easter of the Blajin – is interpreted as the *day of the dead* [when] one goes to the cemetery, one cleans, like in your culture...<sup>94</sup>. In another version, the change (extension) in meaning took place inside the Turkish community, through influences assimilated from one place to another. "[...] Locals of Măcin, especially women, gather in the town's Islamic Cemetery (a historical monument, the 'Medieval Muslim cemetery'). Together with the town's imam, they honour the memory of the deceased. Verses from the Quran are recited [...]"<sup>95</sup>. The tradition connects people belonging to different social categories by involving marginal groups, people with a poor financial situation, beggars, who receive food offered for the souls of the deceased. *You pack whatever you have, but pack something*.<sup>96</sup> A tradition with a strong ethnic character, meant to gather together people who share the same origin, and celebrating the renewal of life<sup>97</sup>, the Hidirellez partially reshaped its significance, the religious component being highlighted by the charitable acts of the members of the communities. It is possible that this component has become more important during the post-socialist period, against the backdrop of religious freedom and of the renewal of Muslim identity owing, among other things, to the teachings of foreign imams. Turkish and Tatar believers appreciate this revival, also apparent in their self-identification on religious grounds rather than lineage. "For the Muslims, today's celebration represents the same thing the Easter of Blajin represents for the Orthodox believers. It's about commemorating the dead, our dead to whom we pay our respects. We take care of them, we pray, we clean their tombs and we pray for the

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<sup>89</sup> Tatar pie (with beef or chicken).

<sup>90</sup> N. C.

<sup>91</sup> A. M.

<sup>92</sup> Nurgan Ibrahim, *Hidirellez – ieri şi azi*, in "Haksess", no. 5 (155)/2008, p. 19.

<sup>93</sup> I. Dumitrescu, *Sărbătorile la tătari*, in "Analele Dobrogei", year II, no. 3/1921, p. 372.

<sup>94</sup> G. A., male, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Ovidiu, April 4, 2014.

<sup>95</sup> N. Ibrahim, *Hidirellez – ieri şi azi*, p. 19.

<sup>96</sup> A. M.

<sup>97</sup> *Nawrez and Hidirellez are...non-religious holidays...(Lay.) – Ethno-folkloric. Lay, yes. – S. T.*



peace of their soul [...] We give alms. We give alms to poor children, to poor people, to orphans – so we render homage, and all of this is homage to the departed."<sup>98</sup>

However, this celebration does not have the same meaning for all practitioners of Islam. The offerings – those given at Hidirellez, and during the memorial meals organized at regular intervals – are labelled as Christian borrowings<sup>99</sup>, even though they are present in other Muslim cultures as well (in Turkey, for instance). The Quran does not "mention anything related to memorial meals", but at the same time it does not indicate any restrictions on the subject<sup>100</sup>. *During the time of the Prophet, the following was said: a man who is dead, who has passed on, we must always remember him. Memorial meals are meant to remind us of that person.*<sup>101</sup> Renouncing this tradition, even if it is imposed or prescribed by religion, is perceived as an attack on the community's ethos. The majority of the believers think that there is no reason to change the custom, which has become perennial due to the fact that it was passed on by the elders and transmitted from generation to generation. *I lost my father two years ago and all memorial meals that are usual in this religion were held, following the tradition, let's say.*<sup>102</sup> The means of transfer, the quality of the transmitters, the age of the custom, its functionality, uncorrupted by time, offer the tradition enough legitimacy in the eyes of the community members to represent a natural practice. *(Are memorial meals allowed in the Islamic faith?) – Now, I've heard talk that it isn't allowed; and that, actually, they are pagan customs and... But this is what I've seen and I comply with this tradition, to... (What does 'now' mean? When did you hear that it's no longer...?) – In the past few years, I've heard that it is actually forbidden, by... And those – especially families related to Arab families. I've noticed that within these families, which... they say you're not supposed to hold a memorial meal either, there should only be Quran readings, but no meals for the people and... (They are the ones who told you or was it the imam?) – No. They told me, they told me, when marrying Tatar or Turkish women.*<sup>103</sup>

Similar to the Hidirellez, the Tepreç<sup>104</sup> has been revived among the Tatars at Fîntînița forest (near the town of Murfatlar), after about half century in which it was preserved only in memory. "For Tatars, it was a special day. They used to organize Kuresh (Tatar wrestling, A/N) and archery competitions; housewives used to cook on

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<sup>98</sup> Litoral TV, *Hâdârlez - vestirea primăverii la musulmani - Litoral TV* (published on May 6, 2013), available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ve5ZBrzpNy8>, accessed on December 12, 2014.

<sup>99</sup> "What is happening here today in the Turkish cemetery is totally against Islam. I would like to resort to Imams, even to Muftiate, to take measures, proper measures in order to prevent such non Muslim traditions." – Kenan Ibram (local councilor, Medgidia City Hall), in *Hâdârlez - vestirea primăverii la musulmani - Litoral TV*.

<sup>100</sup> A. A., male, b. 1991, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

<sup>101</sup> A. A., b. 1991.

<sup>102</sup> A. I.

<sup>103</sup> A. I.

<sup>104</sup> Or merely another name of the Hidirellez – Nuredin Ibram, *Hidirlez. Tradiții la turcii dobrogeni*, in "Hakses", no. 5 (83)/2002, p. 1.

the spot, baklava, sarayli pastry, chiburekki, ram roast and other delicious dishes. Children used to ride horse-drawn carts, they got ice-cream and some showed off their talents on specially set up stages. This was in 1966, when Tepreş was organized for the last time, and we closely followed that tradition, except for the competitions, we had only demonstrations."<sup>105</sup> Huge human and financial resources are deployed according to a script carefully designed by the UDTTMR, as part of the organisation's great ethnic and cultural revitalization project. By using well-known means of arousing interest (competitions, open air celebrations) and following a regular timetable, the UDTTMR involves large segments of the community, in an attempt to gradually teach them to cherish their own heritage. In support of these events, they have assembled an expanding series of props, ranging from specifically Tatar bow models (at the Tuzla branch)<sup>106</sup> or Tatar wrestlers' costumes (at the 2014 edition of the Festival of Turkish-Tatar Costume, Dance and Song) to women's festive costumes. The destination of the latter changed, once the need for them and the possibility to display them disappeared. *Here's a dress, it belongs to the children in the dance ensemble. (On what occasions was this costume worn...?) – For instance, when the girl dressed up as a bride, she would put on a dress (So this was a dress, a bride's dress?) – This is representative for us, this is the dress that used to be worn. (And when did they stop wearing it?) – In time, just like folk costumes in your case; you used to wear the traditional costumes too. (What about now?... ) – Now... You saw it in Maramureş. (During Ceauşescu's time, were such costumes used?) – I believe less, I don't think so, no, because we didn't have – our union branches were created after the Revolution, so we were established in 1990. (I was thinking that maybe people still had these costumes at home and they used them to...) – Yes, they had them, yes, yes, yes, they did.*<sup>107</sup> Such items of clothing are in a better situation, being recycled and copied to be used in dance ensembles and women's and children's choirs, which exist at almost all UDTTMR branches. Their role within the family life was transferred to one within the society and the community, since young women wish to look fashionable at the emotionally charged moment of the wedding. *Everybody has emancipated, everyone wears dresses that are more and more... More and more... – Extravagant, more, I don't know what – We are a little more advanced, we're no longer like in the old days, now we have expectations, well – The daughter-in-law doesn't obey her mother-in-law anymore...*<sup>108</sup>.

Discussing the relation with tradition and comparing European societies with societies on other continents, A. M. Hocart shows that, at first, educational models generate a pressure to situate oneself in relation to "the present reason or order of

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<sup>105</sup> Gelil Eserghep, in Ionela Halciuc, *Lupte tătareşti şi tir cu arcul, la tepreş* (June 16, 2014), available at [http://www.telegrafonline.ro/1402866000/articol/search/270789/lupte\\_tataresti\\_si\\_tir\\_cu\\_arcul\\_la\\_tepres.html](http://www.telegrafonline.ro/1402866000/articol/search/270789/lupte_tataresti_si_tir_cu_arcul_la_tepres.html), accessed on December 21, 2014.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>107</sup> Female 3, group interview, conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.

<sup>108</sup> Female 4, group interview, conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.

things"<sup>109</sup>. This pattern of modernity, the urgent need to situate oneself in the present or in relation to the present, overshadows tradition, and places value upon the models and fashions of the day. For the young, its recovery seems all the more difficult, under these circumstances. *Our grandparents still celebrated (Nawrez, AN), but afterwards...Also because people moved from the village to the city. (Do you remember?) – No. (No.) – So, our grandparents were the last to celebrate traditions, that's it.*<sup>110</sup> In this context, Unions have taken on the mission of revitalizing customs in the cases where they believe that oblivion and indifference have done so much harm that measures must be taken. *Nawrez is an old celebration, more than 500 years old, which was lost in the mists of time. It isn't celebrated anymore. So, we [UDTR, A/N] revived it, by organizing symposiums, shows, and even during these symposiums we speak about Nawrez, how it used to be celebrated, and so on. (So, Nawrez is no longer celebrated?) – No. (Nowhere?) – Um, it's celebrated in Turkey, but not in our country, in Dobruja...*<sup>111</sup> Ethnic organizations make use of the knowledge of those who used to celebrate traditions in the old times, year after year. They become the mentors of the younger generations<sup>112</sup>, who seem to be increasingly receptive towards their own cultural heritage, regarding its cultivation as a form of resistance against assimilation. The well-educated members of the two ethnic groups, in particular, (re)discover the tangible and intangible heritage, probably also under the influence of a similar trend in Romanian society in the past few years.<sup>113</sup> *On March 21<sup>st</sup>, Nawrez is celebrated, the same date as the spring equinox. We first carolled to the men who were leaving the mosque. They knew, they'd been told beforehand, because you know how it is, each should have a penny in their pocket, for the children. And they were happy that we succeeded in reviving this tradition. (How do the parents feel about this, do you discuss with anybody else within the community like this, about reviving traditions? What type of discourse do they have? What do they say?) – They are very*

<sup>109</sup> J. Pouillon, in Pierre Bonte, Michel Izard (ed.), *Dicționar de etnologie și antropologie*, Iași, Polirom, 2007, p. 674.

<sup>110</sup> S. T.

<sup>111</sup> S. T.

<sup>112</sup> *Yes, for Nawrez. I didn't know about it either; and when I heard about it from Mr. Duagi – who is an encyclopaedia, so to say, he tells us many interesting and scientifically accurate things. For this festival of Nawrez he says 'You should dye eggs, because that's the...' I ask: 'Are you sure?' I've told them myself. He says: 'Yes, that's the tradition.' I passed it on to the children's families. 'How come? We don't celebrate Ester, we, Tatars, Muslims!' And the older ladies in the family, the grandmothers looked at us saying 'What do you mean? You... No Easter!' It's clear it isn't, I mean this interference between... We, in Tatar culture, we don't have it. However, it exists! (That means these women didn't remember the custom either?) – They probably hadn't heard about it or maybe where they came from, it wasn't... It wasn't common practice in that community, I don't know. (And?) – And we dyed eggs. (Red or other colours as well?) – Red and other colours. And with the kids, for the first time, we carolled on Friday, after service at the mosque, after the main service. – A. I.*

<sup>113</sup> "I appreciate the fact that many Romanian intellectuals, not Romanian officials, are increasingly respectful towards their own values. Years ago, I believe that there was a higher degree of indifference in this matter." – Otilia Hedeșan, in Otilia Halunga, *Interviu Prof. Otilia Hedeșan: Tradițiile sunt într-o permanentă dinamică; Ignatul 'se mută' spre Sf. Andrei* (December 21, 2013), available at <http://www.agerpres.ro/social/2013/12/21/interviu-prof-otilia-hedesan-traditiile-sunt-intr-o-permanenta-dinamica-ignatul-se-muta-spre-sf-andrei-11-51-07>, accessed on December 20, 2014.

*pleased, as I said, parents who bring their children to learn Tatar are around 40 years old. They also lived during the communist period, they don't know much about these customs. And they are thrilled: 'What do we do next? Because...We also learnt the carol with our child at home!' And, I don't know...They seem very open to anything related to the revival of Tatar traditions.*<sup>114</sup>

As F. M. Zerilli observes in discussing V. Mihăilescu's study on the tradition of a dish considered to be Romanian (the *sarma*)<sup>115</sup>, the variable semantics of the concept of "tradition" mirrors the changes that have occurred in society over a certain period of time. More precisely, it provides arguments and consolidates the positions of power of those social actors who, in one context or another, invoke "customs, traditions"<sup>116</sup>. During post-socialism, for many national minorities, resorting to folklore has strengthened the process of recovering cultural specificity, but largely within the limits of a formal approach, designed and implemented by institutions (ethnic organizations, mainly). This is explained by the perception of the younger generations who mostly see the now commonplace phrases – such as "customs, traditions" – as elements of the past and not as active elements that "need to be perceived and understood within their space and time dynamics, and not merely transfigured by patrimonial valorization or by deprecating deconstruction."<sup>117</sup>

### List of Interviewees

A. A., female, 41 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, July 25, 2013.

A. A., male, b. 1991, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

G. A., female, b. 1941, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, April 2014.

G. A., male, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Ovidiu, April 4, 2014.

N. A., female, 27 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, September 2013.

S. B., female, b. 1938, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 2, 2013.

Z. B., female, b. 1946, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

M. C., female, 78 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Ovidiu, April 2014.

N. C., female, 55 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, April 1, 2014.

N. D., male, b. 1948, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

L. D. C., female, 16 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, April 1, 2014.

G. E., male, b. 1967, interview conducted by M. Dincă, S. Preda in Constanța, July 22, 2013.

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<sup>114</sup> A. I.

<sup>115</sup> See above, note 49.

<sup>116</sup> Filippo M. Zerilli, *Prezentare*, in C. Papa et alii, p. 16.

<sup>117</sup> V. Mihăilescu, in C. Papa et alii, p. 204.

Female 1, group interview, conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.  
 Female 2, group interview, conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.  
 Female 3, group interview, conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.  
 Female 4, group interview, conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.  
 Female, 35 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.  
 D. G., male, interview conducted by M. Dincă, S. Preda in Constanța, July 22, 2013.  
 A. I., female, b. 1968, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 3, 2013.  
 A. I., female, b. 1977, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.  
 E. I., male, b. 1975, informal discussion, September 4, 2014, Constanța.  
 N. I., female, 55 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.  
 S. I., female, 18 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, July 2013.  
 A. M., female, b. 1948, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, October 16, 2013.  
 F. M., female, b. 1954, interview conducted by S. Preda in Mangalia, September 1, 2014.  
 M. M., female, 63 years old, conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.  
 N. M., female, 33 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Tulcea, April 4, 2014.  
 S. M., female, 30 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, July 25, 2013.  
 S. M., male, interview conducted by M. Dincă, S. Preda in Bașpinar, July 23, 2013.  
 U. S. M., female, 54 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Tuzla, April 2014.  
 N., female, 27 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, July 2013.  
 Z. M., female, 64 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Tuzla, April 2014.  
 N., female, 27 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, July 2013.  
 Ș. R., female, b. 1931, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 5, 2013.  
 F. T., female, b. 1974, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, August 22, 2014.  
 I. T., female, b. 1932, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Ovidiu, April 2014.  
 S. T., female, b. 1965, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 23, 2013.  
 A. U., female, b. 1941, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

## Language Issues: Between Tradition, Acculturation and Generations

*If you want to see a people destroyed, first take away its language!*<sup>118</sup>

Tatar proverb

In the case of the two groups under discussion, language remains one of the most important pillars of identity construction, due to its role in communication and as a bridge between generations. The long coexistence of the two communities did not result in a fusion of languages. We can certainly talk about a pre-eminence of the Turkish language over the Tatar<sup>119</sup>, which goes far back in history. This can be explained through the former's status as an official language; used by government institutions, it was also the language of high culture, of the education system, a language that could always find guidance and sustenance in the language spoken in Istanbul. With an infinitely greater number of speakers, Turkish has been in constant evolution, orally as well as in writing, in contrast with the Tatar language of Dobruja, a dialect preserved in an enclave, handed down orally, and only rarely (in certain environments) put down on paper.

In what concerns their function in the preservation of ethnic culture, Tatar and Turkish, as mother tongues, have fulfilled a similar role. The current state of the Turkish and Tatar cultural heritage also owes a lot to the contribution of the archaic idioms preserved in the south-eastern Romanian enclave, and to the fact that they served as a vehicle for the transmission of many elements of the Tatar and Turkish cultural legacy. Even when some of these elements disappeared (or were forgotten, or went through changes), language was/still is the one that continued/continues to pass their memory on to the new generations. Their image and their memory are stronger when they are transmitted through the medium of the mother tongue.

The establishment of communism marked the beginning of a period in which the Turkish and the Tatar languages shared a similar situation in terms of the place they occupied in school education. Thus, as at a certain point they could no longer be studied, and their use was limited to the private, family environment, the mosques, and ethnic neighbourhoods, where (or as long as) these remained compact. However, higher education allowed the training of specialists: in 1957, at the University of Bucharest, a Turkish language and literature department was founded. Simultaneously, a Tatar language department was also created, but its existence ceased in 1977, after four generations of graduates; occasionally, Tatar language was

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<sup>118</sup> Güner Akmolla, *Istoria și istoria literaturii tătarilor crimeeni din România – Compendiu*, StudIS, Iași, 2014, p. 60.

<sup>119</sup> The Crimean Tatar language belongs to the northwest Turkic group and to the larger group of Altaic languages, like Turkish (part of the Oghuz group of languages) and Gagauz. – "Atlas of the World's Languages" (Second Edition), R. E. Asher, C. J. Mosely (ed.), Routledge, 2007, p. 255.

taught in optional courses<sup>120</sup>. After 1990, its academic status has not been restored. There have been several initiatives aimed at primary and secondary school pupils, which came relatively late. In the past few years<sup>121</sup>, Tatar children have had systematic access to their grandparents' language within a project initiated by the Tatar Union, generally known as the "community school". Taking place at branches of the union, this project is supported through the dedication of some Tatar teachers; some of them (the elderly) took Tatar language classes during primary school (when Tatar was used as a teaching language in some public schools, for a while, after the Second World War).

For the UDTTMR (*Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania*) and for those associated with it, cultivating the mother tongue is a race against time<sup>122</sup>, as it has been difficult for Tatar to find its place within the busy schedule of pupils, where it competes not only with Turkish, with different foreign languages and curriculum subjects, but also with temptations specific to their age. The UNESCO Interactive Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger draws attention to the fact that the language of Dobruja Tatars occupies a middle position ("severely endangered") – on their 1 to 5 scale – regarding the degree of danger that threatens it<sup>123</sup>. This means that we are dealing with a language known and used by seniors, but not employed in their relationships with their offspring<sup>124</sup>. Our field research experience has revealed the uneven theoretical and practical knowledge of the Tatar language (this phenomenon is much less extensive in the case of ethnic Turks, where such deficits are compensated by the resort to the standard language, present in education and the mass media). There are families in which the grandparents, being in charge of raising their grandchildren, handed down to them elements of Tatar language and culture. This is complemented by the parents' interest in speaking with their children in their mother tongue and in enrolling them in the community school courses. These cases testify to a state of vulnerability, rather than one of increasing danger. Some of the

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<sup>120</sup>"Secția de limbă tătară", available at:

[http://turca.ils.unibuc.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Istoricul-sectiei-de-limba-tatara\\_Universitatea-din-Bucuresti.doc.pdf](http://turca.ils.unibuc.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Istoricul-sectiei-de-limba-tatara_Universitatea-din-Bucuresti.doc.pdf), accessed on November 9, 2014.

<sup>121</sup> George Marinescu, *Reprezentanții Școlii Comunitare a UDTTMR Constanța, invitați la "Școala după școală"* (September 26, 2014), available at <http://www.gazetadenavodari.ro/reprezentantii-scolii-comunitare-a-udttmr-Constanța-invitați-la-scoala-dupa-scoala/>, accessed on November 9, 2014.

<sup>122</sup> "Last week, UNESCO launched a new version of the online Atlas of languages in danger. [...] In the case of those used in Romania, 11 such alert situations are recorded. i.e. the language spoken by Banat Bulgarians, the one used by the Tatars living in some villages in Dobruja, such as Castelu, Topraisar or Murfatlar, [...] the Nogai language spoken by the Turkish-Tatars in Dobruja villages such as Mihai Kogălniceanu, Lumina, Valea Dacilor or Cobadin." – Cristian Preda, *Pericol de dispariție* (February 22, 2009), available at <http://cristianpreda.ro/2009/02/22/pericol-de-disparitie/>, accessed on November 8, 2014.

<sup>123</sup> "Interactive Atlas", available at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap>, accessed on November 10, 2014.

<sup>124</sup>"Endangered languages", available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/atlas-of-languages-in-danger/>, accessed on November 10, 2014.

interviewees (especially those associated with the Unions) believe that sustained, constant effort will result in the deeper knowledge of the language and, implicitly, in a consolidation of their ethnic identity.

Naturally, the accumulation of knowledge transmitted by the older members of the community does not guarantee that a language will continue to be used. Considering the fact that not all parents insist on the need of speaking the language of the forefathers (as well as possible), and given the contexts in which the language is used, as well as the young people's own desire to improve their knowledge, the situation of the Tatar language in Dobruja should be approached in a differentiated manner. Our field survey has also encountered examples of families where Tatar was lost, for various reasons, some presented by our respondents as "objective", others assumed by the subjects. The elderly in particular believe that measures to save the language of the forefathers should have started much earlier, and that it would have been (and would still be) useful if the community members themselves took on more responsibility in preserving an asset which represents one of the pillars of group identity.

Many young people notice a number of factors in their environment that interfere with their acquisition of the minority language. Even if they live with their parents (in the case of those who habitually speak Tatar and Turkish with their children), young people communicate more with their friends, their fellow students, at school, when going out, on the telephone and online, and in all these circumstances Romanian prevails. Mother tongues have a secondary status for the parents and an unclear status for the children. We established that, in the answers given to researchers, the latter do not mention (or very rarely mention) values, characteristics, qualities related to language. Their reactions rather provide a sort of quantitative feedback, indicating the situations in which the language is used. Young people say they speak Turkish or Tatar (but not exclusively) in certain family related contexts, during language classes, when participating in toplantis (dance gatherings of young Turks and Tatars), or at the mosque. Pupils and students who are close to the Unions practice their language more during activities organized by these, such as dance ensembles, choirs, cultural and artistic events in general. They are interested in becoming fluent in their mother tongue, in order to make use of the language skills acquired within the family and improved at school. *This isn't really [enough]. You can imagine, we have 4-5 Romanian language classes a week, maybe more. We could have had more, but...*<sup>125</sup>

Recurrent everyday exposure to conversations in Romanian is one of the most direct and powerful means of acculturation and partly explains the intermittent knowledge and use of the Tatar language. Some young people admit that they also lack personal motivation in cultivating their own linguistic identity. *In fact, I think it's lack of practice. I understand absolutely everything! But no, I can't find my tongue.*<sup>126</sup> Although the accumulation (and especially the practice) of the elements of culture is intermittent, sporadic, it progressively becomes a mission of faith, even for people

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<sup>125</sup> I. I., male, b. 1992, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, July 23, 2013.

<sup>126</sup> I. S., female, b. 1995, interview conducted by S. Preda in Lumina, September 22, 2013.



outside the Union. (*Don't you perceive it as a loss?*) – A loss? No, because I still know it. No, I won't lose it. I mean I know that when I'll have my own family, I'll speak Tatar. (*So you've planned to do that?*) – Yes! Yes, I mean, it's a trend within several minorities in Romania, to continue along this line, Tatars with Tatars, and to learn [the language], and to have a family that's entirely made up of Tatars. (*This means you insist on having a Tatar as a husband?*) – It's not, it's not (starts laughing) what I want! It is what I want, but...it's the influence of my parents, who would want this. It's the trend with everyone.<sup>127</sup>

After Ceaușescu's disappearance, within the framework created by the provisions of the education law, historical minorities were allowed to study their mother tongue<sup>128</sup> for up to a few hours per week. Over time, one hour was added in which students acquired information on the culture of their ethnic group. The creation of an adequate environment for the cultivation of their specificity has mobilized the Turks and Tatars concentrated in south-eastern Romania. The requests submitted by the Turkish and Tatar Unions resulted in the establishment, with the support of school inspectorates, of groups interested in learning and improving their Turkish<sup>129</sup>. Students enrolled in the public school system can choose to study Turkish language and literature three hours a week<sup>130</sup>. In the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, they can also study the "History and traditions of the Turkish and Tatar minority". Published in 2006 and devised by notable scholars belonging to both ethnic groups (Nedret Mamut, Enver Mamut, Ervin Ibraim), the textbook was a first in the field; the information within it

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<sup>127</sup> I. S.

<sup>128</sup> According to art. 45 of the Law of Education, "Persons belonging to national minorities have the right to study and learn in their mother tongue at all levels, types and forms of education, under the conditions set out by law (1)". Also, "Taking into account local needs, groups, classes, sections or school units with teaching in the languages of national minorities may be established, upon request of parents or legal guardians and in compliance with the provisions of law (2)" – "Legea educației naționale. Legea nr. 1/2011" (Law of National Education, no. 1/2011), available at <http://www.dreptonline.ro/legislatie/-legea-educatiei-nationale-lege-1-2011.php>, accessed on November, 8, 2014.

<sup>129</sup> Mictat A. Gârlan, *Metodologia cercetării etnopsihologice*, Lumen, Iași, 2011, p. 226. The same source mentions the cities and towns where the measure was implemented: "Constanța, Medgidia, Cobadin, Mangalia, Valu lui Traian, Fântâna Mare, Tuzla, Castelu, Basarabi, Tulcea and Babadag."

<sup>130</sup> Some variations are possible, depending on the school profile, and on the number of children who choose to study their mother tongue. Here is an example for the Turkish language: "According to the provisions of the Order of the Minister of Education and Research no. 5718/22.12.2006 regarding the approval of the curriculum framework for the upper secondary high school level, the subject *Mother tongue and literature* can be allocated, for the 12th grade, the following number of hours: in the core curriculum, 3 hours per week – for all types of studies, profiles and specializations/qualifications; in the type A differentiated curriculum, 1 hour per week – for the theoretical studies, humanities, philology; in the type B differentiated curriculum, 1 hour per week – for other types of studies, profiles or specializations." – "Curricula for Turkish Language and Literature, 12<sup>th</sup> grade (approved by Minister's Order no. 5959/22.12.2006)", The Ministry of Education, Research and Youth website, available at <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/curriculum/8508>, accessed on November 10, 2014.

refers to the great history of the Turkish population, focusing in particular on the evolution of the Muslims in Dobruja, who developed specific traditions along the centuries of coexistence with various ethnic groups in the area<sup>131</sup>. Writing a dedicated work also involves investigating the realities in the field. *There are even images from different families around here; I know that my colleagues, who worked on the textbooks, went [to do fieldwork] and their sources truly were oral. Many times, they went to the villages, they talked with the old people and learned about different traditions, customs and...about the Turkish-Tatar folklore*<sup>132</sup>. Divided over two years of study, the subject also aims at presenting the two communities in their relationship with a regional and global framework. Thus, it is believed that students should know about "their belonging to a historical and cultural space by knowing the history of the community to which they pertain"<sup>133</sup> and should develop their ability of identifying "common elements in the history of the Romanians, Turk-Tatars and other peoples in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe"<sup>134</sup>.

To a number of 29,832 self-declared ethnic Turks and 24,596 Tatars, in 1992<sup>135</sup>, the number of students who chose to study the Turkish language in the school year 1998-1999 was of 2,443<sup>136</sup>. Both groups have decreased in number, but the interest in pursuing an education in Turkish does not follow the same downward curve. In Constanța county, for example, Turkish is studied at all levels of education and in various institutions: kindergartens<sup>137</sup>, public schools, private schools (such as "Spectrum"), the "Ovidius" University and, since 2011, the "Yunus Emre" Cultural Center. Gradually textbooks were published<sup>138</sup>, and, besides them, textbooks from

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<sup>131</sup> Nilgün Asan, Minever Omer, *Istoria și tradițiile minorității turce și tătare*, in "Hakses", no. 9 (135)/2006, p. 15.

<sup>132</sup> I. A., female, b. 1976, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 5, 2013.

<sup>133</sup> Ministerul Educației și Cercetării – Consiliul Național pentru Curriculum, "Istoria și tradițiile minorității turce-tătare, clasele a VI-a – a VII-a. Notă de prezentare", available at <http://www.edu.ro/index.php?module=uploads&func=download&fileId=4354>, accessed on November 10, 2014, p. 2.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>135</sup> Romanian National Institute of Statistics, *Recensământul populației și locuințelor – 2011*, available at <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/pliante%20statistice/04-recensamantul%20populatiei.pdf>, p. 9, accessed on November 10, 2014.

<sup>136</sup> M. Gârlan, p. 226.

<sup>137</sup> Romanian-Turkish Bilingual Kindergarten "Zubeyde Hanım", no. 58, Constanța; Romanian-Turkish Bilingual Kindergarten in Medgidia.

<sup>138</sup> A list of works approved by the Ministry of Education is available on the website of Constanța County School Inspectorate. Printed at the Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, these are: "Abecedar" (by Naile Velița and Leman Ali). Ali Cafer Ahmet-Naci and Mustafa Ali Mehmet are the authors of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks for "Turkish Language". For the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade, there is the already mentioned "History and Traditions of the Turkish-Tatar Minority" textbook, while for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, there is "Turkish Language and Literature" (Ulgean Ene, Memedemin Belghinzar, Buliga Cartali) – "Catalogul manualelor școlare valabile pentru anul școlar 2013-2014", available at <http://www.isjcta.ro/?p=3369>, accessed on November 10, 2014.

Turkey and additional materials were used. *We also have [textbooks] from Turkey, very many and very beautiful, they're more attractive to children, they're more beautiful. (It's you who chose the textbooks...?) – No, we have a curriculum, we need to comply with the curriculum, but children also look over the others, we read stories from them, so...*<sup>139</sup>. For the primary school, a curriculum for the subject "Communication in the Turkish mother tongue - preparatory grade, first and second grade" was drawn up<sup>140</sup>. Alternative sources are employed, in order to keep pace with the materials and methods in Turkey, as well as with a permanently changing model, since Romanian textbooks are based on the models of the early 90s<sup>141</sup>. *In general, the teacher comes to class with all sorts of auxiliary materials. We have books from the Republic of Turkey, a lot of them. They make reading notes on these books, on those teachers' guides; so Turkish teachers work must be – the thing is slightly more ample, because they also look for the resources that they must hand over to the child. That is, we don't have a special workbook that we can use to work on a certain subject. The teacher, when he comes to class, must be prepared. (What does this involve? Is there a control of the inspectorate regarding auxiliary materials, let's say regarding the textbooks from Turkey that teachers use?) – No. (They can choose whatever they want?) – Yes. They can choose whatever they want; it's only when we go on inspections that we advise them on whether they are suitable or not for that particular age. Because in fact we have no reason to be against them, because any foreign language can be learned through multiple methods*<sup>142</sup>.

Teachers make efforts not only to consult and choose from a large quantity of textbooks and auxiliary materials but also to cover the needs of various groups, in different years of study, coming from different institutions and with different schedules etc. There are more students than ten years ago, but not more teachers and educators. *(Did they call you from the inspectorate and tell you that there were vacancies?) – Yes! A friend told me, 'Look, there are many vacancies, so they need you, you have to' and I said many people give up, it's hard to teach Turkish, to teach full-time, 4 hours a day; basically you're busy all day long! You go out in the morning, to 3-4 schools, in the city, it's very difficult like this. So, I guess it's not worth it. (Laughing)*<sup>143</sup>. Their efforts show that they are aware of the special situation of the minority language, which is in better shape than other minority languages in Romania, but is nonetheless subjected to an acculturation process. The future of the ethnic group depends on the perpetuation of their idiom, not only in the educational system, but also within the community, in every family, without interruption. In recent years, at the call of both Unions, Turkish and Tatar, a growing number of parents have sent their children to Turkish and Tatar classes (at the community school), understanding that the mission of identity transmission must be assumed

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<sup>139</sup> E. A.-G., female, b. 1970, interview conducted by S. Preda in Ovidiu, September 25, 2013.

<sup>140</sup> Available at <http://www.isjcta.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/comunicare-lb-materna-cl-PIII.pdf>, accessed on November 10, 2014.

<sup>141</sup> I. A., E. A.-G.

<sup>142</sup> I. A.

<sup>143</sup> E. A.-G.

individually. *I assume that if everybody looks a little after their children... And takes care of the language and of...this community will last long. Otherwise, probably in time, slowly, through mixed marriages and through absorption, it will slowly die away. I don't know. But we're still hoping.*<sup>144</sup>

The increasing presence of Turkish businessmen in Dobruja, once it became possible as a result of the installation of a democratic regime in Romania, explains, to a certain extent, the interest in learning – or, as the case may be, in improving – the Turkish language. Also, labour mobility (the Turks and Tatars in Dobruja going to Turkey for temporary jobs), the desire to study at universities in Istanbul, Ankara etc. have contributed to an increased visibility of the Turkish language. Some of our interlocutors consider that speaking this language is an advantage when applying for a job (in the restaurants, shops or businesses owned by Turkish citizens in Dobruja, and in Romania in general). For others, handing the language down is what matters, so that the younger generations may perceive identity building as a structure from which language – along with religion and traditions – cannot be absent. *The number of... these requests to learn Turkish has increased*<sup>145</sup>. There are fewer speakers<sup>146</sup>, but we can say that the interest has increased, as well as the concern for speaking the language well and the number of those who study it in an institution. Among these, the majority is certainly represented by the children in schools, who enjoy a right that was denied to their parents. *It began with a few dozens of applications and now we have 6,000 students who... 4,000, 4,000, more than 4,000 are in Constanța county, more than 1,000 or so are in Bucharest and 200 students in Tulcea county.*<sup>147</sup>

The most active factor in raising awareness of the importance of language is represented by the Tatar and Turkish representative unions. Partnership with schools is vital, especially in the context of the lack of (constant or thorough) use of the mother tongue in the families of the recent generations. Many of them were formed in a physical and cultural space different from that of the previous generations; living in the urban environment, they learned the official language early, in a period when otherness was rejected (or at best ignored). Exposed to the various transformations and challenges brought about by the installation of the democratic regime and to the cultural changes it triggered, parents find it difficult to represent themselves as active players in the mission of carrying forward the specificity of their group of origin. *School is what saves us a little. Until school children don't speak Turkish, but Turkish is taught in school and they go there and learn a few things, and it's ok. And there are also the Union's activities which draw very many children and young people.*<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> N. P., female, b. 1977, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 23, 2013.

<sup>145</sup> V. B., female, b. 1968, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 6, 2013.

<sup>146</sup> Although in 2002, statistics recorded 32,098 Turks (over 2,200 people compared to the 1992 census) a decade later, the number had reached 27,698 individuals. The number of ethnic Tatars also decreased. – "Populația stabilă pe sexe, după etnie - categorii de localități, macro-regiuni, regiuni de dezvoltare și județe", available at: <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/>, accessed on November 10, 2014.

<sup>147</sup> V. B.

<sup>148</sup> N. P.

The fact that all generations of the ethnic community understand the importance of the mother tongue is reflected not only in the number of those who want to learn it, but also in the ways in which it is cultivated. The Turkish language has also become attractive due to the culture it carries, which has become interesting for the descendants of the Ottoman Empire in Dobruja, and not only for them. "[...] after more than 15 years of hard work, we have succeeded in creating and maintaining an emulation both among our ethnic group members and among others in order to get to know our own traditions and customs, as well as the Turkish language."<sup>149</sup> After about ten and a half years, the number of pupils studying this language has increased by a third<sup>150</sup>, and – in some environments<sup>151</sup> – there is a desire to expand its share within the educational process as a whole. This aspiration is propelled by the existence of certain models, such as that of the Hungarian, Czech, German, or Slovak minorities, which applied a model of "education in the languages of national minorities" where "all subjects are studied in the mother tongue, except for Romanian language and literature"<sup>152</sup>. However, applying this educational model also has consequences which are difficult to estimate at a first stage (*Are these opinions in favour of a "total" education in Turkish so many that they could make you initiate, let's say, a project and propose it to the government, to the Ministry of Education? Did you make an inventory? In terms of numbers, so to speak?*) – Uh, we want this, but... We don't know where this could go, because some, indeed, some ask this question: if at university I can't or don't want to study Turkish and I want something else, I won't cope; but until university...<sup>153</sup>

The Tatars' trilingualism makes them special among other ethnic minorities in Romania. Their historical evolution in Dobruja, their proximity to Turkish communities and their orientation towards the Ottoman Empire and then towards the Republic of Turkey created a natural framework for learning the Turkish language. "First you should know that Tatars are fond of the Turkish language and they want to speak it well, because they consider it more 'mellow' than their own language. Thus,

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<sup>149</sup> Ervin Ibraim, in Mădălin Roșioru, *Ervin Ibraim, profesor de limba turcă, secretar general UDTR: "I militate for replacing the term "tolerance" with "harmony"... My motto was and still is "unity in diversity"*,

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:vtC7A6scroAJ:www.resurseculturale.ro/site/%3Fq%3Dnode/16&client=safari&hl=ro&strip=1>, accessed on November 11, 2014.

<sup>150</sup> The statistics of the Constanța County School Inspectorate reveal that in the school year 2013 – 2014 the Turkish language was studied by 3,633 pupils – Loredana Dăscălescu, *Consfătuirea națională a profesorilor de limbă și literatură turcă și religie islamică, la Medgidia* (October 9, 2014), available at: <http://www.ziuaConstanța.ro/stiri/invatamant/consfatuirea-nationala-a-profesorilor-de-limba-si-literatura-turca-si-religie-islamica-la-medgidia-515162.html>, accessed on November 10, 2014.

<sup>151</sup> (*Does the Dobruja community really wish to pursue a total education [in Turkish]? – There are pros and cons. There are parents who would want this, and parents who... – V. B.*

<sup>152</sup> Available at <http://www.edu.ro/index.php?module=uploads&func=download&fileId=1578>, accessed on November 11, 2014.

<sup>153</sup> V. B.

as the circumstances are favourable, the import takes place easily."<sup>154</sup> Also, the population's mobility within the Empire – for example, for economic reasons – facilitated acculturation, which is apparent in the content of the traditional culture. "Turkish songs, proverbs, riddles and games" were easily adopted, on the one hand, due to the novelty they brought (especially in a state border area) and to the oral transmission<sup>155</sup>; on the other hand, due to the prestigious position of the dominant language, the influences absorbed in this way could only be positively valorised.

Where Tatar communities were homogeneous, people with a certain level of education (for instance imams or other Muslim clergy) were the ones who spoke Turkish and used it as a language of administration and education. When they came under Romanian authority, a process of gradual adaptation to the official language began. Social distance from the Romanians (if they were nearby) was kept until late. The pressure of the local socio-political changes that took place in the mid-twentieth century pushed the members of rural communities to learn the minimum necessary for communication. Gender roles (whose traditional configuration persisted in the Turkish village community more than in other ethnic groups) were the reason why, at first, men were better acquainted with the language of the state, at least at the oral level. *My parents didn't know how to write in Romanian. Dad had started to speak well because he worked in the collective farm, the C.A.P. [Cooperativă Agricolă de Producție, Collective Farm Unit]. Mom, as she was a housewife, was not really doing well in Romanian.*<sup>156</sup>

Self-oriented for identity reasons and having little contact with the outside, the communities (be they Tatar or Turkish) began to change their view of the official language for reasons related to the social connections with other ethnic groups and to a desire to change their way of life, driven by external models<sup>157</sup>. The belief that these could no longer be avoided, that modernization was a necessity, not a trend, paved the way for learning the majority language. Linguistic homogenization is perceived today as a fact that occurred naturally, in circumstances defined by a certain historical evolution. Some members of the two groups<sup>158</sup> remain conservative, in their discourse as well as in practice, being convinced of the importance of maintaining the ethnic borders by (also) consistently cultivating linguistic identity. *These two things, language and faith, if a community – an ethnic group like us, forgets them, then you lose your Muslim or Tatar identity.*<sup>159</sup> From their point of view, acculturation must stop at some point, and it is the individuals who can decide how much they get

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<sup>154</sup> I. Dumitrescu, *Folklor tătaresc din Pervelia*, in "Analele Dobrogei", year III, no. 2/1922, p. 309.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>156</sup> N. D., male, b. 1948, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

<sup>157</sup> "Especially urban cultures, partly taken over by the rural population, can influence language." – Thede Kahl, *Considerații privind dispariția limbilor cu trimitere la romanitatea balcanică*, in "Philologica Jassyensia", year IV, no. 1, 2008, p. 131.

<sup>158</sup> This is mainly the case of some of the ethnic Tatars, who perceive their group as disadvantaged, as it does not enjoy the support of a state in the pursuit of its own language policy.

<sup>159</sup> N. D.

involved in rescuing their ethnic specificity. "‘How can a man be a man of faith if he doesn't speak his language?’ Many interviewees mention the idea that in '58-'59 they used to learn Turkish and Tatar at school, but one of them adds that ‘Romanian is the primary language.’"<sup>160</sup>

In localities with a mixed Tatar and Turkish population, the former speak the Turkish language (to a varying degree), while Tatar is learned only rarely, such as, for instance, in couples where the influence of the Tatar partner prevails. For some of the Turkish natives, it is difficult to identify the "payoff" of an old language, preserved in an enclave. *When I learned it in high school, I had a Turkish teacher, but she was of Tatar origin. And she was always saying something in Tatar, and I could never understand her and she said to me: When you finish this high school, you'll speak Tatar. And I told her I hadn't come there to learn Tatar, and that I couldn't do anything with the Tatar language. Literally, it's of no use*<sup>161</sup>. In their opinion, the superiority of the Turkish language is evident, deriving both from a vast history and from the opportunities it provides to its speakers. Its prevalence during the post-socialist period placed Tatar in a secondary position; there are also some who believe that the development of the Kırım dialect harms the Turkish heritage in the area. "Difficulties seem to increase as some leaders of the Tatar community try to promote the Tatar language in Dobruja, to the detriment of the Turkish language and culture, which have centuries of tradition, and this will certainly lead to an alienation of the Turkish-Muslim community in Romania from the rest of the Turkish world in the Balkans, and from our motherland, the Republic of Turkey"<sup>162</sup>. The subject here is not language, but its ideologization, starting from the belief that the Turkish cultural heritage, validated for centuries, represents the auspices under which the Dobruja Muslims define their future.

What for some represents the opportunity and duty to cultivate their own cultural specificity, for others is what will lead to the fragmentation of a centuries-old unity. Language is not in itself a source of conflict, and neither is the ethnicity it expresses; the use of the latter in political games generates tensions in a number of circumstances, such as those marking the creation of the UDTR (*The Romanian Turkish Democratic Union*) and the UDTTMR. Intensified in recent years, the activism of the Tatar Union tries to consolidate the mother tongue, in its capacity as salient source of identity. The efforts of the organization leaders have intensified and have focused on launching wake-up calls meant to awaken the consciousness of a group identity. Even if at the informal level a pessimistic discourse prevails, its aim is not to confirm a state of affairs, but to change it. Attachment to the past and passivity slow the fight for the consolidation of ethnic and cultural specificity. Understanding the importance of the mother tongue, of cultivating it and handing it down to children

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<sup>160</sup> Ana Chirițoiu, Mădălin Nicolăescu, Sergiu Novac, Mihai Popa, *Etnicitate și turism cultural în satul Bașpunar*, in "Dobrogea. Identități și crize", Bogdan Iancu (coord.), Paideia, 2009, București, p. 112.

<sup>161</sup> N. P.

<sup>162</sup> Mehmet Mustafa, in Nini Vasilescu, *Comunitatea turcă din România* (September 28, 2011), available at <http://www.radioamator.ro/articole/view.php?id=773>, accessed on November 24, 2014.

and young people should not only be the Union's responsibility. It remains the partner of the family and community in the common project of ethnic preservation.

The particular situation of the Tatar idiom in Dobruja also derives from the fact that it does not have an (official) language to sustain it, unlike Turkish and the languages of other minority groups in the area. Tatars lack a state whose language can permanently nurture the dialect of the diaspora (as the Republic of Turkey functions for the Turkish minority in Romania). Abounding in terms that come from other languages spoken in the region over time, Tatar remains in a state of stagnation: even so, its continuity is supported by the fact that it is taught in community schools.

Introduced in Dobruja schools in 1948, Tatar had a short and problematic presence in the post-war education system. Textbooks were used that were imported from the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and printed in the Cyrillic alphabet. The language there was different from the vernacular Tatar of Dobruja. "It was agony, because Tatar is not Kazan. The poor students barely understood half the words."<sup>163</sup> In the Tatar communities, such as Castelu, Hagieni, Techirghiol, Cobadin, Edilköy (Miriştea, Mereni commune, Constanța county) education in Tatar was allowed, but this was in fact a Greek gift; there are opinions<sup>164</sup> that the aim was to get them closer to the natives of the Tatar Republic and distance them from Crimea, although the latter, destroyed by Stalin's measures, no longer represented a danger. Decreeing the so-called similarity of languages also allowed granting scholarships, which contributed to improving the image of the newly installed communist leadership: "the weakest students were sent with scholarships to Kazan and Moscow, on the basis of a sound file, with communist parents."<sup>165</sup> The forced implementation of Soviet textbooks overlapped with the measures taken against the Tatar elite. On the one hand, the publications in Dobruja Tatar were no longer printed; on the other hand, the textbooks from Kazan induced a falsified version of history, rejected by the older generations<sup>166</sup>.

The experiment with teaching the Tatar from the territory of the current Republic of Tatarstan lasted for about a decade. According to data of the Techirghiol town hall, between 1948 and 1959 local Tatar children studied in their so-called language, an unsuccessful project, which ended up in a number of students who were poorly prepared for the Romanian language used in secondary schools and in the closure of the school. In the last year of activity, there were 13 students left<sup>167</sup>, although the ethnic Tatar population was the largest group. In Techirghiol 85% were Tatars, about 15% were Christians<sup>168</sup>. However, it was very difficult to graduate in the Tatar language, because afterwards, in secondary school, you went on to

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<sup>163</sup> Curtede Leman, in Carmen Pleșa, *Neamul lui Gingis-Han de pe pământul Dobrogei* (October 15, 2004), available at <http://jurnalul.ro/special-jurnalul/reportaje/neamul-lui-gingis-han-de-pe-pamantul-dobrogei-58940.html>, accessed on December 4, 2014.

<sup>164</sup> G. Akmolla, p. 102.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 112.

<sup>167</sup> "Scurt istoric al învățământului din Techirghiol" (February 18, 2013), available at <http://www.liceultechirghiol.ro/prezentare/istoric.html>, accessed on December 1, 2014.

<sup>168</sup> Z. B., female, b. 1946, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.



Romanian language, and it was very hard for them!"<sup>169</sup> It was not only children who faced difficulties, but also the teachers who did not have any prior knowledge; negative reactions soon emerged, in a climate of "generalized confusion regarding the way in which the Tatar community expressed itself in its mother tongue."<sup>170</sup>

Beyond the use of imported books, the approximately ten years during which Tatar was present in the education system mattered to the graduates, to their personal and group identity. Current textbooks, inspired (in terms of format) by the old books, awaken the nostalgia of those who studied the mother tongue, even if for a short period. "It was so good at the Tatar school in Hagieni!"<sup>171</sup> During primary school, they used *Russian letters, Tatar words* and they also studied Romanian.<sup>172</sup> Even if students faced difficulties in being admitted to secondary school (in certain cases, they learned Romanian even later<sup>173</sup>), parents considered it important that they should have the right to study in their mother tongue. There were also parents who wanted to make sure, right from the start, that their children would integrate easily in school and in the Romanian society. For their children, there was the option of normal classes, in the schools of the majority. Some ethnic Tatars hoped that education in their own language would not simply stop with the first four grades. *Being more conservative, more devout believers, my parents sent me to learn the Tatar language, hoping that... to learn Tatar, and hoping that there would be a day when maybe we could attend high school in Tatar, hoping perhaps for this to also happen at university level – which was very hard.*<sup>174</sup> Where this was possible – for example in the old Azaplar – students simultaneously learned both languages; in the morning they went to Tatar courses, and, in the second part of the day, *we used to go to the Romanian school, to learn Romanian, to learn how to communicate.*<sup>175</sup>

The situation of education in the Tatar language was also difficult due to the lack of teachers needed for the instruction of primary school children of Tatar origin. The Tatar language Teacher Training High School was established in 1950 at Medgidia, the first enrolled being those who trained to become imams<sup>176</sup>. Transferred to Constanța the next year, it also accepted other young people who were eager to pursue a teaching career and to improve their language skills (We should note here that, in the educational process, the Kırım dialect and the Turkish alphabet were used<sup>177</sup>). "[...] I helped very many colleagues who wanted to learn Tatar. Some of

<sup>169</sup> A. A., male, b. 1935, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

<sup>170</sup> Enver Mamut, Nedret Mamut, Nejdet Yaya, Gemal Boşnac, Gevat Ziyadin, Servet Baubek, Güner Akmolla, Nihat S. Osman, Eden Mamut, *Raport Asupra Stadiului Actual al Limbii Tatara*, in "Karadeñiz", no. 5(214)/2014, p. 6.

<sup>171</sup> Domnica Macri, *Tătarii dobrogeni: "cine suntem?"*, in National Geographic, no. 89 (September)/2010, p. 29.

<sup>172</sup> N. D.; A. B., male, b. 1928, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 2, 2013.

<sup>173</sup> D. Macri, p. 29.

<sup>174</sup> N. D.

<sup>175</sup> S. B., female, b. 1938, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 2, 2013; R. S., female, b. 1939, interview conducted by S. Preda in Castelu, September 2, 2014.

<sup>176</sup> A. A.

<sup>177</sup> E. Mamut et alii, p. 2.

them, living among several ethnic groups, did not really speak their mother tongue. In my poems I also declare the love for my mother tongue."<sup>178</sup> The post-war circumstances, the difficulties of adjusting to the urban areas (for those who came from rural communities) were overcome by those who, by vocation, chose to attend the Mixed Tatar Teacher Training School, as this institution is also known. "Despite the difficult material conditions, these were the best years of my life. [...] All teachers made efforts to prepare us for life, for the teaching career that we were going to embrace."<sup>179</sup> These mentors faced additional tasks, having the mission of rendering intelligible the language of the Kazan textbooks, "different from the one we used to speak at home."<sup>180</sup> *We had textbooks from Kazakhstan*<sup>181</sup>! *All textbooks came from Kazakhstan. Of course, their content was in Tatar, but the alphabet was Cyrillic! It was very difficult. Both for us, who were learning, and for the teachers! Because in those years Russian was introduced and many of them did not even know the Russian alphabet! We, at least, after the education reform in '48, we'd learned some Russian.*<sup>182</sup> "For the sciences, teachers basically translated the textbooks from the Romanian school."<sup>183</sup> In fact, translation was a common practice, because not all fields of study had dedicated teaching materials. *We had subject matters, for example history, geography, and we had no [textbooks]: we read in Romanian and talked with the teacher; he told us things in Tatar and we – when he asked us to recite the lesson – also answered in Tatar.*<sup>184</sup>

In the late 50s, The Tatar Teacher Training School was closed, after having educated four series of graduates. *It was closed, because there was no need for teachers. Why? Because there were no more students who wanted to enrol*<sup>185</sup>. In informal discussions, some members of the ethnic group claim that the communist state at the time of the Romanian Popular Republic<sup>186</sup> was responsible for the closure of the Constanța high school. Tatar language primary schools were closed as well. *No, they closed by themselves! There were no more teachers, and no more students. Students did not attend them anymore. (So it wasn't the communist state...?) – No, no,*

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<sup>178</sup> Uteu Kyasedin, in Anca Enea, *Carte. Amintirile elevilor Școlii Pedagogice Mixte Tătare* (September 14, 2014), available at <http://www.romanialibera.ro/cultura/carte/carte--amintirile-elevilor-școlii-pedagogice-mixte-tatare-349831>, accessed on December 1, 2014.

<sup>179</sup> Umeiran Brăslășu, in A. Enea, *Carte...*

<sup>180</sup> Axeit Memli Omer, in Maria Bara, *Relații interetnice dintre creștinii ortodocși și musulmani în Dobrogea. Studiu de caz: Medgidia și Cobadin*, in "Philologica Jassyensia", year II, no. 1, 2006, p. 96.

<sup>181</sup> A confusion between Kazan (capital of Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic) and Kazakhstan (a former Soviet republic) occurs in the discourse of some members of the Dobruja Tatar community; for example, "Republic of Cazakhstan" – Axeit Memli Omer, in Bara, p. 96.

<sup>182</sup> A. A.

<sup>183</sup> Axeit Memli Omer, in Bara, p. 96.

<sup>184</sup> S. B.

<sup>185</sup> A. A.

<sup>186</sup> After the abolition of the monarchy, a system of "popular democracy" was installed in Romania; between 1947 and 1965 the country was called "Republica Populară Română – The Popular Republic of Romania".

*not the state. Well it was the state that established the Teacher Training High School No.*<sup>187</sup> In a number of communities/villages, Tatar was taught at the same time as Turkish, and, for a while, the latter persisted<sup>188</sup>, with the help of textbooks from Turkey<sup>189</sup>.

The field research has revealed that linguistic identity is a sensitive issue in the dialogue between two generations, that of the grandparents and that of the grandchildren. In addition to the initiatives and events organized by the Unions, linguistic practices are mainly carried out by the elderly. At home or in the public space, they chatter in their mother tongue, they teach young people songs, poems, and prayers (as confirmed by the formal and informal discussions with the latter). Their effort supports the efforts of teachers; but the perseverance of learners remains a sore point. *By the fourth grade, I used to practice with him in Turkish, both writing and reading. But after the fifth grade, when he stopped visiting me, the kind of...He started to forget. When I talk to him, I talk to him in Turkish, so that he should know. And he asks me again – and I say to him, 'It's ok that you're asking me, kid, but you've really forgotten? Don't you know how to speak anymore?'*<sup>190</sup> As they grow up, children seem to be harder to motivate to continue studying the "home" language. Their entourage is generally made up of people who do not speak Turkish or Tatar; even when they are native speakers (with both parents of Turkish or Tatar ethnicity), using the official language for a long time makes them unwilling to speak, or does not provide any reason for conversation in an archaic language, also perceived as archaic due to its association with a "traditional" environment. *As a joke, when my friends and I get together, we use a few Tatar phrases. But it's strictly for a joke: we don't talk like that.*<sup>191</sup>

The generations who – before going to school – had solid knowledge of their

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<sup>187</sup> A. A.

<sup>188</sup> The information collected in the field (during interviews) is not consistent with the information contained in various publications. Maria Bara (p. 96) mentions the introduction in schools, in 1956, of the Dobruja dialect, with a Latin alphabet (giving no details on the level of education where this measure was introduced). Also in the latter half of the 50s, several sources mention a decline in primary instruction in Tatar schools (there is no record of these schools, of the number of functional schools, no list of all localities where they were established and of when they opened, no student numbers etc.), caused mainly by difficulties in working with the textbooks from Kazan. In addition to the schools where Tatar was taught in the first grades, C. Gîlă also mentions the establishment of some secondary schools for the "numerous Muslim" population (p. 20); these schools disappeared at the end of the 50s (it is not known in what language they operated). In an unspecified period, "in the villages, they introduced the state education system in Turkish. In these schools pupils had two classes of Turkish per week, and the rest of the hours were allocated to education in Romanian." (p. 19) – Cristina Gîlă, *Civilizație musulmană în Dobrogea*, în "Educație interculturală dobrogeană – auxiliar didactic", Mădălin Roșioru ed., Asociația Pentru Resurse Culturale, Constanța, 2011, available at <http://www.resurseculturale.ro/volum2/img/Auxiliar.pdf>, accessed on May 24, 2013.

<sup>189</sup> Axeit Memli Omer, in Bara, p. 96.

<sup>190</sup> A. M., female, b. 1948, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, October 16, 2013.

<sup>191</sup> I. S.

mother tongue (and who, in some cases, did not speak the official language until they began to attend an educational institution and faced difficulties in learning it in the early years of school) seem to have the most difficult responsibility; i.e. that of convincing their offspring that learning Tatar is not merely an extra task, but a matter of ethics, of self-respect from the point of view of identity. These generations grew up in a period when many grandparents still had difficulties in speaking Romanian (if they spoke it at all), and required or demanded the exclusive<sup>192</sup> use of the Noghai or Kırım dialect. The oscillation between the family environment, which is attached to traditional values, and the heterogeneous and levelling social space illustrates the dilemma of several members of these generations. On the one hand, the routine of daily life estranges them from the specificity of their original culture; on the other hand, certain occasions (such as family celebrations, or the feasts taking place over the year and found only in Tatar communities – and sometimes in the Turkish communities of Dobruja) activate the sense of ethnic identity and, in some cases, the desire to transpose it in the future by handing it down to the young. Children and youth are called upon to consolidate their spiritual heritage by attending free courses, which are at the moment, the only systematic (and systematically promoted) way of doing so. "Send the children to study, so they can speak Tatar!"<sup>193</sup> Community school complements and consolidates the knowledge acquired within the family, especially through the grandparents. For them, ethnic identity coincides with linguistic identity. Admitting that times have changed, that the world has its own course and that acculturation takes more and more forms, (some of) the elderly continue to believe that their linguistic specificity should not be affected by any social, political, cultural or any other kind of change.

### **List of Interviewees**

A. A., male, b. 1935, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

E. A.-G., female, b. 1970, interview conducted by S. Preda in Ovidiu, September 25, 2013.

I. A., female, b. 1976, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 5, 2013.

Z. B., female, b. 1946, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.

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<sup>192</sup> The field research revealed the existence of such people, especially elderly and very elderly, some of whom spoke Romanian with difficulty and did not always understand the questions included in the interview guide; there were some with whom, due to this fact, the dialogue was not carried out.

<sup>193</sup> This appeal was launched by UDTTMR, on the stage and at the end of the International Festival of the Turkish-Tatar Folk Costume, Dance and Song, 20th edition, August 28 - 31, 2014, Constanța.

V. B., female, b. 1968, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 6, 2013.  
A. B., male, b. 1928, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 2, 2013.  
S. B., female, b. 1938, female, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 2, 2013.  
N. D., male, b. 1948, interview conducted by S. Preda in Techirghiol, August 28, 2014.  
I. I., male, b. 1992, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, July 23, 2013.  
A. M., female, b. 1948, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, October 16, 2013.  
N. P., female, b. 1977, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 23, 2013.  
I. S., female, b. 1995, interview conducted by S. Preda in Lumina, September 22, 2013.  
R. S., female, b. 1939, interview conducted by S. Preda in Castelu, September 2, 2014.

## Preserving Ethnicity in the Turkish Enclave from Dobruja

*In our discussions taking place around 1990 – in the early '90s – the former president of Turkey, Süleyman Demirel, told me we should take into account three things, and in a strict order. First, we are Romanian citizens; then, we are Turks, by nationality; and then, we are Muslims. He said 'As long as you mix them and keep this order, you will not have any troubles anywhere.'*<sup>194</sup>

One character feature, especially noticed by the elderly, is strength of commitment. The Turk keeps his promise, and therefore was and is recognized by other nations as a guarantor of morality. *A man of honour, the Turk didn't lie, didn't steal from you, noo...*<sup>195</sup>. Honour – a concept that includes other related features (hospitality, protection, generosity, nobleness)<sup>196</sup>, mentioned by different sources as individualizing the Turks – characterizes the peoples of the Balkan area, as well as many Muslim populations. "The stranger, even if he is evil-minded, if he asks for shelter, the host has to grant it to him. And when he enters his house, the host must protect the guest's life, even with his own life"<sup>197</sup>. Reflecting an "ethics of integrity, of nobleness in body and soul"<sup>198</sup>, correctness seems to be ingrained in the Turk's genetic makeup, *'cause that's what he was like, built to be honest'*<sup>199</sup>. From the way he keeps his word to the purity of the bride<sup>200</sup>, in deeds and in words, honesty becomes an identity card, a resource of the individual and community: *among us, if your words aren't honest, you'd better stay home! Honesty matters!*<sup>201</sup> This quality equally represents an ethnic and a social model. *We were good neighbours. As a matter of fact, there are many, let's say, stories, saying that when the Romanian neighbour left, he gave his house keys to the Turk, not to his Romanian neighbour! (Laughs)*<sup>202</sup>. The rules of conduct generate an ideal model of self-image<sup>203</sup>, which quite explicitly illustrates the dialectic of belonging-exclusion, produced by a definition which has a moralizing role and is constructed not for "us", but for "them".

A declared source of probity is confessional identity, extremely important (especially in self-identifications) to both Dobruja Turks and Dobruja Tatars. When

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<sup>194</sup> F. O., male, b. 1958, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 4, 2013.

<sup>195</sup> A. M.

<sup>196</sup> M. P. di Bella, in P. Bonte, M. Izard, p. 485.

<sup>197</sup> Mehmet Ali Ekrem, *Din istoria turcilor dobrogeni*, Kriterion, București, 1994, p. 198.

<sup>198</sup> Campbell, 1964, cited by M. P. di Bella, in P. Bonte, M. Izard, p. 485.

<sup>199</sup> A. M.

<sup>200</sup> *Well, you know, before, the bride, when she was a bride, it was a shame, she was covered! And not white. Red, pink. Anyway she was covered. Not like she is now. Now, oh dear... – S. M., female, 88 years old, interview conducted by S. Preda in Mangalia, August 25, 2014.*

<sup>201</sup> Female, 66 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.

<sup>202</sup> F. O.

<sup>203</sup> Smaranda Vultur, *The Image of the good European*, in "Interculturalism and Discrimination in Romania. Policies, Practices, Identities and Representations" (François Rüegg, Rudolf Poledna, Calin Rus, ed.), Lit Verlag, Berlin, 2006, p. 309.

starting a project, people sometimes distinguish individuals according to criteria of ethnicity, and especially faith. *I couldn't fully trust the Turks either. 'Cause that's the way man is! But I'd rather set up a business – when the time comes – with a Turk. (In this sense, would you distinguish between a Turk and a Tatar?) – No! We rely a lot on religion, on... Don't lie, don't cheat, don't... And if I see that he's also a believer, he goes up in my estimation and I begin to trust that person.*<sup>204</sup> Without being exclusive, "ethno-confessionalism" indicates a tendency to associate with the known other, who is closer due to the familiarity which springs from a "traditionalist" conceptualization of identity (the maximum valuation of certain components such as origin, language and religion). Invested with positive attributes intrinsically, by way of his origin, and not because these attributes have been demonstrated, the Turk or Tatar neighbour may be replaced by a member of another minority or of the majority who demonstrates the qualities valued by the one who makes the judgement. *As long as I consider him a friend, I think he is trustworthy, any time I choose him.*<sup>205</sup> The complex diagnosis of the Turkish and Tatar ethnic specificity made by Mictat Gârlan<sup>206</sup> indicates the top position occupied by religious faith (alongside traditionalism) within the cultural style of the two Turkic groups in Dobruja.

For Muslims, the teachings of the Holy Book regulate not just religious practices, but also the conduct within society. *Cause this is what the Quran reads: be honest, do not covet your neighbours, and help them*<sup>207</sup>. The guidance provided by religious education and coercion is enforced by the fact that infringements bring about severe consequences. The Quran, in the Surat Al-Ma'idah, states that theft brings not only condemnation by humans, but also the punishment of Allah, as it is an offense not only to the injured party, but also to Divinity<sup>208</sup>. The capital importance held (up until almost the present day) by religious prescriptions, by the teachings that governed almost all areas of the believers' lives and resulted from the text of the Quran, is also confirmed by the establishment of Muslim courts. During the decades following the inclusion of Dobruja in the Romanian state, they regulated "matters regarding family organization, parental power, marriage, divorce and inheritances without a testament"<sup>209</sup>. Although individuals had the option of addressing the official courts, these eventually also assessed the cases in keeping with Muslim tradition. This illustrates how important the model of religious justice was to Turks and Tatars (qadiates were organized in such a way that they could shelter and feed the persons involved in different cases<sup>210</sup>). On the other hand, the functioning of courts reflects the persistence – even after they no longer were under Ottoman tutelage – of the Eastern culture and civilization, of the way of life specific to the two communities,

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<sup>204</sup> E. M., male, b. 1991, interview conducted by S. Preda, M. Dincă in Constanța, September 27, 2013.

<sup>205</sup> E. M.

<sup>206</sup> M. Gârlan, p. 214 and p. 235.

<sup>207</sup> A. M.

<sup>208</sup> *Coranul cel Sfânt, Traducerea sensurilor și comentarii* (1st edition), Asociația Studenților Musulmani din România (ed.), Islam, Timișoara, 1997, p. 417.

<sup>209</sup> N. Ibram, p. 66.

<sup>210</sup> K. R., female, b. 1924, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 3, 2014.

which continued to live (as far as possible), according to models transmitted since times immemorial.

*We've lived – our grandparents, our great-grandparents, our parents and ourselves, in perfect harmony. We've had no conflict or anything like that.*<sup>211</sup> The ability to live alongside others, to accept and understand difference, is indicated as another characteristic of the Ottomans' heirs. It reminds of the Empire's spirit of tolerance, wherein different populations could maintain their religion, a certain degree of autonomy, certain privileges, "as the Ottoman policy did not rely on such principles as *divide et impera* or religious homogenization"<sup>212</sup>. "Inter-ethnic and inter-confessional viability"<sup>213</sup> is no doubt one of the inheritances of the multi-ethnic state, dissolved at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. *We, the Turks, are very tolerant and very friendly*<sup>214</sup>. Turks appreciate meeting any Other, arguing that getting along with the various linguistic and confessional communities originates in their kind and peaceful nature. *This is what we're like, us Turks, we're calmer.*<sup>215</sup> The cliché of the bloody<sup>216</sup> and merciless Turk – which nowadays still short-circuits collective mentality and alternative history textbooks – is left behind, at least at the level of local past, as demonstrated by the hetero- and self-identifications regarding the low dominance and aggressiveness of Turks in Dobruja<sup>217</sup>. In a regional assessment of social distance, beyond the occasional stigmatizing considerations resulted from a certain manner of presenting national history (not only by scholars, but also by ordinary people), opinions on Turks – as well as Romanians, Greeks or Tatars, for example – were positive<sup>218</sup>.

*We, the Turks, are the largest community in Dobruja, I believe. Not Turks: I mean Muslims. There aren't that many Turks left. There are more Tatars. And I think that we're the largest community in Dobruja. Turks and Tatars.*<sup>219</sup> Considered separately from the Tatars and according to the 2011 census, Turks represent the second largest ethnic group in Dobruja (27,698 people)<sup>220</sup>. Both communities

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<sup>211</sup> V. B.

<sup>212</sup> Serin Türkoğlu, *Moştenirea otomană în Balcani*, in "Hakses", no. 7(216)/2013, p. 19.

<sup>213</sup> Ester Benbassa, 1993, p. 101, cited by Marianne Mesnil, *Maladia identitară sau miza unei cartografii culturale a Europei*, in C. Papa et alli, p. 40.

<sup>214</sup> V. B.

<sup>215</sup> F. O.

<sup>216</sup> "In the Ottoman Empire, there were no pogroms, ethnic cleansing or mass expulsions of the non-Muslim population." – N. Ibram, p. 21. One of the reasons for maintaining normality and certain freedoms in favor of the subdued ethnic groups derives from economic considerations, as Christians had to pay much higher taxes than Muslims.

<sup>217</sup> M. Gârlan, p. 213.

<sup>218</sup> Mihaela Naidin Sandu, *Diversitate etnoculturală și interacțiune socială. Studiu de caz Dobrogea* (PhD thesis abstract, Bucharest University, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Bucharest, 2012, p. 19, available at: <http://www.unibuc.ro/studies/index.php?path=Doctorate2012Mai%2F>.

<sup>219</sup> A. M.

<sup>220</sup> *Recensământul populației*, in "Hakses", no. 7(216)/2013, p. 22.



challenge the official numbers<sup>221</sup>, also criticizing the recording procedures used by census takers. *According to our estimates, we and the Tatars are about 100,000. Not about 60,000, as...For example, in Babadag, where there are over 3,000 ethnic Turks, none was recorded in the census! You see?... (None?) – Yes! (How did it happen?) – Well, I don't know...In Babadag there are supposed to be about 70-80 ethnic Turks, according to the record? Out of more than 3,000<sup>222</sup> – 3,000 then, and now, 200.*<sup>223</sup> The statements of the UDTR and UDTTMR leaders are based on internal assessments, on *very accurate verification*<sup>224</sup>, provided by the records kept by the imams, who closely know the Muslim communities, the number of believers in each and every settlement.

However, numbers are not everything: prestige comes from the fact that we *are a beautiful community*, a beauty resulting from *beautiful traditions*<sup>225</sup>. In the interlocutor's opinion, the individuality of the group of origin does not derive from ethnicity. *I don't think that you can be in a certain way due to ethnicity*<sup>226</sup>. "The identity referent *par excellence*"<sup>227</sup>, ethnicity becomes meaningful to the extent to which the culture distinguishes it. Filiation – a certain filiation – becomes one of the components of the identity construct by providing placement in a story, the story of origin. Ethnicity starts with "the cultural interpretation of origin"<sup>228</sup> and continues with other items, such as kinship, religion, etc. *I can't say that our community is different from others: just because you're a Turk, you are in a certain way.*<sup>229</sup> Current cultural codes see ethnicity as a generator of culture (a specific culture, among other specific cultures). Without having a content of its own, "being only what various people try to make of it"<sup>230</sup>, ethnicity is perpetuated as long as it renews the meaning of the cultural difference between "Us" and "the Others".<sup>231</sup> The traditional identity markers have not changed, but interest in their content has diminished. Language, for

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<sup>221</sup> Several Tatar respondents say that, for various reasons (discussed in the chapter on the identity of Tatars in Dobruja), some members of their ethnic group declare themselves (formally and/or informally) as "Turks".

<sup>222</sup> F. O.

<sup>223</sup> E. I., male, b. 1975, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 4, 2013.

<sup>224</sup> F. O.

<sup>225</sup> N. P.

<sup>226</sup> In her PhD thesis abstract, M. Naidin Sandu shows that the application of the Wilcoxon Test on several ethnic groups in the area has revealed many discrepancies regarding the significant difference between group and individual weighted averages. The author notes that "Turks, Lippovan Russians and Armenians did not identify any ethnic attributes that would differentiate them from the others and would reveal a self-stereotype which characterizes them as an ethnic group. Their perception, even of the positive attributes, overlaps with the attributes characterizing people in general. From this point of view, we cannot talk about a clear and distinct ethnic identity of these groups, as they take over the characteristics of people in general." (p. 18).

<sup>227</sup> B. Vienne, *Identitate*, in P. Bonte, M. Izard, p. 754.

<sup>228</sup> C. F. Keyes, 1981, cited by B. Vienne, in P. Bonte, M. Izard, p. 754.

<sup>229</sup> N. P.

<sup>230</sup> A. C. Taylor, *Etnie*, in P. Bonte, M. Izard, p. 216-217.

<sup>231</sup> F. Barth, cited by A. C. Taylor, in P. Bonte, M. Izard, p. 216.

example, is no longer a mark: not because Turks do not speak Turkish anymore, but because they also speak Romanian, and are beginning to use it more than their mother tongue. *When we, the Turks meet, here, at the Union, have you noticed? People speak Turkish among...? (Well, I was thinking it's because I am here that they speak in Romanian...) – And when you close the door, don't you hear that people keep on speaking in Romanian? No, I can't say that language... I'd say it's our beautiful traditions. Yes, look, we have some very beautiful traditions, which we are trying to preserve.*<sup>232</sup> Ethnification<sup>233</sup>, the reiteration of prominent, remarkable segments of the intangible patrimony, seems to be, if not the key to the recovery of the old status, at least the way to the preservation of culture and, implicitly, of the ethnic being.

Why does this type of legitimation matter? And how?<sup>234</sup> Fears generated by the hybridization of culture – to the point in which new generations will find themselves in a state of confusion about their cultural inheritance, oscillating between the standardized culture and the one their grandparents valued, seen as a relic with which they have less and less in common – explain the repeated references to the spiritual and material products that individualize their ethnicity. Those who relate to them (the age groups that came in direct contact with the relevant assets) do so mainly in a discursive manner. For them, the values of the native culture represent salient parts of ethnic identity. Experience that is direct and still quantifiable (through each individual and his/her story), and not time, is what turns cultural inheritance into a memory, and not an impersonal account which has inevitably crossed into archived history. "On an 'individual' level, 'the past' is memory; on a collective level, it is history."<sup>235</sup> For those who relate to the cultural identity of "the elders" only through the stories of others, their own identity has occasionally become history: it has become passive or was entirely buried. One of the factors blamed for this is "Romanianization", seen in oral documents as a process of transformation undergone by the Dobruja Turk or Tatar<sup>236</sup>. Another cause, the inertia of group members, is one that still can be fought against: *finally, it depends on us, as a minority, it depends on each family.*<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> N. P.

<sup>233</sup> "A second cultural logic that reasserts the particular is ethnification. Ethnification is about the assertion of local identity, especially amid the experience of social change and cultural instability. [...] Ethnification may be either a process of rediscovery of a forgotten identity or ethnogenesis [...]" – Robert J. Schreiter, *The Changing Contexts of intercultural Theology: a Global View*, in "Studia Missionalia", vol. 45, 1996, p. 377.

<sup>234</sup> Beth S. Epstein, *Collective Terms. Race, Culture, and Community in a State-Planned City in France*, Berghahn Books, 2011, p. 9.

<sup>235</sup> Jenkins, 1996, p. 28, cited by Florentina Scârnci, *Studiu calitativ asupra condiției identitare a managerului din România*, in "Revista Română de Sociologie", year XXII, no. 1-2, București, 2011, available at <http://www.revistadesociologie.ro/pdf-uri/nr.1-2-2011/07-FScirnci.pdf>, accessed on December 7, 2014, p. 150.

<sup>236</sup> This perception is encountered in several local ethnic groups and is commonly associated with the communist regime. We documented this process in the case of the Czech-speaking *Pemi* minority, in south-western Romania, in the study "Istorie și memorie în comunitățile cehilor din Clisura Dunării", Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2010.

<sup>237</sup> S. T.

Romanianization, which merges acculturation and enculturation, highlights the interlocutors' regret, their nostalgia for those elements which used to set them apart from the majority population. The fact that the interviewees are on good terms with the Romanians does not prevent them from believing that their borrowings from the Romanian majority have altered their ethnic being and their cultural particularities. Understood more or less as a negative-impact phenomenon, this represents one of the indicators of inter-generation difference, whether it comes in the shape of an adopted custom or of the inclusion, over time, of Romanians in the most intimate area of the group, the family. (*What do you think about the Turks today, as compared to the Turks of 50 years ago?*) – *They're no longer, everything's changed. They married a Romanian man, they married a Turkish woman. The Turkish woman married a Romanian. No proper Baptism, no proper marriage, no... Everything's...*<sup>238</sup> Romanianization is seen as much more intrusive, because a Romanian taking the position of husband/wife has a more powerful, direct impact, compared to the step by step penetration, at the community level, of certain models and cultural practices.

For other people in the group studied, ethnicity is "transactional", subject to historical variations, "to the ongoing event"<sup>239</sup>, dependent on the individual's perspective. In such cases, taking over elements from different culture areas, or social patterns, acquires the significance of a naturally developed, tacit assimilation, of a connection to contemporaneity, to its course. (*Is there a desire, among young people, to leave to, to become residents of the Republic of Turkey?*) – *No. No. Because the mentality is entirely different and I, born and grown here, I couldn't move there, I couldn't hold up there, because they have a different mentality... I don't know, I don't... The Turks in Romania are very modern. And they... How should I put it? They integrated very well here and have the same mentality, there are very, very few things that are different as compared to the Romanians. While over there they are not so libertine, so... Well.*<sup>240</sup> The narrator sets himself up as the voice of community, in a "supra-referential"<sup>241</sup> language, regarding the ethnic group, appreciating the country of origin, but claiming legitimacy by resorting to the culture where they were born and educated.

The common origin of the Dobruja Turks and of their congeners in the Republic of Turkey does not translate into a fully similar mental horizon. From the perspective of this identity marker, a net differentiation between "us" and "them" emerges. In relation to the Romanian majority, however, the "otherness" has been attenuated, "they" have become close to "us" by force of certain historical circumstances. The difference in blood, in ancestry between the Turkish minority and the Romanian majority was superseded by the levelling effect of culture. The reference to a common ancestor remains a form of identification in relation to other groups, but loses its force in the relation with an otherness with whom they have

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<sup>238</sup> M. S., female, octogenarian, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, October 16, 2013.

<sup>239</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking ethnicity: arguments and explorations*, Sage, 2001, p. 79.

<sup>240</sup> N. P.

<sup>241</sup> E. Benveniste, cited by Claude Dubar, *Criza identităților: interpretarea unei mutații*, Știința, Chișinău, 2003, p. 202.

coexisted for so long. The gradual abandonment of endogamic principles, the increasing number of friendship relationships in the neighbourhood and at work, have strengthened the prevalence of personal, individual relationships over the isolation of the community, which was strictly maintained until a few decades ago. Especially in rural settlements, neighbourhood (through its forms of manifestation: solidarity, mutual aid<sup>242</sup>) has resulted not only in positions of power, but also in communion, closeness, a feeling of belonging to a coherent organic structure, made up of people who may have different origins, but nonetheless understand each other, and each other's cultural models. *For example, we don't do laundry on a Friday, because it's a holiday. And my mother doesn't do laundry on Sundays either. As a child, 'Mom, I get it, Friday is a holiday, but Sunday? 'And she says, 'Well, you see, we shouldn't, it's a holiday for our neighbours, the Romanians, and we shouldn't be spilling suds or hanging out laundry on their holiday.' It's the same on Easter, we never hang out our laundry or... So, all the time, with this kind of tacit and very subtle respect.*<sup>243</sup> The changes which occurred at the scale of Grand History became imprinted in people's ethnic being, to such an extent that some respondents assume a position of similarity to *others*, on behalf of their group. Individual identities are "taken" from the identity of "Us"<sup>244</sup>. *Turks act just like Romanians. There's no difference, you don't know if someone's a Turk or...*<sup>245</sup>. The fact that they attend the same educational system, the similarity in moral values, and in practices related to various aspects of life, the use of the same language all determine the speaker to become reflective about his/her ethnic identification, by that *you don't even know*, left in suspense, which (also) suggests that the sense of difference has been lost.

The difference becomes more visible when approaching the connection with the Republic of Turkey, the place which is often referred to, by virtue of an ancient filiation and affinity. *We, over here, the Turks in Romania, we have many rights that we have been granted by the Romanian state; and Turkey...It's the mother country. But, that's all!*<sup>246</sup> After 1989, Turkey has been discovered through personal experiences by the diaspora in Romania; to some of the Muslims in Dobruja, the differences in the system of values are too significant and prevent them from adapting, from settling there. In the interviewees' opinion, the obligation to comply with religious laws, with certain specified or implicit social rules, restricts their freedom, the liberalness with which they are accustomed in the Romanian society. *From posture, or outfit, to certain things related to education*<sup>247</sup>, the differences they mention depict the Turkish society as a foreign country, despite the linguistic and religious identity. Perspectives are different, depending on the reasons for going to Turkey and the time spent there. To those who are there to work and have rather

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<sup>242</sup> Gabriela Coman, *Vecinătățile fără vecini*, in Gabriela Coman, Ferenc Pozsony, Anne Schiltz, Vasile Șoflău, "Vecini și Vecinătăți în Transilvania" (Vintilă Mihăilescu, ed.), Paideia, 2002, p. 111.

<sup>243</sup> S. T.

<sup>244</sup> Norbert Elias, in C. Dubar, p. 22.

<sup>245</sup> Z. M.

<sup>246</sup> V. B.

<sup>247</sup> V. B.

limited contact with the local people, the other who shares the same blood, language and religion seems a stranger, in contrast with the Romanian neighbour, who has become close as a result of many years of coexistence. *Well, it's not like over here. What's over there? It's...a life of...work there. That's it. Work and work again. No fun like home, on Saturday, Sunday, when you go out, you go for a walk, no.*<sup>248</sup> The "Us" is defined by the sense of communion that has developed over time, based on knowledge, understanding, and acceptance. The Turkish citizen remains a cultural other, with whom communication can be established easily, but with whom interaction and the things that result from it are often missing. *There, it's everyone for himself. There, you won't see the neighbours going out, like we do, visiting a neighbour, making a barbecue; no: there, they stay with their own.*<sup>249</sup> In fact, the way in which they relate to their congeners demonstrates the importance of social identity, and of affiliation to a community of neighbourhoods, structured by a shared history, memory and experience. Some of the Dobruja Turks narrate a story of origins which speaks about the extensive Ottoman Empire, its greatness and achievements; others particularly value local history, placed in the recent past, where Turks find their place alongside many other ethnic groups, living together in a way which is described as balanced, based on mutual respect and on an accurate sense of the social distances between groups.

The fact that identity narratives resort to various historical references can be explained by a double motivation and perspective. Firstly, there is the belief in the continuity of the Empire's heritage – the Turks in Dobruja being regarded as descendants of the Ottomans and bearers of a culture and civilization which had an impact on world history. *It's a pride (laughs), a feeling of pride, that we are still here and we weren't... exiled, or... And the good news is that we can live here as a minority. The state helps us; there is no discrimination, there are no differences. We also have mosques, it's ok. Schools.*<sup>250</sup> This belief was perpetuated in an environment pervaded by the spiritual charge of Eastern values, in a Dobruja seen as a kind of microclimate, an area with a special "cultural temperament"<sup>251</sup>, whose contours were, in fact, also traced by the Muslims. "Here, on the ancient land between the Danube and the Sea, which is Dobruja, we feel at home. Here, we are at home. Here, we have identified with the Romanians' European ideals, preserving our identity, our particularities of origin, language and Islamic religion, of our Islamic and Turkic culture."<sup>252</sup> A familiar theme is apparent here, namely the general discourse about the harmonious plurality which exists in the area, about the Other as a resource and as a mirror, about borrowings in various fields of life, about living together without friction (or about the wisdom of overcoming tensions). The peaceful coexistence (of groups distinguished by origin, language, religion, customs, norms etc.) always generates a similar kind of discourse, typical for areas where interculturality is the result of a range of good practices. In this respect, Dobruja is an example of one of

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<sup>248</sup> V. V., male, middle age, interview conducted by S. Preda in Cumpăna, August 21, 2014.

<sup>249</sup> V. V.

<sup>250</sup> E. M.

<sup>251</sup> Magda Cârneci, *Ancheta*, in "A Treia Europă", no. 3-4/2000, Polirom, 2000, p. 13.

<sup>252</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *1 Decembrie*, in "Haksas", no 12 (78)/2001, p. 1.

those "de-dramatized encounters" (such as Banat), breathing the same "peaceful, invigorating, paradisiacal"<sup>253</sup> atmosphere.

Finally, references to recent history support the process of group self-identification, the relationship with the adoptive country, for which, ever since 1878, they have had feelings of faith and devotion. The by no means negligible number of immigrants to the Empire and, afterwards, to Turkey, after the incorporation of the area into Romania and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>254</sup>, did not destroy or reduce commitment to the Romanian state. The Turks are described as *obedient*<sup>255</sup>, "loving our good country Romania, being respectful"<sup>256</sup>, and portrayed in interwar documents as peaceful and devoted "to the interests of the country"<sup>257</sup>. Therefore, they are among the loyal minorities; they are less visible outside the boundaries of the region, they do not make any claims of autonomy, and consider themselves to be in perfect harmony with the local society. "Minority conformists are those who make a point of systematically including in their discourse references to the fact that they are loyal citizens of Romania, that they feel at home in Romania, also stressing the fact that they have good relationships with both the institutions of the Romanian state and their fellow-countrymen who belong to the majority."<sup>258</sup>

After the union with the country, the adaptation to new political, administrative, and social realities represented an effort for the ethnic Turks. Their archaic way of life ("refractory towards the new conditions of modern life, they still rudimentarily deal with farming and livestock breeding, particularly horses"<sup>259</sup>) was given up only gradually; it is difficult to say to what extent the situation of other ethnic groups in the area was much different. However, the Muslims who stayed in the former Ottoman province remained confident in the benefits of this transformation. "We, ethnic Turks, fought for the ideals of Greater Romania, of modern Romania."<sup>260</sup> This is demonstrated not only by the fact that they were declared full citizens of the Romanian state, but also by the fact that this status was implemented, despite difficult circumstances. *One can also check: I don't think there was any Turk who deserted from the Romanian army.*<sup>261</sup> The respondent does not merely formulate a prestigious image of his in-group, but he invites us to examine and

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<sup>253</sup> A. Babeți, 2007, cited by Maria Chiș, *Livius Ciocârlie - Rețetele centralității*, in "Banatul din memorie. Studii de caz" (Smaranda Vultur, coord.), Marineasa, Timișoara, 2008, p. 73.

<sup>254</sup> For an overview of the causes of this phenomenon and some of the most important works of related literature, see N. Ibram, p. 19-20.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>256</sup> Hafuz Rifat Efendi (Mufti of Constanța County), in "Dobrogea Nouă", no. 1, April 14, 1914, in N. Ibram, p. 65.

<sup>257</sup> N. Ibram, p. 64 (note 109).

<sup>258</sup> Călin Ruș, *Relațiile interculturale din România – o perspectivă psihosociologică*, in "Interculturalitate", Rudolf Poledna, François Ruegg, Călin Ruș (ed.), Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 51.

<sup>259</sup> Alexandru P. Arbore, *Din Etnografia Dobrogei – Contribuțiuni la așezările tătarilor și turcilor în Dobrogea* (excerpt from "Arhiva Dobrogei", vol. II, 1919), Tipografia Curții Regale F. Gobl Fii, București, 1920, p. 41.

<sup>260</sup> N. Ibram, *1 Decembrie*, p. 1.

<sup>261</sup> F. O.

confirm it, starting from examples of devotion to the country from among his community members. *You realize that eight centuries have passed, right? Since we've been Romanians. (laughs) ('Since we've been Romanians'?) – Yes. (laughs) (You feel you're both Romanian and Turkish?) – Yes, equally, not... We are citizens of Romania and we act as such.*<sup>262</sup> This categorization of the group of origin delineates a social identity of the Turks as individuals connected to a state which provides them with a variety of rights and through which their sense of belonging, of equality, of communion is constructed. "As Romanian citizens of Turkish ethnicity, settled here for centuries, by the will of destiny, we feel good the way we are. That is, Turks, Romanians, Europeans."<sup>263</sup>

### List of Interviewees

Female, 66 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin, March 2014.  
E. M., male, b. 1991, interview conducted by S. Preda, M. Dincă in Constanța, September 27, 2013.  
S. M., female, 88 years old, interview conducted by S. Preda in Mangalia, August 25, 2014.  
F. O., male, b. 1958, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 4, 2013.  
K. R., female, b. 1924, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 3, 2014.  
M. S., female, octogenarian, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, October 16, 2013.  
V. V., male, middle age, interview conducted by S. Preda in Cumpăna, August 21, 2014.

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<sup>262</sup> F. O.

<sup>263</sup> N. Ibram, *1 Decembrie*, p. 1.

## Kırım Tatars: Constructing Self-identity in Late Modernity

*To shine, today our Tatars no longer need a sword.*<sup>264</sup>

The self-image of today's Tatars reveals multiple positionings, defined by such factors as age, sense of ethnicity, area of residence, and level of education. A review of the formal and informal conversations conducted in the field reveals the dominance of a self-identification which takes into account human qualities, alongside references to ethnicity and positionings generated by their awareness of their status as a minority integrated in the Romanian society and culture. Another marker, more or less suggested by the interviewers, namely the representations of neighbouring groups, generated mainly images and values of their own ethnic group, which simultaneously reflect the neighbouring *other* with whom they share a long history, of conflicts, concessions, truces, cooperation, peace and understanding.

Probably the most substantial contribution of the oral documents resulting from field research consists in the fact that they add another version to the "vulgata" of the historical Tatar, to paraphrase Liviu Chelcea's words<sup>265</sup>, thus contributing to our understanding of the ethnic Tatar. Researchers themselves can admit to having been the prisoners of clichés before going in the field, by virtue of a stock of knowledge acquired through the official education system and by reading history and/or fiction books. This set of knowledge, while not unfounded, documents extinct realities. Today's Tatars of the Dobruja enclave have their own way of relating to the succession of ages: their stories are worth listening to, not (only) in order to eliminate ignorance (for what else is, above all, stereotype?), but to learn who the Tatars of modern times are, as they believe they are, and as they choose to present themselves.

The story of their own origins is a component of their identity structure, revalued after 1989, when stories about Crimea were no longer prohibited by the communist state. Mostly spread within the family, the narratives of the past quarter century are more detailed due to the fact that information could circulate more easily and, above all, that people had the opportunity to investigate their own past and were interested in doing so. However, only part of the community were preoccupied with such things, especially those concerned about the decline of their spiritual heritage, who believed that cohesion was beneficial in perpetuating the ethnic being. *Our ethnic group, sort of... tries to regroup: we don't ask for territories, we don't ask for inheritances, no, we don't!*<sup>266</sup> – *Nor for autonomy!*<sup>267</sup> – *In order to keep our language, our customs and traditional costumes.*<sup>268</sup> – *Our origin.*<sup>269</sup> – *The songs, the customs,*

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<sup>264</sup> Vildan Anefi, *Tătarii pot și trebuie să contribuie la îmbogățirea patrimoniului cultural universal*, in "Karadeñiz", no. 11(246)/2013, p. 27.

<sup>265</sup> Liviu Chelcea, Puiu Lățea, *România profundă în comunism*, Nemira, București, 2000, p. 25, note 6.

<sup>266</sup> S. M., male, b. 1951, interview conducted by S. Preda in Mangalia, September 1, 2014.

<sup>267</sup> Z. I., male, 55 years old, interview conducted by S. Preda in Mangalia, September 1, 2014.

<sup>268</sup> S. M.



*all these things. (Regrouping? A conscious policy?) – It's not a policy, but it's something of which we are aware, because we're no longer separated. Because, in the old times, each of us went sort of where he could and tried to live alone. (What do you mean by old times?) – During communism. We were starting to separate, even to become solitary. We used to get together only at weddings or events. Now, with an organized festival<sup>270</sup>, with I don't know what, in my opinion, this is regrouping, getting together, getting to know each other. Even if afterwards each of us goes back to his daily life, to his job, business, to everything, his home. But by trying to get together now and then, by organizing different events, we assert our Tatar personality which we don't want to lose.<sup>271</sup>*

What almost all community members know about their existence in south-eastern Romania is related to the episode of Crimea coming under Russian dominion, which was the reason for their ancestors' exile to Dobruja, among other places. The mass departure from their native territories had started earlier, in the last two decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>272</sup> *Our coming here was... As far as I know... Was in the 1800 or 1735.<sup>273</sup> – The largest emigration of the Crimean people was in 1718-1853. My great-grandparents came from there, from the area of Crimea. Yes, so this period between 1718 and 1853 was the largest emigration. It was the time of the tsarist, of the Russian regime.<sup>274</sup> – Which laid down some conditions. And they emigrated... And then, the Ottoman Empire placed them somewhere and gave them names, things like that.<sup>275</sup>* Time references indicate stages of the long "Russian genocide"<sup>276</sup>, which culminated in the Crimean War and whose outcome is remembered in the popular memory as the decisive moment for the Tatars' coming to Dobruja. Group identity is constructed based on the interlocutors' biographies, as a "story of existence"<sup>277</sup>. Usually, young people only know (via oral sources, subject to implacable

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<sup>269</sup> Z. I.

<sup>270</sup> International Festival of the Turkish-Tatar Folk Costume, Dance and Song, 20th edition, August 28 - 31, 2014, Constanța.

<sup>271</sup> S. M.

<sup>272</sup> M. Gârlan, p. 224.

<sup>273</sup> H. A., male, b. 1943, male, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Ovidiu, April 4, 2014.

<sup>274</sup> G. A., male.

<sup>275</sup> H. A. *In the time of Sultan Abdul Medgid (Abdülmecid I, A/N.) very many came from Crimea and he somehow helped them settle in Medgidia* – G. I., female, 39 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, September 2013. The disappearance of Abdülmecid I (in 1861) did not put an end to the Ottoman aid, as in the same year, the Empire facilitated the settlement of other Tatar refugees from the southern part of the peninsula – F. Kaunitz, cited by M. A. Ekrem, p. 50. Tatars had also migrated to the Turkish territories earlier, in 1783, along with the annexation of Crimea. – Alfred J. Rieber, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands: From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War*, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 56.

<sup>276</sup> Taner Murat, *Postfață – 'Tatarlar' – 'Tătarii', roman în două volume scris de Güner Akmolla*, in Güner Akmolla, *Tătarii*, vol. II, Boldaş, Constanța, 2011, p. 336.

<sup>277</sup> Thede Kahl, *Întrebări și metode ale cercetării coexistenței interreligioase în Europa de Sud-Est*, in "Philologica Jassyensia", year II, no. 1/2006, p. 138.

alteration<sup>278</sup>) that their ancestors came from the northern part of the Black Sea, while their parents can retrace their genealogical path up to the time when the Tatars settled across the sea. *My father is the fourth generation of Crimean Tatars who came from Crimea, from the Crimean steppes.*<sup>279</sup> The experience of otherness – also facilitated by the good practices of multiculturalism in Dobruja – helps young people to position themselves in relation to the layers of their identity, and add the status of Romanian citizen to that of member of a group that is distinct, as a nation and (partially) as a culture. *I am a Crimean Tatar, I'm from Crimea. My great-grandparents came from Crimea*<sup>280</sup>. In the absence of the connections with an almost mythical space (constructed more by stories and by the sense of belonging to a legendary ethnicity than by direct experience), identification rather seems to be of an ideological nature. Young people believe that the past, regardless of how glorious it was, cannot guide them. With Crimea, *we don't have any... relationships. (Who do you mean by 'we'?) – The young Tatars! I, personally, and those who are my close friends, we don't have.. any kind of preconception or... leaning towards such a thing.*<sup>281</sup> Discovered after 1989 through visits organized by the UDTTMR, Crimea is (not only for many of the young) a virtual entity towards which they cannot develop any loyalty, belonging to the register of subjective minority categories (such as the consciousness of citizenship)<sup>282</sup>. *We know that we are Tatars and this is related to... To us, being a Tatar is related to the family, to how we behave within the family, to tradition, feasts, religion and that's all.*<sup>283</sup> Thus perceived, self-identification as a Tatar is based on a set of practices, within a definite and, at the same time, intimate space, wherefrom its somewhat secondary placement within individual biography. Given the fact that this identity is modelled outside the field of extended social relations (particularly appreciated by today's young people), an identity which differentiates rather than brings people together, nowadays the Tatar "hypostasis" embodies a more abstract, changeless identity, resulting from a succession of political and historical circumstances, assumed by its bearers as an unfortunate destiny.

If for part of the Dobrujan community identification with the land of the ancestors remains historical and symbolic<sup>284</sup>, the identification by traits that distinguish individuals from one another, including or excluding them in/from a group, places Tatars at the same level in the construction of social identity. In a collective self-characterization, the quality of being honest ranks among the first places, along with such traits as diligence, respect and friendship. Our respondents consider them both virtues and values; some of them feel the need to mark them out

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<sup>278</sup> "The memory 'passed on through the family or traditions' is eroded, it weakens starting with the third generation" – M. Vovelle, cited by Doru Radosav, *O 'sensibilitate sudică' a memoriei și oralității*, in "Anuarul de Istorie Orală", vol. 6/2005, Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, p. 10.

<sup>279</sup> G. I.

<sup>280</sup> I. I.

<sup>281</sup> I. S.

<sup>282</sup> T. Kahl, *Întrebări...*, p. 138.

<sup>283</sup> I. S.

<sup>284</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, University of Nevada Press, 1991, p. 40.

in a social picture that no longer looks like "before"<sup>285</sup>. Honesty and morality are, among others, features in the portrait of Tatars, who describe themselves as *very good, decent people*<sup>286</sup>, *good householders*<sup>287</sup>. The attribute "diligent" is often accompanied by "hard-working". One of the contexts mentioned by the respondents in order to give meaning to these adjectives is the period of intense industrialization of the Romanian economy, in accordance with Ceaușescu's plans; many Tatars say that they managed to break through in a little known world, through personal effort, coming from a closed and traditional environment. The education received in the family, consolidated within the ethnic community, has guided their behaviour towards correctitude, both in what is said, and in what is done. *Honest and well done work*<sup>288</sup>, understood as a way of life, has resulted in social self-realization, in a status of prestige: Tatars are convinced that many of them were able to acquire a desirable position in society, to a greater extent than individuals belonging to other ethnic groups. The self-ascription of these skills optimizes the subjects' image about the group to which they belong. Their desire to succeed should not always be understood as a way of demonstrating something to others, but it also self-addressed, centred upon an essential aspect of personality encountered in self-identifications, namely ambition. *Tatars are ambitious in everything they do, they try to stand out, they are loyal, and industrious.*<sup>289</sup> We are dealing with ambition understood as courage, and not as unfounded claim. Tatars see themselves as people who are involved in society, more ambitious than the members of other ethnic groups, mobile, always engaged in personal or social projects. (*What else can you say about the Tatars?*) – *They're industrious, I mean they like to do many things. Good householders, diligent, good-hearted...*<sup>290</sup>.

Aspirations to success are not always fulfilled. Tatars describe themselves as simultaneously ambitious and unpretentious, being in favour of genuine success, achieved in a proper manner<sup>291</sup>. For a Tatar, a status of prestige can only be achieved by following a straight, moral path, because he guides himself by truth, above all the truth prescribed by his religious code. From this perspective, the Tatar presents himself as a believer, as a follower of Islam. *Correctitude, honesty, they are characteristic to the Ottoman people, to Muslims. (Yes.) – Really. Honestly. A word given is a word given! There's no question of you saying something today and tomorrow or after half an hour later going and saying something else, of you telling something to a few friends or colleagues and then going elsewhere, and saying other*

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<sup>285</sup> So this man [the Tatar, A/N] is honest. He cares for his family. What can I tell you? Honesty! A word given is a word given! It's true, times have changed, there are lees to every wine...(How old are you?) – 55. (And do you see any difference between the Tatar community of your childhood and today's Tatar community?) – ...Yes, there is a difference! (What?) - ...What do I know...(laughing) – Z. I.

<sup>286</sup> S. S., female, 80 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Ovidiu, April 2014.

<sup>287</sup> I. T.

<sup>288</sup> H. A.

<sup>289</sup> S. A., female, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, September 2013.

<sup>290</sup> L. D. C.

<sup>291</sup> M. I., female, b. 1971, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, August 22, 2014.

things. So what characterises them is honesty, correctitude, speaking the truth and nothing but the truth, the facts. This is what I...<sup>292</sup>. Fair, honest and industrious people, Tatars keep out of dirty business and I don't know what<sup>293</sup>, by virtue of the religious and parental teachings that complement each other. My father (A/N) kept on telling me that 'you are a Tatar woman and you must make an honest living, by working. You must go to work in the morning, then come home, take care of the children, become a mother, a wife'...<sup>294</sup>.

Honesty is a condition and a mission in the Tatar family, being closely related to the perpetual importance of the family in the spiritual and relational universe of the Tatars. The changes determined by modernity in the family structure, in the traditional role structure of its members, seem not to have affected the Tatar family, or to have affected it only to a small extent. As is the case of other ethnic groups, the number of offspring has decreased, while concern for children, for providing them with the best conditions for success in life and in society, has increased. Beyond this, ancient characteristics are maintained: respect for the elders, helping relatives with a modest financial condition, obedience to parents, the mother's particular involvement in the well-being of the family, on multiple levels. The Tatar family reproduces on a small scale the developments in the Tatar community. "The basic cell of society" is not just one of the Tatars' existential projects, but also a valuable asset. For *the Tatar as such, the best and most important value is family. Being presentable, well dressed, well...Possibility, as far as possible. Yes. First, a child should not go out in the street begging, or, or, or go out at night, seeking to steal, no, no such things!*<sup>295</sup> Such a family suggests a prototype of the "fundamental" Tatar, who values his image in society and his peers' respect, which is granted as long as the head of the family takes care of his own.

*Quiet, industrious, Tatars mind their own business*<sup>296</sup>, investing their high expectations in the family, and focusing their interest on the well-being of the offspring. Time has triggered changes in forms rather than in content. A century ago, the hero of Dobruja Tatars, Necip Hacı Fazıl, described in one of his plays the portrait of the family microcosm: "A married man works during the day, improving his life. When night falls, he gathers his wife and children and tells them stories in a sweet voice. He loves his children. He gives wise advice for their education. He confers with his wife, in order to ease the burden of his life. Oh, if only you could see how sweet family life is! Firstly, to live for someone else, to strive for your offspring's health. If only everyone could have such a fate!"<sup>297</sup> Later, efforts focused on supporting the generations who migrated to urban areas, forced by the communist regime to search for sources of subsistence. A first layer of the migrating community was made up of those who worked in the port, in factories and services, giving the next one an easier start in getting an education. In terms of ethnic culture, relocation

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<sup>292</sup> G. A.

<sup>293</sup> Z. I.

<sup>294</sup> M. I.

<sup>295</sup> H. A.

<sup>296</sup> G. E.

<sup>297</sup> Güner Akmolla, *Necip Hacı Fazıl*, Newline, Constanța, 2009, p. 226.

meant a stronger exposure to acculturation; from the perspective of quality of life and access to resources, relocation made possible processes specific to urban agglomerations. (*How do you think the Tatar community has changed since it moved to the city?*) – *It... In a good way! They all got an education, all their children went to school and they all have a rather good situation. (During Ceaușescu's time also?)* – *Yes, during Ceaușescu's time also. Our people worked. They were honest, they worked and tried to send their children to school, to become educated. (Do you see any difference between the Tatars of 70 years ago and today's Tatars?)* – *The difference is that before they were uneducated.*<sup>298</sup> – *They were peasants. They used to work... the land, in the countryside. They had a household, with two oxen, three horses, a plough, they were ploughing, sowing, digging.*<sup>299</sup>

The elements that shape ethnicity (language, religion, folklore) are acquired within the family, and it is also here that Tatars learn a way of life which they consider superior to other existential models<sup>300</sup>. For the Tatars, the family continues to be the space where the fundamental events in human life unfold. Baptism (or the "boy's wedding", as it is called by some of the respondents), the wedding, memorial services, the Kurban sacrifice of the wether, take place at home, and in such circumstances participants behave like one big family. At the wedding, *they all receive their guests at home, on a Friday. Relatives, close members of the community, neighbours who don't participate in the Saturday evening dinner (at the restaurant, A/N)*<sup>301</sup>, *but who come home to congratulate the parents-in-law, the bride and groom.*<sup>302</sup> For the little ones, after circumcision, *the imam comes at home and reads their name... He says it like this in... (The ear?)* – *In the ear, yes.*<sup>303</sup> These events bring out the ethnic side of the individual, his "Tatar" side, little known in everyday life, where he identifies himself according to certain roles, established by relationships with neighbours, at work etc.

As an agent in the production, development, consolidation, and communication of the tangible and intangible heritage, the Tatar family proves to be a coherent structure, resistant to the variations visible in the structure of this type of group during the last two decades of Romanian post-socialism. The agents with crucial importance in passing on the elements of ethnicity are the elderly and the women. *By the side of the men, there were the Tatar women*<sup>304</sup>. Perceived, at a first

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<sup>298</sup> S. B.

<sup>299</sup> A. B.

<sup>300</sup> Michael C. Howard, *Contemporary Cultural Anthropology* (Third edition), Harper Collins Publishers, 1989, p. 274.

<sup>301</sup> Dinner organized at a restaurant (or, in the past, at the community centre) is a tradition adopted several decades ago, under the influence of the majority culture. *For example weddings, we kind of borrowed them from the Romanians. Our Tatar traditions used to be totally different! But now we've modernized, we followed the Romanians and we do weddings just like the Romanians! But certain traditions are ours.* (Female, b. 1939, interview conducted by S. Preda, M. Dincă in Ovidiu – Constanța county, September 2013).

<sup>302</sup> A. I.

<sup>303</sup> Z. B.

<sup>304</sup> Ș. R.

glance, as independent and active women, they are also docile, not in the sense that they are obedient, but in the sense that they understand their partner's proud side. The man confers with his wife, and they decide together on important matters. Those who are responsible for the household, for education (including religious education – although not in all cases, or not exclusively), for the cultivation of the ethnic being, are the mothers, wives and grandmothers. Elderly women, through their long experience in using the mother tongue, substantially contribute to the process of learning the Tatar language as children grow up. *School-age young people or children in preschool, having a grandmother, used to speak only in their mother tongue at home.*<sup>305</sup> It is also them who represent models for the offspring, by keeping the traditions that provide a balance to their existence. *The only one who fasts is my grandmother, my maternal grandmother. She keeps it, despite her old age.*<sup>306</sup>

Another aspect highlighted by our field research is the perception of the Tatar woman as a person who enjoys freedom of choice regarding marriage and her public presence in society. Nowadays, the practice of stealing the bride has lost its meaning: in the past, this practice demonstrated that, behind the parents' first reactions (of surprise, of reluctance), the girls' right to get married for love, not under compulsion, was tacitly acknowledged. "Arranged" couples undoubtedly existed. Older generations do not always consider such changes in customs to be a good thing. *When they got married, girls used to be maidens, as they say. Now I understand – I don't know, I haven't seen it with my own eyes – our children, our young people have taken a very wrong direction.*<sup>307</sup> Their cultural codes, considered obsolete by the young, condemn the breach of religious customs: *They solve it just like that. He lives with her for one year and then they get married. But Muslims, Islam does not allow such a thing! Without marriage, you can't touch! That's it! But now they got civilized, they got Romanianized!*<sup>308</sup> Urbanization, assimilation in a homogeneous world without "traditionalist" coercions, have imposed other models, including the model of the equality of women, who had for a long time only been associated with duties in the private, domestic environment.

Tatar women's freedom, or freedoms, are more significant compared to the *other* close model, the Turkish woman, who, until recently, was a less present figure in social life. The stereotype of the Muslim woman with her face covered is denied by Tatar women: even in the old days, this was not characteristic of the Tatar costume<sup>309</sup>. *Turkish-Tatar minority women are not the ones that are still promoted in movies,*

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<sup>305</sup> C. L., male, b. 1975, interview conducted by S.Preda in Ovidiu, September 25, 2013.

<sup>306</sup> N., 27 years old, female.

<sup>307</sup> M. I.

<sup>308</sup> O. S., male, 75 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Ovidiu, September 2013.

<sup>309</sup> "We will soon organize an exhibition of old photos, and there everybody will be able to see what few people know: women did not wear a veil. The photos are taken in 1910, 1930. We are a Muslim community that greatly respects religion, but also has a progressive outlook. Our women did not wear shalwars, they wore dresses." – *Online interview with Gelil Eserghep, president of the UDTTMR* (February 1, 2013), available at: <http://uniuneatatara.ro/blog/articole/415/interviu-online-cu-gelil-eserghep-presedintele-udttmr.html>, accessed on December 1, 2014.

books, about the Muslim woman with a veil, with a yashmak<sup>310</sup>, isolated. Here, women are modern, well-anchored in the realities of everyday life.<sup>311</sup> A good housewife<sup>312</sup>, kind, beautiful, respectful<sup>313</sup>, in the past hundred years the Tatar woman has been permanently connected to the trends in society, able to adapt to the rhythm of progress. Sooner than her peers in other ethnic communities, once rural communities became more open, after the war, she was concerned about building an occupational identity for herself. *Knitting, tailoring*<sup>314</sup>, *learning a trade, as a girl, embroidery, tailoring, this was it.*<sup>315</sup> Parents also put pressure on the young, making them find a job<sup>316</sup>, a model which continued during communism. As access to education became easier, the number of those who chose to go to school increased; in rural areas, the mentality of the individual's fulfilment through employment was dominant. For a population who until then almost exclusively dealt with agriculture, with animal husbandry, getting a job (even a modest one) in the factories and companies which had started to spread in the region was a step up in the social hierarchy. *For example, they told me right from the beginning that they wouldn't let me learn, study. I mean going – I was in Cobadin – to Constanța to school, no. They told me right from the beginning: you're a girl, we'll teach you, send you to learn a trade, a handful of trade is a handful of gold. And I thank them that I got to learn it, how shall I put it? And I liked my job, I also raised my children to do it, and so on...*<sup>317</sup>. Looking back, they gratefully consider their parents' choice, also understood from the perspective of personal fulfilment, but also in the context of a time when *our generations' priority was trades.*

In many traditional societies, it is largely thanks to the woman that the ethos of her people is passed on. In the Tatar community, mothers have to face the increasingly aggressive phenomenon of acculturation, a difficult task considering that their idiom is and will only be used within the family; *as a Tatar mother, I want my child to speak the Tatar language*<sup>318</sup>. Essentially vernacular, with no support (compared to the culture of other minorities which is promoted through education and/or the media), put in the position of "competing" with a standardized, majority culture<sup>319</sup>, the Tatar culture has to face primarily the inertia of its bearers. This is the background that contextualizes the communication task of the Tatar woman. *She is the one who passes on to children the traditions and customs related to our*

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<sup>310</sup> Type of veil covering the head and part of the face.

<sup>311</sup> D. I., female, 39 years old, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, October 2013.

<sup>312</sup> I. T.

<sup>313</sup> M. C.

<sup>314</sup> Z. B.

<sup>315</sup> M. M., female, b. 1961, interview conducted by S. Preda in Murfatlar, August 27, 2014.

<sup>316</sup> S. S., female, b. 1933, interview conducted by S. Preda in Murfatlar, August 27, 2014.

<sup>317</sup> M. M.

<sup>318</sup> I. A.

<sup>319</sup> "All dominant cultures impinge on and transform their less-dominant neighbours" – Napoleon A. Chagnon, *The Beginning of Western Acculturation*, in "Anthropology: Contemporary Perspectives" (6th Edition), Phillip Whitten, David E. K Hunter (ed.), Glenview, Illinois, p. 267.

preservation as an ethnic identity. (Don't women from other ethnic groups do the same?) – But in our case it's stronger. Because that's how we actually pass it on. It's a custom. It's not a thing written in your job description, so to say, but mothers usually do this.<sup>320</sup> This ethnic-cultural education is carried out since an early age, as children start to understand that they have several affiliations, that they represent a culture different from the majority, a culture which offers them a sort of prestigious uniqueness. *This is what our mother used to tell us: you're girls, you must have your own role in the family, and not be dependent on the man – this is one thing; and she always told us it was good to get married to Tatars, to preserve religion, customs and traditions. But not in the sense: I'm telling you and you must pass this on – on the contrary, it's a natural thing.*<sup>321</sup>

This process of transmission also includes the cultivation of the moral profile from which the Tatar should not deviate, and which includes diligence, faith, honesty, willingness to succeed. *To be good, honest, not to steal, not to lie, not to cheat, not to speak ill of somebody, not to... Wherever we go.*<sup>322</sup> Within this ideal moral profile, the "Spartan" education regarding the cult for work has contributed to the rather quick adjustment of this ethnic group to the ever more demanding society of the last decades. After the war, there was a time when some parents (in rural settlements) did not see as viable the solution of their children moving to the city, and wanted them to remain nearby, either for economic reasons or in order to preserve the unity of the family and of ethnicity. For girls, fears were even greater, given the possibility of their getting married to a non-Muslim. *This is what they used to think, that the girl must be near her parents, that she should not leave. These were their views, old-fashioned ones.*<sup>323</sup> However, more and more parents, trusting the good behaviour of their offspring and/or in response to a changing society, allowed them to break away from the village environment that had become increasingly limiting. *(Didn't the older ones try to hold back the young people, like you?) – The older ones were happy to send the young people to the city to get an education, to work and get a salary, so that they would have a pension when they get old. Anyway, we didn't have parents, so there was no one to keep us. Both me and him, we had no parents, but the others also sent their children to the city. (Was the possibility of getting a salary seen as a good thing?) – Very good! Yes! Yes! Yes!*<sup>324</sup> It was very important to get a salary in a period when resources no longer came from agriculture, once the lands were forcibly entered in the collectivist system. *Being the eldest in my family, I started to work. And since they gave a law that required every employee to have eight years of formal education, I did the eight grades too, I attended part-time.*<sup>325</sup>

Today, the aim of the generations that have adapted to the urban environment is to ensure an (easier) livelihood for their children, to ensure their education in prestigious schools, prepare them for good jobs, drawing on the strengths that the

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<sup>320</sup> D. I.

<sup>321</sup> D. I.

<sup>322</sup> M. I.

<sup>323</sup> M. M.

<sup>324</sup> S. B.

<sup>325</sup> A. U.



members of the ethnic groups see as innate. *I noticed that Tatars and Tatar children are very intelligent. And they have a talent for exact sciences like mathematics or grammar – they're not so much involved with the literary, artistic side, but it's not unheard of. And there are children with good and very good school results here who belong to the Tatar community. (Am I to understand that education – or the desire to study - is part of the culture of Dobruja Tatars?) – Yes, yes, to study, to be somebody, to achieve something in life. I think this also starts at home, but we, as a community, are ambitious and tenacious... (Are these characteristics specific to Tatars?) – Yes, I believe so.*<sup>326</sup> The project of providing Tatars with education in their native tongue, all the way to university level<sup>327</sup>, a project that failed in the mid-twentieth century, aimed at creating a class of people educated in as many fields as possible, whose task was to educate other professionals in their turn. Even so, Tatars adapted fast, enrolled in official schools and became people appreciated for their professionalism (doctors, engineers, professors<sup>328</sup>). The innate nature of their performances, a reason of pride for Tatars, is seen as having a biological explanation. *My observations about us – these are my observations and my personal opinions. Asians, I think, the Asian spirit, just like genetic traits, is preserved. We are resilient and we adapt anywhere, in one way or another. We adapt to any conditions, that's what I mean when I say resilient. And we spread all over the world. Take Genghis Han for example, who scattered Tatars all over the world (laughs).*<sup>329</sup>

Self-improvement and the interest in getting a good education represent, according to someone else<sup>330</sup>, the path the Tatars have found in order to prove that they are the same as the rest, that they have the ability to succeed socially. Education is reported to have been the only way in which the Tatars could succeed as a minority. It is hard to assess to what extent the community viewed education as a ticket to success, or whether an inferiority complex generated a community behaviour. What is certain is the recurrence of the topic of education in the answers given by the interviewees, who regard it as something valuable, maybe (also) due to its "portability", since the Tatars tend to spread all over the world. Education, as a permanent, unassailable asset, independent of political pressure, economic changes etc., brings an advantage and a guarantee to the Tatar youth. This is, in fact, the message that is permanently promoted by the leader of the Tatar Union: "Education is the only advantage young people have in this life, so that all of us, parents and teachers, must ease their way into it and make them understand very clearly that all that matters is education!"<sup>331</sup> Many Tatar students win school competitions, school

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<sup>326</sup> A. I.

<sup>327</sup> Sarah A. Smith, *Email from Constanța*, The Guardian, December 9, 2002, in Elis Bechir, "Assimilation and Dissimilation: Tatars in Romania and Gagauz in Moldova" (MA thesis, CEU Budapest, 2008), available at [http://www.etd.ceu.hu/2008/bechir\\_elis.pdf](http://www.etd.ceu.hu/2008/bechir_elis.pdf), accessed on December 22, 2014, p. 41.

<sup>328</sup> A. A.

<sup>329</sup> B. A., male, b. 1967, interview conducted by S. Preda in Mangalia, August 25, 2014.

<sup>330</sup> C. M., male, b. 1964, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 2, 2013.

<sup>331</sup> Gelil Eserghep, in Ghiulșen Ismail-Iusuf, *Gala de premiere a excelenței în educație a cadrelor didactice de etnie turco-tătară*, "Karadeniz", no. 246/11, p. 14.

Olympiads – motivated by their own will to learn. *For many (parents, A/N) it's a pride – look, my son or daughter graduated in this or that place! And they're also proud if their children graduate from a certain university or high school. Because many are accepted, but not all graduate. That's the difference.*<sup>332</sup>

The large number of Tatar children and students is proof of the fact that this is a model which has been internalized at the level of the community. The model also relies on a study/survey, mentioned by many interviewees<sup>333</sup> to the point in which it has become a commonplace, focusing on the intellectual abilities which situate the ethnic group above almost all historical minorities in Romania. *There's been a study, and it shows that Tatars were, that they are a scholarly people. I remember once, at a Union meeting, Professor Faruk*<sup>334</sup> *said that an analysis and a..., no, a survey, found that ninety-something per cent of Tatar children do great at school. So if this analysis shows that Tatar children study, it also means that their parents are willing to allow them to study. So it wasn't the case – and there would have been no reason – for us Tatars, for our parents to say 'Stop wasting your time studying, don't do this, don't do that' – on the contrary! All parents, all Tatars wanted us to... We had this... And I think it's the same with any ethnic group, but we had this competition: 'Look, see? Her child studied and has become somebody! You must study hard too!'*<sup>335</sup> Over a few decades, education has become one of the salient components of group identity, besides those considered canonical (the common origin, the idiom, the denomination). "Education is actually the essence of the human capital, its importance being superior to components associated to health."<sup>336</sup> For Tatars, the educational capital has become not just a benchmark for themselves and the others, but also a social guarantee of the group.

The interest in education and achievement, as a way of acquiring legitimization as an ethnic group, is supported by the UDDTTMR and is one of its most important policies. Parents stimulate and incentivize their children, depending on their means, and the Union contributes further by giving awards and organising events that honour and give public (local<sup>337</sup> and regional) recognition to the efforts of students and their teachers. The Tatar minority distinguishes itself from other groups through the high number of good students, which places it in a position of superiority. *We have the highest percentage of people graduating from higher education in Romania, amongst minorities, after the Jews. Let me give you one example: this year, 23% of the children who got prizes in school Olympiads are Tatar. We only account for 6% of the county's population! So 23%, four times higher than that. Mathematics especially, physics too but mostly mathematics is our strong point... As I've told you already, in*

<sup>332</sup> N. A., female, 27 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, September 2013.

<sup>333</sup> But without any additional details related to the form, author/authors of the research, the period when the study in question was undertaken, or the primary source of the study.

<sup>334</sup> Professor Faruk Memet, former president of the Tatars' Union.

<sup>335</sup> F. M.

<sup>336</sup> Blaug 1976, cited by Bogdan Voicu, *Capitalul uman: componente, niveluri, structuri. România în context european*, "Calitatea Vieții", no. 1-2, XV/2004, available at: <http://www.revistacalitateavietii.ro/2004/CV-1-2-04/11.pdf>, accessed on March 31, 2015, p. 139.

<sup>337</sup> The good results and skills of the Tatar students are also presented in the Union's magazine, in special sections such as "Young people in whom we take pride", "Exceptional students".

*the maths competition, 6 of the 19 children who got prizes were Tatars! Out of 19. In Constanța.*<sup>338</sup> Although the stock of education is quite restricted, it is compensated by efficiency. Moreover, this is regardless of the area of residence: good results and the will to learn are not only present in urban areas, but in rural ones as well – even to a higher extent, because here, in homogenous communities (by comparison to the ones in the city), as people live *near each other*<sup>339</sup>, competition becomes more intense. In the villages, the need to prove one's worth is also related to many young people's desire and hope of migrating to the city, mainly in order to complete their education, which is possible only there.

Being a Tatar is a reason to be proud. *I think that being proud you're a Tatar, the way I see it, is... (The essence?) Yes, kind of. The essence. Something that, for me at least... this word defines me and we fight, we militate for all Tatars to be proud of their origins, so to say...*<sup>340</sup> Ethnic consciousness is built through interdependence with a social environment. In a society with a high level of tolerance, where people enjoy security, mobility, real opportunities to fulfil their aspirations, people will be less interested in supporting the cultural values and models of their group.<sup>341</sup> In this case, pride can be understood as an expression of the existence of a group of people who are well-regarded in society, not only because they hold high/good positions, but also due to the fact that they have qualities generally recognized by others. *There are many teachers, many doctors, many engineers, many scientists among us; very many!*<sup>342</sup> Many personalities in Dobruja culture come from this ethnic group<sup>343</sup>. Not everyone, apparently, can apply their recipe for success: genetic heritage, completed by decisiveness, by determination. *(Is success definitely a matter of intelligence or can there be another explanation? For instance, are they more ambitious or do their parents pressure them more...) – First comes intelligence. If you are not intelligent, how can you be ambitious? Everybody is ambitious! It's innate; you see small children going like – why should someone else have the bigger fruit, not me? Ambition... Ambition is ambition. Why can that guy own a house and not me? There is ambition, of course there is. We are ambitious, but what I'm saying is that it's a matter of intelligence...*<sup>344</sup> According to our interlocutors, intelligence means cleverness, being able to succeed in life, self-possession, the ethnic group's capacity to adapt to a troubled history. *Generally, Tatars are quite intelligent.*<sup>345</sup>

Last but not least, some of the young Tatars see the ethnic group as *united*<sup>346</sup>. We are often tempted to believe that it is precisely this age group, regardless of their origin, who has a low level of interest for categories such as ethnicity. The feeling of cohesion is strong among the respondents who are members of the UDTTMR or who attend the organization's events. Optimism, solidarity, constant involvement all support an "identity tonus" that highlights positive aspects. *(‘We, Tatars, are...’: How would you continue this statement?) – Umm, we, Tatars, are united. That's about... (Anything else?) – Anything else... (Qualities, or maybe things that are not so good?)*

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<sup>338</sup> G. E.

<sup>339</sup> G. E.

<sup>340</sup> C. L.

<sup>341</sup> E. Bechir, p. 15.

<sup>342</sup> Z. B.

<sup>343</sup> E. I., male, b. 1984, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, July 24, 2013.

<sup>344</sup> Z. B.

<sup>345</sup> N. A.

<sup>346</sup> S. M., female, b. 1989, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 21, 2013.

– *There are none of those. (Laughs). I'm being optimistic now. I don't know what to say. Even our motto refers to unity, actually. (What is the motto?) – Well... (You don't have to translate it word by word...) – Unity in diversity<sup>347</sup>. Something like that. (Is that the Union's motto?) – It's the Tatars' motto, yes. Most of them. All of them I think.*<sup>348</sup> Cohesion must have as primary reason – as the most legitimate reason, according to the Tatars' Union (and not only) – a goal that they see as supreme: the fight for ethnic survival. Such statements do not indicate the existence of an exaggerated or unjustified image; they reflect a certain type of education, and the confidence in one's own strengths held by a group of individuals connected by a need to protect their ethnic identity. *Because we have all our lives before us, our horizons are open wide and we choose to show who we are.*<sup>349</sup>

## List of Interviewees

- H. A., male, b. 1943, male, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Ovidiu, April 4, 2014.  
D. A, female, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, September 2013.  
N. A., female, 27 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, September 2013.  
S. A., female, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, September 2013.  
B. A., male, b. 1967, interview conducted by S. Preda in Mangalia, August 25, 2014.  
D. I., female, 39 years old, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, October 2013.  
E. I., male, b. 1984, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, July 24, 2013.  
Z. I., male, 55 years old, interview conducted by S. Preda in Mangalia, September 1, 2014.  
G. I., female, 39 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, September 2013.  
M. I., female, b. 1971, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, August 22, 2014.  
C. L., male, b. 1975, interview conducted by S. Preda in Ovidiu, September 25, 2013.  
C. M., male, b. 1964, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 2, 2013.  
M. M., female, b. 1961, interview conducted by S. Preda in Murfatlar, August 27, 2014.  
S. M., male, b. 1951, interview conducted by S. Preda in Mangalia, September 1, 2014.  
S. M., female, b. 1989, interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 21, 2013.  
S. S., female, 80 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Ovidiu, April 2014.

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<sup>347</sup> "Tilde, Fikirde, İşte Birlik" ("Unity in language, thought and action"). This incentive (found on the cover of each issue of the UDTTMR magazine, "Qaradeñiz", belongs to an emblematic figure for the history of the Tatars in Crimea and Dobruja, İsmail Gaspıralı, writer and militant for the right to education and culture of his people.

<sup>348</sup> I. I.

<sup>349</sup> D. A, female, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Constanța, September 2013.

O. S., male, 75 years old, interview conducted by M. Dincă in Ovidiu, September 2013.

S. S., female, b. 1933, interview conducted by S. Preda in Murfatlar, August 27, 2014.

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# Identity Dynamics in the Turkish and Tatar Communities of Dobruja (Romania)

## Abstract

*The present study is an attempt to identify and untangle the identity dynamics of two ethnic communities of Romania, the Turks and the Tatars. The study first frames the discussion by presenting the historical and demographic evolution of the Turks and Tatars during the 20th century. The study focuses more extensively on the Communist period, in order to highlight the way in which the political, economic and social changes of the time were reflected in the ethnic and religious identity structure of the Turks and Tatars in Dobruja, and subsequently focuses on developments regarding identity after 1990. By bringing together archival research, the analysis of journalistic texts and field research (interviews, participant observation), the study identifies patterns in the memory of the communist period, the types of relations and attitudes towards the regime of the time, as well as the evolution of the self-image and the image of the other (Turk/Tatar), generated by the main aspects of identity: ethnicity, religion, origins, mother tongue and traditions, within the socialist society as well as after the fall of Communism.*

*Keywords: identity, ethnicity, Islam, Turks, Tatars, Dobruja.*

## 1. Introduction

The present study is an attempt to identify and untangle the identity dynamics of two ethnic communities of Romania, the Turks and the Tatars. The study first frames the discussion by presenting the historical and demographic evolution of the Turks and Tatars during the 20th century. The study focuses more extensively on the Communist period, in order to highlight the way in which the political, economic and social changes of the time were reflected in the religious and ethnic identity structure of the Turks and Tatars in Dobruja, and subsequently focuses on developments regarding identity after 1990.

In terms of methodology, this paper uses the archive research conducted in the Constanța County Department of the National Archives (Romania), the discourse analysis of press articles published in the regional official magazines, data analysis of the communist and postcommunist census and field research (semi-structured and life-history interviews, participative observation).

Starting from Alessandro Portelli's statement that oral history treats issues regarding the dynamics of collective and individual memory and of identity (collective and individual) in the process of remembering,<sup>1</sup> my research explored the intersection between memory and identity, and attempted to identify the way in which the political, economic and social changes of the Communist period were reflected in the ethnic and religious identity structure of Turks and Tatars in Dobruja.

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<sup>1</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: form and meaning in oral history*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1991, p. 50.

As I subscribe to the view that, in order to understand a historical period as reflected in the memory of a community, it is essential to know not only the life of individuals, but also information regarding the ideas which animated their daily experience during that period (self-images, myths, perceptions),<sup>2</sup> I used as a source oral history interviews, of the life history type, taken in 2013 and 2014 in the Dobruja Turkish and Tatar communities, in the belief that what an interviewee remembers is equally important as what really happened.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the analysis concentrated on factual elements but also upon their significances, as they took shape in the consciousness of the individuals. Using as a framework the works of several authors influenced by symbolic interactionism,<sup>4</sup> I approached collective and personal identities as products of social interaction, which become present through narratives (Kaneva 2006: 2).<sup>5</sup> From this perspective, approaching the narratives of memory as important acts of identity production, my analysis identified patterns in the memory of the Communist period, the types of relations and attitudes regarding the regime of the time, alongside the evolution, in the context of the socialist and postsocialist society, of Turkish/Tatar self-representation and hetero-representation generated by such fundamental identity elements as ethnicity, religion, origins, mother tongue and traditions.

## 2. Turks and Tatars in Dobruja: History and Demographics

On the territory of Romania, especially in the area of Dobruja, Turks and Tatars were present as early as the 13th century,<sup>6</sup> the population being consolidated during the Ottoman period. Being an important part of the Ottoman military system, which protected Constantinople and ensured a communication channel with Crimea, Dobruja was intensely populated with Turks and Tatars from Asia Minor and Crimea, respectively. Two more intense waves of Tatar migration to Dobruja took place. The first followed the annexation of the Crimean Khanate by Tsarist Russia in 1783, while the second occurred in the wake of the Crimean War (1853-1856), when numerous Tatars were dispossessed of their goods and driven away from their villages and towns in Crimea. The war of 1877-1878 triggered a massive migration of Dobruja Muslims.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the most complete and correct data regarding the population of

<sup>2</sup> Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in popular Memory. The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> See J. A. Holstein; J. F. Gubrium, *The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World*, New York, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Nadia Kaneva, „Memories of Everyday Life in Communist Bulgaria: Negotiating Identity in Immigrant Narratives”, in *Colorado Research in Linguistics*, Vol. 19, no. 1, p. 2, [http://www.colorado.edu/linguistics/CRIL/Volume19\\_Issue1/](http://www.colorado.edu/linguistics/CRIL/Volume19_Issue1/), accessed 26 January 2015.

<sup>6</sup> See Tahsin Gemil, *Peste un mileniu de existență a populației turco-tătare pe teritoriul României, în Moștenirea istorică a tătarilor*, Vol. I, Bucharest 2010. <http://www.tatar.ro/publicatii/Tahsin%20Gemil/PESTE%20UN%20MILENIU.pdf>, accessed 20 September 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Constantin Iordachi, „La Californie des Roumains. L'intégration de la Dobroudja du Nord à la Roumanie, 1878-1913”, in *Balkanologie*, Vol. VI, no. 1-2, 2002, p. 170.

Dobruja which was to be incorporated into Romania in 1878 is found in a statistical table obtained by the French consulate in Tulcea.<sup>8</sup> According to the French consul, this data was collected by a special envoy of the Romanian government, whose mission was to estimate as accurately as possible the population that was to be incorporated into Romania according to the Berlin Treaty of 1878. Thus, according to this source, the total population of Northern Dobruja was of 225.753 people. Out of these, 126.924 were Muslims (48.784 Turks, 71.146 Tatars and 6.994 Circassians), 46.504 were Romanians, 30.237 Bulgarians and the rest were Jews, Greeks, Armenians, Russians and Germans.<sup>9</sup>

After the incorporation of Northern Dobruja into Romania, the province was subject to a special, extraconstitutional administrative regime, which lasted from 1878 to 1913. According to this status, Dobrujans enjoyed a local type of citizenship which denied them political participation and forbade them ownership of possessions outside the province. In his article *La Californie des Roumains. L'intégration de la Dobroudja du Nord à la Roumanie, 1878-1913*, Constantin Iordachi argues that the integration of the multi-ethnic province of Dobruja into Romania took place by means of a process of internal colonization. His arguments are the organisation of the province, which was based on a special administrative status and on excessive centralization, but also on a sense of cultural superiority attributed to the central region, on intense ethnic colonization and on uneven regional economic development which responded to the needs of the metropolis.<sup>10</sup> Between 1880 and 1882, a campaign was launched to verify all Ottoman property documents and to replace them by Romanian property titles. At the end of this campaign property ownership in the province was regulated by the *Immovable Property Law of Dobruja*, in April 1882. The aim of the law was the transformation of the Ottoman conditional ownership of agricultural land into capitalist property. The condition peasants had to fulfil in order to become owners was financial compensation paid to the state, and those peasants who did not fulfil their financial obligations were dispossessed by the state. As Toma Ionescu shows, between 1889 and 1914, 82,127 hectares were redistributed to Romanian colonists in the province.<sup>11</sup>

The colonization process triggered changes in the ethnic makeup of the province and at the same time had an impact on the land ownership model in the province. More precisely, in 1882 Dobruja had 175,075 hectares of arable land. Turks and Tatars were the community who owned most land in the province, i.e. 50% of the arable land, followed by Romanians and Bulgarians, each of these ethnic groups owning about 23% of the arable land<sup>12</sup>. This distribution was radically modified by

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<sup>8</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, „Urbanismul otoman: Emigrația din Crimeea spre Dobrogea și întemeierea orașului Medgidia (1856-1878)”, in Tahsin Gemil (ed.), *Tătarii în istorie și în lume*, Kriterion, Bucharest, 2003, p. 228.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> Constantin Iordachi, *op.cit.*, pp. 168-169.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 185.

<sup>12</sup> See Iordachi, 2002: 186.

the colonization process. In 1905, Romanians were the main land owners, with 63% of the arable land, while the proportion owned by Turks and Tatars fell to 7%.<sup>13</sup>

The colonization process was seconded by one of cultural assimilation through education and the church, which contributed to a phenomenon of emigration among the Turks and Tatars in Dobruja, a phenomenon which culminated in the 1930s. Based on the analysis of a report issued by governmental authorities, according to Mehmet Ali Ekrem, two main causes of emigration can be identified, namely: the change of land ownership laws and the inefficiency/corruption of some of the officials.

The report underlined the insufficiency of rural property, which was more and more meagre in the case of the Turks and Tatars who lived in villages as a result of the agrarian reform, the verification of property titles, the introduction of high taxes and the impossibility to pay them, as well as the actions of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. To this were added the harsh living conditions, caused by the lack of water, the abuses of the gendarmes and of local administrations which used the Turkish population to perform certain tasks, the poverty of the communities and, last but not least, the fact that Turks with valid property titles were sometimes omitted from the land distribution process.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the regulation of property and the division and sale of land reduced the space available for animal husbandry, changing the general characteristics of traditional Muslim country life in the province. Consequently, the number of Turks fell constantly due to emigration and the decline of traditional occupations. Turkish and Tatar communities, 85% of whose members were originally peasants who dealt in animal husbandry and agriculture, saw after 1880 a gradual increase in the number of farm hands, port workers, small tradesmen and craftsmen.<sup>15</sup>

As far as international developments are concerned, the victory of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk against the Greek army and the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 marked the beginning of a coherent policy regarding the support of the emigration of Turkish nationals from other states.<sup>16</sup> Usually, emigration to Turkey took place in large groups of about four or five hundred people who could prove they had sold their land and had no other property or debts to the state. In order to control the phenomenon and avoid medical and organizational problems, on September 4, 1936, Romania and Turkey signed the *Convention regarding the property of emigrants*. The property of emigrated Turks and Tatars became the property of the Romanian state, which was required to pay half of their value in oil and the other half in hard currency within a period of 10 years, while art. 2, paragraph 5 stipulated the obligation of the government of the Republic of Turkey to announce the maximum figure it was to receive. The desire to emigrate sometimes exceeded the annual quota set by the Ankara government to 15,000 people, as is revealed in the note issued by

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 186.

<sup>14</sup> Mehmet Ali Ekrem, *Din istoria turcilor dobrogeni*, Kriterion, Bucharest, 1994, p.128.

<sup>15</sup> Răzvan Limona, *Populația Dobrogei în perioada interbelică*, Semănătorul, Bucharest, 2009, p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 46.



the Turkish Consulate on 15-16 April 1935,<sup>17</sup> which permitted only Turks and Tatars who had sold their property and had fulfilled all legal requirements to benefit from the advantages given to immigrants. The onset of World War II and the need to secure the borders forced the Romanian government to put a stop to the emigration of the Turkish and Tatar population, which now numbered 119,481 people, as compared to 177,166 in 1918. Their repatriation also caused a severe drop in rural population. If between 1918 and 1921 there were 38 villages with a Muslim majority, around World War II only three were left. As a consequence, Turks and Tatars dropped from the third position to the sixth, far from the Lipovans, Russians and Germans.<sup>18</sup>

In the 1948 census, Turks and Tatars were recorded together, statistical data indicating the figure of 28,782, while in the 1956 census 14,329 Turks and 20,460 Tatars were recorded (2002 Census, Vol. IV).<sup>19</sup> The figures in the two censuses should be regarded with circumspection. On the one hand, they are a consequence of the massive migration from Dobruja towards the Ottoman territories in the interwar period, which explains up to a certain point the downward demographic trend recorded in 1948 among Turks and Tatars. On the other hand, the statistical data regarding the Turks and Tatars should be interpreted from the perspective of the international diplomatic context and the social and political developments of the first two decades of the communist regime, which had a certain impact upon the situation of Turks and Tatars. More precisely, it is connected to the fact that, under the pressure of USSR foreign policy, Communist authorities associated ethnic Turks with the Republic of Turkey, a capitalist power and a member of NATO, which triggered among the Turkish population a reluctance to declare their ethnicity, especially in the first communist censuses. At the same time, the drastic fall in the Tatar population must be seen in the context of the organic fear which a large part of the Tatar community had of being associated with the Crimean issue, which was synonymous, in the Dej years, with the repression dictated by the NKVD. Another factor which influenced the process of recording the Tatars in the census was the anxiety caused by the absence of a *de facto* Tatar state, by the practical absence of the protection of a mother-state. This feeling developed after the annexation of the Crimean Khanate by Tsarist Russia in 1783, and was amplified after the forcible deportation of Crimean Tatars by Stalin in 1944, which destroyed the hope of the creation of an independent Crimean Tatar state.

The following two censuses undertaken during the Communist period, in 1966 and 1977, recorded 18,040 Turks and 22,151 Tatars, and 23,422 Turks and 23,369 Tatars respectively (Census 2002, vol. IV), showing a tendency of growth in both communities. The rising demographic trend is a consequence of the relaxation of diplomatic tensions between Turkey and the Communist regime in Bucharest, which took place in 1964-1965 and was also reflected among the ordinary Turkish and Tatar

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>19</sup> National Institute of Statistics, *Recensământul populației și al locuințelor 18-27 martie 2002*, Vol. IV, *Structura etnică și confesională. Populația după etnie la recensămintele din perioada 1930-2002, pe județe*:

<http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/RPL2002INS/vol4/tabele/t2.pdf>, accesed 8 December 2014.

population. In retrospect, Tatars believe that *a feeling of vulnerability*, caused by the lack of a Tatar state, and the fact that under the circumstances they were placed under the protection of Turkey, led about 30% of Tatars to declare themselves Turks,<sup>20</sup> a phenomenon which, according to many Tatars, has continued ever since the Communist period (see Fig. 1).

The analysis of the data by living area indicates that, starting with the 1956 census, against the backdrop of the process of industrialization and collectivization, an increase in the ethnic Turkish and Tatar population took place in urban agglomerations, simultaneously with a tendency of decline in rural areas.<sup>21</sup>

In the first census of the post-Communist period, in 1992, 29,832 Turks and 24,956 Tatars were recorded,<sup>22</sup> while the next census, in 2002, recorded 32,098 Turks and 23,935 Tatars.<sup>23</sup> The data of the most recent census, that of 2011, indicates a number of 28,226 Turks and 20,464 Tatars,<sup>24</sup> the downward demographic trend representing a source of discontent within both communities. The latter suggest that the procedure used in the census was flawed due to the fact that the census takers confused the terms Turk and Tatar, and this influenced the way in which questions were asked of those interviewed. Members of the Tatar community suggest that the real number of ethnic Tatars is 30,000,<sup>25</sup> 35,000,<sup>26</sup> 37,000.<sup>27</sup> The figure of 35,000 is confirmed by the representative minority organisation, which is suggestive for the Tatars' self-perception and for the way in which they relate to other ethnic groups. The figure is supported by the internal census organized by the *The Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania* through its local branches and, where there were no local branches, via estimates based on the national census.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Interview with T. G., member of the Tatar community, 11 January 2013.

<sup>21</sup> For details, see *Recensământul populației din 21 februarie 1956: structura demografică a populației*, Vol. 3., *Numărul și repartizarea teritorială a populației; Starea civilă; Naționalitatea; Limba maternă; Nivel de instruire; Familii*, Central Directorate of Statistics, Bucharest, 1961; *Recensământul populației și locuințelor din 15 martie 1966* Vol. 1, *Rezultate generale*, General Directorate of Statistics, Bucharest, 1969; *Recensământul populației și al locuințelor din 5 January 1977*, Vol. 1-2, *Populație - structura demografică*, General Directorate of Statistics, Bucharest, 1980.

<sup>22</sup> National Institute of Statistics, *Recensământul populației și al locuințelor 18-27 martie 2002*, Vol. IV, *Structura etnică și confesională. Populația după etnie la recensămintele din perioada 1930-2002, pe județe*:

<http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/RPL2002INS/vol4/tabele/t2.pdf>, accessed 8 December 2014.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> 2012 Census, in:

<http://www.insse.ro/cms/files%5Cstatistici%5Ccomunicate%5Calte%5C2012%5CComunicat%20DATE%20PROVIZORII%20RPL%202011.pdf>, accessed on 22 March 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with M. F., member of the Tatar community, 29 January 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with O. E., member of the Tatar community, 29 January 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with G. A., member of the Tatar community, 29 January 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Information provided by the *Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania*.

### 3. Turks and Tatars in the Communist period

After World War II, in the first decades of the Communist regime, two directions can be identified in the evolution of the Turkish and Tatar communities. These directions are in connection with both the attitude of the communist regime towards Turks and Tatars and their attitude and behaviour towards the new regime. On the one hand, we can identify a tendency towards conformity, towards joining party structures and involvement in the so-called process of building a Soviet-type society in Romania. A second direction identified is one of coordinated persecution and repression directed by the Communist authorities against an important number of ethnic Turks and especially Tatars, the response to which was, as we shall see, an attitude of resistance.

#### 3.1. Organisational evolution

As shown by earlier research, after 23 August 1944 a mass organisation of Turks and Tatars was created, namely the *Muslim Democratic Union*. The organisation, which placed the two ethnic groups under the banner of a religious denomination, had reached by the end of 1946 a number of about 630 members.<sup>29</sup>

In September 1946, considering that the activity of the union had been insufficient, the Constanța county organization of the Romanian Communist Party decided to create the *Muslim Workers' United Front*.<sup>30</sup> Its objectives, such as the appointment as mufti of the Muslim cult of a person with democratic views, but who should at the same time have the approval of the Muslim masses, or the organization of the Muslim community on democratic bases, demonstrated its total ideological commitment to the structures of the Communist Party.<sup>31</sup> In a report of the Constanța party committee in December 1946, the organisation is mentioned as *The Democratic Muslims' Bloc*, in the context in which the Party expressed its discontent towards the fact that the issue of the Muftiate leadership had not been resolved.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, reports in the following period noted the closeness of a great number of Muslims to the traditional parties, considered reactionary, as well as their commitment to religion and the influence of Turkey, a capitalist power. All of these represented for the regime reasons of discontent regarding the organisational evolution of the Turks and Tatars in Dobruja.<sup>33</sup> Previous studies state that in 1948 it was decided to establish the *Muslim Democratic Front*, as a mass organization<sup>34</sup> which brought together both ethnic Turk and Tatar Muslims. During the same year, 1948, the MDF became the

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<sup>29</sup> Marian Cojoc, „Unele considerații privind turco-tătarii din Dobrogea între anii 1944-1966”, in Tahsin Gemil (ed.), *Tătarii în istorie și în lume*, Kriterion, Bucharest, 2003, p. 288.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 179.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 286.

<sup>34</sup> Virgil Coman, „Mărturii Documentare privind activitatea culturală a Comitetului Democrat Turco-Tătar Constanța (1948-1953)”, in Marian Cojoc (ed.), *Tătarii în istoria românilor*, Muntenia, Constanța, 2004, p.186.

*Turkish Democratic Front*,<sup>35</sup> the name of the organization excluding the Tatars, although these constituted a wide section of the Dobruja Muslims.<sup>36</sup>

Towards the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, the organization was subjected to criticism from the Party, being accused, as revealed by several articles in the local press, of not disseminating the Resolution regarding the national issue among the Turkish population, of failing to counter the influence of its own nationalism, which was in the service of Turkish, English and American imperialism,<sup>37</sup> and of lacking vigilance, which permitted the infiltration of the organization by elements which were considered exploiters and class enemies of the working people. On the other hand, the same articles also reveal an attitude of conformity and *self-criticism* of the Front in response to the criticism directed against it,<sup>38</sup> the role of the organization throughout its existence being mainly that of a transmission belt of the policies of the *Romanian Workers' Party*<sup>39</sup> towards the Turkish and Tatar population in Dobruja.

Some of the studies which have focused on analyzing the minutes of the *Turkish-Tatar Democratic Committee Fund* in the collection of the Constanța County Directorate of the National Archives argue that the political and ideological activity of the organization, although its main aim was to train the members of the community in the spirit of socialist ideology, simultaneously gathered several initiatives which had a positive effect.<sup>40</sup> More precisely, they acted for the preservation of the Turks' and Tatars' ethnic identity, by perpetuating the traditions of the two communities within cultural events,<sup>41</sup> by preserving the mother tongue and developing education in the mother tongue,<sup>42</sup> or by reducing illiteracy among the Turkish and Tatar population.<sup>43</sup>

In March 1953, against the backdrop of the *solving of the national issue*<sup>44</sup> and of the dissolution of the democratic committees belonging to ethnic minorities (Coman 2004: 191), the organization which appears in the archival documents of the time as *The Turkish-Tatar Democratic Committee* dissolved itself.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Constanța County Directorate of the National Archives, Turkish-Tatar Democratic Committee Fund, file 1/1948-1950, p. 28, p. 30.

<sup>36</sup> Constanța County Directorate of the National Archives, Turkish-Tatar Democratic Committee Fund, file 2/1948-1950, p. 49.

<sup>37</sup> *Dobrogea Nouă*, year II, 1949, no. 223 (February 3).

<sup>38</sup> *Dobrogea Nouă*, year II, 1949, no. 225 (February 5).

<sup>39</sup> Marian Cojoc, *op.cit.*, p. 291.

<sup>40</sup> Virgil Coman, *op.cit.*, pp. 188-191.

<sup>41</sup> Constanța County Directorate of the National Archives, Turkish-Tatar Democratic Committee Fund, file 1/1948-1950, p. 52, p. 82, p. 90, p. 91, p. 104, p. 134.

<sup>42</sup> Constanța County Directorate of the National Archives, Turkish-Tatar Democratic Committee Fund, file 1/1948-1950 p. 190.

<sup>43</sup> Constanța County Directorate of the National Archives, Turkish-Tatar Democratic Committee Fund, file 1/1948-1950, p. 50, p. 197.

<sup>44</sup> Constanța County Directorate of the National Archives, Turkish-Tatar Democratic Committee Fund, file 2/1948-1950, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Constanța County Directorate of the National Archives, Turkish-Tatar Democratic Committee Fund, file 2/1948-1950, p. 1.

### 3.2. Foremost workers and unworthy citizens

The attitude of conformity towards the directives of the regime, present at the organizational level in the first years of the Dej period, can be said to have pervaded all strata of the Turkish and Tatar communities, and can also be identified among the ordinary population. The pages of the daily newspaper *Dobrogea Nouă* contain numerous examples of Turks and Tatars who joined Party structures and adapted to the new Communist society. The examples contain mentions of ethnic Turk and Tatar citizens as: *foremost workers in collective farms* (Memet Dali Alie, Ismail Musin), *foremost threshers* (Bazâl Baubel)<sup>46</sup> or *foremost sowers* (the communist Regep Gani, the member of the Union of Working Youth Nuredin Bechir).<sup>47</sup>

However, this attitude towards the Communist regime was not general among the Turkish and Tatar population in Dobruja. Here we must mention the issue of the unworthy citizens, as mentioned in the 1948 Constitution. Thus, although the fundamental rights and liberties of the individuals were officially guaranteed, and all citizens, regardless of sex, nationality, race or religion, were formally permitted to elect and to be elected to hold office in the institutions of the Romanian state, a number of so-called electoral incompatibilities were named for a significant category of Romanian citizens, who were declared unworthy. This category included people whose rights were terminated as a result of the fact that they were in trouble with the regime due to their “unhealthy origin”.<sup>48</sup> Many of them were ethnic Turk and Tatar citizens, the reasons of their unworthiness being specific to the political psychology of the new regime. Previous studies based on the research of archival documents in the *Fund of the Constanța Prefect's Office* mention the case of Abduraman Calila of Agigea, who was considered to be a kulak because he owned 5 hectares of land and was punished for having links with the exploiters, or the case of Kiazim Gafar, accused of exploiting 50 hectares and supporting the politics of the Peasants' Party, which made him an enemy of the working class.<sup>49</sup>

### 3.3. Communist repression

An important aspect of the first years of the Communist period which affected the Tatar community in Dobruja in particular was the politics of repression directed against it. The reason behind it was the Crimean issue, to which a great number of ethnic Tatars were connected. Romania's entry into World War II alongside Germany and its participation in the campaign against the USSR had a significant impact upon the fate of the Tatars in Dobruja. Political and intellectual elites as well as ordinary members of the community laid their hopes on the support they would receive from Germany and Romania for the realization of their national ideal, the creation of an independent Tatar state in Crimea.

More precisely, the USSR asked the Romanian authorities to repatriate the Crimean Tatars who had taken refuge on the territory of Romania. The request, sent in 1944, triggered a hunt both of Crimean Tatar refugees and of Dobruja Tatars, who

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<sup>46</sup> *Dobrogea Nouă*, year VI, 1953, no. 1559 (30 August).

<sup>47</sup> *Dobrogea Nouă*, year VI, 1953, no. 1457 (18 March).

<sup>48</sup> Marian Cojoc, *op.cit.*, p. 291.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 153-154.

were accused of harbouring them. As victims of Stalin's terror, which had begun in Crimea with the mass killing of nationalist Communists and of intellectuals in 1928, and had continued with the deportation of tens of thousands of Tatars during the collectivization and the massive cleansing campaigns of the 1930s, the majority of the Crimean Tatars detested the Soviet regime. Therefore, the German and Romanian armies were regarded as liberators by the Crimean Tatars. Dobruja Tatars saluted the ousting of the Soviets and supported the Crimean Tatars. The political and religious leaders of Dobruja Tatars were sent to their territory of origin by the Romanian and German authorities in order to spread propaganda for the collaboration with the military and in order to establish an administrative apparatus with limited powers. This embryonic government, *The Tatar National Committee*, had several divisions, including a unit of armed police. Special attention was given to the reconstruction of the Muslim religious structures and institutions, dissolved by the atheist Soviet politics, an action to which clerics from Dobruja also participated. The wider Dobruja community also supported Crimean Tatars by volunteering to fight for the Tatar cause and by providing financial aid. Despite the hopes Dobruja and Crimea Tatars held for the creation of an independent Tatar state with help from Germany and Romania, the results obtained between 1941 and 1944 were modest. Germany had its own plans regarding Crimea's future after the war, which did not include Tatar autonomy, and even less an independent state.

In the spring of 1944, the Soviet troupes regained control of Crimea, which led some Crimean Tatars, including the members of the *Tatar National Committee*, to take refuge in Romania. The collaboration of some of the Crimean Tatars with the German-Romanian authorities and the support they received from the Tatars from Romania had serious consequences upon the fate of the community, providing the Soviet authorities with a pretext to launch a massive repression against Crimean Tatars.<sup>50</sup> Upon orders of the USSR, the Communist authorities also initiated campaigns to identify and deport Crimean refugees from Dobruja and, simultaneously, a severe campaign of repression against the Dobruja Tatars who had provided any kind of support to Crimean Tatars.

Starting with 1948, after a first wave of arrests and deportations, since the majority of Crimean refugees had already left the Romanian territory, the measures taken by the authorities were directed exclusively at the Dobruja Tatars who had hosted them. Thus, at the beginning of the 1950s, several members of the Tatar community were arrested by the Securitate, being accused of nationalist and religious activities (Cossuto 2004: 217).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ernest Oberländer Târnoveanu, Volker Adam, „Tătarii din România. Schiță istorică-Secolele XIII-XX”, in Andreescu, Gabriel (ed.), *Tătarii din România - teme identitare. Tatars in Romania - Problems of Identity*, Centrul pentru Drepturile Omului, Apador-CH, Bucharest, 2005, pp. 57-67.

<sup>51</sup> Giuseppe Cossuto, „I musulmani dell'Europa dell'Est durante il periodo comunista. Note sulla loro storia e sui loro rapporti con i rispettivi stati”, in Călin Felezeu (ed.), *Studii și cercetări de turcologie contemporană*, Tribuna, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, p. 217.

In October 1948, the series of arrests started with the imprisonment of Necip Hagi Fazıl<sup>52</sup>, leader of the Dobruja organisation *The Committee for the Help of Tatar Refugees*. Known for his involvement in receiving and distributing Crimean refugees to villages in Dobruja, Fazıl was arrested and tortured for a week in the Ovidiu Square prison in Constanța. As his daughter remembers, his family were notified of his demise a week later and told to collect his remains, which were afterwards interred in his native village of Tătaru (Azaplar).<sup>53</sup>

The repression campaign against the Tatars culminated in 1952, when on 19 April 39 Tatars, with professions which ranged from priests, doctors and lawyers to landowners, were arrested<sup>54</sup>. Among these there were Tatars, but also Turks and one Romanian citizen<sup>55</sup>. The proceedings against them were instituted on 11 March 1953 and, according to their file, they were guilty of *constituting the counter-revolutionary organization The National Tatar Movement. They spread propaganda in favour of the so-called Crimean Liberation Movement, in favour of an independent Tatar state*. It was mentioned that for this purpose they had collected *money, food, harboured during the war national Crimean elements which had escaped to the territory of our country*. To these was added the accusation of *espionage for the Turkish Espionage Service*<sup>56</sup>.

As archival documents and oral accounts reveal, the targets of Communist authorities in the first decades of the Dej period were the ethnic Turk and Tatar citizens who owned land, who opposed collectivization, the so-called kulaks (in the regime's view), the imams who were deemed to have nationalist or anti-Soviet beliefs, those who were suspected of having connections of any kind, political, economic or purely personal, with Turkey, those who had belonged to a nationalist group or one of the Romanian historical parties, and naturally those who had hosted Crimeans (Ciorbea, Stancu, Aledin 2011: 33-147).

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<sup>52</sup> Necip Hagi Fazıl graduated from the Medgidia Muslim Seminary, after which he attended the Academy of Bank Cooperatives. Upon his return to his native village, following the model established at Bazargic by his brother Mustecep Ülküsal, he founded the *Committee of Nationalist Tatar Youth* at Azaplar (Tătaru). After his brother Mustecep Ülküsal emigrated to Turkey, he became the leader of the *Committee for the Liberation of Crimea*. When this national organization became the *Committee for the Help of Tatar Refugees*, he was involved in receiving Crimean refugees which had arrived in Constanța in 1943-1944 and distributing them to villages in Dobruja. (Interview with S.M., member of the Tatar community, 30 January 2013); see also Güner Akmolla, *Necip Hagi Fazıl*, New Line, Constanța, 2009, p.114.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with S.M., member of the Tatar community, 30 January 2013.

<sup>54</sup> *Observer*, 1999 (23 November).

<sup>55</sup> For a list of the name of those arrested in 1952, see Güner Akmolla

, „Rezistența Tătară în Dobrogea”, in Ilie Popa, *Experimentul Pitești. Reeducarea prin tortură*, Vol. I, Fundația Culturală Memoria. Filiala Argeș, Pitești, 2003, pp. 372-375. For information on the monitoring of Necip Hagi Fazıl and those involved in the trial by the Securitate, Valentin Ciorbea, Laura Stancu, Amet Aledin (eds.), *Tătarii în izvoare arhivistice românești. Comunitatea Musulmană în Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității*, Vol. I, Ex Ponto, Constanța, 2011, pp. 46-62.

<sup>56</sup> Güner Akmolla, *Cartea iertării. Document tătar*, Europolis, Constanța, 2002, p. 165.

Gradually, the repression lost power, but, according to the accounts of ethnic Turks and Tatars, it continued, on a case by case basis, throughout the Communist period, in the shape of house searches, and sometimes threats and surveillance.

### **3.4. Education in the mother tongue<sup>57</sup>**

The annihilation of political adversaries from within the Turkish and Tatar communities was followed by actions which undermined their cultural life. Between 1948 and 1956-1957, education in the Turkish language survived, but against the backdrop of a decrease in the number of schools and teaching staff. In the period which immediately followed the 1948 Law, the authorities encouraged the breaking up of Dobruja schools into Turkish and Tatar schools, and experimented with education in the Tatar dialect imported from the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Kazan, in the USSR, by bringing in textbooks and literature from the republic.<sup>58</sup> The introduction of the Tatar language was meant to counter the Turkish language, which to the Communist regime represented the official language of a capitalist state. Therefore, this was a way of opposing Turkish intellectuals, or at least the mentalities which came from a capitalist country. Consequently, the policy was pure propaganda, and lacked any practical purpose or beneficial effects in the cultivation of the Tatar language and culture. The long-term effect upon the community was non-existent, which is confirmed by a large number of members of the Tatar community who were in those years integrated into the Tatar educational system. The first discrepancy started from the fact that the obligatory textbooks were in Cyrillic, while Dobruja Tatars used the Latin alphabet. Moreover, there was no adaptation regarding the elements of history, culture and mentality they presented, and hence the textbooks contained information regarding the Tatars of Kazan. The transmission of notions of Dobruja Tatar culture was entirely up to the teachers.<sup>59</sup> The Communist authorities manipulated the idea of the difference between the Turkish and Tatar language, claiming in the press, for reasons of propaganda, that many Tatar teachers who came from communities of peasants and workers requested that pupils of Tatar origin should study in the language they spoke at home. The pretext they used were the difficulties Tatar pupils supposedly encountered in the teaching and learning process as a result of the differences between the two languages, which in fact have a common vocabulary and a similar linguistic structure.

Simultaneously, the authorities began to eliminate education in the Turkish language. Gradually, in Turkish language schools, under pretexts such as the better preparation of pupils for high school and university education, certain subjects such as history, geography, and even chemistry and mathematics began to be taught in the

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<sup>57</sup> Until the Communist regime, only education in the Turkish language existed. Even the leaders of the Tatar national movement spoke and wrote in the literary Turkish language. The publication *Emel (The Aspiration)*, which played a very important part in shaping the Crimean national consciousness, was also published in literary Turkish and Arabic alphabet (until 1940), although in Turkey the Latin alphabet was used.

<sup>58</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea: repere de viață spirituală: viață religioasă și învățământ în limba maternă*, Ex Ponto, Constanța, 1998, p. 178.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with N. I., member of the Tatar community, 31 January 2013.



Romanian language exclusively. Staff meetings, meetings with parents and educational and cultural activities with ethnic Turkish pupils began to take place only in the Romanian language. Ethnic Romanians were named as school masters, and simultaneously ethnic Turk and Tatar university graduates were scattered in schools outside Dobruja, in a process of educational levelling meant to contribute to the creation of a united working people. Starting with the school year 1956-1957, religious and secular educational institutions in the Turkish language were closed.<sup>60</sup> The already mentioned process of favouring the Tatar language ended towards the 1970s. After the 1948 reform, a Tatar Pedagogical High School opened in Constanța, which functioned until 1960 and took over the task of training primary school teachers of Turkish and Tatar language in Dobruja, while the Muslim Seminary in Medgidia trained only imams. The seminary, founded in 1610, was closed in 1965-1966, and soon afterwards the Tatar language degree within the Faculty of Oriental Languages at Bucharest University was cancelled.<sup>61</sup>

A phenomenon which must be mentioned is that, although schools in the Turkish language had already been closed at the beginning of the 1970s, with the support of some teachers, several classes of pupils were allowed to study Turkish, which created a small-scale outlet for the printing of reading textbooks for grades I to VII. These textbooks however provided the Communist regime with an opportunity to improve its image abroad, since it was presented as a proof of the liberalization in Romanian-language education, and of the fact that the Constitution and the Law of Education were respected.<sup>62</sup> As far as Turkish and Tatar elites are concerned, they were marginalized, and publications in their mother tongues disappeared completely.<sup>63</sup>

### 3.5. The Muslim Cult

All these measures resulted in the indirect assimilation of Dobruja Turks and Tatars. The same method was used in the field of religious life, the Communist state having no direct policy of suppressing religious institutions. On the contrary, they were permitted to function, but their impact within the Muslim community was suppressed by the fact that the authorities promoted an atheist policy,<sup>64</sup> which became apparent in the reservation with which religious values were practiced in day to day life<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea: repere de viață spirituală: viață religioasă și învățământ în limba maternă*, Ex Ponto, Constanța, 1998, p. 173.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 178.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 194.

<sup>63</sup> Călin Felezeu, Adriana Cupcea, *O perspectivă comparativă a imaginii otomanului în manualele de istorie din România și Bosnia Herțegovina în perioada post-comunistă*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj Napoca, 2013, 76.

<sup>64</sup> Kozák Gyula, *Muslims in Romania: Integration models, categorization and social distance. Working Papers in Minority Studies*, nr. 18, Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Y. M., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January 2013.

After the law regarding the general regime of cults was adopted in August 1948, the main religions in Romania were officially recognized. Islam was among the few legally recognized ones, after it was given special status in 1949. The Muftiate of the Muslim Cult of Romania, which had its seat in Constanța,<sup>66</sup> continued to exist during this period, and its members received salaries from the Romanian state. The Mufti was assisted in running the institution by a synodal college (*sura al-islam*) made up of 23 members, elected by secret ballot by a community council. The council was made up of five-six members and had the task of administering the *vakıfs*.<sup>67</sup> Although the official provisions regarding the status of Islam should have ensured a comfortable situation, in practice there were difficulties caused by the insufficient funding of the Muftiate, whose effects were felt within urban, but especially rural communities, where mosques and Muslim cemeteries were decaying, or where the number of imams was insufficient.<sup>68</sup>

Towards the end of the 1960s, the Islam began to benefit from a more tolerant attitude on behalf of the regime, due to the important role the institution of the Muftiate had in developing and maintaining relations with Communist Muslim Arab states. With the strengthening of bilateral relations between the Communist state and the Arab states which started in this period, the relations of the Romanian Muslim elite with the communities in other states intensified, especially with regard to governmental and academic contacts. Thus, in 1972 the Muftiate's representatives took official visits to Morocco, Lebanon and Iraq, in 1973 to Egypt, and 1976 to Libya. This orientation towards the Muslim states in the Communist regime's foreign policy was reflected in the situation of the Turks and Tatars of Romania. Consequently, in 1978 the import of the Quran into the country was authorized. At the same time, the authorities proposed re-opening the primary schools which provided education in the Turkish language, and permitted the occasional publication of the Muslim Magazine, which the Constanța Muftiate office distributed between 1980 and August 1982.<sup>69</sup>

However, the revitalization of the cultural and institutional life only took place after 1990. The 1995 reform of the educational system brought about the reinstatement of Turkish language education for grades I to XII (Ibram 1998: 204).<sup>70</sup> An important accomplishment in this sense was the establishment of the *Kemal Atatürk Muslim Pedagogical Highschool*, a school which reawakened the tradition of the old Muslim Seminary at Medgidia, a salutary step in the training of Muslim

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<sup>66</sup> In 1877 the Muslim Cult of Romania was organized into four Muftiates. Between the two world wars, these fused into two, and in 1943 the Muftiates of Tulcea and Constanța merged into one Muftiate (centre of worship), whose seat was in Constanța.

<sup>67</sup> Vakıf – a religious foundation which owned various facilities such as land or buildings and used the income obtained from these for religious or charitable purposes. See Gabor Agoston, Bruce Masters, *The Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, Facts On File, New York, 2009, p. 75.

<sup>68</sup> In the case of more isolated rural communities, the lack of religious staff caused difficulties in performing basic religious rituals such as baptisms or funerals.

<sup>69</sup> Giuseppe Cossuto, *op.cit.*, p. 219.

<sup>70</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

clergy, which upon the fall of Communism was insufficient and aging.<sup>71</sup> In the school year 2000-2001, the high school changed its name into *The National College Kemal Atatürk*.<sup>72</sup> Of significant effect for the rediscovery of the two communities' identity was the emergence of several publications, such as *Hakses (The Genuine Voice)*, in Turkish, and *Karadeniz (The Black Sea)* in Tatar. At the same time, in the field of university education the degree in Turkish language philology at the Ovidius University in Constanța was founded, in addition to the one that had existed at Bucharest University<sup>73</sup> ever since 1957, but which had been suspended in the 1980s, during the Communist period.<sup>74</sup>

On the whole, the condition the Islam inherited from the Communist period was a worrying one. Some of the most acute problems of the Muftiate after 1990 were the restoration, repair and construction of places of worship,<sup>75</sup> as well as the renewal of property documents in the case of several mosques which had no official documents for the land and the pertaining constructions, much of the paperwork having been destroyed or lost.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, land was acquired and work began for the construction of Muslim cemeteries and the restoration of Muslim heritage sites.

#### 4. The Primary Cores of Ethnic Identity

In the literature, as well as in institutional contexts in general, the two ethnic groups this study focuses on, the Turks and the Tatars, are usually treated together, either as an ethnic group – the Turkish-Tatar minority, or as a religious group – the Muslim community. At present, the two ethnic groups should be treated as two distinct communities not only due to the evolution of their political and institutional organization in the post-communist period. The necessity of such an approach is also suggested by the relation between ethnic self-representations and mutual representations of the Turkish-Tatar otherness. At a deeper level of analysis, we can identify two defining cores of the Turkish and Tatar identity discourses, one of convergence, and one of separation between the two groups.

On the one hand, we can speak of a **common core – the sense of belonging to the Turkic world**, and on the other hand of a **specifically Tatar core, represented by the Crimean origins**, dating back to the interwar period, a defining element in the current delimitation of the Tatar identity discourse from the Turkish one.

In the case of both Turks and Tatars, the process of identity construction was influenced by external factors. On the one hand, there was the Turkish nationalism of

<sup>71</sup> After the dissolution of the Muslim Seminary in Medgidia, in 1965-1966, no further imam was trained during the Communist period.

<sup>72</sup> Mictat Gârlan, *The Chronology of the Turkish minority (1989-2009)*, <http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/node/minoritatea-turc-2002>, accessed on 19 December 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

<sup>74</sup> Călin Felezeu, Adriana Cupcea, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>75</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *op.cit.*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 111-112.

the post-Ottoman period in Turkey. For both Turks and Tatars, an important element in the formation of self-consciousness was the victory in the war of independence led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the process of modernization he initiated in the new republic established in 1923. Turkish nationalism, as an ideology which lay at the foundation of the new Turkish state, contributed to the creation of a new consciousness, adapted to the new political situation of the interwar period. More precisely, against the backdrop of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire as a structure in which Muslim solidarity prevailed as a form of identification, the new nationalist ideology offered Dobruja Turks and Tatars an essential element of their identity – **a sense of pride in belonging to the Turkic world**. Therefore, we can say that Turkish nationalism triggered the intensification of emigration tendencies among Turks and Tatars in Dobruja, as they felt marginalized and disadvantaged as citizens of the Romanian state, after the annexation of Northern Dobruja to Romania in 1878. Given the secularization measures implemented in Turkey after 1923, the causes which prevailed as reasons of emigration to Turkey among the Turks and Tatars in Dobruja were not religious, but were connected to a sense of belonging and, implicitly, to cultural and political, but also economic protection. The common origin and Islam did, however, play an important role in the sense of belonging to the Turkic world.

The second important core involves the particularization of the Tatar identity discourse, creating, beyond the differentiation through the **Crimean Tatar origins**, a delimitation which resulted from their connections to the political and ideological evolution of their territory of origin, Crimea, in the interwar period. These connections existed and influenced the evolution of Dobruja Tatars not only during this period, but also during the post-war period.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, a process of national awakening took place in Dobruja, simultaneous to similar developments in the case of Crimea Tatars. Starting with Ismail Gaspirali, continuing with the movement of the Tatar Youth, created after the defeat of the Russian revolution of 1905, and up to around 1908, the Tatar national movement defined the main components of the idea of a modern Crimean Tatar nation: the territorial definition of the Crimean Tatar national concept, Crimea being a compact and well delimited geographic entity, easily identifiable from the outside. Elements such as the common language, albeit with several dialects, the fact that they practiced Islam, the emphasis placed on the historical precedent of statehood represented by the Crimean Khanate, led by the ancestors of the Tatars, within the territory recognized as the motherland, alongside the sense of belonging to the cultural and historical heritage of the Turkic and Muslim world,<sup>77</sup> were also arguments in favour of a Tatar national distinctivism embraced by Crimean Tatar intellectuals.

The centre that coordinated the movement was Istanbul, through the Crimean Tatar leaders who had taken refuge there, and there was permanent communication among leaders in Turkey, Crimea and Dobruja. The main channels through which

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<sup>77</sup> Hakan Kırımlı, *National Movements and National Identity Among the Crimean Tatars 1905-1906*, Brill, New York, Köln, p. 221.

national ideas circulated were face to face encounters in one of the three territories, the organization of open conferences, or the publication of newspapers and magazines printed in Istanbul, such as Çolpan (The Morning Star), Teşvik (The Impetus) și Dobruca Sadası (The Voice of Dobruja), which also reached Dobruja.<sup>78</sup> One of the Dobruja Tatar intellectuals who were actively involved in the Tatar national movement both on the Crimean territory and in Turkey and who nowadays constitute the pantheon of the minority's great personalities is the poet Mehmet Nyiazi (1878-1931). As a professor at the Muslim Seminary in Medgidia, he contributed decisively from his position as an educator, through the national ideas he disseminated, to the creation of a new generation of Dobruja leaders. One of these is the lawyer Müstecep Ülküsal (1899-1996), the founder, in 1930, together with his brother Necip Hagi Fazıl, of the nationalist Crimean Tatar magazine Emel (The Aspiration). Generally, Tatar national ideology found followers among students and among the commercial bourgeoisie (Oberländer Târnoveanu, Adam 2005: 50-51). Among these were also the lawyer Selim Abdülhakim (1877-1944), the journalist Fevzi Ibrahim Ismail (1890-1960) or the Mufti Halil Fehmi (1888-1933).

In Dobruja, Tatar nationalism emphasized the primary links to Crimea, which was considered to be the motherland, re-establishing connections with its history and with its cultural and linguistic traditions, with its specificity. Therefore, in Dobruja communities the lines of separation between the Crimean and the Nogay group were perpetuated. An incipient national revival took place among the Nogay Romanian Tatars as well, but one that functioned purely on a cultural level, since a return to Budjak, and even less to Edisan, in the steppe between the Don and the Volga, or to Kuban, was out of the question.<sup>79</sup>

The creation in 1917, in the wake of the fall of the Russian Empire, of an independent Tatar republic in Crimea, eventually dissolved under Bolshevik pressure in 1918, was and still is to many Crimean Tatars, including those in Dobruja who are historically and politically conscious, the only period since 1783 when national aspirations were fulfilled.<sup>80</sup> Political elites in Dobruja, as in fact the majority of the Tatar population, welcomed enthusiastically the creation of the independent Crimean state. A large number immigrated to Crimea, participating actively in the events, and at the same time providing financial, organizational, propagandistic and political-diplomatic support to the national revolution in the new state. Also, many Tatars who escaped Bolshevik terror found refuge in the Tatar communities in Dobruja.<sup>81</sup>

The occupation<sup>82</sup> of Crimea by the Axis powers in 1944 led to the escalation of a brutal war between Soviet partisans and the German and Romanian forces that

<sup>78</sup> Ernest Oberländer Târnoveanu, Volker Adam, *op.cit.*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>80</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1978, p.120.

<sup>81</sup> Ernest Oberländer Târnoveanu, Volker Adam, *op.cit.*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>82</sup> The desire of the Crimean Tatars to be recognized as an indigenous group of the Crimean Peninsula was only realized during the nativization of the 1920s and 1930s. In this period, the Soviet regime decided, in keeping with the new nationalities policy, which emphasized the collaboration among all nationalities and the cultural development of the various ethnic groups in the USSR, the creation of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Within the

had occupied the peninsula. The repression the Tatar population had been subjected to during the Soviet regime, in all fields of life (political, cultural, economic and social), led them to perceive the German and Romanian armies as liberators. However, there were also Tatars who joined the ranks of the Soviet partisans (Fisher 1978: 153).<sup>83</sup> Dobruja Tatars supported their fellow nationals in Crimea. As already mentioned, Tatar political and religious leaders from Dobruja were sent to Crimea in order to spread propaganda, to collaborate with the military and to create an administrative apparatus with limited powers. Alongside the elites, the great mass of the population contributed financial and other types of support, and volunteered to participate in the fight for the Tatar cause.

This involvement of the Tatar community who lived in exile, including the Tatars from Dobruja, is demonstrated by the involvement of three leaders from Turkey and Romania, namely Cafer Seidamet, Mustecip Ülküsal and Edige Kırimal. Ülküsal was, as already mentioned, a Dobruja Tatar and one of the political leaders of the Tatar community in exile. The negotiations between Seidamet and the German ambassador in Ankara, Von Papen, resulted in an invitation for Ülküsal and Kırimal to participate, in Germany (Berlin), to the formulation of the Nazi policy for Crimea and the Turkic peoples in the Soviet Union. At the end of November 1941, Ülküsal, who had immigrated to Turkey as early as 1940, and Kırimal left to Berlin to support the Tatar cause.

Despite great hopes, the results achieved in the years 1941-1944 were modest, because Germany had its own plans regarding the post-war future of the peninsula,<sup>84</sup> plans which did not include Tatar autonomy, even less an independent state. Despite the modest results obtained in Berlin, Ülküsal's participation in this episode is significant on the one hand for the links between the Tatar elite in Dobruja and the Tatar national movement and the political realities of Crimea, and on the other hand for the present-day meaning this event holds in the consciousness of part of the Tatar intellectuals in Dobruja – a moment in which the ideal of an independent Tatar state is affirmed.

In the spring of 1944, the Soviet troupes regained Crimea, which led some Crimean Tatars, including members of the National Tatar Committee, to take refuge in Dobruja. The collaboration of some of the Crimean Tatars with the German-Romanian authorities and the fact that they supported Crimeans provided pretexts for the Soviet authorities to launch large-scale repression campaigns against the Tatar community. The final punishment for the Tatars came on the night of 18 May 1944, in the shape of an organized operation of mass deportation to Siberia. In the collective consciousness of Dobruja Tatars, this date is now known as the 18 May 1944

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new administrative unit, the cultural autonomy of Crimean Tatars was promoted, the Tatar language becoming, alongside Russian, the official language of the republic. A number of Tatar cultural institutions existed, such as journals, newspapers, museums, libraries, Tatar language degrees in universities. Everything came to an end in 1928, when Stalin decided to destroy all national Communist movements within the USSR. See Alan W. Fisher, *op.cit.*, pp. 131, 140, 141.

<sup>83</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *op.cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>84</sup> Hitler's initial idea was to turn Crimea into Gotland, a refuge for Arian Germans.

banishment – the tragic day when the Crimean brothers were forced to leave their territory of origin. As we shall see, its effects extended upon a segment of the Dobruja Tatar population as late as the Dej period of the Communist regime in Romania.

## 5. Self-image and hetero-image

### 5.1. The Communist period

In what concerns the issue of self-identification in the Communist period, in the case of Turks and Tatars, but also that of mutual identification and the general perception of the society, their situation was evidently influenced by the Communist state's policy towards minorities. The creation of the united working people meant the levelling of society, and therefore the integration of all citizens, regardless of nationality, into the egalitarian Communist society involved social and national levelling, and even assimilation.<sup>85</sup> As a consequence, in the case of groups and individuals, the interviews with members of the Turkish and Tatar communities reveal either an **ethnic identity which has become private**, whose space of manifestation was most of the time the personal space of the family or the house, as a personal space, or a **weakening of the sense of ethnic belonging, resulting from and motivated by the preoccupation for social and professional adjustment to the Communist society**. In the case of families which were directly targeted by repression from the authorities, life in Communism seems to have been experienced from the perspective of personal drama. Ethnic aspects faded into the background of their inner life, their place being taken by priorities such as material and existential survival under the Communist regime.

Both Turks and Tatars underlined, with regard to the **mutual identification Turk-Tatar in this period, the absence of clear differences between the two ethnic groups**. The arguments are the practice of the common religion, the existence of mixed marriages between Turks and Tatars, the shared customs,<sup>86</sup> and the education based on a shared sense of belonging to the Turkic world: *We made no distinction between Turks and Tatars, this comes from the education we got in our family, that's how we were raised. For example, at the Muslim Seminary in Medgidia you studied in Turkish. Our parents favoured the Turkish language, but, at the same time, at home we spoke Tatar.*<sup>87</sup>

In the case of ethnic Tatars, this statement is often accompanied by the mention of the confusion between Turks and Tatars in the communist period. More precisely, the majority used the ethnic designation 'Turk' for Tatars. This feature persists, in the opinion of the latter, in present-day perceptions and social relations: *...my fellow students at high school and university called me a Turk. I was the only one of 150 students. We were perceived as Turks, they made no distinction, and they*

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<sup>85</sup> Elena Florea, *Principiile politicii PCR în problema națională*, Editura Politica, 1975, pp. 82-83.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with S. T., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with I. A., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

make no distinction nowadays either.<sup>88</sup> A component of the Tatar discourse repeated in this context is the mention of the cliché of Tatars as a barbaric people.<sup>89</sup> They regard this aspect as a consequence of their association in the collective mentality of the Communist society with the image created and spread through the history books of the period, an image which overlaps with that of the hordes of Tatars, invading warriors of the Mongol empire led by Genghis Khan:

*For example, at university they only found out now, after the Revolution, that I'm a Tatar, you Turk, they used to call me. What was I supposed to explain? Especially because according to that old history everyone knew about the Tatars that they were barbarians. And then they said Turk, everyone was – "you Turk."*<sup>90</sup>

### 5.2. The organizational separation of the 1990s

After the fall of Communism in Romania, in 1989, we can speak, like in the case of all ethnic minorities, about a rediscovery of identity values and symbols. The revival of the spiritual life was implicitly accompanied by an institutional one, with the creation, as early as the last days of December 1989,<sup>91</sup> of the *Muslim Turkish Democratic Union of Romania*. As a result of disagreement within the community, it was decided that the organization should split into two separate ones: *The Union of the Ethnic Turkish Minority of Romania*, which later took the name of *The Turkish Democratic Union of Romania* (TDUR), and the *Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania* (DUTITR), both organizations having as main declared goal the preservation and perpetuation of the cultural and traditional values of ethnic Turks and Tatars respectively. Professor Tasin Gemil, who, as the leader of the *Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania* at the time, was directly involved, reports that the disagreements between the Turks and the Tatars started from the issue of the leadership of the Muftiate. After the dismissal of Mufti Iacob Memet, who had held office ever since 1947, part of the Muslim community requested the naming as Mufti of Mustafa Ali Mehmed, a historian and a graduate of the Muslim Seminary in Medgidia. On the other hand, the imams did not want to lose power and elected a Mufti from among them, Ibraim Ablachim. The rupture between the two ethnic groups was caused by the fact that Mustafa Ali Mehmed was a Turk, while the newly elected Mufti, Ibraim Ablachim, was a Tatar. Thus, although the groups that had supported each of them included both Turks and Tatars, the disagreements soon took the shape of a conflict between Turks and Tatars.<sup>92</sup>

The Muftiate crisis (February-July 1990) was the background against which the dissolution of the *Muslim Turkish Democratic Union of Romania* occurred. On 16

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with G. A., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with O.E., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

<sup>91</sup> Tahsin Gemil, „Înființarea Uniunii Democratice a Tătarilor Turco-Musulmani din România (Documente)”, în *Moștenirea istorică a tătarilor*, Editura Academiei Române, Bucharest, 2012, p. 351.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 354.



March 1990, the group that contested the Tatar leadership of the MTDUR registered at the Constanța court a new organization named *The Union of the Ethnic Turkish Minority of Romania* (UETMR), which, on 11 May, pressed charges against the MTDUR, requesting it to eliminate the ethnonym ‘Turk’ from its name (Gemil 2012: 356).<sup>93</sup>

The dissensions between the two organizations also manifested themselves in the field of politics, as we can infer from the observation of a report of the *Institute for the Study of National Minorities Issues*, according to which, although only the DUTITR participated, according to the website of the Chamber of Deputies, both minorities had their own deputy in the first legislative body of the post-Communist period (Gergő 2009: 47). More precisely, Tasin Gemil was elected deputy on behalf of the DUTITR, and, upon the insistence of the UETMR, the Validation commission of the Chamber of Deputies also considered the candidature of Amet Hogeia.<sup>94</sup> Since the Validation commission explicitly underlined the problem of the ethnic denomination of one of the two organizations, as the regulations in force at the time did not permit a national minority to be represented by more than one deputy, the leaders of the MTDUR decided to include the ethnonym *Tatar* in the name of the organization. Thus, starting with July 1990, the official name became *The Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania* (DUTITR) (Gemil 2012: 357). Finally, in July 1990, the Validation commission voted the validation of both deputies: Tasin Gemil, as a representative of the Tatars, and Amet Hogeia as a representative of the Ethnic Turkish Minority.<sup>95</sup>

In retrospect, the moment of separation of the two ethnic groups in terms of their political representation is seen from two different perspectives. On the one hand, this organizational, administrative and representational separation in the post-Communist period is perceived to have been motivated by strictly financial reasons, i.e. by the possibility of obtaining separate financing from the state budget, for two separate unions, one representing the Turkish minority, the other the Tatar minority. This perspective is suggestive for how this evolution is perceived, since budget subsidies for minorities organisations were introduced five years after the organizational separation of Turks and Tatars, in 1995. From this perspective, the separation is strictly practical in nature, supported by the administrative structures of the two unions, without having a real basis among the ordinary population. The religious and cultural connection represented by Islam, the customs deriving from this religion, the common Turkic origins and the cultural affinities which resulted from belonging to the Turkic world represent, in the opinion of both Turks and Tatars, undeniable cohesive elements. As some members maintain, these shared identity components run counter to the separation that occurred at the level of political representation.

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 356.

<sup>94</sup> Initially, the candidature of Amet Hogeia was only accepted as an independent, since he had not registered according to the legal requirements. Subsequently, the Validation commission of the Chamber of Deputies validated his candidature, and he became deputy on behalf of the UETMR. See „Înființarea Uniunii Democratice a Tătarilor Turco-Musulmani...”, p. 356.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 358.

*There never was a difference between Turks and Tatars. Also, the Tatar language is a dialect of the Turkish language. After the revolution we had financial opportunities, two deputies, two funds. At the beginning there was only one union, and when they saw there was another way they separated. But there is no difference (between Turks and Tatars), we had our weddings together, were raised together, spoke together. Now we also do common activities, we have the same holidays, there is no split, but in order to get financial benefits and titles... These things matter for money and titles, for the ordinary population it doesn't matter: this one's a Turk, this one's a Tatar.*<sup>96</sup>

At the same time, others are in favour of this organizational and representational separation, simultaneously with the continued collaboration in the field of culture and education between the two minorities.

*It's a good idea to have the two minorities, for them to continue their activities separately, but not completely separate, there should be collaboration among us for certain activities. There are activities we do together. For example, at school no. 12 (in Constanța), we have classes that are taught in the Turkish literary language, with ethnic Turk and Tatar children. The class was set up in 2000, in cooperation with the Turkish Democratic Union.*<sup>97</sup>

From the interviews, it could be established that this affirmation of the separation persisted in the discourse of the intellectuals who were familiar with the local and international history of their ethnic group, regardless of whether they were actively involved in the two unions.

The attitude towards the moment of organizational separation which took place in 1990, but also towards the issue of current and future representation, is relevant for the relationship between self-image and hetero-image in the case of the two ethnic groups. In this context, despite the fact that they belonged to the Turkic world, the Crimean origins of the Tatars become the major distinctive element both in the view of the Tatars and in the view of the Turks. The ethnic Turks allude in their discourse to a specific attitude of the Tatars towards the Turks, which stems from the consciousness of their Crimean roots.

*The term of Turkish-Tatar minority is correct, and the Turks recognize the Tatar people as belonging to the Turkic people. But the Tatars place themselves separately somewhere. In Turkey they are called Crimean Turks, here they consider themselves a Tatar nation.*<sup>98</sup>

In the view of the Tatars, the organizational separation represented an initiative of the Turks,<sup>99</sup> resulting from a differentiation some ethnic Tatars ascribe to their Crimean origins, or to an intellectual superiority that characterizes the Tatars,

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with S. T., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January, 2013.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with M. F., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with R. R., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 30 January 2013.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with I. A., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

stating that they represent, after the Armenians, the second minority in terms of percentage of intellectuals out of all minorities in Romania.<sup>100</sup>

In its turn, the Tatar discourse directly recognizes the Crimean origins as a powerful core of their identity. This represents a particularizing component inherent to their identity structure, a component which remained in a state of latency during the almost fifty years of Communism, being rediscovered after 1990. ...after '90, when we had the opportunity to declare our identity, we said Tatar, and it's well known that we haven't forgotten our Crimean origins, but we had no connections to Crimea, there was no one to have connections with, after '44 no one was left.<sup>101</sup> At present, they declare themselves to be the descendants of Crimean Tatars, while Turks consider them a Turkic branch and Tatar language a dialect of the Turkish language respectively.<sup>102</sup>

However, both in the view of the Turks and in that of the Tatars, the connection between the two ethnic groups is recognized and identified through common points such as religious affinity, common customs and belonging to the Turkic world. The elements mentioned are present in the personal discourse, but are also reflected in the official one. The logos of the unions which represent the two ethnic groups are suggestive in this sense. For instance, the logo of the *Turkish Democratic Union of Romania* (see Fig.2) incorporates a globe on which there is the symbol of the star and crescent, interpreted as a symbol of the Turks, framed at the bottom by two olive branches, symbolizing peace. At the base of the globe there is the name of the *Turkish Democratic Union of Romania*, framed by the Romanian tricolour flag, explained as a symbol of the support the Romanian state provides the Turkish nation for the preservation of its cultural, spiritual and religious identity,<sup>103</sup> thus sending to the clearly expressed integrative character of the community. The sense of belonging to the Turkish and Muslim world is suggested in the case of the Tatars both by the name – *The Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania* (see Fig. 3) – and by the logo. The latter also includes the star and crescent, as a symbol of the connection to the Turkish world, alongside a stylized green mosque,<sup>104</sup> signifying religious belonging to Islam,<sup>105</sup> against the background of the Tatar symbol “tarak tamga”,<sup>106</sup> the coat of arms of the Crimean Khanate which

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<sup>100</sup> Interview with M. F., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013; Interview with O. E., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with O. E., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with S. T., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January 2013.

<sup>103</sup> See the site of the *Turkish Democratic Union of Romania*, <http://www.udtr.ro/index.htm>, accessed on 25 February 2013.

<sup>104</sup> Green is the colour of Islam.

<sup>105</sup> Interviews with members of the Tatar community suggest that the introduction of the term ‘Muslim’ in the official title of the union also had financial reasons, giving them the opportunity to attract a wider range of sources of financing from Muslim states.

<sup>106</sup> See the site of the *Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania*, <http://uniuneatatara.ro>, ssed on 25 February 2013.

existed between 1441 and 1783, but also of the Tatar state of the Golden Horde, between 1240 and 1502.

## **6. The perspective upon the Communist period: between conformity and repression**

In what concerns the perspective upon the Communist period, it is crystallized around two types of discourse, reflecting two types of retrospective attitudes and behaviours regarding the previous regime. On the one hand, we can identify an attitude of acceptance and conformity of Turks and Tatars towards the Communist regime, both as average citizens and as members of a minority. The main elements of this discourse are the equal treatment of Turks and Tatars, in harmony with the treatment of the other ethnic minorities and all citizens in general, the exclusion of any feeling of marginalization or discrimination, be it ethnic or of any other kind<sup>107</sup>.

*There was the official ideological view which considered all Romanians, including ethnic Turks, Tatars and all the others, as belonging to the united working people, according to the idea that all people are the same, have the same rights, at least in the Constitution, that's what it was like. A number of liberties and rights were mentioned there, but they weren't always put into practice. So, from our point of view, there was no hostile attitude towards the Tatars in particular, or a hostile attitude towards the Turks or Armenians or the others.*<sup>108</sup>

A recurrent theme of this discourse is the comparison of the situation of ethnic Turks and Tatars in Romania with that of other Muslim communities in the Balkans, during the Communist period,<sup>109</sup> more specifically with the Turkish community in Bulgaria. The latter had been subjected at the beginning of the 1980s to an aggressive process of ethnic and cultural assimilation.<sup>110</sup> In this context, therefore, life under Communism is described as *good*,<sup>111</sup> arguments being the preservation of traditions, the possibility to keep their Turkish names, the survival of a large number

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<sup>107</sup> Interview with O. E., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with N. I., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January 2013.

<sup>109</sup> For details on the situation of the Muslim communities in the Balkans during the communist era see Hugh Poulton; Taji-Farouki Suha (eds.), *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, Hurst, London, 1997, and Ina Merdjanova, *Rediscovering the Umma. Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013.

<sup>110</sup> For the situation of the Turkish community in Bulgaria, see "The Turkish minority under Communist Bulgaria – politics of ethnicity and power", in *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol. 1, no. 2, 1999, pp. 149-162.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with G. E., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 28 January 2013; Interview with G. S., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 28 January 2013.

of mosques, at a time when in large Romanian cities Orthodox churches which were heritage sites were being demolished.<sup>112</sup>

At an individual level, this type of attitude can be identified in the case of ethnic Turks and Tatars who were personally motivated by a desire for professional achievement, which led them to conform, to adapt to the political and social rigours of the authorities. They admit that this type of conformity simultaneously brought them material benefits which, from the perspective of the present, they regard as strictly professional merits or rewards, excluding any collaboration with the Party and the Communist authorities.

*They left us alone because we worked conscientiously and seriously. Both of us, if we speak in front of other Tatars, they'll say "you were communists." The funny thing is that, for instance, I wasn't a party member, and I did hold some positions, but I worked...*

*They kept us because they saw we were serious people, made for that kind of work. If they saw that you drank, that you didn't do your job... And then many say: "What they did to us." What we did to ourselves, not what others did to us, that's what it's all about.*<sup>113</sup>

Commitment to one's profession becomes the core of the memories of the period, representing at the same time a legitimizing element when seen from the perspective of the present. In the case of some of them, the process of remembering the Communist years focuses on everyday social and professional activities, and lacks ethnic implications. For example, in the case of a Romanian language teacher it concentrates on disciplining the students, compulsory education, extra teaching hours, participating in agricultural work, or rehearsals for the festival Cântarea României ("Praise to Romania").<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Interview with G. E., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 28 January 2013; Interview with O. E., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea 29 January 2013.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with O. E., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with H. A., member of the Tatar community, 29 January 2013. Cântarea României was defined as a "festival of socialist education and culture..., ample educational, political-ideological, cultural-artistic manifestation of creation and interpretation, meant to enrich and diversify the spiritual life of the country, to enhance the contribution of the creative genius of the Romanian people to the national and international cultural patrimony." The direct implication was that any artistic, but also technical creation, any cultural manifestation, amateur or folkloric performance, theatrical performance, etc. had to obtain the approval of the "activists" who were responsible with the festival Cântarea României, who were present in every factory and in every village. The principle which regulated the activity of these guardians of "socialist culture" was the same as that stated in the July 1971 Theses and reiterated during the Mangalia Conference in August 1983, which focused on "issues of organizational and political-educational work," later perpetually repeated in discourses with an ideological content: there can be no artistic or cultural creation without a "revolutionary" message. Each work, each cultural event, all publishing, literary or artistic education were subordinated to the requirements of propaganda, any manifestation of this type necessarily

Thus, the problem of social origins, collectivization and Communist repression represent internal problems of the two ethnic groups, but external to their members as individuals. They regard these problems as being specific to their parents' and grandparents' generations, i.e. for the Dej period.

Tatars who support this type of discourse recognize in Communism a *de facto* rupture from the territory of origin, from the history of Crimea and of Crimean Tatars, only rediscovered after the fall of Communism. Significant in this respect is the account of a member of the Tatar community who admits he found out about the genocide of the Tatars on 18 May 1944 at the *Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars*, after 1990<sup>115</sup>. On the whole, we can say that the consciousness of being a Turk or a Tatar existed during the Communist period as well, but at a personal or small group level, and in a shape that was specific to every individual or group.

A second type of discourse identified reflects a retrospective view which focuses exclusively upon certain realities of the Communist period, but at the same time, at least in some cases, acquires ethnic undertones: persecutions, blackmail, the resort to the pretext of unhealthy social origins in the exclusion of children from the educational system, the impossibility of continuing their studies for those who had a political history, i.e. had family members who had been arrested for political reasons.

Within this discourse, the overall memory of the period is identified with the causes that led to the persecutions against their own families. The most frequent causes mentioned by those interviewed were the involvement in helping Crimean refugees in Dobruja,<sup>116</sup> the process of collectivization and the refusal to surrender land to the newly established Collective Agricultural Institutions,<sup>117</sup> the immigration of a family member to Turkey, the refusal to collaborate with the Securitate.<sup>118</sup>

Charges of high treason, negligence towards the security of the state, harbouring fugitives from a friendly country, nationalist Tatar politics, espionage in favour of Turkey were brought against the accused in the trials of March 1953<sup>119</sup> or December 1953<sup>120</sup>, both groups made up of Tatars, Turks and even Romanians.

In the case of those whose family members had been arrested, belonging to the Tatar minority becomes a secondary concern, and the issue of ethnicity is superseded by living in a Communist state, by everyday material worries, by personal drama. Many of them express their regret for not having pursued university studies as

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contributing to the creation of the "new man." See the Presidential Committee for the analysis of the Communist dictatorship in Romania, Bucharest, 2006, p. 603.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with M. F., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with G. A., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013; Interview with S.M., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, 30 January 2013.

<sup>117</sup> Güner Akmolla, *Cartea iertării...*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with H. K., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 30 January 2013.

<sup>119</sup> *Observer*, 1999 (23 November).

<sup>120</sup> Interview with G. A., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

a result of their families' choice to send them to technical schools, a choice motivated by their worries about subsistence.<sup>121</sup> This is, for instance, the case of the two descendants of Necip Hagi Fazıl, who is nowadays considered a national hero of the Tatars, and who was arrested and killed by the Security Police, in 1948, as a consequence of the fact that he had coordinated the protection of the Crimean refugees in Dobruja.<sup>122</sup> Others highlight the obstacle social origins represented in pursuing studies, as well as the well-established practice of forging the social origin certificate required by the authorities.

*In 1959, when I went to university, I was called to Cadres and I had an autobiography ready, I mentioned this one and that one, I had no relatives abroad, brothers, two or three, I didn't mention everyone. My father had a certificate that he'd been a teacher at the Medgidia Seminary, I'd worked for two years at the ITMC, I brought a certificate that I had working class origins and that's how I got myself a worker's autobiography. For two weeks they called me to Cadres and didn't go to university. I was born in Bulgaria and they searched the archives in Bulgaria – the name Ibrahim didn't come up much and that's how I got through.*<sup>123</sup>

Last but not least, the accounts of the interviewees raise the issue of the incorporation of some ethnic Turks and Tatars within the Communist structures, revealing fratricidal attitudes within the two ethnic groups. In describing the onset of the Communist hunt of Crimean refugees in Dobruja, G.A. states that *it was people from among us who gave them over to the Russians, the fugitives who had eaten our chiburekki the day before.*<sup>124</sup>

Within this category, the main characteristic which emerges is the continuous reference to family members who were arrested, killed, persecuted. Regardless of the question, the interlocutors always return to their situation, which marked their life during the Communist regime. Although in many cases the initial cause of the persecution were accusations of Tatar nationalism or connections with Turkey,<sup>125</sup> that is identity elements of an ethnic nature, we can see that the period seems to have been experienced through the perspective of a citizen who is being persecuted by a Communist state, in which individual subsistence prevails over ethnic survival.

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<sup>121</sup> Interview with A. Ş., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 3 April 2014.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with S. M., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 30 January 2013.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with I. A., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with G. A., member of the Tatar community, 29 January 2013. Şuberek is a traditional dish, both in the Turkish and in the Tatar cuisine – a pie with beef or mutton.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with K. R., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 25 mai 2013.

## 7. Turks and Tatars: religious community in the Communist period

In what concerns the existence of the Muftiate as a representative institution of Islam in Romania in the Communist period, at first sight its role seems to have been a predominantly administrative one. Some of those interviewed highlighted the role of the Muftiate in administering the mosques and in saving many of these during the Communist period.<sup>126</sup> Among the ethnic Turks and Tatars, as Muslim community, the Muftiate is perceived through the presence of imams seen as important factors in the preservation of Islam in the communist period. Ethnic Turks and Tatars recognize their merit in maintaining their status, in a period in which the function of imam meant both a social and a material disadvantage.

*...before 1989, our Imams' salaries were below the minimum wage, therefore their merit is that they managed to hold their own. The majority had to work another job too in order to survive, but those who believed in their profession resisted. We mustn't forget the merits of the older ones, who stayed when the average salary was 500 lei and they stayed on 180-200 lei on that job. And during that period people were poor, you couldn't go as a imam to a family, to a funeral, to a service and claim a lot of money.*<sup>127</sup>

The degrading situation of imams (imams) is also suggested by the accounts of their family members, who speak of the fact that they simultaneously engaged in proletarian activities such as working in the Collective Agricultural Institutions (G.A.C.'s).

*The imam had become dirt-poor, he earned a pitiful salary, he was called upon only for funerals. When I was a child I understood, and when I was asked: what does your father do?, I either avoided to answer, or I lied saying that he was a worker* (Akmolla 2002: 56).

Those interviewed denied the idea of a direct persecution of the Communist regime based on the fact that they were of Islamic religion, but they highlight at the same time the tacit policy of discouraging spiritual life practiced by the Communist regime in the case of all religions in Romania. As an example, they mention the fact that religious services were organized at the mosque every Friday, but they also confirm the reluctance of the population to express their religious choices and attitudes publicly. This attitude had as a result the absence of much of the active population from the religious ceremonies. The reasons mentioned were the fear of consequences on their professional life, and implicitly on their social and economic life. Thus, religious services appear as the duty of the older members of the Muslim community, be they Turks or Tatars.

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<sup>126</sup> Interview with T. G., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 11 January 2013.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with M. F., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.



*The old people were those who came to the mosque more often, the young ones were cautious, they were afraid they could be criticized at work, especially those who were members of the UCY, who could be admonished in public meetings.*<sup>128</sup>

Kurban Bayram<sup>129</sup> and Ramazan Bayram<sup>130</sup> are mentioned as the only religious holidays observed within the whole community, the majority of which participated directly and actively in the religious services organized at the mosques.

*The Bayram holidays (Kurban Bayram and Ramazan Bayram) were those in which we all participated, regardless of age, at the Bayram services you couldn't get a place in the mosque.*<sup>131</sup>

A major consequence of the tacit but deliberate policy of inhibiting the spiritual life practiced by the Communist state is, according to the ethnic Turks and Tatars, the closure in 1965 of the Muslim Seminary of Medgidia. This is considered by all members of the Muslim community who mentioned it, Turks as well as Tatars, an important institution for the preservation of their identity, since it trained the future imams of the community. They see the disappearance of this institution as a slow process of gradual smothering, which took place through a series of actions which placed it under indirect pressure. As a first phase identifiable in their discourse is the limitation of its activity to training imams, in the context in which in the interwar period the Seminary trained imams as well as teachers. A second step in its dissolution is the underfinancing of Muslim cult, and implicitly the deterioration of the social-economic situation of the imams. This phase, correlated with the Muslim population's awareness of the Communist ideological context which promoted

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<sup>128</sup> Interview with T. G., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 11 January 2013.

<sup>129</sup> Kurban Bayram (The Festival of Sacrifice) celebrates Prophet Ibrahim, who, made to choose between sacrificing his own son and the love for Allah, chooses the latter. In reward, Allah sends him a ram which is sacrificed instead of his son, who stays alive. The sacrifice of the ram, whose meat is divided into three: for the members of the family, for friends and neighbours, and for the needy, is a traditional obligation of the economically independent, well-off Muslim. The accomplished obligation strengthens the relations within the community and between communities, enhancing feelings of solidarity. After the Bayram prayer (Bayram Namazî), which must take place at a mosque, and after the men call at the houses of those who have died over the past year, where they read the Quran, four days of recreation follow, when there are traditional meals, visits of parents, grandparents, relatives, friends, which strengthen the family and the community. See Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea, Ex Ponto, Constanța*, 2011, p. 55.

<sup>130</sup> The holiday of Ramazan Bayram (The Festival of the Fast, the Sweet Festival) is, alongside the Festival of Sacrifice (Kurban Bayram), the second important religious celebration of the Muslims. It represents an opportunity for the consolidation of the Turkish community. The month of fasting (30 days) results in physical and mental strengthening and closes with the Bayram service (Bayram Namazî), being followed by three days of joy, recreation, and peace. See Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea...*, p. 55.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with M. F., member of the Tatar community, 29 January 2013; Interview with H. K., member of the Turkish community, 30 January 2013.

atheism, triggered a third step in the process of dissolution of the Seminary: the decrease in the number of students and, finally, its effective closure in 1965.<sup>132</sup>

On the whole, the factors which emerge as the main ones in preserving the Islamic religious identity during the Communist period, in the case of both ethnic Turks and ethnic Tatars, are the presence of the imams (imams), the community life and the family.

The importance of imams is highlighted, on the one hand, as already mentioned, in the context of their capacity to resist the economic and social vicissitudes resulting from their status as official religious representatives. On the other hand, their presence is connected to the second factor in the preservation of religious identity, namely community life. Starting with the 1960s, when the effects of urbanization and industrialization began to be felt, community life was reduced to gatherings on the occasion of wedding ceremonies, baptisms and funerals. These were facilitated by the fact that, according to the Islamic tradition, they were organized in the private space of the home, and not at the mosque.

*...usually, the religious wedding was done at our place, because it's easier, the imam comes to your house and doesn't go to the church. All religious customs were actually much easier for us, because the imam went from one house to another. Baptisms too, because baptisms are also done at home, and the religious wedding, we did all this. Of course, with some fear and some caution...*<sup>133</sup>

The fact that these group events within the religious community were performed by the imams is in the Muslims' view a very important fact, since they consider their priests to be the legitimizing agents of their religious life. Their presence excluded any suspicion of irregularity in a ceremony or religious manifestation.

The family emerges as the main structure which ensured the survival of the religious feeling. The older members of the family were mainly the ones who fulfilled the task of transmitting the elements of religious education, both informative and practical, to the younger generations. Against the background of a general attitude of caution regarding public manifestations of religious choices,<sup>134</sup> customs such as observing the fast (the Ramazan) or daily religious prayers<sup>135</sup> became individual practices, with the family and the home ensuring a private and secure environment where they could take place.

With regard to their status as a religious minority, a frequently repeated element both in the case of ethnic Turks and ethnic Tatars is the comparison with the situation of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. From this perspective, ethnic Turks and

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<sup>132</sup> Interview with T. G., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 11 January 2013; Interview with Y. M., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January, 2013.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with S.T., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January 2013.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Y. M, member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January 2013.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with S.T., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January 2013.

Tatars consider their situation as a religious and ethnic minority as a good one,<sup>136</sup> since there was no direct aggressive policy of the authorities against Muslims. For example, Y. M. believes that Islam suffered no ill effects, as other Muslim communities in the Communist bloc did, owing to the good relations between the Romanian Communist state and the Arab states, particularly Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein<sup>137</sup>. Despite arrests among the imams and the fact that a number of mosques were allowed to fall into disrepair, these were not shut down, and payment of the imam, although very low, existed, unlike other Communist states, where no form of financing for the Muslim cult existed.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, the policy of indirect pressure upon religious life, although it posed problems and represented an obstacle to religious practice, was not part of an ethnic assimilation policy, as it was in Bulgaria.

### **8. Spirituality and ethnicity in the Communist period: traditions and the mother tongue**

In what concerns traditions, be they religious or secular, these are presented as a characteristic of interwar rural life. The village after the 1878 War of Independence emerges in the memory of the elderly as a repository of traditions, a site where the society in its traditional shape was preserved. Several Islamic religious or secular holidays which were held in villages are mentioned: Hıdırellez,<sup>139</sup> Kurban Bayram and Ramazan Bayram. Among the important means of cementing the community mentioned are weddings, baptisms, funerals organized according to the Islamic tradition, courses for the study of the Quran organized by mosques, the school graduation exams, which entailed a ceremony that entertained the whole community.<sup>140</sup> In the memory of both Turks and Tatars, the village takes the shape of a micro-space of values, of ethnic and religious tradition, brutally cut short by the arrival of the Red Army and the onset of Communism.

The memory of the first decades of Communism is still marked by community life, in the sense of the cohabitation and the permanent social contact between ethnic Turks and Tatars, seen as the main core of ethnic and religious

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with T. G., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 11 January 2013.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Y. M., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January, 2013.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with Y. M., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January, 2013.

<sup>139</sup> Hıdırellez is an ethno-cultural and religious festival celebrated on 6 May every year to mark the beginning of the warm season. This is when people visit the graves of the loved ones or of saints, clean them, bring flowers, read prayers from the Quran, give alms, help the widows and the orphans. Religious services and the commemoration of the dead are followed by folkloric and musical performances, and picnics. See Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea...*, p. 55.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with M. F., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

identity, both within the traditional village and in the Turkish or Tatar quarters in the city. The processes of industrialization and urbanization, started in the Dej period of the Communist regime and continued after 1965, which involved dislocation from villages to cities and the dissipation of the suburbs into workers' neighbourhoods,<sup>141</sup> are identified by the interlocutors as the main causes of the destruction of community ties and of the distancing from traditional culture. Despite the complete equality regardless of ethnic origin proclaimed by the Communist state, the fact that the differences regarding the status of the minorities were not taken into account in practice<sup>142</sup> materialized into specific forms of repression which prevented them from pursuing their traditions and customs. Out of these, ethnic Turks and Tatars both mentioned the dissolution of mother tongue education in 1957, the absence of books, of media in the mother tongue, that is, of a written culture in the Turkish or the Tatar language.

The only religious festivals observed at the community level in the Communist period remain Kurban Bayram and Ramazan Bayram, mentioned especially in the context of the participation to the religious services organized at the mosque. The observance of the two festivals had certain limitations. For instance, the fast, or the Ramazan, which precedes the Ramazan Bayram, represented, as the interviewees state, almost exclusively the preoccupation of the elderly Turks and Tatars. In what the Kurban Bayram is concerned, this festival was observed by visiting parents, grandparents or relatives, and less by the custom of slaughtering the wether. This latter practice took place, according to the accounts, in more isolated communities, farther from the control of the authorities. These communities remained, in fact, the centres where ethnic and religious traditions were preserved.

At the same time, weddings, baptisms and funerals, organized according to the Islamic tradition, represented during the Communist years the main occasions when the community was reunited. These were sufficient to create a sense of cultural particularity, and their practice gave the younger generations of Turks and Tatars of the Communist period a sense of ethnic and religious distinctiveness.<sup>143</sup>

*An important role during the Communist period was that of our social gatherings, weddings, baptisms... My mother, for example, took me along ever since I was little to all religious weddings, they did the engagement, I listened to the words, to all the stages. For example, at engagements there was the custom of showing the girl's dowry, and all the girls gathered. And my mother said: see, this is what I'll do for you too. Even if you weren't allowed to have gold in those times, we always had*

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with T. G., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 11 January 2013.

<sup>142</sup> *Minorități în tranziție. Raport privind politicile publice în domeniul minorităților naționale și etnice din România*, <http://www.edrc.ro/docs/docs/provocdivers/092-127.pdf>, accessed on 7 March 2013.

<sup>143</sup> In this respect, we must remember that for Muslim believers in general religion is a way of life and represents a repository of the ethnic element through the social and cultural behaviors it generates, and which eventually emerge as factors which contribute to a sense of ethnic identity distinctiveness. In the particular case of the Turks and Tatars of Dobruja, this distinctiveness refers to the common identity background of the Turkic world.

*some, because when a daughter in law came, no matter what you had or didn't have, you had to give her rings, bracelets, a thick chain, that was the tradition.*<sup>144</sup>

Alongside traditions and customs, another component of the ethnic identity that was influenced by the changes in society, by the processes of industrialization and urbanization, was language, both Turkish and Tatar. Migration from villages to cities and the dissipation of ethnic Turks and Tatars into workers' quarters meant the destruction of the social centres that had spread the culture and implicitly the mother tongue. Under these circumstances and as a result of the dissolution in 1956-1957 of Turkish language education, and of Tatar language education at the beginning of the 1970s,<sup>145</sup> the family remained the last stronghold for the preservation of the Turkish and the Tatar language, spoken in the privacy of the home and of small social gatherings.

In retrospect, with the exception of the episode of the Tatar textbooks imported from Kazan, the idea of mother tongue education appears to both Turks and Tatars as an extremely positive one, especially when seen through the lens of the present. Although they admit the limited effect of Turkish and Tatar schools upon the two communities during the early decades of Communism, due to the fact that they followed a Romanian language curriculum exclusively and therefore only promoted Romanian culture,<sup>146</sup> these are presented as micro-communities,<sup>147</sup> which gave pupils the opportunity to use their mother tongue in socializing, and thus contributed to creating an ethnic bond among the younger generations.

The reclaiming of education in the mother tongue only took place after 1990, with the 1995 reform in education, when education in the Turkish language was reinstated for grades 1 to 12.<sup>148</sup> The inability to organize Tatar language education during the post-Communist period represents, in the view of the Tatars, a great shortcoming of the community, a hiatus in the process of rediscovery and preservation of ethnic identity. The cause highlights one of the main issues faced by the Dobruja Tatar community at the moment, namely the fact that the Tatar language is not known by the present generations, a situation which some of the interlocutors believe is the consequence of the psychological inhibition of speaking the mother tongue in public, prevalent during the Communist period.<sup>149</sup> At present, there are attempts to prevent the loss of this habit among youth, primarily through an institutional effort undertaken by DUTITR. This effort involves the organization of courses in some of its branches and the introduction of the Tatar language as an

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<sup>144</sup> Interview with S.T., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January, 2013.

<sup>145</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea...*, p. 182.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with N. I., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January 2013.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with I. A., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

<sup>148</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea...*, p. 182.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with N. I., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 January 2013.

elective subject in some schools in Constanța county.<sup>150</sup> This revival is considered, both by individuals and by institutions, as being essential for the future evolution of the Tatar community.

## **9. The reference to the territory of origin: Turkey vs. Crimea**

The reference to the territory of origin represents an important element of the Turkish as well as Tatar identity discourse, not only during the Communist period, but also after 1990.

Despite the lack of a *de facto* relation with Turkey, during the Communist period there was a connection in the consciousness of Turks and Tatars. An important role in the persistence of this connection was played by the fact that the members of many families of Turkish or Tatar origin lived in Turkey, having immigrated there in the interwar period, before the onset of the Communist regime.<sup>151</sup>

Within the Turkish collective mentality, Turkey represented during the Communist years, and still represents, the territory where their ancestors who reached Dobruja 800 years ago came from, namely the original country, the motherland.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, the consciousness of having belonged to the Ottoman Empire is seconded by the acceptance of Turkey as heir of the former empire.<sup>153</sup> Thus, Turkey has become the space which represents the centre for both Turks and Tatars, owing to cultural, historical and religious affinities.

For the Tatars, Crimea is the quintessential territory of origin, the Crimean origins representing, as noted before, an important component of Tatar consciousness both during the Communist period and nowadays. An important role in this sense may have been that of the history of the ancestors seeking refuge, which is more recent than in the case of the Turks, identifiable from one individual case to another during the period of the Russian-Turkish wars at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>.<sup>154</sup> For part of the Dobruja Tatar population, an important role in the preservation of a consciousness of the Crimean origins was that of the connection with the Tatar national movement of Crimea, in the interwar period, which stimulated national feelings for some of the Dobruja Tatars.<sup>155</sup> The fact that this movement became active on the Turkish territory as well, through the actions of some Crimean, but also Dobrujan Tatar leaders, consolidated the perception of

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with G. E., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 28 January 2013.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with F. S., member of the Turkish Community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 18 October 2013.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with I. I., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 31 March 2014.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with H.N., member of the Turkish community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 14 October 2014.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with A.I., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 19 September 2014.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with G. B., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 3 April 2014.

Turkey as a state that protected Tatars. As the dream of the motherland was shattered by the expulsion of the Tatars in 1944, Crimea thus appeared as a lost territory, and Turkey was perceived as the second homeland of the Tatars, the protector homeland, or Turkey-the fatherland, a phrase that circulated among Tatar intellectuals.<sup>156</sup>

*...the Turks saw us Tatars as their children and they've always supported us.*<sup>157</sup>

The closer relations between the Ankara regime and the Communist regime in Romania, starting with 1964 – 1965,<sup>158</sup> and the fact that citizens of Tatar and Turkish origin who had relatives on the territory of Turkey were allowed to visit Turkey every two years both had an impact on the consolidation of the spiritual connection with Turkey in the 1970s and 1980s, but not for the whole of the Turkish and Tatar population. Diplomatic and cultural connections and the circulation of information from the two territories of reference, Turkey and Crimea, were only resumed after the fall of Communism, leading to a rediscovery, a vertical revival of Turkish and Tatar identity, from the institutional and group level to the personal level.

## 10. Conclusions

On a deeper level of analysis, two defining cores of the Turkish and Tatar identity discourses were identified, one of convergence, and one of separation between the two groups. On the one hand, there is the common core – the sense of belonging to the Turkic world, and on the other hand there is the specific Tatar core, represented by the Tatar national movement of Crimea in the interwar period, a crucial element in the current delimitation of the Tatar identity discourse from the Turkish one. In conclusion, we can say that the process of identity construction in the case of both Turks and Tatars took place under external stimuli. On the one hand, there is the nationalist post-Ottoman Turkish ideology, which appeared in Turkey after the establishment of the new republic by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923, and which replaced Muslim solidarity as a form of identification specific to the Ottoman Empire, with a new essential identity component – the sense, and the pride of belonging to the Turkic world.

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<sup>156</sup> Interview with T. G., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 11 January 2013.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with G. A., member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 29 January 2013.

<sup>158</sup> On the whole, the period of the Cold War is characterized by a cooling of the diplomatic relations between Romania and the Ankara government. One exception is the agreement of 30 July 1966, signed in Istanbul, which regulated scholarly and artistic exchanges between the Socialist Republic of Romania and the Republic of Turkey, the agreement between the government of the Socialist Republic of Romania and that of the Republic of Turkey regarding civilian air transport, signed in Ankara on 2 May 1966, and the agreement regarding cooperation in the field of tourism, signed in Istanbul on 29 July 1966. See Călin Felezeu, Adriana Cupcea, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

The second important core involves the particularization of the Tatar identity discourse, creating, beyond the differentiation through the **Crimean Tatar origins**, a delimitation which resulted from their connections to the political and ideological evolution of their territory of origin, Crimea, in the interwar period. These connections existed and influenced the evolution of Dobruja Tatars not only during this period, but also during the post-war period.

After World War II, in the first decades of the Communist regime, two directions can be identified in the evolution of the Turkish and Tatar communities. These directions are in connection with both the attitude of the Communist regime towards Turks and Tatars and their attitude and behaviour towards the new regime. On the one hand, a tendency towards conformity, towards joining party structures and involvement in the so-called process of building a Soviet-type society in Romanian could be identified. This corresponds to an attitude of acceptance and conformity of Turks and Tatars towards the Communist regime, both as regular citizens and as members of a minority population. This type of attitude is discernible in the case of ethnic Turks and Tatars who were personally motivated by a desire for professional achievement, which led them to conform, to adapt to the political and social rigours of the authorities.

A second direction identified is one of coordinated persecution and repression directed by the Communist authorities against an important number of ethnic Turks and particularly against Tatars, especially as a result of their involvement in the Crimean problem. This direction corresponds to a second type of retrospective discourse upon the period, focusing exclusively upon some of the aspects of the Communist era, but this time with ethnic undertones: persecutions, blackmail, social discrimination. At the level of this discourse, the overall memory of the period is identified with the causes which led to the persecutions against one's own family, causes which are obviously of a political and social nature.

The spread of the repressive tendencies to religious life and to the field of culture took place through an indirect, tacit, but deliberate policy of suppressing the manifestations of the ethnic and religious spirituality of the two communities. Although they retrospectively underline the absence of a direct assimilation policy, thus situating themselves in permanent contrast with the Turkish community in Bulgaria, the effects of these policies are noticeable in the evolution of their ethnic and religious identity during this period. Interviews with members of the Tatar and Turkish communities reveal an ethnic identity which has become private, simultaneously with a weakening of the sense of ethnic belonging, resulting from and motivated by the preoccupation for social and professional adjustment to the Communist society. In the case of families which were directly targeted by the repression of the authorities, life in Communism seems to have been experienced from the perspective of personal drama, of survival in a Communist society, the ethnic aspects fading therefore into the background.

With regard to mutual identification, both Turks and Tatars highlighted the absence of clear differences between the two ethnic groups during the Communist period. The arguments are the practice of the common Islamic religion, the existence of mixed marriages between Turks and Tatars, the shared traditions and customs, the



shared sense of belonging to the Turkic world, alongside the persistence at the level of general perception in Communist society of the confusion between Turks and Tatars. More precisely, the majority used the ethnic designation 'Turk' for Tatars, which, in the opinion of the latter, still happens in present-day perceptions and social relations.

The rediscovery of identity values and symbols, alongside the revival of the spiritual life which took place after the fall of Communism in 1989, had as a result a phenomenon of return to the origins, materialized in the re-appropriation or recovery of the two primary cores of identity: the sense of belonging to the Turkic world and the Crimean origins.

The first identity core represents a factor of cohesion between the two communities, through all the elements it involves: the religious and cultural connection represented by Islam, the customs stemming from this religion, as well as the common Turkic origins. On the other hand, the Crimean origins represent the main distinguishing element, both from the perspective of the Tatars and from that of the Turks, leading to the powerful particularization of the Tatar discourse. Latent for 50 years, the consciousness of the Crimean origins became an integral component of the Tatar identity structure after 1990. Alongside material considerations, this identity core is considered to be a cause of the separate political and institutional evolution of Turks and Tatars in the Communist period and had, as we have seen, significant implications for the relationship between ethnic self-representations and the mutual representations of the Turk-Tatar alterity, which suggests the post-communist view of the two groups as distinct ethnic communities which share certain common points.

On the whole, we can note a chronological alternation of the layers of identity, in the context of political, economic and social evolutions of the host territory as well as the territory of origin. The succession of levels of identity, ethnic or religious in nature, is relevant from the perspective of the identity models which prevail in one period or another. In the interwar period, we can note the prevalence of identity components such as the sense of belonging to the Turkic world and the Crimean Tatar origins, which determine the manifestation and re-emergence of the Turks and the Tatars as **ethnic communities**, united by common historical and cultural elements, but inherently particularized by the Tatars' Crimean origins. The fading of ethnic identity which took place against the background of Communist policies over 50 years determined during this period the re-emergence of Turks and Tatars in their only distinctive hypostasis, that of **religious community**, follower of Islam. Although censored, the latter found ways to manifest itself, either among individuals or within groups. What is interesting is that it is precisely this hypostasis which ensured the survival of certain social and cultural elements which, both in the case of the Turks and in the case of the Tatars, represent part of their ethnic and cultural distinctiveness, resulted from belonging to the Turkic world (see note 86).

After 1990, as a counterweight to the ethnic constraint and inhibition of the previous years, we may note a compensating process of return to the identity components which prevailed in the interwar period, namely the affiliation to the Turkic world, the Crimean origins in the case of the Tatars, the connection with the original territories (Turkey and Crimea, respectively), which once again place the two

communities within the **ethnic hypostasis**. The phenomenon was a spontaneous one. It came, on the one hand, as a natural reaction to the fifty years of ethnic latency, but it also represented a consequence of the economic and political interests which emerged after 1990, as a result of restoring connections with the territories of origin, thus explaining the Tatars' desire to dissociate themselves from the Turkish community, and to support their own identity and language, but in the wider context of the Turkic world and, implicitly, of the indissoluble historical, religious and cultural connections with the Turkish community.

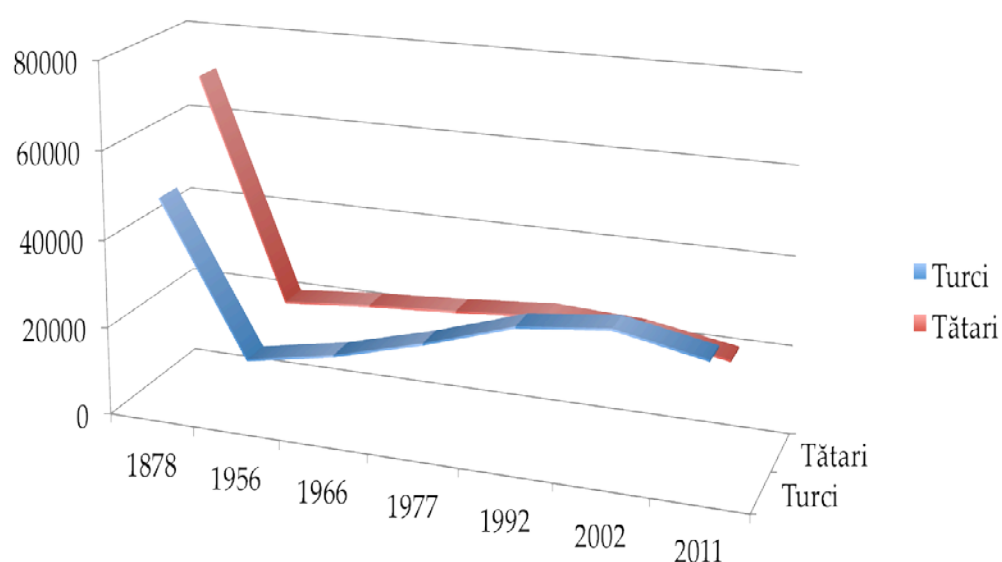


Fig. 1. Demographic evolution of Turks and Tatars (1878-2011).

\* Between 1913 and 1940 Southern Dobruja, with a significant Turkish and Tatar population, was part of Romania.

\* In the 1948 census, Turks and Tatars were recorded together (28.782).



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## **Tatar Nationalism and Communism: The Fate of the Fazıl Family (1948-1989)**

### **Abstract**

*The present study will resort to historical and sociological research in examining an episode in the history of the Tatar community in Dobruja, namely the case of the Dobruja Tatar leader Necip Hagi Fazıl and of the social evolution of his family during the communist period. As leader of the Committee for the Help of Tatar Refugees, he was arrested and killed by the Security Service in 1948 for his involvement in the reception of Crimean Tatar refugees who arrived in Constanța between 1943 and 1944 and their placement in Dobruja villages.*

*By looking at oral accounts of the surviving members of the Fazıl family, at personal documents, as well as documents from the archive of the CNSAS (Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității – The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives), the present study will analyse the experience of everyday life from the perspective of social marginalization and repression. This will represent both a frame of reference and a core theme in the memory of everyday life during the communist regime. By resorting to a qualitative method, I will attempt to determine the specific characteristics of the discourse of everyday life under communism in the case of a politically persecuted Tatar family, and the way in which certain elements of this daily persecution turned into ingredients of a personal tragedy. From this perspective, the study will capture aspects and phenomena specific to the patterns of everyday life under communism, such as living conditions, workforce migration, workplace relationships, and access to education, which will be used to reconstruct the life of an ethnic Tatar family who for two generations lived under the stigma of an accusation of nationalism.*

### **Introduction**

In contrast with the definition given by Henri Lefebvre in his 1991 book *Critiques of Everyday Life*, according to which everyday life is a site of repression and social control, other researchers have advanced the idea of everyday life as a site of social resistance. Scholars such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Michel de Certeau in particular suggest that everyday practices are not fully pervaded by false consciousness. They maintain that, on the contrary, everyday life rather offers an opportunity for liberation and resistance. Although Michel de Certeau recognizes social life as a limiting and oppressive context in which individuals are largely marginalized, he suggests at the same time that everyday life is extremely complex and multifaceted, allowing some room for manoeuvre and individuality, and believes

that it is only at the level of everyday life that we can truly understand the way in which social relations are experienced<sup>1</sup>.

The present research involves an analysis of the relationship between daily life, individual memory and collective memory. Thus, by approaching individual memory as a component or an aspect of group memory, since individual memory is the expression of an individual's social environment<sup>2</sup>, the present study deals with an episode in the history of the Dobruja Tatar community, namely the case of the Dobruja Tatar leader Necip Hagi Fazıl and the social evolution of his family throughout the communist period.

Since this is not a widely known topic, a more detailed exposition of the general background will be given, in order to provide a fuller understanding of group and individual evolutions during the communist period. Thus, I will contextualize and explain how the relations between the Crimean and the Romanian Tatar communities were structured, how the Tatar elite was formed, what role it had in the national Tatar movement, how the latter was organized, what its aims were, and what the role of Necip Fazıl was within it.

I resorted to the concept of *guilt by association*<sup>3</sup> by which Xin Ran, the journalist who gathered accounts of the communist period and the period of the Cultural Revolution in China, explains the way in which during the communist period the persecution against one member of a family extended upon the rest of the family, and, based on oral accounts of the surviving family members of the Fazıl family and on the study of documents from the CNSAS archive, I analysed the experience of everyday life from the perspective of social marginalization and repression.<sup>4</sup>

Using a qualitative method, I attempted to determine the specific characteristics of the discourse of everyday life under communism in the case of a politically persecuted Tatar family, and the way in which certain elements of this daily persecution became the ingredients of a personal tragedy. From this perspective, the study captures aspects and phenomena specific to the patterns of everyday life under communism such as living conditions, workforce migration, workplace relationships, and access to education, which will be used to reconstruct the life of an ethnic Tatar family who for two generations lived under the stigma of an accusation of nationalism.

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Longhurst, Greg Smith, Gaynor Bagnall, Gary Crawford, Miles Ogborn, Elaine Baldwin, Scott McCracken, Pearson Longman, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, Second Edition, Harlow, 2008, pp. 196-197.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Xin Ran, *China Witness. Voices from a Silent Generation*, Chatto & Windus, Londra, 2008, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Repression was approached from the perspective of the everyday, of daily life under the communist regime, in contrast with other studies, which look at organized forms of repression, such as, for instance, Cosmin Budeancă (Ed.), *Experiențe carcerale în România comunistă*, Vol. I, Polirom, Iași, 2007.

## **The National Tatar Movement in Dobruja. The Committee for the Help of Crimean Refugees**

A lesser known episode in the history of ethnic minorities during the communist period, and that of the Dobruja Tatar community in particular, was the policy of repression directed against this community. The reason behind it was the Crimean issue, to which an important number of ethnic Tatars were linked. More precisely, the policy of repression against Tatars in the 1950s was rooted in the fact that, from Dobruja, they connected to the interwar political and ideological evolutions of their territory of origin – Crimea, evolutions which influenced their lives not only during this period, but also in the post-war period.

In Dobruja, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, a process of national awakening was under way, concurring with similar developments among the Tatars in Crimea.<sup>5</sup> The centre that coordinated this movement was Istanbul, through the Crimean Tatar leaders who had taken refuge there, and there was permanent communication between the leaders in Turkey, those in Crimea and those in Dobruja. The main channels through which national ideas circulated were face-to-face meetings in one of the three territories, the organization of open conferences, and the publication of newspapers and magazines, published in Istanbul, which also reached Dobruja<sup>6</sup>. One of the Dobruja Tatar intellectuals who were actively involved in the Tatar national movement both on the Crimean territory and in Turkey is the poet Mehmet Nyiazi (1878-1931)<sup>7</sup>. As a professor at the Muslim Seminary in Medgidia, he contributed decisively, from his position as an educator and through the national ideas he disseminated, to the creation of a new generation of Dobruja leaders<sup>8</sup>. One of these is the lawyer Müstecep Ülküsal (1899-1996) who, in 1930, together with his brother Necip Hagi Fazıl, founded at Bazargic the nationalist

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<sup>5</sup> Starting with Ismail Gaspirali, continuing with the movement of the Tatar Youth, created after the defeat of the Russian revolution of 1905, and up to around 1908, the Tatar national movement defined the main components of the idea of a modern Crimean Tatar nation: the territorial definition of the Crimean Tatar national concept, Crimea being a compact and well delimited geographic entity, easily identifiable from the outside. Elements such as the common language, albeit with several dialects, the fact that they practiced the Muslim religion, the emphasis placed on the historical precedent of statehood represented by the Crimean Khanate, led by the ancestors of the Tatars, within the territory recognized as the motherland, alongside the sense of belonging to the cultural and historical heritage of the Turkic and Muslim world, were also arguments in favour of a Tatar national distinctivism embraced by Crimean Tatar intellectuals. See: Hakan Kırımlı, *National Movements and National Identity Among the Crimean Tatars 1905-1906*, Brill, New York, Köln, p. 221.

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Oberländer Târnoveanu, Volker Adam, *Tătarii din România. Schiță istorică. Secolele XIII-XX*, in Andreescu, Gabriel (ed.), *Tătarii din România – teme identitare. Tatars in Romania - Problems of Identity*, Centrul pentru Drepturile Omului, Apador-CH, București, 2005, pp. 50-51.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> The group had followers among students and among the commercial bourgeoisie. Among these were also the lawyer Selim Abdülhakim (1877-1944), the journalist Fevzi İbrahim İsmail (1890-1960) or the Mufti Halil Fehmi (1888-1933). (See *Ibidem*, pp. 50-51.)

Crimean Tatar magazine *Emel* (*The Aspiration*), whose aim was to fight for the national ideal of creating an independent Crimean Tatar state. In the late 1930s, starting from the group of Tatar intellectuals who had gathered around this magazine and following its ideological line, they created the *Committee for the Liberation of Crimea*. The magazine represented both the heart of the manifestations organised by the Bazargic Committee and a source of inspiration and coordination for the creation of nationalist organisations in many Dobruja villages. One of these was the organization in Tătaru (Azaplar) commune, led by Ülküsal's brother, Necip Hagi Fazıl<sup>9</sup>. Until 1943, all of these organisations, including the central one headquartered at Bazargic, were cultural, literary and ethnic in nature, their activity concentrating mainly on the organization of performances, of conferences, on the unveiling of monuments<sup>10</sup>, all meant to convey national ideas to the Dobruja Tatar population<sup>11</sup>.

The occupation of Crimea<sup>12</sup> by the Axis powers in 1941 led to the precipitation of a brutal war between the Soviet partisans on the one hand, and the

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<sup>9</sup>Güner Akmolla, "Activitatea național-patriotică a eroului tătar Necip Hagi Fazıl (1906-1948)", in *Emel*, no. 19, 2008, pp. 23-25. (*Emel* magazine appeared from 1930 until the beginning of World War II. After the pact of understanding between the Russians and the Germans, when the Germans entered Romania, the magazine ceased publication. It was revived starting with 1 November 1960 in Ankara, and as of 2004 it has been published once again in Constanța.)

<sup>10</sup>See Ali Osman Bekmamabet (transl. By Güner Akmolla), *Keşken Kunler. Zilele vieții mele*, Editura Infcon, Constanța, 2003, pp. 132-133.

<sup>11</sup>Dobruja Tatar nationalism emphasized the primordial connections with Crimea, considered to be the ancestral homeland, and promoted reconnecting with its history, its cultural and linguistic traditions, its specificity. The creation in 1917, in the wake of the fall of the Russian Empire, of an independent Tatar republic in Crimea, eventually dissolved under Bolshevik pressure in 1918, was and still is to many Crimean Tatars, including those in Dobruja who are historically and politically conscious, the only period since 1783 when national aspirations were fulfilled. Political elites in Dobruja, as in fact the majority of the Tatar population, welcomed enthusiastically the creation of the independent Crimean state. A large number immigrated to Crimea, participating actively in the events, and at the same time providing financial, organizational, propagandistic and political-diplomatic support to the national revolution in the new state. Also, many Tatars who escaped Bolshevik terror found refuge in the Tatar communities in Dobruja. See Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1978, p. 120; Ernest Oberländer Târnoveanu, Volker Adam, *op.cit.*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>12</sup>The desire of the Crimean Tatars to be recognized as an indigenous group of the Crimean Peninsula was only realized during the nativization of the 1920s and 1930s. In 1921, the Soviet regime decided, in keeping with the new nationalities policy, which emphasized the collaboration among all nationalities and the cultural development of the various ethnic groups in the USSR, the creation of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Within the new administrative unit, the cultural autonomy of Crimean Tatars was promoted, and the Tatar language became, alongside Russian, the official language of the republic. A number of Tatar cultural institutions existed, such as journals, newspapers, museums, libraries, Tatar language degrees in universities. Everything came to an end in 1928, when Stalin decided to destroy all national Communist movements within the USSR. (See Alan Fisher, *op.cit.*, pp. 131, 140, 141).

German and Romanian forces who had occupied the peninsula on the other hand. As victims of Stalinist terror, which began in Crimea in 1928 with the mass execution of nationalist communists and of intellectuals and continued with the deportation of tens of thousands of Tatars during the period of the collectivization and the great purges of the 1930s, the majority of Crimean Tatars detested the Soviet regime. Therefore, the German and Romanian armies were regarded as liberators by the Crimean Tatars<sup>13</sup>. Dobruja Tatars saluted the ousting of the Soviets and supported the Crimean Tatars. The political and religious leaders of Dobruja Tatars were sent to their territory of origin by the Romanian and German authorities in order to spread propaganda for the collaboration with the military and in order to establish an administrative apparatus with limited powers. This embryonic government, *The Tatar National Committee*, had several divisions, including a unit of armed police. Special attention was given to the reconstruction of the Muslim religious structures and institutions, dissolved by the atheist Soviet politics, an action in which clerics from Dobruja also participated. The wider Dobruja community also supported Crimean Tatars by volunteering to fight for the Tatar cause and by providing financial aid.

This involvement of the Tatar community that lived in exile, including the Tatars in Dobruja, is demonstrated by the activity of three leaders from Turkey and Romania. One of these, alongside Cafer Seidahmet and Edige Kirimal, was Mustecep Fazıl Ülküsal. Ülküsal, a Dobruja Tatar, was one of the political leaders of the Tatar community in exile. The negotiations between Seidahmet and the German ambassador in Ankara, Von Papen, resulted in an invitation for Ülküsal and Kirimal to participate, in Germany (Berlin), to the formulation of the Nazi policy for Crimea and the Turkic peoples in the Soviet Union. At the end of November 1941, Ülküsal, who had immigrated to Turkey as early as 1940, and Kirimal went to Berlin to support the Tatar cause.

Despite great hopes, the results achieved in the years 1941-1944 were modest, due to the fact that Germany had its own plans regarding the post-war future of the peninsula, plans which did not include Tatar autonomy, even less an independent state.

Under these circumstances, in 1943, as a result of the intervention of the Turkish ambassador to Romania and the leaders of the *Committee for the Liberation of Crimea*, the Romanian government authorized the organization of several train transports of families of Crimean refugees from Odessa to Constanța. The committee, which in the same year changed its name to the *Committee for the Help of Crimean Refugees*, was to have an important role in the reception of the refugees in Constanța and their subsequent placement in Tatar villages in Dobruja<sup>14</sup>. In what the nature of the *Committee's* activity is concerned, it can be divided into two distinct periods: a) before 1943, when there were still hopes for the creation of an independent state, the efforts of the members were focused in this direction (it was the period in which

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<sup>13</sup> There were also, however, Tatars who crossed to the camp of Soviet partisans (see *Ibidem*, p. 153).

<sup>14</sup> Valentin Ciorbea, Laura Stancu, Amet Aledin (eds.), *Tătarii în izvoare arhivistice românești. Comunitatea Musulmană în Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității*, Vol. I, Editura Ex Ponto, Constanța, 2011, pp. 56-57.

Mustecep Fazıl Ülküsal was the leader of the organization); b) the second period began after Crimea was regained by the USSR in 1944 and Crimean Tatars were deported to Siberia. In the autumn of 1943, the *Committee* reoriented its activities towards the support of Crimean refugees, as its new name suggests. During this period, Necip Fazıl became the leader of the organization, being elected to this position after his brother, Ülküsal, immigrated to Turkey. This suggests the reorientation of the Tatar national movement from the focus on the forcibly abandoned territory of origin towards salvaging the Tatar people.

The number of Crimean Tatar refugees increased after Crimea was regained by the USSR in 1944 and after the decree, issued in the same year by the USSR State Defence Committee and signed by Stalin, which stipulated the deportation of Crimean Tatars to Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics. The pretext was the accusation that Crimean Tatars had collaborated with the German occupation forces<sup>15</sup>. A significant part of Crimean refugees chose Dobruja as their destination, at least temporarily<sup>16</sup>. The newcomers did not enjoy the support of the Antonescu regime, as becomes apparent from an informative report of June 1944 upon the general state of the population of Constanța in May of the same year. The report mentions the arrival of a great number of Tatar refugees in the town of Constanța, as well as the fact that they represented a danger for the order and security of the state, a situation which came to an end as a result of general Antonescu's measure of surrendering them to the German camp which had been set up in Constanța<sup>17</sup>. The reason for their surrender to the German camp was the fact that the Romanian authorities feared the potential collaboration of Tatars with communist organizations, since during the war some Crimean Tatars had chosen to collaborate with the Red Army<sup>18</sup>.

The activity of the Committee continued under these circumstances, but officially ceased when the Soviet troops entered the Romanian territory on 23 August 1944. The onset of communism sped up the process of identifying Crimean Tatar refugees in Dobruja, since the USSR had specifically required the Romanian authorities to repatriate immediately all Tatars who had come from Crimea in 1943-1944. The communist authorities complied with the request, and surrendered the identified refugees to the Soviet authorities for repatriation. Simultaneously, investigations were launched among Dobruja Tatars who had provided any type of support to their Crimean fellow nationals<sup>19</sup>. Their pursuit and persecution turned into large-scale repression after the new government led by Dr. Petru Groza was installed on 6 March 1945<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> See Cezar Aurel Banu, „Passé traumatique, mémoire, histoire confisquée et identité volée: la déportation des tatars de Crimée par Staline en mai 1944 (le Surgûn)”, in *Conserveries mémorielles*, no. 1/2006, p. 6, <http://cm.revues.org/288>, accessed on 12 February 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Virgil Coman, *Mărturii documentare privind tătarii din Dobrogea (6 septembrie 1940 - 6 martie 1945)*, in Marian Cojoc (ed.), *Tătarii în istoria românilor*, Editura Muntenia, Constanța, 2004, p. 156.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 157.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> Ernest Oberländer Târnoveanu, Volker Adam, *op.cit.*, pp. 57-67.

<sup>20</sup> Virgil Coman, *op.cit.*, p. 159.

Thus, in the early 1950s several members of the Tatar community were arrested by the Securitate on charges of *nationalist and religious activity*<sup>21</sup>. In October 1948, the series of arrests opened with that of Necip Hagi Fazıl<sup>22</sup>. The campaign of repression against Tatars culminated in 1952, when, over the year, thirty-nine people were arrested: clergy, doctors, lawyers, landowners<sup>23</sup>. Of these, most were Tatars, but Turks and even a Romanian citizen were among them<sup>24</sup>. Fifteen of these, leaders and prominent members of the *Committee for the Help of Crimeans*, were sent to trial on 11 March 1953 and, according to the court file, were charged with “*setting up the counter-revolutionary organization The Tatar National Movement. They spread propaganda for the so-called Movement for the Liberation of Crimea in favour of an independent Tatar state.*” The file specified that, for this purpose, they had collected “*money, food, had hosted during the war Crimean national elements which had fled to the territory of our country.*” To this was added the charge of “*espionage in favour of the Turkish Intelligence Service*”<sup>25</sup>.

### Necip Hagi Fazıl – Biographical Notes

Necip Fazıl was born in 1905, in a Tatar family which originally came from the Geankoy region of Crimea, and which had settled in Eastern Dobruja, in Sarighiol village, around the year 1862. Alongside his brother, Mustecep, he played an important part in the cultural and political life of Crimean Tatars in Dobruja. In 1927, he graduated from the Medgidia Muslim Seminary, after which he attended the Academy of Bank Cooperatives in Bucharest, and subsequently worked for two years as a banking inspector<sup>26</sup>. At the same time, he engaged in a fairly intense literary activity, writing and publishing poems and plays in *Emel* magazine. His works, which dealt with literary, historical, ethnographic and linguistic topics, attempted to convey his national ideas, his attachment for the country of origin, Crimea, the tragedy of

<sup>21</sup> Giuseppe Cossuto, *I musulmani dell'Europa dell'Est durante il periodo comunista. Note sulla loro storia e sui loro rapporti con i rispettivi stati*, in Călin Felezeu (ed.), *Studii și cercetări de turcologie contemporană*, Editura Tribuna, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, p. 217.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Suyum Memet, 79 years old, member of the Fazıl family (daughter of Necip and Sultana Fazıl). Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 30 January 2013, in Constanța.

<sup>23</sup> Güner Akmolla, „Rezistența tătară în Dobrogea”, in *Observer*, 23 November 1999, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> İrstmambet İusuf, Mustecep Samedin, Memet Mendu, Ali Osman Becmambet, Mehmet Vani, Abdula Teufic İseam, Serafedin İbrahim, Sultana Fazıl, Salia Mendu, Nazif Geancai, Geafer İusuf, Şaip Veli Abdula, Amet Mustafa; Malic Cadâr, Enan Curtmola (Căruntu Ștefan). See Güner Akmolla, *Rezistența Tătară în Dobrogea*, in Ilie Popa, *Experimentul Pitești. Reeducarea prin tortură*, First edition, Pitești, 6-8 December 2001. Second edition, Section 1, Pitești, 4-6 October 2002, Vol. I, Fundația Culturală Memoria. Filiala Argeș, Pitești, 2003, pp. 372-375; and Cicerone Ionițoiu, *Victimele terorii comuniste (arestați, torturați, întemnițați, uciși)*, Editura Mașina de Scris, București, 2000-2010, vol. I-XI. For information on how the Securitate monitored Necip Hagi Fazıl's activity and the activity of those involved in this trial, see Valentin Ciorbea, Laura Stancu, Amet Aledin (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 46-62.

<sup>25</sup> Güner Akmolla, *Cartea iertării. Document tătar*, Editura Europolis, Constanța, 2002, p. 165.

Güner Akmolla <sup>26</sup>, *Necip Hagi Fazıl*, Editura New Line, Constanța, 2009, p. 120.

being uprooted from this territory, as well as the dream of creating an independent Crimean state<sup>27</sup>.

In 1931, he married Sultana Alimseyit from his native village of Azaplar (Tătaru), with whom he had two children, Suyum and Bora. In 1933, after the death of his father, he returned to his native village and, following the model established by his brother Mustecep Kırimal at Bazargic, he founded the *Committee of Nationalist Tatar Youth*. After his brother immigrated to Turkey, he became the leader of the *Committee for the Liberation of Crimea* and, when this national organization became *The Committee for the Help of Tatar Refugees*, he became involved in the reception of the Crimean refugees who had arrived in Constanța in 1943-1944<sup>28</sup> and their placement in Dobruja villages.

According to a brief biography written by his brother Ülküsal about Necip's life after the onset of the communist regime, "*during the communist occupation he lived with dignity, watchful of the way in which Bolshevik, and especially Russian authorities acted towards us, Tatars.*" He reports that Necip continued to help Crimean refugees who were hiding in isolated Dobruja villages even after the onset of communism, during the years 1945-1947<sup>29</sup>.

Fazıl was first arrested in 1945, for his nationalist activity, together with one of his collaborators, the imam Şaip Veli Abdula of Albești village (Constanța). He managed to secure his release from this first arrest by the intervention of Amdi Nusuret, the director of the Constanța prison<sup>30</sup>, only to be imprisoned again in October 1948 and tortured for a week at the Constanța headquarters of the Security, in Ovidiu Square. As his daughter remembers, his family were notified of his demise a week later and told to collect his remains, which were afterwards interred in his native village of Tătaru (Azaplar)<sup>31</sup>. His capture in 1948 inaugurated the series of arrests which took place in the early 1950s, when the Securitate held several members of the Tatar community on charges of nationalist and religious activity<sup>32</sup>.

### **The Members of the Fazıl Family in the Tatar Trial of 1953**

Between 1949 and 1953, the actions of the authorities against the Tatar minority gradually became actual investigations launched against members of the Dobruja Tatar minority, who were accused of espionage against the Romanian state. A significant moment in this series of actions was the arrest (in 1952) and sentencing

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<sup>27</sup> For a more detailed presentation of his literary activity, see *Ibidem*, pp. 116-119.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 114.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 122.

<sup>30</sup> Eadem, *Eroii tătari cunoscuți și necunoscuți în războiul anticomunist român și opresiunea culturii și a religiei lor (perioada 1944-1970)*, in Ilie Popa, *Experimentul Pitești. Comunicări prezentate la simpozionul Reeducarea prin tortură. Opresiunea culturii tradiționale române în timpul dictaturii comuniste*, Fifth Edition, Pitești, 23-25 September 2005, Fundația Culturală Memoria. Filiala Argeș, Pitești, 2006, p. 356.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Suyum Memet, 79 years old, member of the Fazıl family (daughter of Necip and Sultana Fazıl). Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 30 January 2013, in Constanța.

<sup>32</sup> Giuseppe Cossuto, *op.cit.*, p. 217.



(in March 1953) of fifteen members of the Tatar community<sup>33</sup>, on charges which represented a culmination of the investigations and pursuit of Dobruja Tatars ever since the war period. The charges brought by the investigation body were: the transformation of the Tatar national movement into a counter-revolutionary organisation, which spread propaganda for the so-called liberation of Crimea and the creation of an independent Tatar state, giving information to the German troops in Crimea during the 1941-1944 occupation, hosting Crimean Tatars, and collaboration with the Turkish intelligence service through the Turkish consulate in Constanța in 1950-1951<sup>34</sup>.

According to the criminal prosecution record drawn up by the Securitate lieutenant Petre Crișan, among the fifteen Tatars charged in 1953 were three members of the Fazıl family: Necip's brother-in-law Memet Mendu, former landowner and the son of a rich hajji,<sup>35</sup> his wife, Salia Memet<sup>36</sup>, Necip's sister, as well as Sultana Fazıl, Necip's wife<sup>37</sup>. As members of the *Committee for the Help of Crimean Tatars*, they were arrested during 1952 and sentenced in the March 1953 trial. The indictment drawn up by the Bucharest Military Prosecution Service in February 1953 specified, as common charges for the three members of the Fazıl family, engaging in actions that promoted the liberation of Crimea and the creation of a Tatar state among the Tatar population, alongside Mustecep Fazıl and Necip Fazıl, providing aid in the form of money and food and hosting of Crimean refugees, giving political and economic information to the Turkish espionage service, through Mustecep Fazıl, who had immigrated to Turkey, registering on the list of volunteers for Crimea he had drawn up in 1942<sup>38</sup>, and receiving, after Necip's death in 1948, letters and financial aid from the same Mustecep Fazıl, through Turkish sailors who passed through Constanța port, but also through the Turkish Consulate<sup>39</sup>. They were sent to trial and, according to the sentence pronounced on 11 March 1953, they received a final conviction. Thus, Memet Mendu was sentenced to penal labour for life, loss of civic rights for ten years and confiscation of property for the crime of high treason<sup>40</sup>, and to ten years in

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<sup>33</sup> Marian Cojoc, *Anul 1953 în istoria tătarilor dobrogeni*, in Marian Cojoc (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 163-164.

<sup>35</sup> A Muslim believer who has been on a hajj, i.e. on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

<sup>36</sup> A graduate of the Turkish Pedagogical High School of Bazargic (Dobrich in today's Bulgaria), Salia Mendu was active as a poet, publishing her pieces in magazines. Her poems were translated by Güner Akmolla in order to be included in a planned, but never published anthology.

<sup>37</sup> Marian Cojoc, *op.cit.*, p. 193.

<sup>38</sup> After his departure to Turkey in 1939, Mustecep Ülküsal returned in 1942 and organized a small meeting in Constanța, drawing up a list of volunteers who were to go to Crimea and fight against the USSR.

<sup>39</sup> Marian Cojoc, *op.cit.*, pp. 230-232, 240-242.

<sup>40</sup> The object of the high treason charge were the letters sent to Mustecep Ülküsal through sailors and the Turkish Consulate. It was thought that these letters conveyed economic and political information to the Turkish Intelligence Service (see *Ibidem*, p. 267)

regular prison for the offence against the security of the state<sup>41</sup>. His wife, Salia Mendu, was sentenced to five years in regular prison for complicity to the offence against the security of a foreign state, while Sultana Fazıl was sentenced to eight years in regular prison for the offence against the security of the state<sup>42</sup>.

Both Salia Mendu and Sultana Fazıl were pardoned in 1950, while Memet Mendu was freed in 1964, as a result of Decree No. 411, which stipulated the release of political prisoners. Sultana was arrested again in 1962 to continue her initial 8 year sentence, while Salia passed away soon afterwards as a result of her fragile health, before the release of her husband Memet Mendu who, in 1970, managed to immigrate to Turkey<sup>43</sup>.

### **Recovering Memory: The Everyday Experience of Persecution**

In the case of the Fazıl family, life in the communist period comes to light in the retrospective discourse of the two descendants of the family, Bora and Suyum, the son and daughter, respectively, of Necip and Sultana Fazıl. In their case, the experience of everyday life is pervaded by a sense of social marginalization, as the repression against the family becomes the main frame of reference and the core theme in their memory of everyday life under communism.

This feature has its origins in the perpetuation, or more exactly the emotional adoption of the parents' repressive experience by the generation of the children. From the two descendants' retroactive perspective, there are two registers of memory which overlap with the two chronological phases of the communist regime. Thus, the Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej period is marked by the death of the father, Necip, the arrest of the mother, Sultana, and the persecutions directed against the family, while the second register of memory overlaps with the period of Nicoale Ceaușescu, which emerges as a period of everyday survival under communism, dominated from a psychological point of view by the personal trauma of the previous period.

Life under communism immediately after Necip's death is "*agony*" to the family<sup>44</sup>. Initially, what prevails is the personal emotional tragedy, the life of the family being deeply affected in this sense by the loss of the father. After this event, which occurred in 1948, the evolution of the family is marked by the stigma of enemy of the people attached to Necip, which leads to a life of social marginalization in

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<sup>41</sup> The object of the offense against the security of a foreign state was the setting up on the territory of the Romanian state of several Tatar nationalist organizations, which had as a goal the creation of an independent Tatar state, in whose government they were to be members. At the same time, harbouring Crimean fugitives who had collaborated with the German fascist forces against the USSR also constituted the object of the offence against the security of a foreign state, given the fact that these actions were considered as an aggression against the sovereignty and independence of the USSR and endangered the internal and external security of the USSR (see *Ibidem*, p. 268).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 279.

<sup>43</sup> Information provided by Güner Akmolla, member of the Fazıl family, 1 August 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Suyum Memet, 79 years old, member of the Fazıl family (daughter of Necip and Sultana Fazıl). Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 30 January 2013, in Constanța.

which the family is the only refuge. Gradually, however, the privations of everyday life trigger a shift in emphasis from the emotional tragedy towards material survival.

*“When we returned to Constanța, after the funeral, we felt that our life was becoming more and more difficult day after day, more and more oppressive and empty. The struggle for bread, for survival, for rent money, for education helped us forget our father, forget his tragic death, and think about ways to get by in those difficult years, 1948, 1949, 1950...”*<sup>45</sup>.

In this sense, Suyum conveys a very clear image of the situation: *“Mother couldn’t sleep for worry and grief... She was 36 years old, I was 14, my brother was 12. We went to school, and mother sold family jewellery, father had a notebook with the people he had lent money to and who owed us, we also received food from friends who lived in the countryside”*.<sup>46</sup>

Although the initial and main cause of the persecutions was the accusation of Tatar nationalism, based on identity components of an ethnic nature, we can see that in the case of Necip’s two descendants, Suyum and Bora, the period is experienced from the perspective of the persecuted citizen of a communist state, in which individual survival prevails over ethnic survival. They remain faithful to the national principles held by their family ever since the first generation that settled in Dobruja – the love for the homeland and the dream of an independent Crimea, but in the new political and social conditions instituted by the communist regime, the sense of belonging to the Tatar ethnicity loses its centrality. Ethnicity is overshadowed by life in the communist state, by everyday material worries, by the personal tragedy of the loss of the father and the arrest of the mother, but also by the policy of the communist regime towards minorities. This is a persistent feature in the way in which the entire communist past is remembered, both the Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej period and the period after 1965. Despite the complete equality regardless of ethnic origin proclaimed by the communist state, the fact that the differences regarding the status of the minorities were not taken into account in practice<sup>47</sup> materialized into specific forms of repression, which were sometimes perceived as confusion about one’s identity. Thus, from the perspective of the teenager’s experience, Bora Fazıl reports the episode of the textbooks imported from Kazan, since immediately after 1948 the authorities encouraged the separation of Dobruja schools into Turkish and Tatar ones, and experimented with education in the Tatar dialect imported from the Autonomous Tatar Socialist Republic of Kazan in USSR, by bringing in textbooks and literary works from this republic<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Bora Fazıl (son of Necip and Sultana Fazıl), in Güner Akmolla, *Cartea iertării...*, p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Suyum Memet, 79 years old, member of the Fazıl family (daughter of Necip and Sultana Fazıl). Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 30 January 2013, in Constanța.

<sup>47</sup> See *Minorități în tranziție. Raport privind politicile publice în domeniul minorităților naționale și etnice din România*, <http://www.edrc.ro/docs/docs/provocdivers/092-127.pdf>, accessed on 7 March 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea: repere de viață spirituală: viață religioasă și învățământ în limba maternă*, Editura Ex Ponto, Constanța, 1998, p. 178.

*“It was hard for us at school, we were confused by the disputes between Turks and Tatars, we were not attracted by the textbooks written in the Cyrillic alphabet in a language which was alien to us. We no longer knew what we were, Tatars, Turks or Kazakhs”*<sup>49</sup>.

The tacit practice of the regime was to deny access to university education to the children of those who were considered unworthy citizens<sup>50</sup>. Like the majority of ethnic Tatars whose parents or grandparents had been arrested, both Suyum Memet and Bora Fazıl express their regret for not having been able to pursue a higher education. On the one hand, they mention their mother’s practical decision, fuelled by worries about subsistence, to send them to technical schools<sup>51</sup>. At the same time, both mention the obstacle represented by their social origins in the way of their pursuit of further studies or of their professional achievement. Suyum states that she worked as an accountant, since she was prevented from studying by the fact that a criminal record was required for the purpose, while her social origins were unhealthy. On the same subject of the consequences of one’s social origins, Bora recalls that, as a teenager and high school student, he was harassed during meetings of the UTM (Uniunea Tineretului Muncitor – The Union of Working Youth), and subsequently excluded from the organization, at the insistence of an activist who happened to be a Turk, comrade Ramazan<sup>52</sup>.

*“A communist thunder was heard in the school’s assembly hall: Fazıl Bora, a dangerous class enemy, should stand up!*

*I was sitting among my classmates somewhere towards the back, in the packed hall, and I stood up in amazement, because I was no enemy of any ideology!*

*The thundering voice continued, indifferent to my torment: You are summoned to return your UTM membership card and then leave the room immediately and stop spying on us!*

*...How could an orphan boy, one who had lost his father and went to bed hungry, be a danger? To me, school was an odyssey, and it was only in 1955 that I could say I had completed 10 grades attending night school...”*<sup>53</sup>

The subsequent arrest of Sultana Fazıl in 1952 is experienced by Suyum and Bora as a rupture, both at a personal and at a social level. If Suyum took refuge in family life, Bora lived through this period in proletarian solitude. The period of his mother’s first arrest, 1952-1956, is what triggered, alongside the pressure of denunciations and constant surveillance, the two siblings’ migration towards other areas of the country, as part of the phenomenon of workforce migration.

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Bora Fazıl (son of Necip and Sultana Fazıl), in Güner Akmolla, *Cartea iertării...*, p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> In this context, the label is applied to those persons who had lost their rights as a result of problems with the regime caused by their unhealthy origins.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Suyum Memet, 79 years old, member of the Fazıl family (daughter of Necip and Sultana Fazıl). Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 30 January 2013 in Constanța.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Bora Fazıl (son of Necip and Sultana Fazıl), in Güner Akmolla, *Cartea iertării...*, p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

Suyum left for Bacău in 1953 together with her husband, Nuredin Memet, who requested to be transferred to Bacău due to the denunciations he was subject to for marrying Fazıl's daughter, while Bora chose to go to Braşov in order to qualify as a lathe operator. The separation from their family is accompanied by the social frustration arising from the forced espousal of a proletarian status. Bora sees this as a necessity of the social and material conditions he experienced, a consequence of the fact that he was the son of parents who had been sentenced on political grounds by the communist regime, and identifies with his father's actions in a way which to him is synonymous with accepting the name of Fazıl.

The distance from the village of Tătaru, and later from Constanţa and implicitly from Dobruja, the family's native place, is seen in retrospect as an experience of uprootedness, as a forced displacement, a period of wandering, of exile in the name of socialist work. Both Bora and his sister Suyum perceive their proletarian fate as unfair. This is the light in which their discourse reflects typical phenomena of everyday life under communism such as the lack of food or the poor housing conditions. Suyum points out that she lived together with her husband and her two children in one single room, while Bora speaks of life in the workers' dorms in Braşov, where forty proletarians slept in one room, working for a negligible salary and one meal in the canteen, while *"the rest came down to bread and marmalade, because marmalade cost only 5 lei and 20 bani! It was the food of the soldier, of the worker, of the convict... (the first thing my father bought after he was freed from prison was a crate of marmalade)"*<sup>54</sup>.

The two siblings' migration to other industrial centres in the country triggered the dispersal of the family, which involved the erosion of the typical relations within the traditional model of the extended Tatar family. Sultana Fazıl was released for the first time on 30 July 1956, from the Miercurea Ciuc prison, after she was pardoned according to the 18 July 1956 decision of the Constanţa Military Court<sup>55</sup>. Her return, after four years of detention, also triggered the two siblings' return to Constanţa. However, the period of her freedom, 1956-1958, was, for the whole family, marred by feelings of fear, anxiety and terror caused by constant surveillance and denunciations, by distrust in one's fellow human beings, and especially by a sense of waiting, of the pressure of an imminent new arrest for the completion of the eight year prison sentence. Suyum recalls this period: *"we lived on Mihai Viteazul street (Constanţa), with a family (we rented the place) and, because we were under surveillance, (Sultana) hid whenever the sector policeman came. She stayed hidden for two years..."*<sup>56</sup>.

In 1958, Sultana Fazıl was arrested again, and was only released for good in 1962. According to her daughter's account, this last period of detention was fatal to

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>55</sup> Arhiva Consiliului Naţional pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securităţii (hereafter abbreviated as ACNSAS), *Fond Informativ*, file 37875, f. 10.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Suyum Memet, 79 years old, member of the Fazıl family (daughter of Necip and Sultana Fazıl). Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 30 January 2013, in Constanţa.

Sultana, the heart attack she suffered during this time causing irreversible damage to her health<sup>57</sup>.

The period between her release and her death in 1971 is described as a period in which the feeling of being under surveillance was a permanent feature of their everyday life. The period is captured in detail by the notes to the Securitate extracted from Sultana Fazıl's surveillance file. A 1968 note reveals her serious health condition (end-stage heart disease) and the fact that she was therefore visited in the flat that had been allocated to her son-in-law, Nuredin Memet, by all her relatives from Constanța and Bucharest<sup>58</sup>.

The Nicolae Ceaușescu period is reflected in personal memory in the light of the social consequences of the re-established diplomatic relations between Ankara and Bucharest starting with 1964 - 1965<sup>59</sup>, and of the fact that visits to Turkey were authorised every second year for citizens of Turkish and Tatar origin who had relatives on the territory of Turkey. In retrospect, the period is dominated by the resumed relationships with Turkey and by the reunion of the family, who succeeded in meeting again Necip's brother, Mustecep Ülküsal. The emphasis now shifts from personal tragedy and material privations towards the obstacles against the freedom of expression and of movement. Both siblings mention the difficulty of obtaining a passport and of getting approval for trips to Turkey, as well as the censorship of correspondence, used by the Securitate as a means of gathering information on the activity of spies and counter-revolutionary elements.

*"In 1969, since we had our uncle Mustecep Ülküsal there, we wanted to visit, but we weren't given permission. My husband was advised to file petitions, and the approval eventually came. It was a joy to see our relatives again, we hadn't seen Mustecep since 1948. That's where we met his children, his grandchildren... He'd left before communism.*

*The children stayed at home, they weren't allowed to come along, because they were the guarantee that we were going to return. Many people left their children behind and then got them back through the Red Cross.*

*After 1969 we also started to exchange letters with the relatives in Turkey, but not too often, the letters got opened anyway"*<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup>*Ibidem.*

<sup>58</sup>ACNSAS, *Fond Informativ*, file 37875, f. 24. (during this period, Bora Fazıl worked at the Mihăilești Factory Farm, which was subordinated to the Superior Council of Agriculture).

<sup>59</sup>On the whole, the period of the Cold War is characterised by the cooling of diplomatic relations between Romania and the Ankara government. Exceptions were the agreement of 30 July 1966, which regulated scientific and cultural exchanges between the Socialist Republic of Romania and the Republic of Turkey, signed at Istanbul, the agreement between the government of the Socialist Republic of Romania and the government of the Republic of Turkey regarding civilian air transport, signed in Ankara on 2 May 1966, and the agreement regarding cooperation in the field of tourism, signed in Istanbul on 29 July 1966. See Călin Felezeu, Adriana Cupcea, *O perspectivă comparativă a imaginii otomanului în manualele de istorie din România și Bosnia Herțegovina în perioada post-comunistă*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj Napoca, p. 72.

<sup>60</sup>Interview with Suyum Memet, 79 years old, member of the Fazıl family (daughter of Necip and Sultana Fazıl). Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on 30 January 2013.

The suspicions which persisted in this regard against the Fazıl family are apparent in Sultana Fazıl's personal file, which not only reveals that she was under surveillance, but also contains data about all the members of the family, Bora Fazıl, Suyum Memet, and her husband Memet Nuredin.

A note dated 12 December 1968 states that Bora Fazıl maintained a relationship with Mustecep Fazıl. Based on information provided by Bora, the latter had supposedly informed the Turkish Prime Minister Demirel about the situation of the Turkish-Tatar population in Romania, and suggested that he should bring up in discussions with the Romanian government the issue of signing a convention which would create the framework for emigration. The same note says that Suleyman Demirel did attempt to address the issue in his discussion with the Romanian government<sup>61</sup>.

Despite the same backdrop of surveillance and the severe privations of the 1980s, the period after 1965 is perceived as a period of relative normality, as a result of the weakening of repression that had started with Necip's generation<sup>62</sup>. It is a period when connections with the protector state – Turkey<sup>63</sup> – are re-established, but also one in which, through organized trips, a first contact is made with the territory of origin, Crimea, which Necip Fazıl and many of the convicted members of the *Committee for the Help of Crimeans* had only known from the stories told by the previous generations of Tatars<sup>64</sup>.

## Conclusions

In the shape it took in Romania, The Tatar national movement was not directed specifically against the communist regime. Its anti-communist character crystallized gradually, as a result of the partial transfer of the Crimean Tatars' Soviet experience to the collective mentality of Dobruja Tatars. The repression that took place in the 1950s, while motivated by the movement's pre-war actions, was in fact the expression of the pursuit and surveillance of Tatars ever since the war period, as demonstrated by the accusations formulated by the communist authorities, such as hosting Crimean Tatar refugees in 1941-1943. The Dobruja national Tatar movement must be seen from the perspective of ethnic involvement, of the connections with the

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<sup>61</sup> ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, file 37875, f. 31.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Bora Fazıl (son of Necip and Sultana Fazıl), in Güner Akmolla, *Cartea iertării...*, p. 20.

<sup>63</sup> The activation of the national Tatar movement on the territory of Turkey, through the Tatar leaders from Crimea, but also from Dobruja, consolidated the perception of Turkey as protector state of the Tatars. As the dream of the motherland was shattered by the expulsion of the Tatars in 1944, Crimea thus appeared as a lost territory, and Turkey was perceived as the second homeland of the Tatars, the protector homeland, or Turkey-the fatherland, a phrase that circulated among Tatar intellectuals. (Interview with Professor Tahsin Gemil, PhD, member of the Tatar community, 11 January 2013.)

Tatar national movement in the territory of origin, Crimea, which triggered an extrapolation of its anti-Soviet character, rooted in the historical experiences of Crimean Tatars after 1917. On the one hand, this ethnic involvement functioned at the level of intellectuals, through the movement's leaders and prominent members, who were imams, teachers or lawyers, and who identified with the ideas of the Crimea national Tatar movement and disseminated them, while maintaining a close relationship with the Crimean leaders. On the other hand, however, through its ideological and practical extension into the rural localities of Dobruja, the movement also reached ordinary people.

At a first level of the analysis, we could argue that the Fazıl family represents an illustrative case for the situation of the members of the Dobruja Tatar elite at the onset of the communist period, since Necip Fazıl occupied a leading position in the Dobruja Tatar national movement. However, the extension of the national movement to the ordinary Tatar population implicitly meant the extension of communist repression to this segment of the population. The experience of the Fazıl family is thus illustrative for all these layers of the Tatar society at the beginning of the communist period. The stigma placed on it by the conviction of its members at the beginning of the 1950s influenced its subsequent social, financial, professional and emotional evolution throughout the communist period, while social marginalization takes a similar form, with variations depending on each individual situation, in the case of other families whose existence was marked by a conflict with the Communist authorities, regardless of nationality.



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## 1. Research Methodology

The purpose of the present research is to undertake a descriptive analysis of the cultural heritage and dynamics of social identity in the Turkish and Tatar communities. We will attempt to identify the actions these communities have taken in order to preserve their ethnic and religious specificity. The study analyses the cultural similarities and differences in the formation of the social identity of the two ethnic groups, which constitute part of the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of Dobruja.

By using oral testimonies, life stories, and the statements of Turks and Tatars, the study investigates their efforts to pass on the main elements of their culture, traditions and ethnic identity to younger generations, by means of family and kinship networks.

### 1.1. Scope of the Research

Dobruja is a historical and geographical region in Romania and Bulgaria, covering the area between the Danube and the Black Sea. From an administrative point of view, it includes the counties of Tulcea and Constanța in the South-East of Romania, while in Bulgaria it includes the regions of Dobrich and Silistra. As far as ethnicity is concerned, the population is made up of Romanians, Aromanians, Bulgarians, Turks, Tatars, Roma, Jews, Greeks, Russians, Lipovans, Ukrainians, Germans, Italians, Hungarians, Serbs, etc.

Representing a small percentage of the Romanian population, Turks and Tatars generally live in compact communities in the historical area of Dobruja.

| Ethnicity | Number of individuals | Percentage of the general population |
|-----------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Turks     | 27,698                | 0.15%                                |
| Tatars    | 20,282                | 0.11%                                |

Table 1. Number of ethnic Turks and Tatars in Romania according to the 2011 Population Census.

The final results of the 2011 Population and Housing Census in Romania<sup>1</sup> show the following socio-demographic characteristics of the ethnic Turkish and Tatar population as of 20 October 2011:

- Information on ethnicity was available for 18,884.8 thousand people (out of a total of 20,121.6 thousand people). Ethnic groups for which the census recorded over 20 thousand people are: Ukrainians (50.9 thousand people), Germans (36.0 thousand), Turks (27.7 thousand), Lipovan Russians (23.5 thousand) and Tatars (20.3 thousand people).

- About 90% of the ethnic Turks were recorded in Constanța county (20.8 thousand people) and Tulcea county (1.7 thousand people), as well as in Bucharest (2.3 thousand people).

<sup>1</sup> Results of the 2011 Population and Housing Census in Romania, available at <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/>

REZULTATE-DEFINITIVE-RPL\_2011.pdf, pp. 5-7, accessed on 11.11.2014

- Most of the ethnic Tatars are concentrated in Constanța, i.e. 96.6% of the individuals who declared that they belonged to this ethnic group (19.6 thousand people).

- According to the free self-declaration of the 18,891.6 thousand persons who declared their mother tongue, the structure of the resident population by mother tongue is as follows: for 90.9% of the resident population, Romanian is the first language usually spoken in the family during childhood. Turkish, Tatar or Russian are (each) mother tongues for one out of 1000 people.

- The distribution of the resident population by mother tongue and ethnicity also provides interesting information. 85.6% of the ethnic Turks used to speak Turkish in the family, in childhood, while the rest declared Romanian as their mother tongue.

From a historical point of view, Turkish communities have populated Dobruja since the Ottoman Empire, when Turks started to outnumber the other ethnic groups in the region. The Turkish and Tatar population remained numerically dominant in Dobruja until 1880 (Schmidt-Rösler, 1993:100). In the collective memory of the Tatar communities in present-day Dobruja, Tatars represent the founders of some of the most important settlements in this region. The successive waves of Tatars populated Dobruja and dominated its social life throughout the area's recent history. At present, Dobruja is inhabited by two subgroups of Tatars, distinguished especially by their dialect. The majority speak the Crimean Tatar language ("*Kırım*"), while the group that is second in size speak the Nogai dialect ("*Noghai*").

During the communist regime, the development of industrialization, the urbanization of the up-to-then predominantly agrarian Romanian society, the internal migration of the population, planned according to assimilationist policies, and the fact that all citizens of working age had to be employed, were only some of the causes that determined the abandonment of the traditionalist model in which women had household responsibilities exclusively, as well as the increase in school enrolment rates, in the training and employment of young people. It also triggered social mobility in all social categories and lowered the risk of enclavisation in the case of the various groups that make up the ethnic structure of Dobruja.

The post-industrialization period, which began with the fall of the communist regime and continues up to the present, is characterized by the recognition of minority rights and by the freedom of expression for the ethnic and religious identities in Romanian society. This new political context allows the renewal, reconstruction and validation of ethno-religious identities. Immediately after the Romanian Revolution in 1990, the Turkish and Tatar communities created legally established ethnic organizations<sup>2</sup> which enjoyed political representation in the Romanian Parliament

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the decision of the Initiative Committee of 28 December 1989, confirmed by the Establishment Assembly on 29 December 1989, the Muslim Turkish Democratic Union of Romania was established. This union was meant to unite in a single national minority organization the entire Tatar and Turkish population in Romania, based on the community of ethnic origin, language, historical tradition and Islamic faith. On 12.04.1990 the Turkish-Tatar community in our country went through a split, following the establishment of the Union of

(<http://uniuneatatar.ro/despre-noi>, webpage accessed on 11.21.2014). Institutions and organizations from the Republic of Turkey have acted as facilitators in the recognition and consolidation of the ethnic (religious, cultural and linguistic) identity of the Turkish-Tatar communities in Romania by initiating economic networks (especially in the area of freight transport and in the development of commercial networks with Romania), by funding the rehabilitation of old Muslim places of worship and the construction of new ones, and by developing Turkish cultural and educational institutions in Dobruja (by donating Turkish textbooks, establishing school hostels for Muslim students in many Dobruja communities, by initiating Turkish and Tatar festivals and celebrations in Romania and by including them in the international circuit of cultural events).

The ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the area and the geo-political context of recent history allowed a relative enclavisation of the compact Turkish and Tatar communities, but also frequent interactions in certain sectors. The fact that the Turks and Tatars conform to Islamic religious practices, share a common language, and have the capacity to preserve their cultural heritage, leads to traditionalism and to the tendency of forming enclaves amongst the Turkish-Tatar communities. However, the Turks and Tatars in Dobruja have also showed a high capacity for creative response to social changes (Stern, Cicala, 1991: 108) demonstrating a high degree of employability, social inclusion, social and political participation, and frequent social interactions according to the principle of celebrating diversity (Giordano, 2004)<sup>3</sup>. Thus there is a high level of tolerance and mutual respect for the cultural heritage of each ethnic group within the ethnic mixture of Dobruja.

In the life histories of the Tatars interviewed for the present study, the most frequent description of the Dobruja Tatars is related to the 'last wave', which included a large part of the ancestors of the present day inhabitants of Dobruja. Many of those interviewed state that they belong to the fourth generation of Dobruja Tatars. They recount episodes from the life stories of their ancestors during the Second World War and speak of their family history during the oppression of the Crimean Tatars. Similarly, the members of the Turkish ethnic community identify themselves by the attributes of their founding fathers, presenting as salient attributes the characteristics of the Ottomans.

Thus, in most cases, the Turkish and Tatar speakers refer to the identity features of the founding heroes in history as being essential attributes in defining present-day Turkish and Tatar communities. When asked about their defining features, most of the Tatars list features belonging to the members of Tatar khanates and explicitly mention the courage, honesty and determination of Genghis-Han.

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the Turkish Ethnic Minority in Romania (U.M.E.T.R.). At the express request of this organization through a decision of the 1st District Court of Bucharest, on 23.07.1990, it changed its name into the Democratic Union of Tatar-Turkish Muslims of Romania (U.D.T.T.M.R). See: <http://uniuneatatar.ro/despre-noi>, webpage accessed on 11.21.2014

<sup>3</sup> In his anthropological study on multiculturalism, Professor Christian Giordano describes "the celebration of diversity" as a dynamic process that values the plurality of ethnic and religious identities.

Similarly, the members of the Dobruja Turkish Communities bring up the attributes of the Ottomans: conquerors, fighters, dominant, and honest.

## **1.2. Research Method**

The investigation conducted within this study is based on the interpretive tradition of social sciences. This methodological approach was selected for the advantages it offers in decoding the meanings of social action and in providing an explanatory approach to social processes such as the construction and dynamics of social identity. Max Weber, the father of the interpretive orientation, postulates that the empirical study of concrete reality aims at understanding the unique characteristics of the reality in which we move: “We wish to understand on the one hand the relationships and the cultural significance of individual events in their contemporary manifestations and on the other the causes of their being historically *so* and not *otherwise*” (Weber, 1949: 72).

The research resorts to a qualitative approach, since this method lends itself to investigations of “richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity, rather than being embarrassed and inconvenienced by them” (Mason, 2004: 1).

Data collection was performed using direct non-participant observation, semi-structured individual interviews and visual investigative techniques of social networks. The semi-structured interviews shed light on that special peculiarity of the rural traditional community – orality – which offers insight into individual memory and therefore, according to Maurice Halbwachs (1992), into the social framework of memory. Written documents, such as local monographs, journal publications, and data from official social statistic reports, were also used.

The empirical research was carried out by a multidisciplinary team of investigators (sociologists, historians, specialists in community analysis, oral history and the history of mentalities) between 2012 and 2014, in the cities and towns of Dobruja where population distribution by ethnic origin, according to the Romanian census of 2011, attests to the existence of important Turkish and Tatar communities in Constanța, Medgidia, Ovidiu, Valu lui Traian, Tuzla, Lumina, Independența and Cobadin.

## **1.3. Selection of Subjects and Data Collection**

Throughout our research, we intended to cover a large variety of investigated topics and social situations in which cultural heritage elements appear: identifying socio-cultural practices, describing identity symbols and characteristics, determining the role of traditional elements in the daily life of Turkish and Tatar communities in Dobruja. Therefore, the respondents selected to participate in the study are not statistically representative for the ethnic Turkish and Tatar population at the regional or national level and were not selected based on a probability sample. They were selected for the study using a snowball technique, on the recommendation of other respondents, based on the criterion of ethnicity and on their willingness to share their knowledge and life stories, as Turks and Tatars who lived in the multicultural area of Dobruja. Not surprisingly, most of the respondents (approx. 60%) are women and are

aged 40 years and over. This category of respondents consider themselves keepers of traditions and of the elements of ethnic culture and identity. In order to cover certain topics of interest in our research - such as Turkish and Tatar language teaching in public schools, the organization of cultural events or traditional ceremonies in the community, the role of “*toplantıs*”<sup>4</sup> or the importance of tradition in the lives of young Muslims – we included among our respondents young people of both genders, aged between 18 and 25, who represent 25% of those interviewed.

Our empirical study included over 100 individual interviews and 10 group interviews. The majority (70%) of our respondents are Turkish-Tatar or adults of mixed ethnicity, most of them inhabitants of the above mentioned cities and villages. Some interviews (30%), taken in Constanța, Cobadin and Ovidiu, were also conducted with community leaders, such as the imam, the Turkish teacher, and active members of the Turkish and Tatar ethnic organizations.

Group interviews were conducted with members of the local branches of ethnic organizations – UDTR<sup>5</sup> Cobadin, UDTTMR<sup>6</sup> Constanța, UDTTMR Ovidiu, UDTR Fântâna Mare, UDTTMR Cobadin, UDTR Constanța –, with representatives of the local authorities in Independența, Cobadin and Ovidiu, with representatives of the Muslim communities affiliated with the mosques in Ovidiu and Cobadin.

## **2. Identity Elements of the Turkish-Tatar Communities of Dobruja, Romania**

### **2.1. Traditional Occupations of the Turks and Tatars in Dobruja Communities**

Before the Communist regime, the majority of Turks and Tatars in Dobruja used to practice certain specific professions. The occupational areas of the Turks and Tatars were determined by the traditions and living conditions of the place. Therefore, women dealt with the living space and the household: preparing sweets, sewing, crochet, or the embroidery which decorated their traditional clothes and various objects inside the household. Men used to engage in agriculture-related activities, the breeding of large animals, fishing and trade.

Nowadays, employment-related issues in Dobruja equally affect all the inhabitants and we can no longer talk about an occupational distribution according to the criterion of ethnic or confessional belonging among the ordinary inhabitants. However, in large cities, like Constanța, some accounts assign to Turks and Tatars certain areas of the current labour market, such as transportation or the trade of products imported from Turkey.

*Well, if we're on the bank of the Danube, on the Danube there were more sailors. And different trades, 'cause if they worked in the fields, some worked in*

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<sup>4</sup> The meetings of the Muslim youngsters, regularly organized and occasioned by religious and lay celebrations, represent another important bond of community life. Such evenings or gatherings are known by the inhabitants of Dobruja as “*toplantı*”. Toplantı (Turkish) means gathering, meeting, reunion.

<sup>5</sup> UDTR - Turkish Democratic Union of Romania

<sup>6</sup> UDTTMR - Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania



*agriculture, raised animals, and were artisans. [...] The candy shop. There were old people, when I was a child, who used to make ice cream. [...] On Sundays, when we went downtown, they sold ice cream and sugar candy. And they sold them like this, downtown. He had a booth, if I may say so. He didn't have any specific location where he made this. (Turkish female, 66 years old, about the occupations of Turkish people in Măcin town, in her childhood).*

*Before, they used to make macramé, those doilies. I remember that. [...] I remember, I used to see them at my grandma's, or I used to hear about them, doilies or macramé, all sorts of models, because they sold well! I know they went and sold them, even in Turkey! [...] We, Tatars, Turks, we kind of have it in our blood. We like to buy and sell. [...] Because I, for example, I did it like they do it in Turkey. And it went really well! So I welcomed people just like in Turkey, I talked to them just like they do it there, therefore I followed that culture.*

*(Turkish Language and Muslim Religion Teacher, 30, Turkish-Tatar mixed ethnicity, Cobadin, July 2013)*

## **2.2. Current Sources of Income**

Among the serious issues faced by the Dobruja communities, most of those interviewed mentioned, first of all, the lack of jobs. Commuting and going abroad to work are current phenomena in all the rural communities investigated, equally frequent among Tatars and Turks, and among the other ethnic groups.

*First of all, for the young [there's] the lack of jobs. Because there aren't any and there are families where neither the husband nor the wife is working. They live from that lousy state child allowance which is 42 lei and a family support allowance, as they call it, which is 30 lei for a family who has a child under care.*

*(State Registrar at Independența town hall, female, 43 years old, ethnic Tatar, Independența, July 2013)*

Looking for a place to work, the young Turks and Tatars are attracted by employers in large urban centres, such as Constanța, Medgidia, Tulcea, but also Bucharest. The massive rural-urban migration of the industrialization period is followed by a similar pursuit of a better life and by the substitution of subsistence agricultural occupations with skilled trades and high-qualified careers. More importantly, education represents a special value which members of Tatar communities in Dobruja declare themselves deeply attached to, and which thus facilitates their employment in specialized positions and the better positioning of young Tatars on the labour market.

Some of the young people choose to go abroad. They select European destinations accustomed to workforce from Romania: Italy, Spain, Germany. Fewer are those who leave for good, with their entire family. The latter prefer to go to Turkey, but also to other countries (Germany, France) that have considerable Turkish and Tatar communities.

During our long discussions regarding the experience of migration and the adaptation of Turkish and Tatar families to the host countries, our interlocutors emphasized their concern for preserving their ethnic identity and the way in which, when they reach their destination, the migrants create a united community, with a

strong help network, striving to preserve their home lifestyle. In their relations with the population in the host country, the Turkish and Tatar migrants from Romania affirm their ethnic identity, and, in official situations, their Romanian citizenship.

*Many of them work in Constanța. Very many went abroad with their families, wives, children and they work there. (Abroad where?) To Germany, Italy, Spain. There are very many who left Cobadin. (And where do they work there?) As maids, in factories.*

*(Choreographer of the UDTTMR Tatar dance ensembles, 41 years old, Cobadin, July 2013)*

Some of the respondents state that being involved in the preservation of religious practices, of the mother tongue and of the cultural patrimony in their mother country, Romania, where their ethnic and religious group represents a minority, helps them relate in similar ways wherever they migrate, either temporarily or for good. When analysing the experience of labour migration in the case of the wide section of the population who seek work in Western European countries, some of those interviewed state that there are differences in the degree of social integration between Turks and Tatars, on the one hand, and the members of other Dobruja ethnic groups who engaged in this migration process, on the other. Thus, they consider that, after they reach their country of destination, Romanians do not affirm their ethnicity in the public space and do not attempt to integrate in local Romanian communities. Unlike Turks and Tatars, Romanians do not attempt to preserve the lifestyle from the country of origin, but, on the contrary, easily give up social practices and Romanian customs, and do not form Romanian social communities in the destination countries.

*Well, for example, half are in Spain. And they all are or went to the same place, all of them. So this is the difference compared to the Romanians. And there, some of them [of the Romanians] take this title: they don't talk to others because "your own people will make you pay". [...] And then, they come back with small children and they don't know a word of Romanian?*

*(President of the UDTTMR, male, ethnic Tatar, Constanța, July 2013)*

### **2.3. Social Identity Is Shaped by the Spatial Segregation of Dobruja Multicultural Communities**

Contemporary interpretive research paradigms show that social activities can only be understood contextually, and social facts lose their deterministic characteristics, being instead seen as created by the community members through social practices (practical activities) (Blaikie, 2010:191-195). In the present study, the increased permeability of group boundaries and the current dynamics of the rural social order (within rural communities) find their explanation in this performance of *active interculturality* which allows the "dialogic hypostasis of cultures by entering a resonance of differences" (Buzărnescu, 2004: 164). The cohabitation of different ethnic groups in Dobruja is actually the connection, the decision making factor in the analysis of different ethno-cultures, of their contacts and interferences with the majority population in terms of material and spiritual values.

The interviewees still preserve in their memories the image of their native place, with the separate streets of Romanians, of Turks, of Tatars, Aromanians, Greeks etc. Most

[illegible]

146



Greek, Russians-Lipovans. Similarly, in Cobadin, the mental map of its inhabitants easily identifies the Turkish, Tatar and Roma-Turkish suburbs as separate habitation areas, where one rarely meets households inhabited by members of a different ethnic group. The habitation area of the Romanians in Cobadin occupies half of the area inside the limits of the locality and is bordered by the main road, which crosses the central area of the entire village. Situated in the centre of the village, the mosque marks the beginning of the area inhabited by the Muslim community and those inhabited by the Tatars, Turks and Roma-Turks of Cobadin.

The appearance of the streets, of the households, and the infrastructure and utilities available are different only depending on their geographical place as related to the administrative centre of the locality. The streets in the centre of the village are covered with asphalt, are connected to the water supply and sewerage network, and have street lighting. The streets in the suburbs are poorer in what their access to utilities is concerned, are usually paved, and the households there are smaller and shabbier. In some areas, where the locality extended with new construction lots for housing, the appearance of the new streets is different from that of the old streets, with several constructions in progress and many empty and neglected lots.

In all cases, the interviewees state that there is no visible difference between the Turkish, Tatar and Romanian houses and streets in the village. The households inhabited by Turks and Tatars are identical in outside appearance with any other usual household in the village. There are no significant differences in what concerns the architecture of the house, the structure and distribution of the outbuildings in relation with the living space, or in the decorative elements of the façade and of the gate. Ethnic or religious identity symbols are not visible on the façade, around the gate and threshold. The old houses, which represent the majority in the Dobruja villages investigated, meet the ethnographic appearance of traditional Dobruja households, having a porch, low rooms, and a single storey. They are built of traditional materials (clay bricks, metal roofs, woodwork for windows and doors, wooden fences and gates), and include outbuildings (a storeroom for food, a wood shed, bread ovens) and specially arranged outbuildings for keeping animals (stables, coops, barns for cereals etc.). The rehabilitated and new habitations are built in modern materials (cement, tiles, PVC work, thermally insulating materials, wrought iron fences and gates etc.) and are architecturally different from traditional houses, being broader, with higher rooms and without outbuildings. Both construction models of the house are equally adopted by the members of all ethnic groups, depending on their resources, and follow models of habitation construction in Dobruja, without representing identity attributes of one single ethnic group out of those that coexist in the region. Therefore, both in our own observations and from the perspective of our interlocutors, in what concerns the identity of Turkish, Tatar and Romanian neighbourhoods or those inhabited by other ethnic groups, there are “no visible indications”, other than the mental maps marked out by the inhabitants who “simply know that Turkish suburbs are located here or there”. We discover the map of ethnic neighbourhoods only when entering the houses, where ritual symbols and objects are precisely ordered, and indicate the obvious ethnic and religious affiliation of the family members.

*Turks used to live in separate neighbourhoods. Even now, in many areas of Dobruja there are Turkish neighbourhoods, Tatar neighbourhoods. And basically a*

*marriage between a Turk and a Tatar somehow resulted in a loss of identity for the girl who entered the family of the other community, so to speak.*

*(Turkish teacher, male, ethnic Turk, General Secretary of the UDTR, Constanța, September 2013)*

*In this neighbourhood, Coiciu, there were many Tatars before. [...] (Are there any Turks?) There are Turks in Piața Griviței. And in Piața Chiliei, there are Turks, Turkish Gypsies.*

*(Male, Tatar, 85 years old, Constanța, September 2013)*

*Because there were two neighbourhoods, one of Nogais and one of Chonhars<sup>9</sup>. But I don't know which and why. The difference between them was the dialect, the language. (The language?) Yes, they speak differently.*

*(State Registrar at Independența town hall, female, 43 years old, ethnic Tatar, Independența, July 2013)*

*Because [in the village] they still live in Turkish neighbourhoods, in slums, so to speak. And there are still many that are very populated [...] Here, in the city, there are clusters, for example, in Palazu Mare, over 100 families live around the neighbourhood mosque. Here in Koiciu<sup>10</sup> and in Anadolchioi<sup>11</sup>, the old villages, there are more compact communities. Those who migrated in '45 are quite many. There are collective buildings where more than a quarter of the people are of Tatar origin.*

*(President of the UDTMR, male, ethnic Tatar, Constanța, July 2013)*

*But mainly Turks, Tatars and Romanians. (Are there any others?) Gypsies too. We've already mixed. There's already an amalgam. But, for example, in the other half of Cobadin Romanians predominate. Here! For example, let's divide Cobadin into two halves. Let's say this is the centre. In this half Romanians predominate [she draws]. But there are also Turks and Tatars in between. Here, in this small part, there are only Turks and Tatars. [...] (If I went on a street, what would make me realize I'm in the Tatar neighbourhood?) There's no clue. (Do houses look the same?) Yes, they do! (Do streets look the same?) Yes, they do! Only if you talk to them. That's all. And if they tell you 'I am Tatar' or 'Turkish'. Otherwise, there's no clue. (When I see somebody, how can I tell?) Yes, maybe by the eyes. 'Cause we, Tatars, we look like Tatars! (Not even by their clothing?) No!*

*(Turkish language and Muslim religion teacher, female, 30 years old, mixed Turkish and Tatar ethnicity, Cobadin, July 2013)*

*Down the street, there is the so called Tatar neighbourhood. The base is in the area of the old village. Ovidiu was a Tatar village. There were many of them like this, gathered in one area. So, almost all of us, most of the Tatars in Ovidiu, live in this street.*

*(Turkish language and Muslim religion teacher, female, 43 years old, Tatar ethnic, Ovidiu, September 2013)*

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<sup>9</sup> "Chonhar" is the name of a region in Crimea.

<sup>10</sup> After the name of the former mayor of Constanța.

<sup>11</sup> Anadolchioi was declared a neighbourhood of Constanța in 1975, when the construction of Tomis III, Tomis IV and Tomis Nord neighbourhoods was finished. Until then, Anadolchioi was only a village (enclosed by Constanța since 1925) and before building these neighbourhoods, there was the Anadolchioi CAP (collective farm). Its name comes from Turkish: Anadol- köy means the village of the Anadolians.

#### 2.4. Inter-Ethnic Relationships

The rural communities in Dobruja are characterized by diversity and endogenous development potential. They are social spaces defined by a diverse ethnic and religious cultural heritage, by active social networks among the ethnic groups and between these and the institutions, and by the participation of ethnic groups to social development, since each of them enjoys political representation at the level of local and regional government.

The Turkish-Tatar community in Dobruja has positive and integrative relationships with the other ethnic groups. All the individuals interviewed speak of the good coexistence of the Tatars with the other ethnic groups, in a region where the celebration of ethnic, socio-cultural and confessional diversity is a tradition. The institutional relationships between the ethnic organizations – the UDTTMR, the UDTR, the Muftiate, the General Consulate of the Republic of Turkey in Constanța, various foundations – and the local and national institutions are also collaborative, integrative and positive.

In what concerns daily life, the Tatars and Turks in Dobruja state that they have good neighbourhood and friendship relationships with the other groups in the localities they live in. They share social practices, some of the traditions blend together, they mutually attend the religious celebrations of the other confessional groups in the community. Transculturalism encounters its limits in the moral-religious obligations of Muslims, in the different (historical) origins of the Dobruja Muslims as compared to the members of the other ethnic groups, and in the issue of mixed marriages with non-Muslims. Also, the rural communities of Dobruja still preserve the spatial segregation of habitation areas, of streets, by ethnic criteria.

Despite their capacity to preserve their own cultural patrimony, the Turks and Tatars have also shown a high ability to adapt to the social or cultural context they live in. Even if in certain situations the persistence of the Muslim lifestyle led to traditionalism and to a more problematic social integration, the Turks and Tatars have always adapted to the context they lived in and have developed good relationships with the other ethnic groups. This adaptation has involved changes in certain aspects of daily life, such as education in the same language community, or the clothes worn in public, while the taboo or belief and value system remained unchanged. Carol Silverman (in Stern, Cicala, 1991:108) names this process creative use of social change. Due to creative adaptation, the Turkish and Tatar population preserved a joint religious-cultural essence, despite the low proportion of the Turkish-Tatar population as compared to the majority population.

*Well, you know, we don't celebrate our holidays, such as the religious ones, the Bayrams, alone. Just like we also celebrate Easter and Christmas with the others. Except for eating pork. [...] So we have a wonderful symbiosis here. If you know anybody who lives in Constanța and says he's from Constanța, and he doesn't know or doesn't have any Muslim or Tatar friend, then it means he's not really from there. It means he's not from there!*

*(President of the UDTTMR, male, ethnic Tatar, Constanța, July 2013)*

## 2.5. Pro-social Behaviours and Community Social Practices as Facilitators for the Conservation of the Cultural Heritage of Turks and Tatars

The institutional relationships between the members of the Turkish and Tatar communities and the local institutions are positive. Generally speaking, city halls, cultural centres and educational institutions are open towards the idea of supporting the organization of cultural and artistic events of the ethnic groups in the locality, and show interest in actions promoting the multicultural specificity of Dobruja.

The local authorities can participate in the development projects and cultural events organised by the ethnic groups within the limits of the local budget and in compliance with the law, which permits them to grant material, logistic and representational support to such activities. In other words, the openness of the local authorities towards getting involved in such activities is sometimes conditioned by the limited resources available to the local administration; however, in most of cases, solutions for the implementation of the initiatives of the Turkish and Tatar communities have been found, and they have received support from the city hall, culture centre, school, and from local institutions.

The Turks' and Tatars' cultural and artistic events are organized locally on the initiative of the ethnic organizations that represent them – the Turkish Democratic Union of Romania (UDTR), the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania (UDTTMR) –, and with the support of the local, county and governmental administration. Such events have a wide participation and are well disseminated in the region due to the fact that most of them concern the Turkish-Tatar ethnic identity in the context of the specific diversity in Dobruja, and thus they address the entire historical region of Dobruja. By way of example, we list here a series of annual events that were supported by the local administration or by other public institutions: The symposium *Multiculturalism, Cultural Inheritance, Interethnic Dialogue*, organised by the UDTR (September 12, 2013, Predeal); the project *Cultural Diversity* for the promotion of the image of the Turkish community in the Tulcea Area (September 26-29, 2013, Tulcea and Băltenii de Sus); the participation in the *Alphabet of Co-existence Festival* for the promotion of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity (September 26-29, 2013, Ploiești); *The International Children's Day* celebrated by the Turks and Tatars in various localities in Tulcea and Constanța Counties (June 1); *The Tatar Language Day* (May 5); secular feasts such as *Kidârlez* (May 6) and *Nevruz* (May 21)<sup>12</sup>; The International Symposium *The Turkish Woman in the Balkans*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (June 10, 2013, Constanța); *The International Festival of the Turkish-Tatar Costume, Dance and Song*, 19<sup>th</sup> edition, with the participation of dance ensembles from all the localities in Dobruja where Turks and Tatars live (September 2013, Constanța); *The Day of National Minorities in Romania* (December 17, 2013, Constanța); The Festival of National Minorities *Celebration of the Delta*,

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<sup>12</sup> Hâdârlez / Kidârlez is celebrated on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May every year. According to the old calendar (takvim), this day was also called RUZI Hizir and it is considered a messenger of summer. Nevruz / Nawrez is the feast that welcomes the arrival of spring and it is celebrated on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, when day and night are equal. Its name comes from the words of Persian origin "nev" (new), "ruz" (day), meaning the "new year" (yıl başı). (Ibraim, 2011: 44 - 45)



10<sup>th</sup> edition (September 2010, Sulina); The International Symposium *The Cultural Inheritance of the Tatars*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (October 2010, Constanța)<sup>13</sup>.

Many of the activities aiming at the preservation of the cultural heritage are also the result of private initiatives on behalf of the inhabitants: museum houses organized in the homes of some community members, exhibitions, recitals or charity performed by community members who usually ask for the support of ethnic organizations, mosques and local institutions.

*As the mayor also said, like in all towns, communities get along with their town halls. Because here political affiliation doesn't matter. We want the town hall to help us too, we want that very much. Local authorities take care of the graveyard. And this is not a big deal. And if possible, to sometimes be helped with the mosque.*

*(President of the UDTTMR, male, ethnic Tatar, Constanța, July 2013)*

The celebrations of the Muslim communities are oriented towards supporting the cohesion of the community, and towards the validation of positive relationships with the other ethnic communities living in the region. The two large Islamic festivals are respected by each and every Muslim family and are celebrated within the community, by visiting the entire social network and sharing the celebration customs with the other community members.

From the perspective of community space, one dimension of these celebrations is the reaffirmation of the connections within the extended family network. On the first day of the feast, the young ones visit the houses of the elderly in the family. The length of such visits depends on the nature of the kinship with the visited family. The closer the kinship, the longer the visit, and the more likely to take place on the first day of the festival. The first Bayram visits are to the parents, grandparents, and elder brothers; then, in order of kinship, the houses of uncles, cousins, and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> degree relatives are visited. Afterwards, visits are paid to one's Muslim, but also Christian network of friends. In the evenings, the young meet and celebrate together. Such "*toplantîs*" also include among the guests Romanian, Aromanian, and Greek friends of the Turks and Tatars in the locality or region.

Also from the perspective of community life, the celebrations signify the occasion to strengthen social solidarity and aid relationships within the community. The Kurban Bayram sacrifice is divided with the needy. Disadvantaged local families receive from the better-off ones food and material goods they may need. Generally, a Muslim family who sacrifice the wether every year look after the same 2-3 needy families they regularly help during the year and with whom they share their celebration sacrifice. In this case as well, the kinship network is of precedence in choosing the needy families that will receive help. However, there are also cases when well-off Muslim families regularly help non-related families in the community.

*(Do you have any relatives in other towns?) Yes! I mean in Dobruja, almost everywhere. [...] For instance, in Cobadin. First, in Fântâna Mare we have our parents-in-law. Then we go to Mangalia to our parents. Then we go to Constanța. Now I'm speaking about the Bayrams. (Yes) Constanța. There we have a sister, aunts*

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<sup>13</sup> These cultural events are described in the articles published by the Karadeniz (UDTTMR) and Hakses (UDTR) magazines, which can be accessed on the two organizations' websites.

*and uncles. In Medgidia the same, we have cousins, aunts, both. Where? In Bucharest! There we have a sister. And friends! We also visit our friends. We have family friends. Romanians, or Turks and Tatars. We have very good relationships with Romanians. Yes, and in Valu [Valu lui Traian] we have mainly friends. We also go to Tuzla. Therefore in all of Dobruja. [...] We also have relatives in Bulgaria! (In Bulgaria too.) I have cousins in Bulgaria. Then, from Bulgaria we go to Turkey [...] It's a moral duty. The younger ones have the duty to go to the older ones. (So you visit the elderly?) Yes, yes. First the family, as a general rule. First our family, then our friends.*

*(Turkish language and Muslim religion teacher, female, 30 years old, mixed Turkish and Tatar ethnicity, Cobadin, July 2013)*

An illustrative example of community event specific to the Tatar minority is the regular organization of celebrations that include Tatar wrestling. Always taking place in the centre of the commune, in the lively public space of the main square, attractive, and a leisure opportunity for both community members and visitors, Tatar wrestling is well known in Dobruja and emblematic for the Tatars. Anyone can take part actively in the sport competition, and therefore Tatar wrestling, alongside Tatar dances and choirs, are a must at secular celebrations and festivities in the towns and villages of Dobruja.

Due to the popularity of Tatar wrestling among the non-Muslim communities in Dobruja and beyond, the UDTTMR has taken steps to register Tatar wrestling in the Romanian Wrestling Federation. Regardless of how easy or difficult such a step may prove to be, Tatar wrestling is part of the life of Dobruja communities and represents a social symbol for Tatar inhabitants.

*So, we have the ensembles, the Tatar wrestling competitions. Now we're trying to have this sport [acknowledged] by the Wrestling Federation and to organize our own federation. We are the only minority in Romania with a specific sport. True, it's a contact sport, but it's also about our specificity. We couldn't have a ballroom dance. (laughs) We have Tatar wrestling, which is a type of fighting, of martial arts, also practiced by many Romanians. They're really successful in Dobruja.*

*(President of the UDTTMR, male, ethnic Tatar, Constanța, July 2013)*

The meetings of young Muslims, regularly organized on the occasion of religious and laic celebrations, represent another important way of cementing community life. Such evening events or gatherings are known among the inhabitants of Dobruja as “*toplantî*”.

The Muslim youngsters get together in a festive atmosphere, with music, dance, and stories about personal and community life. The participation in such reunions keeps friendships, acquaintances and support networks alive amongst young Muslims. Sometimes, young Romanians or non-Muslim friends are also invited at such “*toplantîs*”.

An important role of the “*toplantî*” is to facilitate marriages among members of the same religious and ethnic community. The friendship and acquaintance relationships which form during one's teenage years in the less formal context of the “*toplantî*” are more likely to remain stable and to represent a benchmark of interpersonal relationships during adulthood.

For the Muslim girls, the participation in such reunions, with their parents' consent, in a world that is hardly permissive in what concerns developing social relations beyond the family, represents the base on which they build their image of the world and of social life. Many female interlocutors we encountered during the course of the present empirical study confess to having met their husbands during such “*toplantîs*” and to having established durable friendships by attending the “*toplantî*” in the community.

*(What is a toplanti, for those who don't know about them?) In Turkish, “toplantî” means meeting. So in, Turkey, when such a thing takes place, it basically refers to a get-together, a gathering or a meeting. However, for the Turks and Tatars in Dobruja it also has another meaning. It refers to the so-called Turkish evening parties. Basically, young ethnic Turks, Tatars, Muslims participate in these Turkish evening parties.*

*(General Secretary of the UDTR, Turkish teacher, male, ethnic Turk, Constanța, September 2013)*

## **2.6. Mutual Aid within Tatar Communities**

A religious prescription and a component of Tatar identity, charity plays an important role in community life and is one of the implicit objectives of Turkish-Tatar ethnic organizations. Among day-to-day activities in the life of Muslims whose aim is to help those in need are the regular “*Iftars*”<sup>14</sup>, charity “*toplantîs*”, sharing the wether as alms during the three days of Bayram, and ensuring, through the family relationship network, a decent living to all community members who are in difficult circumstances.

Muslim welfare organizations in Romania are grouped under the umbrella of the Tuna foundation, which is involved in educational, cultural and humanitarian activities in Romania, particularly in Medgidia. The Taiba foundation is an organization for the promotion of Islamic culture in Romania, but its activity also extends to providing social welfare assistance to the Muslim community. It is one of the most active Muslim welfare foundations, aiming at helping people who receive no social benefits and vulnerable individuals in need: elderly, unemployed, people with disabilities, widows and the poor (Zagura, 2012: 244).

“*Iftar*” is a dinner provided by community members, but also by ethnic organizations affiliated to the mosque, to all those who are less wealthy. The structure of the menu is ritualistic, and must include seven dishes cooked before serving. These dishes are served in a certain order. Wealthier participants buy the basic food, and it is also they who prepare the dishes. Usually “*Iftar*” is offered either to the women or to the men in the community.

“*Toplantîs*” are gatherings of young people or of people who are active within the community. In general, participants are exclusively Tatars, but they can also invite other Muslims or Christians who belong to their network of friends and acquaintances. Sometimes these toplantîs may be organized to provide aid in case of

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<sup>14</sup> Iftar is the name of the evening meal, after sunset (maghreb), during the Muslim Ramadan.

some exceptional circumstance, or for a family in need. In the latter case, participants identify and use resources in order to remedy the situation.

In the Islamic tradition, “*Zakat*” is one of the five pillars of faith, and it involves providing food and sharing the wether during the celebration taking place at the end of the holy month of Ramadan, depending on resources. Thus, two parts of the sacrificed wether are given to the needy people in the community and only one part stays with the family for its own consumption. This custom is directly related to the “*Iftar*”, being a religious prescript of the *Zakat*, charity as an act of faith. Along with the pilgrimage to Mecca, this pillar of Islamic religion is compulsory only for those who have the material resources to carry it out.

Ensuring a decent living and reducing extreme poverty among Tatar communities are also achieved through the network of family relationships. Members of the extended family directly contribute to helping poorer family members. The aid consists of goods, money, and especially facilitating access to education and, if possible, finding them jobs.

*So we, the Union, in 2010, we held a toplanti. I made sweets. [The lady here] has a sister with cancer. Also, she has five children, her husband left her [...] we got together, the girls in the choir, we organized a toplanti, a gathering for young people and we made all sorts of sweets. We sold them and also had sponsors. So we helped.*

*(Female, mixed Turkish-Tatar ethnic origin, choreographer of the Tatar dance groups, 41 years old, Cobadin, July 2013)*

*We also organize “Iftar” evenings, dinner for the women or men in the community, for charity purposes. For example, we organize one now, during the Ramadan month. We also invite them to another event, with some packages. [...] (In general you offer food?) Yes, food, generally food.*

*(Turkish language and Muslim religion teacher, mixed Turkish-Tatar ethnic origin, female, 30 years old, Cobadin, July 2013)*

## **2.7. The Role of Ethnic Organizations in Preserving the Cultural Heritage and Orienting the Dynamics of Ethnic and Religious Identity. Case Study: the U.D.T.T.M.R.**

The UDTTMR is an active and highly visible organization in the Tatar and in the Turkish community and within the broader framework of the community in Dobruja. The declared objectives of the organization's leaders are to preserve and promote traditions, customs, the Tatar language and lifestyle of Tatars in Dobruja. The UDTTMR maintains and develops positive relationships with public institutions, local administrations and other institutions and organizations in Dobruja. Also, it collaborates directly with other institutions in Romania, Turkey, Crimea, Bulgaria, and other countries with Tatar communities.

The Union's development strategy in the past decade has focused visibly on two main directions. The first direction is to consolidate the organization's infrastructure by purchasing real estate and movables (minibuses, furniture, etc.) for the offices of Union branches across Dobruja, in localities with important Tatar communities. The second direction of development involves organizing activities to promote and preserve the language and culture of Dobrujan Tatars. Recently, the

organization has been reformed, meaning that it promotes young people as Union leaders and it initiates many events and projects in order to involve young people and to make the most of young people's potential within the Tatar community and the Union. The most frequently mentioned of these events are: conferences, seminars, camps, award ceremonies for Tatars with good results in school Olympiads, the organization of Tatar festivals and feasts. Also, as far as the media are concerned, the UDTTMR finances the publication of the *Karadeñiz* magazine, and together with the UDTR, the radio station that addresses the Turkish-Tatar community in Dobruja, namely Radio T.

The UDTTMR is government funded, according to the legislation in force, and is granted an annual amount of money. These funds represent the main resource in all the current activities of the Union. The organization's relationships with the Republic of Turkey through the Consulate General of Turkey in Constanța, the Embassy of Turkey in Bucharest or other Turkish organizations, associations and institutions, are positive and facilitate integration in the broader Muslim Turkic community. As our respondents remember, Turkey's openness towards the Tatars in Romania dates back to the foundation of the Republic, in 1923, under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Most of the respondents mention the call addressed by the first President of the Republic, Atatürk, to all Turkish Muslims around the world to help build the Turkish state, after the two wars that had weakened the nation's resources.

The problems, but also the development opportunities of the UDTTMR are related to the number of the members of the Tatar community in Romania, which is somewhere between 20,000 – according the Census of the Romanian Population – and almost double, i.e. 36,000, as counted by the Union. The main issue mentioned is that of the way in which ethnicity is recorded in population censuses, when many Tatars declare themselves or are reported as belonging to the ethnic Turkish or Romanian community. One of the main reasons that threaten Tatar identity and contribute to the decline in the volume of the Tatar population is the fact that the learning of the literary Tatar language and its transmission from one generation to another take place only within the family and the extended family network. Next, the respondents mention the issue of mixed marriages, which they frequently see as a factor that puts them in danger of 'losing' their Tatar identity, even in the case of ethnically mixed marriages within the same religious group (mainly to Turks, but also to Arabs, etc.). For some of the respondents, the Union's name and its close relationships with organizations and institutions in Turkey are detrimental to Tatar identity and to the preservation of the specificity of Tatar identity. Concerning the Union's name, the most frequent explanation given by Union members is related to the Union's origin. In the early 1990s, the UDTTMR represented both ethnic communities, being the only legally recognized organization of this kind, for both the Turks and the Tatars in Romania. On the other hand, the Union's name makes reference both to the family of Turkic languages to which Tatar belongs and to the religion of Muslim Tatars.

In what concerns the Union's active relationships with Turkish organizations, the leaders of the UDTTMR cultivate and maintain them, both due to the material support provided by these organisations and to the fact that they belong to the same

religious community. The set of common traditions, customs, social practices, the common Turkic language background, the similar religious customs and prescriptions of the Turks and Tatars in Dobruja, all contribute to the potential consolidation of a community which is distinct from the other significant co-nationals, by putting in common and reducing the differences between the two communities. Thus, within the fascinating ethnic and religious blend of Dobruja, alongside Romanians, Macedonians, Greeks, and Lipovan Russians, the Turkish and Tatar community, in the sense of putting-in-common, is a powerful unit which claims its legitimacy as one of the founders of Dobruja.

*Unlike other minorities which are backed by a motherland, we don't have such a thing. We have a very good relationship with the Republic of Turkey, but it's not our motherland. We are close, like brothers, but it's not the same. [...] The Turkish Ambassador told me loud and clear that the Republic of Turkey does not differentiate between the Turkish and Tatar community in Dobruja. Which is great. The representatives of the local Consulate General of Turkey in Constanța, or of the Embassy of Turkey, come to all our events.*

*(President of the UDTTMR, male, ethnic Tatar, Constanța, July 2013)*

*(Do you also collaborate with the local consulate in Constanța?) Yes, yes. The Consulate is an active partner in the cultural, artistic and social life, and of course in education, and we always have a very close collaboration with them. We constantly try to start projects together and there is reciprocity in everything we do. We inform them in case something shows up, they let us know if they have, if there's anything new. (Can you give me an example of a common project?) Yes. We had the Turkish Children's Day, a project conducted in partnership with the County School Inspectorate in Constanța, the Consulate of the Republic of Turkey, the Turkish Union, the Tatar Union and the TIAD, i.e. the Association of Turkish Businessmen. [...] We also supported another project developed by the Muslim Muftiate and by the Consulate, i.e. Prophet Muhammad's Birthday. [...] We also organize in partnership the Gençlik Bayram day, the Youth Day, for high school students.*

*(School inspector for the Turkish, Tatar and Roma minorities, Constanța County School Inspectorate, female, ethnic Tatar, 37 years old, Constanța, September 2013)*

Regarding the mother tongue, the UDTTMR organizes Tatar language courses for the children and young people in the community. These courses are called 'Community School' and are organized in all Dobrujan towns that have Union branches. Without elaborating on the issue of introducing the study of the Tatar language in schools for the Tatar 'minority', I will only mention that, starting with the late 1950s, the Tatar language is no longer taught in Romanian state schools. Before the Union started organizing these Tatar language courses, language was passed on between generations exclusively by oral means and within the family. The difficulties entailed by the enrolment of children whose modern tongue is Tatar into an education system that does not include the study of Tatar have led, from one generation to another, to a drop in the number of those who have good Tatar language skills. As reported, at the present moment, only the elderly and some of the young people and children have a good conversational proficiency of Tatar.

*(Are Tatar and Turkish taught in school?) Turkish, in school, yes. Tatar, we struggle to introduce it in the curriculum. For now, we teach Tatar here, in the community school. [...], Among those who come to our community school, there are about 30 Tatars. But these children, between 4 and 13, maybe 14 years old, they don't always come, all 30 of them. But if we organize a big event with them, we gather 30, and maybe more. Otherwise, only 10, 15, 17 come to our community school. (When does it take place?) Every Sunday, for two hours. (Only for Tatar language?) Only for Tatar language.*

*(Turkish and Muslim religion teacher, female, 30 years old, mixed Turkish-Tatar ethnicity, Cobadin, July 2013)*

In order to attract the younger generation to the cultural activities organized by the UDTTMR, 16 Tatar dance ensembles have been created within its territorial branches in Dobruja. Symbols of social identity, along with Tatar wrestling, female choirs singing Tatar songs, Tatar cuisine or “*toplantis*”, traditional Tatar dance ensembles play an important role among the current activities for identity promotion and confirmation within the community. Tatar traditional dance classes and dance groups are organized throughout the entire year, on a weekly basis. Most dance groups are for young people and are organized by school age groups – children's groups and young people's groups. The most active dance groups participate in festivals, competitions, celebrations, and international events, in Romania or abroad, several times a year. The young Tatars' participation in the local Tatar dance ensemble is one of the most engaging activities offered by the UDTTMR to the community in order to develop stable social networks among young Tatars and keep these connections active. For example, many young people who in the past were active members of these dance ensembles now hold decision-making positions within the branches of the organization and are very active in all the other activities organized by the UDTTMR.

Other events organized by the UDTTMR with a view to preserving and promoting the elements of Tatar culture, their mother tongue, traditions and customs, are: international festivals, “*Kures*” Tatar wrestling competitions, literary events, “*toplantis*”, the Turkish Children's Day, the Tatar Language Day, conferences and symposia (on history, literature), food festivals, trips for young people and for the elderly. The Union also organizes annual pilgrimages to Mecca for community members and maintains close relationships with the Muftiate and with local imams in the organization of religious events.

### **3. The Role of the Family in Preserving Islamic Cultural Heritage and Identity**

In this chapter I will present the main ways of handing down the cultural heritage between generations and the key players who have an active role in passing on to children the cultural models and social practices essential in the creation of the internalized world representation system of Turkish and Tatar children in Romania.

As a primary social institution, the family is where a child begins to learn the mother tongue, the social practices, and the role prescriptions which will guide his or

her life. Throughout early education and during the first six years of childhood, the family passes on and develops the use of language, a system of rules (customs and habits), roles within the family and community, behaviour, health and nutrition-related habits, and represents the main model for relating to the world and to life. The present study aims at identifying the cultural heritage and the identity characteristics of Turks and Tatars which are passed on and reinforced (intergenerationally) by the family, during early childhood.

In the particular case of the Turkish and Tatar communities in Dobruja, groups which hold the status of 'national minorities' in relation to the members of the dominant culture, institutional social strategies and practices for the transmission of their cultural heritage are limited. For example, for half a century there has been no state education in the mother tongues of these minorities in Romania<sup>15</sup>, which has had a major impact in terms of limiting the ways in which cultural elements belonging to the ethnic Turks and Tatars in Romania can be preserved.

If some of the other ethnic groups in Romania have the benefit of school instruction in their mother tongue at the level of basic education<sup>16</sup>, for Turks and Tatars in Dobruja no such institutional framework exists. Turkish language, elements of Turkish culture and civilization and Islamic religion are optional subjects in the curriculum of the state schools attended by ethnic Turkish and Tatar children. On the other hand, in the case of the Tatar language and the transmission of elements of the Tatar cultural heritage, no such opportunity exists.

However, when speaking of the transmission of their spiritual heritage, the Muslims in Romania consider that it was not affected by limitations of Islamic religious practices, as the Muftiate and mosques continued to be active during the communist regime and are still active today. In this context, throughout their recent history, family and kinship relationship networks have primarily been responsible for preserving and cultivating minority mother tongues, passing on customs, traditions and socio-cultural practices, and instilling traditional systems of rules and values in the younger generations.

Members of the communities investigated emphasize the key role played by the family in passing on the cultural heritage to children. Language is learned within the family as a mother tongue and is thus passed on by the parents and by the grandparents who care for the child. Regardless of age, gender or level of education, all our respondents stated that they learned the traditions and customs related to food, hygiene, the importance of religious prescriptions, and how to relate to family and community members, during their childhood, within their family.

In a Christian society<sup>17</sup> and with Romanian as an official language, prescriptions regarding values and behaviours are acquired by the new generations of

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<sup>15</sup> Starting with the 1960s, Tatar and Turkish language teaching schools were closed. As of the 1990s, at the request of parents and ethnic organizations, middle schools where Turkish and Tatar children were enrolled once again started organizing optional courses in Turkish language and Islam.

<sup>16</sup> Kindergartens and schools with instruction in German, Hungarian, Serbian, etc.

<sup>17</sup> 86.5% of the Romanian population is Christian Orthodox, according to the Romanian Population Census of 2011.



Turkish and Tatar Muslims mainly by means of the institution of the family. In the case of Romanian children, it is mainly the task of educational institutions to instil in them the system of rules and values; language, literature, art and culture-related knowledge are acquired, simultaneously, through the family and through school, through the art clubs, media, and cultural institutions that are present in every community. In the case of Turkish and Tatar children, the elements of the cultural heritage, the language and the Muslim prescriptions are passed on mainly through oral culture and through the family.

The person to whom the child is most attached and who cares for the child, and who in Turkish and Tatar families is generally the mother or grandmother, is the one who, according to all respondents, has a dominant or decision-making role in what concerns the children's education. Even today, when mother-tongue public education no longer exists, some of the respondents state that when they started going to school they were fluent only in their mother tongue and had poor knowledge of conversational Romanian due to the fact that at home they used to socialize only within their own culture and in their mother tongue.

*The family is very important to us. Family and traditions are everything, if I may say so. [...] Religion and everything else was kept in the family. We talked about customs and traditions within the family. And of course parents teach the mother tongue to the children at home.*

(Journalist, female, 39 years old, ethnic Tatar, Constanța, September 2013)

*(Where did you learn to sing and dance Tatar dances?) We used to sing with my grandmother, at home. We used to sing Tatar songs with my mum's mother.*

(Choreographer of the UDTTMR Tatar dance ensembles in Cobadin, female, 41 years old, mixed Turkish-Tatar ethnicity, Cobadin, July 2013)

Concerning hygiene and nutrition rules, Turkish and Tatar families in Dobruja strictly observe the customs and traditions related to the culture of their ethnic group and Islamic prescriptions. Girls learn household rules very early, they know how to cook traditional dishes, stretch dough for *chiburekki*, *kobete* and *cantiq* and how to prepare ritual food for religious celebrations and ceremonies.

Hygiene rules derive from religious texts and are learned during early childhood. The *abdest* – the washing of the hands, face, forehead, nose, ears, and limbs before *Namaz* and the ritual washing of the entire body in certain specific situations such as childbirth, menses, sex, postpartum period and death – is a current practice learned by children from their mothers after early education, around the ages of 8-9.

*What is the order, what do we start with? First you wash your hands. Right. You take water in your mouth three times, you rinse and spit. I told you, you rinse and spit. And do the same for your nose, three times, you sniff it and blow, in order to be clean; this is tradition, this is how I learned it. And then three times again on the face, with water. Then you wash your hands up to the elbows, using water from here, like this. Three times. You wash your hands three times, with water. Then you wash your head, you need to wet one part of your head – they say there are four parts, and one must necessarily be soaked with water. Then you wet your hands, take them to your ear, and stick your fingers in your ear, so that you feel you have water in them. You*

*pass it over the ear, like this... you come here... and then with the back of your hand... that's it. Then you wash your feet... Three times.*

(Female, 78 years old, ethnic Turk, Ovidiu, April 2014)

The five daily prayers – “*Namaz*” – and the practices related to fasting and to important life events are all learned within the family, as well as under the guidance of the Imam, in courses organized for children at the mosque. Muslim women in Dobruja say that usually they only participate in the ‘big prayer’ at the mosque, on Fridays. But religious prescriptions are also very much present in the arrangements of family life. All ritual objects used for prayer can actually be found in the homes of Turks and Tatars, and children mainly learn religious morality from their mothers.

The strong commitment to Islamic values structures the family and determines the paths taken by the respondents’ lives, crucially intervening in key events at different stages of life. Thus, the Muslim ceremony of “*Sünnet*”<sup>18</sup>, the obligation of choosing a marriage partner from the same religious community, the revalidation of the respect for the elderly through kinship-strengthening visits that take place during the two main religious holidays of the year – “*Kurban Bayram*” and “*Ramazam Bayram*” –, religious ceremonies in which the ancestors are honoured, burial and mourning processions according to Muslim rites are all manifestations of the main Islamic precepts. Similarly, the social life guided by the pillars of Islam involves faith, piety, honesty and social solidarity, which are the basis of the system of rules and values in every Muslim family.

Naturally, the Imam, the educational activities organized by the mosques, the meetings of community members occasioned by religious feasts, religious studies and Arabic courses regularly organized at mosques refine the knowledge acquired within the family, securely reinforcing a sense of belonging to the same religious community, and give meaning to the events of adult life. But it is during childhood that Islamic values and firm attitudes are established, ensuring that they will govern the social and religious life of the individual throughout his or her entire life.

All the respondents mentioned as a salient attribute of their social identity the fact that they belong to the Islamic faith: “*We are Muslims*”. By providing examples and detailed descriptions of activities, they show a high level of knowledge

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<sup>18</sup> Some of the respondents use the Christian term of “baptism” referring to elements of the Sunnet ceremony, such as the circumcision of boys and receiving the Muslim name within the religious ceremony performed by the Imam. In many reports, interlocutors refer to Muslim rites or practices using the Christian correspondents or elements of the Romanian culture, wishing to make themselves understood by the Romanian interviewers. Similarly, in their discussions with Romanian people, they often use such phrases, explaining them in relation to the dominant culture, the Romanian culture. Major Muslim celebrations like Ramazan Bayram and Kurban Bayram (the feast of sacrifice) are sometimes called *our Christmas* and *our Easter*. Another example is Zakat - one of the five pillars of faith in the Islamic tradition, which involves providing food and sharing the wether by well-off people during the celebration taking place at the end of the holy month of Ramadan, and which is sometimes presented using the Christian-Orthodox term of *pomana* (memorial meal).

concerning religious prescriptions and an active social participation, in compliance with the rules and values of the Muslim community in Dobruja.

*First of all, in Islam there is no intermediary. If I want to know religion, I go and study it, I go deeper and deeper. If, I don't know, if it gets me, I discuss it with a leader of that organization or with an Imam of mine or, if necessary, with a Mufti. [...] But a simple Muslim must know the essentials, the basics of religion.*

*(Mufti, male, 36 years old, ethnic Tatar, Constanța, July 2013)*

*My Turkish grandmother taught me the prayers. I used to go to the mosque too, during the fasting period. I used to go there and keep the fast.*

*(Female, member of a family of mixed Turkish-Tatar ethnicity, 37 years old, Lumina, October 2013)*

### **3.1. Preservation of the Mother Tongue**

For the respondents, the use of the mother tongue – along with all the traditions, customs, religious feasts, symbols, the identification with ethnic heroes, customs and social values – is one of the central elements of ethnic identity. As such, it invests the individual with all of the characteristics deriving from his/her inclusion in their ethnic community.

In the case of the Turks and Tatars in Dobruja, their mother tongue is learned since early childhood, within the family. Once they enter the public education system where teaching takes place in Romanian, children use their mother tongue less frequently. Families understand that academic success and performance depend on how well they master Romanian language and literature, and in order to make learning easier, homework and school preparation are all conducted in Romanian. However, the mother tongue is still used, mainly within the extended kinship network, at community events, during religious feasts or on other occasions when the members of the ethnic community get together.

In many cases, our respondents reported that they also use their mother tongue for communicating within their social environment, with their neighbours, when they live in a Turkish neighbourhood or in one that is mainly inhabited by Turks and Tatars. Their mother tongue is also openly used in the public space, in work or institutional contexts, with members of the same ethnic community.

When asked about the degree to which Turkish-Tatar children and young people master their mother tongue, the majority of the respondents state that today, as compared to the communist period and the first decade after the fall of the communist regime, opportunities for learning their mother tongue outside the family have increased.

Our respondents have also noticed an improvement in the command of their literary language, in writing in their mother tongue and in the knowledge of elements of the Turkish culture – literature, religion, traditions and values –, through the more extensive learning of mother tongues in specialized cultural environments, in schools, in mosques, through access to the media<sup>19</sup> and by participating in international cultural and artistic events dedicated to Turks and Tatars.

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<sup>19</sup> Turkish radio shows, TV channels, magazines and publications.

Although at present the family is still the primary agent in the acquisition of the mother tongue, in the last decade the ethnic organizations of the Turkish-Tatar communities have been intensely concerned with facilitating children's access to Turkish and Tatar language courses. Teachers have been brought in to work within these organizations and language courses are organized in their branch offices in Dobruja.

The ethnic organizations' orientation towards activities and events aimed at children and young people, as well as their lobbying campaigns for the provision of language and culture courses in the state education system, have led to an increase in the participation of younger members of the community in such activities, where their mother tongue is predominantly spoken.

*We used to speak both Turkish and Romanian. (How did your parents speak at home?) We mixed them [the languages]. But we mainly speak Turkish.*

*(Female, 66 years old, ethnic Turk, Constanța, October 2013)*

*I didn't learn Tatar or Turkish in school. (At home, who used to mainly speak in Tatar?) My mother. We learned the basics from our grandparents. [...] We used to speak in Tatar when we met at weddings and baptisms.*

*(Librarian, female, ethnic Tatar, Ovidiu, September 2013)*

*There are Tatar language speakers and they speak it very well. I'm a speaker also. I used to hear the language in my family all the time and I can say I speak it quite well.*

*(Teacher at the Romanian-Turkish Kindergarten No. 58 in Constanța, ethnic Tatar, September 2013)*

*I learned Tatar from my father. He was a teacher and he was very..., he insisted on us learning Tatar and we used to speak in Tatar with the adults.*

*(Turkish language and Islamic religion teacher, 43 years old, ethnic Tatar, Ovidiu, September 2013)*

*For instance, when I was little, I didn't speak Romanian until I went to kindergarten, I didn't know any Romanian word. If you asked me something in Romanian, I didn't understand.*

*(Female, 37 years old, ethnic Turk, Lumina, October 2013)*

### **3.2. The Issue of Mixed Marriages in the Turkish and Tatar Communities in Dobruja and Gender Roles**

In the Turkish-Tatar community in Dobruja, the opinion on mixed marriages is somewhat reserved. Tendencies to maintain endogamy have been observed strictly, mainly due to the religious differences between the Turkish and Tatar Muslims and the other predominantly Christian ethnic communities populating the historic region of Dobruja (at present and during the communist regime, after World War II).

The increased frequency of mixed marriages in the last two decades is determined by the socio-economic dynamics of society, by the amplification of the labour migration phenomenon and by the demographic decline of the Turkish-Tatar community. The dynamics of social mobility, increasing labour migration and rural-urban migration during the communist regime and immediately afterwards, coupled

with the falling number of Turkish-Tatar people in the total population, are inevitable prerequisites for an increase in mixed marriages.

Despite this, the Muslim community in Dobruja is conservative in this respect. Of the two communities we have studied, the Tatar community is less open to mixed marriages, even within the same religious community, which includes Turks and Turkish-Roma. The analysis of the data in the social statistics provided by town halls<sup>20</sup> confirms the small number of mixed marriages.

The results of our research show that the social distance between the members of the Turkish-Tatar community and the members of the other ethnic groups is relatively small in Dobruja. On the social distance scale<sup>21</sup>, both Turks and Tatars place themselves as being in good relationships with each other, accepting each other as neighbours on the same street, as co-workers and close friends. But close association is excluded in almost all other cases: the 'others', those who are non-Muslim, are rarely accepted as partners for marriage or starting a family. If we look more closely at the Dobruja Muslim community, Tatars reject marriage outside their own ethnic group, often excluding the scenario of marrying even other Muslims in their social and geographical vicinity, i.e. Turks and Turkish-Roma. These results are also supported by other studies concerning the Muslim population in Dobruja: "religion is put before ethnicity itself, and most of the times the difference is made between Romanians and Muslims, not between Romanians and Turks or Tatars. The reasons lie with the specific practices, as it is natural for a community where both religions are well represented. For example, marriages and funerals are a serious issue for mixed families, which are very few, anyway." (Chirițoiu et al., 2009: 111) "For the Turkish and Tatar population, Turkish language and Islam have represented the key factors in preserving their ethno-professional and spiritual unity and identity, the support for a lifestyle and a specific rich culture, with strong manifestations and echoes until the present moment". (Gilă, 2011: 12)

Respondents perceive mixed marriages with members of the Christian communities as becoming problematic only after children are born, when the family must decide on *Sunnet* according to one religious tradition or the other. Later on in life, if one spouse does not convert to the other's religion, there is the issue of burying the couple according to different ceremonies, which requires burial in different cemeteries. A Christian spouse converting to Islam is considered to be an exceptional practice, and there are few reports on mixed families where successful conversions took place.

Imams and other members of the Turkish-Tatar community interviewed state that converting to Islam without an inner motivation and faith is void and thus it does

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<sup>20</sup> An analysis of the demographic indicators of marriage and cohabitation relationships, conducted with employees of the Welfare Department of Cobadin Town Hall in April 2014 and with the Register Office of Independența Town Hall in July 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Research instruments included an adaptation of the Bogardus cumulative scale which monitors the subjects' self-placement at a certain distance from members of specific social groups from within their social field. The Bogardus social distance scale is a cumulative measurement scale because the agreement with any item presupposes agreement with all previous items.

not last. Some of the respondents reported cases where spouses converted to Islam for the purpose of marriage, but, after divorce or their partner's death, they stopped participating in the life of the Muslim community and ceased to educate their children according to the Muslim tradition.

*Turkish and Tatar families support young people's participation in these "toplantîs". Why? Because 99% of those who participate in these "toplantîs" are ethnic Turks and Tatars and, in order to perpetuate their specific identity, Turkish and Tatar families want the young to marry within the same ethnic communities.*

*(General Secretary of the UDTR, Turkish language teacher, ethnic Turk, Constanța, September 2013)*

*But usually, in mixed marriages, there are men who come from our ethnic group and women from the other communities. It's very rare when women marry men of other ethnicities. And in almost all cases women convert to the Muslim religion. [...] And today, I don't think there are more than 10%.*

*(President of the UDTTMR, ethnic Tatar, Male, Constanța, July 2013)*

*When you bring me someone who is not of the same ethnicity, I'm already very hurt. I'll get over it, because I'm a parent, I am the mother of my children. But I don't want to imagine, God forbid! I don't judge, they may love each other, I can see this in someone else's case, but I don't want it to happen to me. [...] It's something that I can't overcome, I can't accept that. God forbid! I told you, they are my kids, it's not that I won't forgive them, but I think it would be very difficult. I pray to God, I say God bless them all. But everybody should stay with his/her religion, it's better like this!*

*(President of the UDTTMR branch in Cobadin, female, 44 years old, ethnic Tatar, Cobadin, March 2014)*

*The problem is when they have children, when children are born. Until children are born, they are very much in love and the young people get along. Yes, it's on the account of children that they start bickering. [...] Parents argue, and when the child grows up, he/she then chooses his/her religion. [...] It's after marriage that the thing with religion begins. When you're young, you don't think about religion that much.*

*(Female, 66 years old, ethnic Turk, Constanța, July 2013)*

*And about mixed marriages, I would like to point out that according to a survey related to such mixed marriages, the level of exogamy is higher in the Turkish community than in the Tatar community, where the level of endogamy is more prominent. Basically, 70% of the Turks marry Turks and Tatars, and the rest of 30% marry Romanians, while more than 90% of the Tatars marry Tatars. Why do I say Tatars or Turks? Because there used to be a problem related to the marriages between Turks and Tatars. Families did not quite agree with this. But now this is only a small issue, because both Turks and Tatars belong to, are of a Turkic origin and share the same religion, i.e. Islam.*

*(General Secretary of the UDTR, male, ethnic Turk, Turkish language teacher, Constanța, September 2013)*

*We don't quite agree because of religion. In life, everything is OK as it is, but when the end comes. Each of us goes in his or her direction, goes to another*

*cemetery. This is what complicates matters. As for the rest, eh, they are people just like us. They're good, trustworthy, they get along well. Only this, the final resting place, it complicates matters for us. Because they go to different places. They can't have a single grave. It's not allowed. But what can we do?*

*(Female, 78 years old, ethnic Tatar, Ovidiu, April 2014)*

*(How is mixed marriage with a non-Tatar seen?) Here? (In your family?) Here, in our town, no. It's not considered a good thing. (Is your sister also married to a Tatar?) Yes, yes! But I've seen that in other families, it's started to happen. (What would your parents say if you came up with a Christian or?) They wouldn't approve! (But what if you came up with a Muslim of another ethnicity?) Yes. Then, probably yes. (Would it be easier?) To be accepted, yes.*

*(Female, ethnic Tatar, 27 years old, Cobadin, July 2013)*

In mixed religion families, the order, the set of rules and values governing the relations between husband and wife and parents and children change in content. Our respondents who belong to mixed families claim that they closely observe the religious celebrations of both rites, but the prescriptions governing the relationships between family members are diluted and changed. For example, in a mixed family with an Orthodox-Christian husband, the Muslim mother's role involves different responsibilities. She enters an egalitarian relationship with her Orthodox-Christian husband regarding such matters as providing for the family, managing their household budget, and taking decisions related to children's education. Similarly, Muslim ritual practices related to the food and hygiene of household members are affected within the couple relationship.

The Romanian Christian-Orthodox husband, who may have more progressive views, may consider certain practices to be submissive and related to their different religious traditions: for example, a Tatar or Turkish wife's belief in her sole responsibility to carry out household chores (cleaning the house, cooking, etc.), and in the acceptance of the dominant position of the husband and eldest son in relation to the wife-mother and their daughters. In contrast, a Muslim wife married to a Christian husband may find herself cooking pork for him and allowing him to help her by getting involved in household chores, while accepting the independence, responsibility and equal treatment of her daughters.

*It's hard for everybody, but they learn. You have to adjust to the family where you're going. At home, you have different ways, and they have different ways, and so on. [...] When the bride went to live with her parents-in-law, she used to take over all the chores of the mother-in-law, the cooking and washing. That's what it was like! That's how it was! She had to be a "selemet" (in Turkish – housewife). Girls were sought depending on this. I even told my mother that "my mother-in-law did this and that". And my mother said: "That's it! This is what to be married to a man means. You went away, you won't come back to me!" If you didn't like it, you couldn't come back home. No!*

*(Female, 55 years old, ethnic Turk, Cobadin, March 2014)*

Thus, gender and family roles have changed not only in the mixed families, but also in the religiously and ethnically homogenous Muslim families in Dobruja. The results of the present study show that, for instance, women's employability, and

in general the social integration of Turkish and Tatar women in Romania, have resulted in greater sharing of money management between spouses, with the woman's role crossing the limits of her social isolation and moving beyond the circle of kinship relationships, into higher levels of socio-economic skills for women and children. All these changes are considered to be modern as compared to the life style of women in other countries with Muslim communities known to our interlocutors (e.g. Turkey, Bulgaria). However, despite these changes, the social integration of Muslim women in Romania has taken place without changing the traditional role of women, i.e. the role of preserving and passing on the mother tongue, values and tradition within the family.

### 3.3. Identity Symbols in the Living Space

The Turkish and Tatar houses in Dobruja are no different from those of other peoples in terms of architecture, street layout, front alignment, outward appearance of the buildings or household components, household annexes, fences and gates. Dobruja villages mainly have traditional houses typical for this geographical area, rather small, low-built, and made of traditional materials (clay bricks, tin or burnt tile roofs, wood joinery, wood gates and fences, etc.). Generally, the houses are well-kept and many of them have been upgraded with new materials (brick, AAC, cement, modern plaster, PVC joinery, wrought iron gates and fences, etc.). Some household annexes have lost their utility, changed and now only have a decorative role (e.g. the wood oven in the yard). House yards are well cared for, clean, decorated with flower patches and ornamental plants.

However, the interior of Turkish and Tatar houses is different from that of the houses belonging to other ethnic groups in Dobruja. Their ethnic and religious identity symbols can be noticed in each and every room. The observer can identify the interior of a Turkish and Tatar house he/she sees by some of the following household items: the small wooden round table, “*minders*”<sup>22</sup> on the floor, hand-woven rugs, towels, the evil eye, the teapot and tea cups the macramé and embroidery decorating the furniture. The interior of Turkish and Tatar houses also includes religious items, such as: rugs with religious images, golden and framed quotations from the Quran decorating the interior walls of the rooms, prayer beads, the kettle etc.

Older women are the ones who know how to make textile clothing and decorative items for the interior of the house. Their job is to keep the household clean, to cook traditional dishes and practice religious rituals inside the house. The mother keeps the house in order and teaches her daughters, and then her daughters-in-law, to respect the father and eldest son of the house, and shares customs, culinary secrets, and traditions related to life events.

*(What about the architecture of the houses?) It's old, yes it's all old. It's the same as it used to be. (How did a house use to be?) It was made of clay, with no cement. (And the roof?) Clay tiles. They used to have wooden gates, not what they have now, wrought iron gates [...] So, old houses used to be small. When you get in a Tatar or a Turkish house, you find the “minder”. The minder is a kind of blanket, a*

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<sup>22</sup> Minder (Turkish) - mattress, pillow stuffed with straw or padded



*pillow, but it's used for sitting down. This is how you realize you're in a Turkish or Tatar house. And if you see a round table in the middle, placed beside that pillow, you realize again that you've entered a Tatar or Turkish house. And mats, the old coloured handmade ones; this is how you can recognize them. [...] In any Turkish, Tatar, i.e. Muslim home, there's the Arabic writing, in a painting, or that blue evil eye. You can see that in many houses. (Please tell me this story, of the evil eye.) It's not a religious thing. That eye means that it keeps you away from the evil eye. From the bad eyes. (And what is this evil eye?) The evil eye is, how to put it, it's something very complex. The evil eye is well-omened, but also ill-omened. (What does this symbol mean?) Well, I think it's more for amusement. It's something beautiful. We wear it as an ornament, rather than believe in it. (Rather than as protection?) According to our religion, we believe that only Allah can protect us and that's all. To be honest, we wear the eye more as an ornament.*

*(Turkish language and Islamic religion teacher, female, 30 years old, mixed Turkish-Tatar ethnicity, Cobadin, July 2013)*

*It's those paintings, with prayers and some sort of... not towels...some sort of rugs. [...] We have that round table at which we used to sit, with no chairs, we just sat down on the floor. We used it to serve dinner; I don't know if there were any plates, each of us was eating from the same dish.*

*(Student, female, ethnic Tatar, 27 years old, Cobadin, July 2013)*

#### **4. The Dynamics of Ethnic and Religious Identity of Muslim Families in the Christian-Orthodox Society and in the Secular Romanian State**

Family, as a primary socialisation agent, represents for the community the first social environment in which a young child learns status role prescriptions, the main cultural values, the language, and the perspective upon the world and upon life. Within the dominant culture, part of this social learning is taken care of by the basic socialization institutions outside the family, such as the kindergarten, the school, the neighbourhood, the acquaintance and friend network, or children's clubs. In the ethnic communities that are different from the dominant one, the set of cultural values and rules, the language and other ethnic identity elements are inculcated almost exclusively by the family. In the case of the Turkish and Tatar communities in Romania, which do not represent a numerically significant minority population within the country population as a whole (each being under 0.15% of the Romanian population), and which show substantial differences compared to other ethnic groups living alongside the Romanian majority, the institutional frameworks for passing on the cultural heritage and ethnic identity are even fewer. The fact that they belong to Islam, the tendency to preserve the traditional family model and the endogamic marital behaviour are the main elements that distinguish the Turkish and Tatar population from the Romanian-Orthodox culture, but also from other ethnic groups they coexist with. Primarily, “here [in Dobruja] religion is the cultural component of ethnicity that functions as a community bond and creates the specific difference from the majority population of the country” (Chirîtoiu et al., 2009: 110)

| ETHNICITY                 | Resident population<br>Total | Orthodox   | Roman Catholic | Reformed Catholic | Pentecostal | Greek Catholic | Baptist  | Muslim       |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|----------------|----------|--------------|
| ROMANIA                   | 20121641                     | 16307004   | 870774         | 600932            | 362314      | 150593         | 112850   | 64337        |
| Romanians                 | 16792868                     | 15730426   | 297246         | 19802             | 276678      | 124563         | 90412    | 6281         |
| Hungarians                | 1227623                      | 26009      | 500444         | 563611            | 6430        | 16144          | 12408    | 86           |
| Roma                      | 621573                       | 474603     | 20821          | 16487             | 71262       | 6511           | 8815     | 3356         |
| Ukrainians                | 50920                        | 39146      | 245            | 41                | 6403        | 1204           | 229      | 10           |
| Germans                   | 36042                        | 2855       | 21324          | 520               | 369         | 858            | 219      | 25           |
| <b>Turks</b>              | <b>27698</b>                 | <b>505</b> | <b>10</b>      | -                 | <b>4</b>    | <b>3</b>       | <b>7</b> | <b>26903</b> |
| Lipovan Russians          | 23487                        | 5840       | 41             | 4                 | 30          | 10             | 24       | 21           |
| <b>Tatars</b>             | <b>20282</b>                 | <b>162</b> | <b>3</b>       | -                 | -           | -              | -        | <b>20060</b> |
| Serbians                  | 18076                        | 6007       | 219            | 10                | 130         | 32             | 200      | 24           |
| Slovaks                   | 13654                        | 583        | 9250           | 51                | 565         | 396            | 36       | -            |
| Bulgarians                | 7336                         | 2079       | 4840           | 7                 | 25          | 86             | 10       | 6            |
| Croatians                 | 5408                         | 64         | 5283           | -                 | 8           | 34             | -        | -            |
| Greeks                    | 3668                         | 3440       | 34             | 7                 | 8           | 51             | 10       | 10           |
| Italians                  | 3203                         | 274        | 2451           | 12                | 11          | 200            | -        | -            |
| Jews                      | 3271                         | 232        | 35             | 18                | 25          | 6              | 9        | 58           |
| Czechs                    | 2477                         | 96         | 2103           | 87                | 8           | 39             | 93       | -            |
| Polish                    | 2543                         | 139        | 2315           | 4                 | 6           | 30             | 5        | -            |
| Chinese                   | 2017                         | 105        | 12             | -                 | -           | -              | 14       | 10           |
| Armenians                 | 1361                         | 974        | 60             | 7                 | 8           | 3              | -        | -            |
| Csangos                   | 1536                         | 216        | 1054           | 4                 | 18          | 12             | 11       | 141          |
| Macedonians               | 1264                         | 1221       | 7              | -                 | -           | -              | -        | 16           |
| Other ethnicity           | 18524                        | 4669       | 2367           | 91                | 189         | 292            | 288      | 6906         |
| Information not available | 1236810                      | 7359       | 610            | 166               | 137         | 115            | 53       | 417          |

Figure 1. Resident population by ethnicity and religion – distribution by the first 7 confessions, in order of volume.

According to the Census of the Romanian Population conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in 2011, the population distribution by ethnicity and religion shows a very high degree of fidelity of Turkish and Tatar ethnic groups to the Islamic religion: 97.12% of the Turks and 98.9% of the Tatars declare themselves to be Muslims. Among the other ethnic groups, the Croats and Macedonians keep the same level of relating to a single confession, i.e. the Roman Catholic confession for 97.68% of the Croats and the Orthodox confession for 96.44% of the Macedonians; however the total volume of these ethnic groups is much lower than the ethnic group of Turks and Tatars.

We also notice a significant percentage of Muslims among Romanians – 0.037% (i.e. 9.76% of the total Muslims), Roma – 0.539% (i.e. 5.21% of the total Muslims) and other ethnicities – 10.73% (i.e. 37.38% of the total Muslims), in addition to 97.12% of the Turks and 98.9% of the Tatars (representing together 72.98% of the total number of Muslims in Romania). As there is no data available for identifying their area of residence, the spouse's ethnicity and religion, and region of residence for these individuals, we can only assume that Romanians who declare

themselves to be Muslims have converted as a result of mixed marriages to Muslims. Muslims belonging to other ethnic groups have probably immigrated to Romania from the Arab states, as this Muslim population is different from the one pertaining to the ethnic groups registered as Turks, Tatars, Roma, etc. Also, Muslim Roma and Csangos may be part of the group called by the respondents in our study “Roma-Turks”, who speak Turkish and are Muslims.

It is interesting to see that the socio-demographic data recorded in the official statistics fully confirm the results of our research, namely the primacy of religious self-identification among all identity attributes mentioned by our interlocutors for defining the ethnicity of Turks and Tatars.

During the communist regime, state intervention through systematizations, urbanization, industrial development, the collectivization of agriculture and the abolition of private property determined a decrease in the rural population, which had prevailed until then, as well as labour migration in sparsely populated areas (such as Dobruja), alongside the mixing of populations in order to avoid homogeneous communities and groups, which were potentially problematic for the Party. The nationalist discourse prevailed in educational and cultural institutions, and, during Ceaușescu's regime (1962-1989), mother tongue education was abolished in Dobruja, the written culture in periodicals or printed press in Turkish and Tatar disappeared, and minority rights to civic and political representation and to the preservation of their own cultural identity and traditions were virtually excluded from the socio-cultural life. Through its actions (paying only one third of the Imam's salary and closing the Muslim seminary in Medgidia), the communist regime aimed at “depriving Muslims of their priests, in the future. During the communist regime there was no manifest hostility towards the Islamic religion, but the actions taken were meant to lower its role in the spiritual life of the Muslim population” (Gîlă, 2011: 15).

Throughout the communist period, Turkish and Tatar minorities in Dobruja transmitted their cultural heritage between generations almost exclusively by oral means, within the family. “Not used in schools, government, justice, the mother tongue was virtually limited to the closed framework of the family or Islamic celebrations.” (Gîlă, 2011: 20)

After the fall of communism, the reassertion process of Turkish and Tatar minority rights was initiated by the European Union directives, by the establishment of politically and culturally representative organizations in Dobruja in the 1990s<sup>23</sup>, by the development of international relations between Romania and Turkey (based mainly on economic and religious connections), by the reopening of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia and by the introduction of Turkish language and Islamic religion as optional subjects in public middle schools. These institutional changes that have occurred over the past 25 years multiply the possibilities of preserving the two minorities' cultural heritage and provide opportunities for learning literary Turkish outside the family.

Also, ethnic and religious organizations have a significant impact in this

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<sup>23</sup> The current UDTR (The Turkish Democratic Union of Romania), UDTTMR (The Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania), TIAD (The Association of Turkish Businessmen), The Yunus Emr Turkish Cultural Centre, Constanța etc.

direction. The Tuna Foundation was created in 1995 by an association of Turkish and Romanian businessmen in order to provide welfare services to underprivileged people irrespective of their religious or national background in Medgidia, Constanța and Bucharest. The Taiba Foundation is financed by Muslims from Arab countries and offers financial and social assistance to members of the Muslim community. It also sponsors pilgrims who wish to make the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Finally, the deputy of the UDTTMR organizes political and educational activities for young people in mosques and in its Cultural Centre and it has also created a women's organization (Zagura, 2012: 259).

The analysis of the identity characteristics of Turks and Tatars shows that the main elements which differentiate them and which set the group boundaries between these two communities and other ethnic groups in Dobruja are the fact that they belong to the Islamic religion and their mother tongue. The cultural heritage involved in performing religious rituals in the home, gender role prescriptions, traditions and customs connected to the major Muslim celebrations, and the mother tongue are learned by Turkish and Tatar community members during their childhood and adolescence under the guidance of their mother and grandmother, within the extended family network.

Starting with the 1990s, children can also learn literary Turkish in Turkish language courses organized in schools at the parents' request and taught by specialized teachers. The Turkish community has many institutional opportunities for the preservation and transmission of its cultural heritage and of the Turkish language. The creation of the institutional framework for the organization of Turkish language courses in middle schools, the reopening of the Muslim Seminary in Medgidia (1990), the establishment of a Romanian-Turkish kindergarten in Constanța, the written press, radio and TV shows in Turkish (Radio T, Litoral TV, the Genc Nesil newspaper between 1999 and 2006, Haksess magazine starting with 1996)<sup>24</sup>, and the organization of Turkish courses in the branches of the UDTR all represent valid opportunities to learn the Turkish language. "Resuming the tradition of education in Turkish, especially in primary and secondary education, after the 1989 events, was facilitated, from the point of view of legislation, firstly by the 1991 Constitution, but also by the Education Law No. 84, passed in 1995. Turkish children who study in schools with instruction in the Romanian language may, upon request and in compliance with the law, study Turkish language and literature, as well as the history and traditions of their minority (Art. 121)" (Gîlă, 2011: 20).

However, within the family, the ethnic Turkish or Tatar woman still holds the main role in passing on these elements of the Muslim culture and in instilling the elements of ethnic identity in children. All the young people and the adults interviewed note the mother's role in shaping their own identity and emphasize the importance of this internalized model in all the important decisions they take in their adult life. The impact of learning the Islamic values, the system of rules regulating their relation with the family and community, learning the practices and customs

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<sup>24</sup> according to the information on the UDTR website:  
<http://haksess.turc.ro/index.php#gsc.tab=0>, accessed on 11.11.2014

concerning hygiene, nutrition and conduct, strongly manifest themselves during adult life in the endogamic behaviour, in choosing a life partner from the same ethnic group, and in practicing the same gender roles within the family they build. Thus, for the Turkish and Tatar communities in Dobruja, the cultural model arising from the ethnic and, especially, religious belonging is faithfully reproduced from one generation to another mainly through the mother, despite the changes in the socio-political context of society.

## **5. The school**

### **5.1. The Study of Islam**

Schools of the Muslim community have a long tradition in the historical Romanian Region of Dobruja. Famous over the centuries, the Islamic Seminary of Babadag, Tulcea County, was *"established in 1610 by General Gazi Ali Paşa, commander of the army corps, who donated his estate in Zebil village, of 10,000 ha, for its upkeep. [...] In 1901, at the request of the doctor Ibrahim Themo, the old Muslim seminary in Babadag was moved to Medgidia. The program also inspired by Themo ensured the training of imams (priests) and Turkish language teachers."* (Gîlă, 2011: 17) The seminary in Medgidia was closed during Ceauşescu's communist regime, in 1967.

Since the early 1960s, for a quarter of a century, all primary and secondary schools, as well as other educational institutions which organized Turkish or Tatar language, literature and culture courses or other courses taught in Turkish and Tatar, reduced their activity. In 1994 the Theological Seminary of Medgidia was reopened under the name of Kemal Atatürk National College, under the auspices of an interstate protocol signed by the Presidents of Romania and Turkey. *"This is a protocol signed at presidency level in 1994, i.e. by the then president of Romania, Mr. Ion Iliescu and by the then president of Turkey, Süleyman Demirel. In fact, this protocol formed the basis for the opening of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia. "*

*(Mufti, male, 36 years old, ethnic Tatar, Constanţa, July 2013)*

After the fall of communism in Romania, the recognition of minority rights and the emergence of actors who represented the ethnic communities in civil society and in the field of politics have contributed to a recovery of the ethnic identity of the two groups in question. Thus, in the two decades of Romanian democracy, the legal framework for studying the mother tongue was created, and courses were set up in public schools and other educational organizations, under the auspices of ethnic or religious organizations.

Currently, the Department for Minorities of the Ministry of National Education has, among other things, the responsibility to ensure:

- The enforcement of specific legislation on the rights of national minorities to receive instruction and study in the mother tongue, according to the principles of the Romanian Constitution, of the Law of National Education - LEN no. 1/2011 and of the international documents Romania has adhered to;
- The development of strategies and policies supporting education for minorities;
- The enforcement of laws regarding the teaching of the mother tongue, of the history

and traditions of the indigenous minorities of Romania;

- The dissemination of information about minority education;
- Compliance with the provisions of bilateral cooperation documents on the protection of minority rights;
- The enforcement of the legislation on equal access to education for all children and young people;
- The framework for approving the means of education necessary for the good functioning of the training and education process in schools.<sup>25</sup>

In compliance with the law, the public school system currently employs 70-80 teachers who teach *Turkish Language* and *Islamic Religion* courses in primary and middle schools and the *History and Traditions of the Turkish Minority* in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades of middle school in about 50 schools in Constanța and Tulcea counties, where most of the ethnic Turkish and Tatar residents in Romania live. These subjects belong to the set of optional subjects and are held at the parents' request, in the schools where there are a minimum number of students who apply for them. Students who attend these courses have a weekly schedule which includes an additional 3-4 hours for the study of these subjects. In general, these courses are organized together in the same school and are taught by the same teacher, who specializes in the Turkish language and Islamic theological pedagogy.

Together, the Turkish and Tatar communities in Dobruja form the majority of Muslims in Romania. These two ethnic groups have a history of migration, define themselves as religious, are attached to the Sunni Islamic religious values and practices and show a high degree of ethnic and religious cohesion. For those who belong to a minority ethnic group, religion classes taught in school have a key role in preserving cultural continuity and social cohesion, and in rebuilding the ethnic and religious identities which, for several decades, until 1990, were passed on exclusively orally and within the kinship network.

In general, integration in small ethnic communities is associated with a high degree of religiosity, both in the case of the older generations and in that of children. "As applied to religion, the social capital approach posits that social networks externally regulate religious expression in accordance with group norms. From a social identity approach, group norms shape individual attitudes and behaviours through the identification of the self with the group." (Maliepaard, Phalet, 2012: 134)

Thus, for the Muslim community in Romania, the creation of an institutional legal framework and the professionalization of teachers who teach Islamic religion in public schools, as well as the organization and development of courses on Islamic religion by mosques and religious and ethnic non-governmental organizations, are important gains for the preservation of ethnic identity and for the transmission of traditions and Islamic precepts between generations in an institutional framework, alongside that of the family.

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<sup>25</sup> According to the information on the official website of the Ministry, available at: <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/11900>

## 5.2. The Study of the Mother Tongue

Sociodemographic data recorded for the Romanian population show that the members of the two ethnic communities analyzed in our study have a strong attachment to their mother tongue. The Turks, Tatars, Turkish Roma and members of mixed families state that their mother tongue is either Turkish or Tatar.

| ETHNICITY          | Resident Population | Romanian        | Hungarian      | Roma          | Ukrainian    | German       | Turkish      | Russian      | Tatar        | Serbian      | Slovak       |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Romania</b>     | <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>17176544</b> | <b>1259914</b> | <b>245677</b> | <b>48910</b> | <b>26557</b> | <b>25302</b> | <b>18946</b> | <b>17677</b> | <b>16805</b> | <b>12802</b> |
| Romanians          | 16792868            | 16771897        | 14128          | 897           | 1504         | 1389         | 185          | 402          | 66           | 343          | 176          |
| Hungarians         | 1227623             | 20706           | 1206264        | 207           | 12           | 248          | -            | 9            | -            | 15           | 32           |
| Roma               | 621573              | 342674          | 32777          | 244503        | -            | 10           | 1127         | 6            | 86           | 59           | -            |
| Ukrainians         | 50920               | 3307            | 24             | -             | 47357        | 4            | -            | 196          | -            | 4            | -            |
| Germans            | 36042               | 6075            | 5279           | 9             | 9            | 24549        | 5            | -            | -            | 17           | 3            |
| <b>Turks</b>       | <b>27698</b>        | <b>3919</b>     | <b>3</b>       | <b>15</b>     | -            | -            | <b>23710</b> | <b>6</b>     | <b>26</b>    | -            | -            |
| Lipovan - Russians | 23487               | 5340            | 9              | 3             | 7            | -            | -            | 18121        | -            | -            | -            |
| <b>Tatars</b>      | <b>20282</b>        | <b>2564</b>     | -              | -             | -            | -            | <b>215</b>   | <b>5</b>     | <b>17495</b> | -            | -            |
| Serbians           | 18076               | 1666            | 46             | -             | -            | 16           | -            | -            | -            | 16329        | -            |
| Slovaks            | 13654               | 944             | 109            | -             | -            | 16           | -            | -            | -            | -            | 12574        |

Table 2. Resident population by ethnicity and religion. This table only includes ethnic groups with over 10,000 inhabitants. Source: The 2011 Population and Housing Census in Romania.

With regard to the school as an agent in the recognition, preservation, and the systematic and structured transmission of the contents belonging to the ethnic cultural heritage – literature, arts, culture, traditions and mother tongue –, at present, the Romanian educational system only provides this set of benefits to the Turkish ethnic group, but not to the Tatar minority.

*"In almost all schools in Constanța county and a few schools in Tulcea county where there are ethnic Turks or Tatars. In addition, they have one class of Islamic religion in Turkish, and in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades they can also choose to study the history and traditions of the Turkish and Tatar minorities, also in Turkish. At university level, there are groups of Turkish language and literature at the Ovidius University in Constanța, at Bucharest University, at the University of South-East Europe in Bucharest and at the Institute of Turkish Studies within the Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. [...] Recently, last year, two "Yunus Emre" cultural centres were established in Bucharest and Constanța, under the auspices of the Embassy of Turkey in Bucharest, as a result of a bilateral agreement between Romania and Turkey. Here, Turkish is studied at various levels, from students to adults, from beginners to advanced. These cultural centres also organize courses of Ottoman calligraphy, Turkish culture and civilization, Turkish musicology etc. The teachers who teach here come from the Republic of Turkey, but also from Romania, and many of them are associate professors or professors. (Is the Tatar language also taught in school, or is it cultivated only by alternative methods: publications, literature, radio, folk songs?) In Dobruja, literary Turkish is taught to both Turks and Tatars. The Tatar language is taught at UDTTMR branches in Romania: that is where those who wish to learn or to improve their language can do so. Then, there*

are all the other forms of literary and artistic manifestation. Both the UDTR and the UDTTMR promote Turkish and Tatar respectively, through various related activities: publishing books in these languages, various almost weekly activities that promote the community's personalities, or through the activity of artistic ensembles, almost one for every branch, all meant to preserve their specific ethnic and cultural identity and mother tongue. As a last detail, Radio T broadcasts daily on 104.4 MHz between 5 AM and 2 PM, as well as 24/24 on the Internet; it addresses ethnic Turks, but also Tatars and Romanians: in fact, all those who wish to get to know each other."

(Ervin Ibraim<sup>26</sup>, Turkish language teacher, General Secretary of the UDTR)

(Have there been no Tatar schools?) — The Tatar language was taught between 1953 and 1957. Tatar was taught for a few years at the time. And of course in the period before 1947. There haven't been any for 50, 60 years. That's why I'm saying! 60 years are 60 generations. We haven't had a school in 60 years! Now we managed to open one, with our money, with community money.

(President of the UDTTMR, male, ethnic Tatar, Constanța, July 2013)

(Did you attend school in the Tatar language?) - Yes. In the forties. Then we had the Tatar school. We had classes both in Romanian and in Tatar. (Here, in Ovidiu?) - Yes. (And when was the school closed?) - When the Russians came. In forty-five. And then there was no more school...

(Female, 78 years old, ethnic Tatar, Ovidiu, April 2014)

The Romanian educational system has not succeeded in providing the conditions for setting up classes in *Tatar language* and *The History and Traditions of the Tatar Minority*, has not established training programs for teachers in the field, has not organized optional, elective or alternative *Tatar language* classes, and has not met the need for the representation and consolidation of the Tatar's ethnic identity.

In the case of the Tatars, the study of the Tatar language and the transmission of elements of Tatar history, literature, art and folklore take place by means of courses and cultural events outside the public education system, without the contribution of the Department for Minorities of the respective Ministry. For example, at the initiative of the Tatar community, ethnic Tatar teachers in mainstream schools were co-opted and, for the past 5 years, they have offered elective courses in intercultural education which include elements of spoken and written Tatar. These courses are especially intended for Tatar students, but participation is open to all students, regardless of ethnicity.

- As far as I know, the Tatar Union wants [Tatar language classes in public schools]. I understand they will, they are taking steps in this direction. At present, it is only studied as an elective class in primary schools. (That is, in the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> primary grades?) — 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>. We have one teacher in each school who gathers ethnic Tatar children and teaches an elective class of Tatar customs and traditions. (So not a language class?) — No, not of language proper, because we don't have Tatar language specialists yet. (But they speak the language at this elective class...?) — I visited my colleagues who study it, who work with children in the classroom and I

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<sup>26</sup> This is an excerpt from a press interview given in February 2011 to the Association for Cultural Resources. The interview is available at:

<http://www.resurseculturale.ro/site/?q=node/16>, accessed on 10 November 2014



*saw it: they speak in Tatar throughout the entire class and everything is explained in Tatar. (How many teachers are there?) — We currently have about five schools in the system where they've studied it, from what I heard. I went to three schools: to the High School in Kogălniceanu, to Lumina and to Techirghiol. In community schools they were held everywhere, as far as I know, i.e. every locality had a community school where the Tatar language was studied.*

*(School inspector for the Turkish, Tatar and Roma minorities; female, ethnic Tatar, 37 years old, Constanța County School Inspectorate, September 2013)*

In an institutional framework, Tatar language courses or Tatar dance and song classes are organized almost exclusively by the non-governmental organizations of the Tatar community and by mosques. The UDTTMR organizes Tatar language courses for Tatar students and dance and song groups for Tatar children and young people, for 2-3 hours per week each, in the community schools of all local Union branches.

The older members of the Tatar community learned Tatar in school until the 1950s, but the active generations, as well as the younger ones, have learned the Tatar language and traditions and have assimilated their ethnic identity within the family exclusively. The latter use the mother tongue only within the family and believe that they have poor language skills, with less extensive language resources than the elderly. Many respondents believe that the disadvantage represented by the absence of Tatar language and Tatar culture and traditions classes in mainstream education is somewhat compensated by the fact that Tatar children have access to Turkish language courses. However, the fact that most Tatar children are enrolled in *Turkish language* and *History and traditions of the Turkish minority* classes is seen by most respondents as a form of dilution of their ethnic identity and of assimilating Tatars into the Turkish community of Romania.

Turkish language courses were introduced in kindergartens, schools and universities, and organized within the framework put in place by associations and non-governmental organizations,<sup>27</sup> with substantial support from Turkey. The Turkish state, through its educational institutions and cultural and religious organizations, provides financial support, textbooks, Turkish language books, offers free educational and specialization programs in Islamic theology for young Muslims in Romania, etc. Turkish and Tatar families and young people are attracted by these benefits, by the opportunity to become more familiar with the Turkic cultural heritage and to consolidate their Islamic religious identity.

### **5.3. Education as an Attribute of Ethnic Identity and as a Resource for Social Inclusion**

The support provided by religious and educational-cultural organizations for the education of Turkish children is mainly intended for disadvantaged families, where children's access to education is poor and where there is a risk of dropping out of school. Interviews conducted with members of the Turkish and Tatar communities

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<sup>27</sup> The UDTR, cultural institutes, hostels called *Yurts* for young Muslims from disadvantaged families, TAID, organizations attached to the Muftiate etc.

have revealed that the spirit of mutual help, Islamic prescriptions and regular interaction practices within the network of inter-community relationships are directed, to a great extent, at ensuring a decent life to needy families. Practices deriving from Islamic precepts, such as sharing the wether, charity events organized by young people within toplantis, the obligation of close relatives to provide for a widow and her children, the obligation to care for elderly family members, the youngest son's duty to remain at home and support his elderly parents etc., are eloquent examples. Muslim organizations that sponsor the school hostels called *Yurts* select Turkish and Tatar children who come from large families with low living standards and provide them with free accommodation, transport, religion classes and after-school help with homework throughout the school year. Some of the respondents give examples of such children who spent their entire time at middle school staying in these Yurts.

One of the structural issues faced by the Turkish community in Romania is the low level of education as compared to the national average. Statistics show a restricted stock of education in Turkish families. Also, at the level of Constanța County, we could identify social intervention projects<sup>28</sup> addressing the issues of access to education, school failure and dropout risk for Roma and Turkish children.

|                      | Resident Population of 10 years and over | SCHOOL LEVEL GRADUATED       |   |                |   |                          |                           |                     |                                      |
|----------------------|--|------------------------------|---|----------------|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                      |  | Higher education -university | Post-secondary education and foremen's vocational education | High school    | Vocational education and apprenticeship schools | Middle school (8 grades) | Primary school (4 grades) | No school graduated |                                      |
|                      |  |                              |   |                |   |                          |                           | Total               | Out of which: Illiterate individuals |
| <b>Romania Total</b> | <b>18022221</b>                          | <b>2591021</b>               | <b>574043</b>   | <b>4390759</b> | <b>2500655</b>                                  | <b>4868213</b>           | <b>2556286</b>            | <b>541244</b>       | <b>245387</b>                        |
| Ethnicity            |  |                              |   |                |   |                          |                           |                     |                                      |
| Romanians            | 15222069                                 | 2254966                      | 503958  | 3766290        | 2172362   | 4043714                  | 2101700                   | 379079              | 153221                               |
| Hungarians           | 1119988                                  | 114470                       | 37354   | 302373         | 178067  | 341661                   | 122939                    | 23124               | 9020                                 |
| Roma                 | 477715                                   | 3397                         | 994   | 23259          | 19858   | 170465                   | 163231                    | 96511               | 67480                                |
| Ukrainians           | 45256                                    | 2364                         | 573   | 6134           | 4675  | 21916                    | 7549                      | 2045                | 927                                  |
| Germans              | 34162                                    | 6334                         | 1554  | 8330           | 4594  | 9730                     | 3170                      | 450                 | 153                                  |
| <b>Turks</b>         | <b>23255</b>                             | <b>2141</b>                  | <b>222</b>  | <b>4478</b>    | <b>1332</b>                                     | <b>6765</b>              | <b>4828</b>               | <b>3489</b>         | <b>2585</b>                          |
| Lipovan-Russians     | 21969                                    | 2153                         | 389   | 3822           | 3117  | 8018                     | 3686                      | 784                 | 492                                  |
| <b>Tatars</b>        | <b>18922</b>                             | <b>3188</b>                  | <b>579</b>  | <b>5509</b>    | <b>2127</b>                                     | <b>4692</b>              | <b>2352</b>               | <b>475</b>          | <b>224</b>                           |
| Serbs                | 17181                                    | 2716                         | 445   | 4329           | 2005  | 5198                     | 2194                      | 294                 | 140                                  |
| Slovaks              | 12748                                    | 982                          | 218   | 2670           | 1514  | 4712                     | 2347                      | 305                 | 139                                  |
| Bulgarians           | 6851                                     | 1066                         | 228   | 1706           | 814   | 1679                     | 1170                      | 188                 | 86                                   |

<sup>28</sup> For example, the SOPHR/23/2.2/G/40709 project entitled "A necessary support for Roma and Turkish students in Constanța County" implemented in schools in south-eastern Romania - Medgidia, Buhuși, Bucharest (Ferentari and Buzești neighbourhoods), Pitești, Bacău – during the school year 2010-2011, by the Research Institute for the Quality of Life

|                 |        |        |       |        |        |        |        |       |       |
|-----------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|
| Croatians       | 4982   | 267    | 58    | 645    | 513    | 2436   | 968    | 95    | 41    |
| Greeks          | 3493   | 1071   | 158   | 1041   | 334    | 504    | 332    | 53    | 30    |
| Italians        | 2916   | 873    | 111   | 1126   | 195    | 419    | 170    | 22    | 5     |
| Jews            | 3173   | 1685   | 162   | 797    | 119    | 277    | 112    | 21    | 9     |
| Czechs          | 2365   | 180    | 53    | 400    | 267    | 912    | 524    | 29    | 11    |
| Polish          | 2312   | 296    | 61    | 414    | 243    | 893    | 363    | 42    | 5     |
| Chinese         | 1924   | 316    | 17    | 1131   | 28     | 335    | 92     | 5     | -     |
| Armenians       | 1294   | 579    | 69    | 375    | 54     | 128    | 72     | 17    | 7     |
| Csangos         | 1405   | 194    | 20    | 228    | 265    | 378    | 267    | 53    | 31    |
| Macedonians     | 1203   | 276    | 45    | 368    | 96     | 262    | 128    | 28    | 13    |
| Other ethnicity | 16978  | 6234   | 264   | 7185   | 414    | 1917   | 806    | 158   | 44    |
| N/A             | 980060 | 185273 | 26511 | 248149 | 107662 | 241202 | 137286 | 33977 | 10722 |

Table 2. Resident population aged 10 years and over by ethnicity and level of education. Source: The 2011 Population and Housing Census in Romania.

The data recorded by the 2011 Population and Housing Census in Romania shows that the educational level of the ethnic Turkish population is well below the national average for higher education graduates (the national average is of 14.3%, and the average of the ethnic Turkish population is of 9.2%), and for secondary education (the national average is of 24.3% and the average of the ethnic Turkish population is of 19.2%). At the same time, the ethnic Turkish population presents an alarmingly large number of uneducated people (the national average is of 3% and the average within the Turkish population is of 15%).

On the other hand, the data is also eloquent as an illustration of the value placed on education among ethnic Tatars. Therefore, the average of all Tatars graduating from a higher education institution exceeds the national average (the national average is of 14.3%, while in the case of Tatars it is of 16.8%), and the same trend is maintained in the case of high school graduates (24.3% is the national average, while 29.11% of Tatars have graduated from high school). As for the frequency of uneducated people, Tatars record an average (2.5%) which is close to the national average (3%).

*"Seit Ozgur, born in Cobadin in 1965, in a family where the mother is Tatar and the father is Turkish (from Hagieni), believes that 'both Turks and Tatars are conservative, but Tatars are smarter and more open to new things. That's why I think there are more intellectuals among Tatars'". (Bara, 2006: 100)*

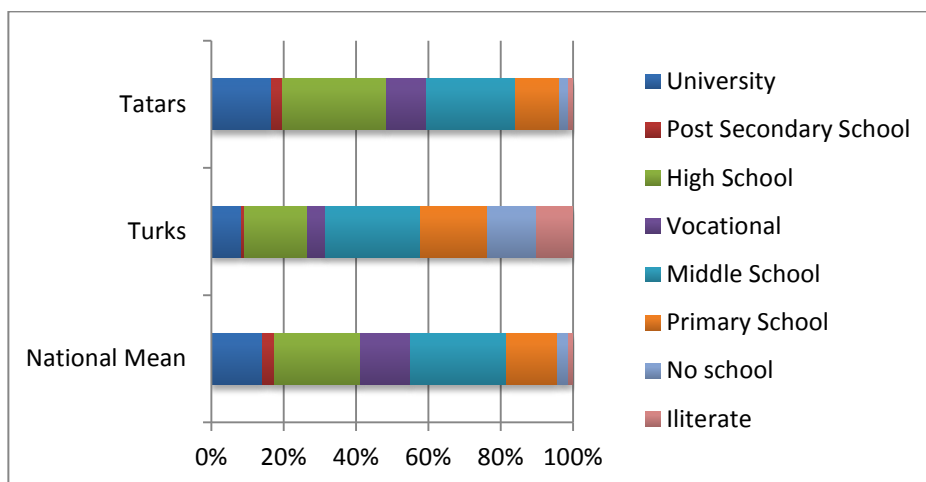


Chart 1. Resident population aged 10 years and over by ethnicity and level of education. Source of the data: The 2011 Population and Housing Census in Romania. This chart only presents the national average and the averages for the Turkish and Tatar ethnic groups.

The structure of the resident population aged 10 years and over by gender, ethnicity and level of education shows (see the charts below) a lower level of education among women in general, in the case of both the national average and the Tatars. In the case of Turkish women, we notice a maximum level of primary school graduation (4 grades) for half of the female population and a high rate of functional illiteracy.

The low level of education that characterizes the Turkish ethnic group and especially Turkish women can be explained by the prevalence of traditional practices within the Turkish family and community in Dobruja, by the low employment rate among Turkish women, and by her prevailing role in domestic activities.

In contrast, the modernization efforts of the Tatar community over the last two decades are strongly reflected in women's emancipation, in the Tatar women's active role within the socio-economic environment, and in their high level of education, which exceeds the national average and is at a considerable distance from the level of education of Turkish women.

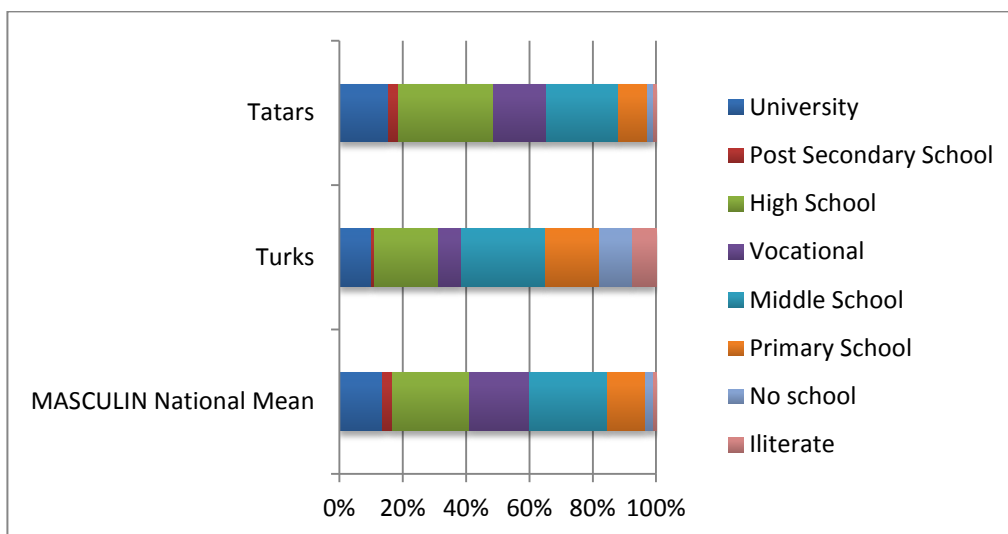


Chart 2. Structure of the resident population aged 10 years and over, by gender – male -, ethnicity and education level

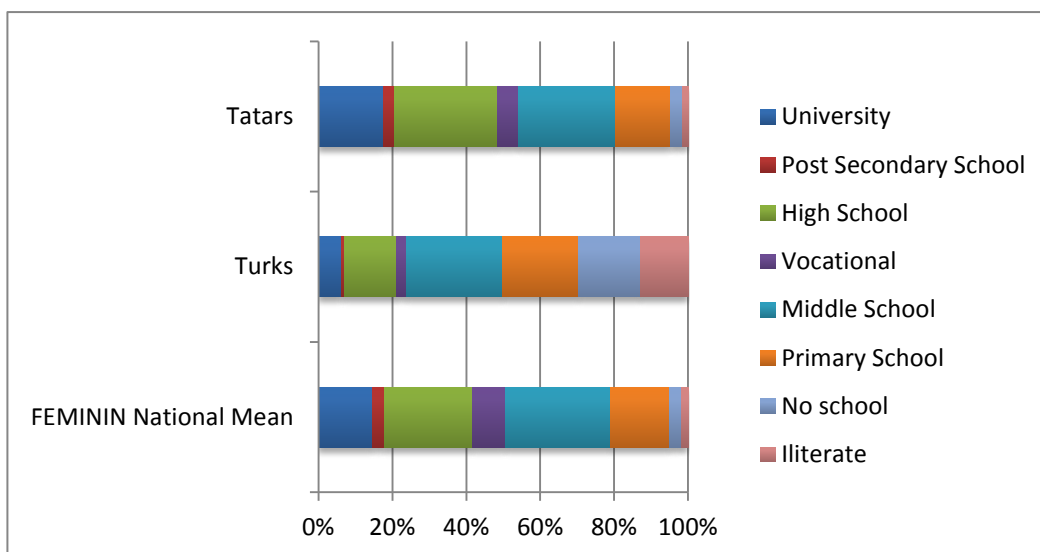


Chart 3. Structure of the resident population aged 10 years and over, by gender- female- ethnicity and education level

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# After the "Great War": the Muslim Seminary of Medgidia in Greater Romania

## 1. Introduction

The Great Union achieved in 1918 imperatively demanded the consolidation of the national construction by the integration of the new provinces and their minority populations into the new Romanian state. Irina Livezeanu has documented the way in which the government used education in order to promote its project of building and consolidating the nation and the Romanian state.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the present chapter examines the way in which the nation building policy of the Romanian state in the interwar period influenced the functioning of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia.

The need that the seminary students should receive a national education was justified by the objective conditions in which they had to work after graduation. Usually, the graduates of the Medgidia Muslim seminary worked as religious clergy and/or teachers for the Muslim population in Dobruja. This population belonged to the Turkish or Tatar ethnic groups, and was largely located in Southern Dobruja, which became a part of the Romanian state at the end of the First World War. From this point of view, the graduates of the Muslim seminary had to act as "agents" of the Romanian state and to promote the Romanian nation building project locally, among a population that was not ethnically Romanian, and, what is more, had been included within the borders of the Romanian state very recently.

My approach is one of *local history*, but not along the lines of the studies which discuss the "deconstruction" of the nation state and the centrifugal tendencies manifested at the regional level. On the contrary, by the discourse analysis of graduation theses written by Muslim seminary students in Medgidia I will emphasize the existence of a *convergence* between the national construction policy of the Romanian state, promoted by means of this educational institution, and the position of part of the Muslim community concerning the emigration of ethnic Turks and Tatars from Dobruja to Turkey (the Ottoman Empire) and other Muslim countries. Regarding the issue of emigration, starting with 1878 and throughout the interwar period, two currents of opinion emerged among the Turkish-Tatar community in Dobruja. The first supported the need for emigration, arguing that the Muslims could not practice their religion properly in a non-Muslim state like the Romanian state. The second current of opinion supported the idea that Muslim believers should stay in Dobruja, and implicitly acted for the consolidation of local Muslim communities.<sup>2</sup>

My chapter also proposes an institutional analysis exploring aspects related to the historical evolution of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia from its creation until the end of the interwar period. Such an analytical perspective can capture not only the way in which the priorities of the Romanian national policy were reflected in the

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<sup>1</sup>Irina Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare 1918-1930*, București, Editura Humanitas, 1998, pp. 14-29.

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to my colleague Metin Omer, PhD candidate at Hacettepe University in Ankara, for suggesting me this interpretation.

functioning of this religious education institution, but also the fact that the Romanian nation-building project, supported by the centralization of political decision-making, did not necessarily operate to the detriment of the Turkish and Tatar minorities in Dobruja.

The chapter relies mainly on interwar documents of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Art, as well as on a series of documentary materials regarding the history of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia in the communist period, kept in the archives of the same Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts (the Education Department). The archival information was completed by information provided in the yearbooks of the Muslim seminary and in the literature.

The chapter has four main parts. The first section includes a brief history of the seminary, as well as some general information on the functioning of this educational institution. Such information is needed to emphasize the importance of the seminary for the Muslim community in Dobruja, as well as the reasons for which the Romanian state showed interest in this institution when promoting its national project. The second part of the chapter will show that during the debate about moving the Medgidia Muslim seminary, all stakeholders supported their position by arguments that resonated with the Romanian nation-building objectives. As will be demonstrated in what follows, the same considerations also underlay the decision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts to keep the seminary in Medgidia.

The third section of my chapter consists of an analysis of the curriculum used at the Muslim seminary. It highlights the Romanian government's concern for seminary students to be trained not only as religious clergy, but also as citizens of the Romanian state. The last section will examine the graduation theses of seminary students, showing how, as a culmination of the knowledge acquired in school, they understood to contribute, in their turn, to the national education of their coreligionists.

As could be noticed throughout my introductory considerations, I chose to use, in different contexts, the term *national* instead of *nationalism* in order to avoid the negative connotations this latter term has in Romanian contemporary history, connotations which are not relevant to this topic. Thus, when talking about the national project, about national policy or national education, I refer to actions taken by the Romanian state, especially in the field of education, with the purpose of building a nation and a national identity to suit the radically different realities generated by the creation of Greater Romania.

## **2. The History of the Muslim Seminary of Medgidia**

The Muslim seminary was established in 1610 in Babadag. For its functioning and maintenance, the Turkish general Gazi Ali Pasha, who participated in the siege against Vienna, donated his estate in Zebil village and Babadag Lake. In 1837, with the financial support of Sultan Mahmud II, a new building was erected, which would host the seminary until 1901, with an interruption between 1877 and 1889. Based on article no. 21 of the *Law on the organization of Dobruja*, the seminary reopened and became a state institution. Changing the status of the seminary had two main consequences. Firstly, the entire estate used for maintaining the

educational institution became the property of the state, which committed itself to supporting it financially, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts. Secondly, the Romanian state intervened, especially after 1904, to regulate and synchronize the seminary curriculum with that of other educational institutions<sup>3</sup>.

For demographic reasons (the decrease in the number of Romanian citizens of Turkish and Tatar ethnicity after 1877-1878), in 1901 the seminary was moved to Medgidia, located in the centre of old Dobruja and very well connected, in terms of infrastructure, with the entire region.<sup>4</sup> In 1904, under the guidance of Spiru Haret, Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Education at the time, the first functional regulations of the seminary were drawn up, having "in mind the harmonization of Muslim religious interests with the state interests of the country."<sup>5</sup>

This harmonization involved the introduction of the Romanian language as a school subject and its use for teaching some of the "science subjects" also included in the curriculum of state secondary schools (geography, history, mathematics, calligraphy, pedagogy, administrative and constitutional law, hygiene, etc.). Obviously, taking into account the profile of the educational institution, its curriculum included the teaching of Turkish and Arabic, the interpretation of the Quran, Muslim law, the history of the Islamic religion or religious music<sup>6</sup>.

The regulations of 1904 also stipulated the organization of courses by classes (rather than in groups, as they were originally organized) and the 8-year duration of studies, as well as the fact that the diploma was to be obtained after a final (written and oral) examination, conducted by a special examining board. After it was moved to Medgidia, the seminary also had a boarding house, where students from all over Dobruja were hosted, some of them studying on scholarships from the Ministry of Public Education. This institution was served by administrative and teaching staff (depending on the school subjects taught), and it was headed by a Romanian administrative manager and a Muslim (study) "spiritual deputy manager". In general, this organization of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia was maintained during the interwar period.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea. Repere de viață spirituală. Viață religioasă și învățământ în limba maternă*, Constanța, ExPonto, 1998, p. 153; Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (Central National Historical Archives, hereafter abbreviated as ANIC), *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 84/1932, f. 28 r; *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts – Education Department*, file 94/1955, f. 6.

<sup>4</sup>*Anuarul seminarului musulman al statului din Medgidia pe anul școlar 1903-1904*, București, 1904, p. 4; ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 84/1932, f. 28 r.

<sup>5</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts – Education Department*, file 94/1955, f. 6; Adrian Rădulescu, Ion Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrogei*, Constanța, ExPonto, 1998, p. 361.

<sup>6</sup>Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea*, p. 154; ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts – Education Department*, file 94/1955, f. 6; *Istoria Dobrogei*, p. 361.

<sup>7</sup>Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea*, p. 154; *Anuarul seminarului musulman al statului din Medgidia pe anul școlar 1903-1904*, București, 1904, p. 4; *Anuarul seminarului musulman al statului din Medgidia pe anul școlar 1907-1908*, Constanța, 1908, p. 4; *Anuarul seminarului musulman din Medgidia pe anul școlar 1928-1929*, Constanța, 1929, p. 5; *Anuarul seminarului musulman din Medgidia pe anul școlar 1930-1931*, Constanța, 1930, p. 20.

The graduates of the seminary represented what could be generically called the local and national elite of the Turkish and Tatar minorities in Dobruja. This was because the "capacity" diploma of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia was a prerequisite for being hired in an ecclesiastical position in the mosques of Dobruja, for becoming a part of the body of religious and public education teachers and later, for being elected as muftis<sup>8</sup> and presidents of religious courts, positions reserved only for those who came from Turkey or who studied in this country<sup>9</sup>. Also, some of the graduates from the Muslim seminary in Medgidia continued their religious studies in Turkey or Egypt, while others chose secular professions, and became physicians, economists, engineers, men of letters or journalists<sup>10</sup>.

### **3. Medgidia or Silistra? The Debate on Moving the Muslim Seminary**

The debate on moving the Muslim seminary from Medgidia took place in two stages during the early 1920s. As I will show in what follows, all stakeholders tried to argue that placing the seminary in Medgidia or Silistra best answered the interests of the Romanian state, meaning that it ensured a "national education" for future religious clergy or teachers. In this way, the seminary graduates could contribute to the promotion of Romanian language and culture among Turkish and Tatar minorities, most of whom were located in Southern Dobruja, which had only very recently become a part of the Romanian state. Also, when taking the final decision to keep the Muslim seminary in Old Dobruja, the officials from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts did not take into account the demographic argument, but rather a series of political arguments. These indicated that an institution of the Romanian state such as

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<sup>8</sup> The *Muftiate* is the central and representative institution of the Muslim community in Romania. In Greater Romania, four such Muftiates functioned, in Constanta, Silistra, Tulcea and Bazargic. They decided on the community's religious matters, collaborated with all state institutions or other organizations or associations for defending and promoting the interests of Muslims and last, but not least, they kept in touch with diplomats and religious leaders in the Islamic countries and elsewhere. For a short period of time (until 1943), the Romanian state conferred upon the mufti in Tulcea the capacity of General Mufti (Baş Müftü). He was supposed to coordinate and regulate the activity of the four Muftiates, but his responsibilities were not established through a regulatory document. After the surrender of Southern Dobruja in 1940, only two Muftiates (Constanta and Tulcea) were left, and they united in 1943. The Muftiate headquarters was established at Constanta, where it still is today. See Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea*, pp. 116-128 and *Istoria Dobrogei*, pp. 361, 363.

<sup>9</sup> *Anuarul 1928-1929*, p. 3. Muslim courts were the main judicial bodies for the Muslim community in Dobruja. Within these courts, presidents or *kadis* (judges) judged the disputes and court cases of Muslims in accordance with the basic principles of the Islamic Sharia. Created during the Ottoman rule, these courts functioned under the guidance of the Muftis of the counties in question until their abolition in 1935, under the influence of the secular reforms implemented in Turkey by Kemal Atatürk. See Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea*, pp. 128-133.

<sup>10</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea*, pp. 155-156.

the seminary in Medgidia could better serve its interests within a territory which had been Romanian for some time already, as was the case of Old Dobruja.

The fact that Southern Dobruja became a part of Romania raised the issue of having the denominational schools existing here authorized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts. Thus, in Bazargic and Silistra two private Turkish seminaries functioned without an authorization. In 1921, travelling in the two towns, the Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs and Arts found out that the seminary of Bazargic had ceased to function for lack of students, who, after the closure of the local Turkish gymnasium, preferred to attend public schools. In Silistra, the four classes of the seminary were still functioning and, in discussions with the Romanian official, the local representatives of the Muslim community expressed their desire to keep the seminary open and, consequently, to obtain the accreditation from the Ministry. At both meetings, the representative of the Religious Affairs and Arts was proposed to move the Muslim seminary from Medgidia to Bazargic or to Silistra respectively, as a convenient solution for the situation of the seminars belonging to the two Muslim communities in New Dobruja (Southern Dobruja, or the "Quadrilateral").<sup>11</sup>

This discussion was resumed in 1923, when the Muslim community in Durostor county asked once again, this time through Senator Mehmet Fehnri, for the Muslim seminary to be moved from Medgidia to Silistra. Also, according to the testimony of the representative of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts, this proposal was supported by the Mufti and by a senator from Caliacra county as well. In his capacity as general deputy director in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, on 13 August 1923 Gheorghe Comşa met with the representatives of the Muslim community "in order to investigate the circumstances which determined the Muslim population in Durostor county to request moving the Muslim seminary from Medgidia to Silistra." In the report prepared as a result of the discussions held at the meeting, the Romanian official mentioned that the request to move the seminary was "supported by reasons worthy of appreciation." The lack of staff (which included not only imams, but also *khatibs* and *muezzins*) for the mosques in the two counties of New Dobruja would have been solved by moving the seminary to Silistra, where 300 students could have been accommodated, including those transferred from Medgidia. In this way, a greater number of young Muslims could be "brought up in the spirit demanded not only by the religious needs of the Muslim population, but also by the interests of the state." Moreover, touching upon a sensitive topic for the Romanian state, the representatives of the Muslim community declared that by unifying the two seminaries "the population will have the required priests who will know their duties, will know the language of the state and will be educated to be devoted to the state, thus increasing Muslim sympathy for the Romanian state."<sup>12</sup>

The discussion also addressed specific issues related to the actual location of the seminary, the Ministry representative inquiring whether Silistra had an appropriate location for the seminary and its boarding house. The answer of the

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<sup>11</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 133/1921, ff. 16-17 r-v.

<sup>12</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1923, f. 19 r.

Muslim delegation highlighted that the population would be willing to support financially, on its own, the transformation of the Ac Kapu mosque into a school building. Thus, it was proposed that the building of the current private seminary should be converted into a boarding house for the students, alongside a military barracks in Silistra. However, the Muslim community conditioned this financial effort by a sum of 400,000 lei which was to be granted by the Romanian state for repairing the royal mosque destroyed during the war. To this amount was added the state contribution for the upkeep of the seminary, which was not to exceed the amount granted to the educational institution in Medgidia. The Muslim representatives also requested that initially the new boarding house should be equipped with inventory items brought from the seminary in Medgidia, and that textbooks and other teaching materials should also be brought from there.<sup>13</sup>

In his report, the Romanian official stated that if the sum of 400,000 lei requested by the Muslim community in Silistra was approved and if the Muslim population in the other counties and the teaching staff in Medgidia agreed to the proposal, then "nothing would stand against moving the seminary next year."<sup>14</sup>

As shown above, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts did not reject from the very beginning the idea of moving the Muslim seminary from Medgidia to Silistra, although it eventually remained where it had been located since the early twentieth century. There were several reasons that prompted the Romanian Ministry officials to take this option into account.

Firstly, the representatives of the Muslim community, which constituted 65% of the population in Durostor county, were the ones who requested moving the seminary. This request was also supported by the Muslim believers who were concentrated in large numbers in Caliacra county.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, Silistra was also the headquarters of one of the four Muftiates that were active in the interwar period.<sup>16</sup>

A third reason referred to the material situation of the seminary, which at the end of the war was in "straitened circumstances."<sup>17</sup> Thus, in early 1921, the headmaster unsuccessfully tried to recover part of the estate belonging to the boarding house of the Muslim seminary. When the town of Medgidia was evacuated in October 1916, some of the seminary's belongings were handed over for safekeeping to the inventory of the Red Cross, which had a hospital installed in the boarding house of the Muslim school. These belongings, which included sheets, pillowcases, cotton blankets, beds, napkins, tableware, buckets, were mixed with those of the Măcin Red Cross Hospital and were used for the needs of the hospital that functioned in Brăila between November 1916 and April 1917. Some of these objects were requisitioned by the Germans. When the hospital in Măcin was closed, its entire property was handed over to Brăila city hall, which redistributed it to the hospitals in its administrative

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<sup>13</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1923, ff. 19 r, 22.

<sup>14</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1923, f. 24 v.

<sup>15</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1923, f. 20 r-v.

<sup>16</sup> Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea*, p. 117.

<sup>17</sup> *Anuarul 1930-1931*, p. 4.

area. Thus, the Muslim seminary could not recover the inventory items that had belonged to its boarding house.<sup>18</sup>

Also, the boarding house of the seminary in Medgidia was not functional for a few years, probably due to the damage caused to the building by fighting taking place in the region. Consequently, seminary students were "forced to find accommodation in inns and isolated houses, coming in contact with all kinds of men and women of easy virtue", as they were received by "neither Muslims, nor Romanians, for reasons of religious prejudice." Being aware of the fact that "the education of students and school prestige" were harmed by the perpetuation of this situation, the headmaster of the seminary repeatedly asked for the support of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts in solving this problem, but according to his testimony, this was "of no avail."<sup>19</sup>

Under these circumstances, the option of moving the seminary to Silistra seemed to be a convenient solution, which would not only have solved the difficult circumstances of the school, but would also have partially relieved the Romanian state from going to expense for this purpose. Yet, the Muslim seminary continued to function in Medgidia until its closure in 1967. This outcome was determined by several factors. The most important development in this regard was the vehement opposition of the Muslim community in old Dobruja concerning this matter. Through its spokesmen, the community was able to advance arguments which corresponded to the views of Romanian officials regarding the Muslim seminary of Medgidia as an institution of the Romanian state, able to promote its interests among young students.

Thus, the muftis of both Constanța county and Tulcea county declared themselves to be against the unification of the two seminaries in Silistra and Medgidia and addressed the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts in writing, bringing arguments in favour of their position. The Muslim community in Constanța had the same position, and it also addressed the Ministry in writing, suggesting the organisation of a meeting with one of their representatives, who would explain the reasons why they were against moving the seminary to New Dobruja. Five main arguments in the documents submitted to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts justify the rejection of the move of the seminary "so insistently demanded by Silistra inhabitants."<sup>20</sup> Firstly, Medgidia had a special significance to the Muslim population, being one of the oldest settlements of this community in Dobruja<sup>21</sup>. Secondly, a religious education institution (madrasa) had always existed in Medgidia, even before the seminary was moved here from Babadag in 1889<sup>22</sup>. Thus, the Muslim seminary became a symbol of Medgidia, and, in its turn, this city was the "cradle of the highest

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<sup>18</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 107/1922, ff. 68 r-v, 71, 77.

<sup>19</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 107/1922, ff. 158 v-159; file 174/1923, f. 70 f. The problem was solved in the following years by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts, which rented a building that was to be used as a boarding house for the seminary. See *Anuarul seminarului musulman din Medgidia pe anul școlar 1932-1933*, Constanța, 1933, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1923, ff. 27, 30, 76 r-v-77, 88 r-v.

<sup>21</sup>*Istoria Dobrogei*, p. 287.

<sup>22</sup>Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea*, p. 153.

religious institution – the seminary."<sup>23</sup> Thirdly, Medgidia was in the centre of Dobruja, being a railway junction that ensured the connection to the Capital. More than anything, however, Medgidia was "at hand to all Muslims, as well as students, who, during major holidays and fasting periods, when under the law they are on holiday, can go to the villages and towns for religious services." In contrast, Silistra was placed at an extreme of Dobruja, and the only way of communication with Old Dobruja was the Danube, which became inaccessible during winter<sup>24</sup>. At the same time, as stated by the Mufti of Tulcea county, the seminary was an institution of the Romanian state, which had to be placed in a "Romanian centre" like Medgidia, where "students could also get an education in Romanian sentiment, which was imperatively required for the young seminarians, in the interest of the country."<sup>25</sup> What the Mufti was trying to say and what is relevant from the point of view of the present chapter is that the Southern Dobruja counties had become part of the Romanian state very recently. Moreover, Bulgarians accounted for a significant part of the population of Southern Dobruja, and their loyalty to the Romanian state was questionable.<sup>26</sup> Fifthly, as the representative of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts remarked as early as 1921, Silistra was not a safe area, because the Bulgarian population there "was stirring the other nations."<sup>27</sup> Also, the frequent attacks of Bulgarian Comitadjis that targeted southern Dobruja<sup>28</sup> represented another argument taken into account by the Romanian authorities in keeping the Muslim seminary in Medgidia.

#### 4. School Subjects

Another important element that illustrates interwar Romanian national policy is the curriculum of subjects followed by the Medgidia Muslim seminary. In this respect, I have analysed seven timetables for the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> grades in the 1920s and 1930s, observing the evolution in the number of Romanian and history classes, and their proportion in relation to some of the most important subjects specific to the profile of this educational institution. *Romanian* and *history* were chosen for two reasons: they were subjects tested in the graduation exam and, by their nature, they supported the objective of a national education.

A comparative analysis of the Muslim seminary timetable suggests a drastic change, namely that in the 1930s school subjects were diversified and secularized as compared to the previous decade. The decrease in the number of religious subjects in the seminary curriculum (Quran, history of religion, Muslim law) or in those that helped the study of Islam (Turkish language, but especially Arabic) was the result of

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<sup>23</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1923, f. 27. It should be noted that after the fall of communism, Medgidia also hosted the Muslim pedagogical and theological high school *Kemal Atatürk*.

<sup>24</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1923, ff. 76 v, 88 r-v.

<sup>25</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1923, f. 88 r.

<sup>26</sup> *Istoria Dobrogei*, pp. 380, 392, 432-435

<sup>27</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 133/1921, f. 17 r.

<sup>28</sup> *Istoria Dobrogei*, p. 434.



the massive secularization reforms of public and cultural life in interwar Turkey, which were also experienced in Romanian Dobruja.

Despite all these changes, Romanian and history remained among the main subjects taught in the Muslim seminary in Medgidia. Thus, students here studied Romanian language 3 to 5 times a week in the 1920s, and 3-4 times a week over the next decade (most of the classes were for the first two years of study). However, *history* continued to be generally taught twice a week. Comparatively, in the academic year 1921-1922, the number of Romanian classes was equal to the number of classes allocated for Turkish and Arabic, but less than the 5 hours per week dedicated to the study of the Quran.<sup>29</sup> For the academic years 1923-1924, 1928-1929, 1929-1930, the number of Romanian classes exceeded the number of Turkish and Arabic classes and was equal to those dedicated to the interpretation of the Quran.<sup>30</sup> For 1932-1933, Romanian language was allocated, with minor variations depending on the year of study, the same number of classes as those for the study of the Quran, and a higher number of classes than those dedicated to learning Turkish and Arabic<sup>31</sup>.

After the reorganization of the Medgidia Muslim seminary curriculum in the 1930s, Arabic was no longer among the subjects taught here. In exchange, the number of Turkish classes (between 3 and 5 classes per week) increased<sup>32</sup>, so that it finally exceeded the number of Romanian classes. The study of the Quran was also limited to 2 classes per week and only for the upper grades of the seminary (5th to 8th grade), while Romanian remained a compulsory subject for all years of study, with 3-4 classes per week.<sup>33</sup>

In turn, *history* also remained a compulsory subject, being constantly present for 2 hours per week in the schedule of seminary students throughout the 1920s and 1930s. This number of classes was sometimes greater than or equal to the classes allocated to the *history of religion*.<sup>34</sup>

As results from the above data, as part of the curriculum taught at the Muslim seminary in Medgidia, *Romanian language* and *history* remained the main school subjects, sometimes exceeding the number of classes per week for the subjects specific to the profile of this religious education institution.

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<sup>29</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 107/1922, f. 4.

<sup>30</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 124/1923, f. 99; file 174/1929, f. 181; file 137/1929, f. 202.

<sup>31</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 84/1932, f. 63.

<sup>32</sup> Increasing the number of Turkish classes was justified by the use of this language for studying the Quran and other religious subjects taught in the seminary. Since 1927, the director of this educational institution requested the replacement of Arabic with Turkish "as a means of teaching and we will certainly be able to eliminate mechanical learning from the school." See *Anuarul seminarului... 1930-1931*, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 102/1938, f. 14; file 104 vol. 1/1939, f. 12.

<sup>34</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, 107/1922, f. 4; file 124/1923, f. 99; file 174/1929, f. 181; file 137/1929, f. 202; file 84/1932, f. 63; file 102/1938, f. 14; file 104 vol. 1/1939, f. 12.

## 5. The Seminary Graduate and His Role in the Romanian Society

The national agenda of the Romanian state was also reflected in the choice of subjects for the Romanian language exam that students had to pass for the completion of the eight classes of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia. These topics, of which the future graduates had a choice in their final examination, were intended to test their knowledge of Romanian language, literature or history. Also, another requirement within the same Romanian language exam was writing an essay in which the future religious leaders and teachers were to describe how they were going to organize and develop their activity within the local Muslim communities. Obviously, the purpose of such an essay was to evaluate the way in which graduates intended to apply and adapt what they had learned at the seminary to the specific local circumstances. Based on their own observations, most of the students identified in their essays the main problems that the Muslim communities in Dobruja were facing and the ways in which they were going to try to solve them, based on the knowledge they had acquired. These essays will be the subject of my analysis regarding the seminary graduates' contribution to promoting the national policy of the Romanian state.

The titles chosen for these essays were quite diverse, such as *The Role of the Seminary Graduate in Society* in the session of 1921, *The Role of the Muslim Clergy in Rural Life* in the session of 1928, *The Muslim Seminary Graduates' Activity for the Propagation of Romanian Culture in Rural Centres* in 1929, *The Moral Strength of a Good Teacher* in 1933, *School and Church as Factors of Cultural and National Education* for the exam of 1937, *Church as an Agent of Education* in 1938, *The Qualities of a Good Educator of the People*, and *National Education in the Development of Peoples* for 1939.<sup>35</sup> Although not all these titles had or made reference to a national topic, their wording also allowed the topic to be approached from this perspective.

Before starting to analyse the theses of seminary students, I believe it is necessary to include some details about the organization and conduct of the final examination at the Muslim seminary in Medgidia. The board that organized and validated the results of this exam was made up of seminary teachers who taught both secular and religious subjects to the students of this education institution. The structure of the board was approved for each final exam by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts. Therefore, we cannot deny the fact that in their essays, in their desire to get better grades for the Romanian language exam, students tried to meet the expectations of the markers. However, the fact that they interpreted their own role as future priests or teachers in a national key, even if with some obvious exaggerations, also represents a confirmation that education had become an instrument in support of the Romanian state's nation building project.

Analysing the content of student theses on the above mentioned topics suggests that for the graduates of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia the education of

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<sup>35</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 133/1921, f. 39, file 174/1928, f. 89, file 137/1929, f. 82, file 111/1933, f. 30, file 129 /1937, f. 44 f, file 102/1938, f. 77, file 104 vol. I/1939, f. 24.

their "coreligionists" was a priority. This is because, from their point of view, the lack of education was the main cause of the material and spiritual decline of the Muslims in Dobruja.

In order to justify their position, the great majority of graduates painted a dark picture of the situation of Muslims in Dobruja, being careful to mention that such an unfavourable development was generated by internal causes specific to the Muslim communities and was not the result of a discriminatory policy conducted by the Romanian State concerning the Turkish and Tatar minorities.

Here is how a graduate of the Medgidia seminary described the living conditions of the Muslims in Dobruja in 1921:

"A low-built long house, with bright windows, made of clay, covered in straw, a yard enclosed by a ditch or by garbage, and no trace of plantation or vegetables, this is the household of a Muslim of Dobruja. A few houses like this that you could pull down with a single stitch, placed in disorder, a pitiful mosque and an imam leading a contemplative life, here is the icon of our villages in Dobruja."<sup>36</sup>

Trying to find an explanation for this state of affairs, another seminary student noted that "the Muslim population is not really hard-working and careful with their savings" and therefore, he proposed to advise the members of his community "to start working, showing them that if, when Dobruja was absorbed [into the Romanian state], Muslims were the biggest landowners, now they became servants to those who used to be their servants and this happened only because the latter have worked diligently, and they merely sat and thought about emigration, wrongly advised by foreign imams." At the same time, "besides their economic, cultural and intellectual flaws" Muslims were also "in narrow circumstances." According to the same student, most of his "coreligionists" were "illiterate, which greatly influenced [their] demoralization."<sup>37</sup>

In this context, the word *education* did not strictly refer to the educational process taking place within the organized framework of the school, but to a specific way in which the daily life of the Muslim population was organized. Fulfilling these tasks was the responsibility of the seminary graduate, who often exerted both the function of religious clergy (imam) and the function of teacher in the local community where he worked. In fact, most of the seminary graduates described the purpose of their work as one of "enlightenment" or "illumination" of the Muslim population that they were supposed to guide from the spiritual point of view. Consequently, from their perspective, clergymen had to be "those who enlightened the villages"<sup>38</sup> sent "to illuminate like a lighthouse guiding ships in the vast and infinite waters of the great ocean"<sup>39</sup> and who wished to uplift the "soul of the people, taking it to glory and illumination". As "in any nation people have a blind faith in the words of the clergy",<sup>40</sup> seminary graduates had the strength or moral force to make

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<sup>36</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 133/1921, f. 42.

<sup>37</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 133/1921, ff. 46-47.

<sup>38</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1928, f. 115 r.

<sup>39</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 133/1921, f. 100 r.

<sup>40</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1928, f. 115 r.

those changes necessary for the social and spiritual uplifting of the Muslim population in Dobruja.

What is important to note is that, from the Medgidia seminary graduates' point of view, carrying out the mission to "enlighten" their "coreligionists" also involved a national dimension, which concerned both the secular and the religious aspects of their work. Thus, for some of them, the primary task was "to remove fanaticism from the people's minds."<sup>41</sup> "A flaw that caused the Muslim population to fall into such a deplorable state",<sup>42</sup> this action meant encouraging the Turkish and Tatar populations to integrate in the Romanian society. Those who were responsible for the religiously motivated self-marginalization of the Muslims in Dobruja were, in the opinion of the seminary graduates, some "uneducated imams brought from Constantinople and not well-prepared enough."<sup>43</sup> These latter not only encouraged the segregation of Turks and Tatars based on ethnic and religious criteria, but also maintained their dream of emigration "to Anatolia or (...), as they said, the holy land."<sup>44</sup>

In this context, by their sermons held in the mosque, the future imams and teachers proposed to convince the faithful Muslims that Greater Romania was their country and to "inspire them with love for their neighbour, regardless of religion and nationality",<sup>45</sup> to help them "know the language of their country, know its laws and abide by them, and live in a perfect union with everybody" and last but not least, to "love their country and its leaders."<sup>46</sup>

The educational component of the activity carried out by the Muslim seminary graduates also aimed at enhancing the attachment of the Muslim population to the Romanian state. In this respect, learning the Romanian language and getting familiar with the Romanian history and culture became a priority in educating the representatives of ethnic Turks and Tatars as "true believers and patriots."<sup>47</sup> This was because, according to some of the seminary students, a common language was the "external sign" that defined a nation. Not only did this ensure the specific interaction between its members, but also the transmission of some specific cultural values. They were meant to support the perpetuation of the nation and its unity of action in case its physical existence or the existence of its national territory was threatened from the outside.<sup>48</sup>

In 1939, the survival of the Romanian state and of the nation, understood "as a spiritual community whose members are connected through a common way of feeling and thinking, established by a community of tradition, beliefs and customs", was a topical issue. Therefore, the theme of the essay to be written by the graduates of the Medgidia seminary was *the contribution of national education to the development*

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<sup>41</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1928, f. 107.

<sup>42</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 137/1929, f. 86.

<sup>43</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 133/1921, f. 45.

<sup>44</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 133/1921, ff. 47-48.

<sup>45</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1928, f. 107.

<sup>46</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 137/1929, ff. 86, 92.

<sup>47</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 174/1928, f. 113 v.

<sup>48</sup>ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 104 vol. 1/1939, ff. 38-39 r-v, 42 r-v.

*of peoples*. Thus, those who addressed this topic in their essays pointed out, among other things, that national education presupposed the transmission of certain specific national knowledge and cultural values through disciplines such as national history, geography and literature or with the help of national institutions other than the school, such as the Church, the army or the "guards and pre-military" organizations. Graduates also highlighted the importance of national education for the political and cultural survival of a nation. This would have made possible and very real the individual attachment to "one's peers, and to the land [on] which one lives." In the case of Romania, this attachment stimulated a strong participation of the population in the war for the state independence of 1877 or in the "Great War" which led to the establishment of Greater Romania in 1918. In the context of 1939, by generating a form of internal solidarity in the face of external danger, seminary graduates saw national education as a primordial requirement in facing a more and more probable new global conflict.<sup>49</sup>

In their essays, the future religious clergy also indicated the most important tools that they intended to use for the national education of the Muslim population in Dobruja. For many of them, such an activity was a continuation of the work they had already begun during the years of study at the seminary. Thus, on different occasions, as students, they organized gatherings or theatre shows in Dobruja villages. Not only did these events represent an opportunity for Muslim believers to become familiar with the Romanian language, but they were also a tool "for propagating Romanian culture within the popular masses."<sup>50</sup>

National education also represented an important dimension of the teaching activity carried out by seminary graduates in the rural schools of Dobruja. For them, teaching Romanian to the Turkish and Tatar ethnic students was a priority. Thus, by putting into practice the pedagogical knowledge gained during school years for teaching Romanian, the "seminary teacher-to-be student" gained the "skill of instilling the children's soul with Romanian precepts."<sup>51</sup> At the same time, for another seminary graduate the fact that Turkish and Tatar populations learned Romanian represented a guarantee of their coexistence and good relationships with the Romanian population: "The language of the country should be their first concern, as it is known that you never forget your mother tongue. And how else could we best show our gratitude to our brethren if not by well and thoroughly getting to know Romanian, which is so beautiful and easy."<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, the graduates of the Muslim seminary identified other tools that they wanted to use in order to consolidate the knowledge taught in Romanian language, Romanian history and geography classes. One of these tools was organizing school trips to the "important and historical places of the country".<sup>53</sup> These should not be just "wonderful, joyful life [experiences] (...) and memories," but also an opportunity to make students familiar with "symbols and evocations meant to create

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<sup>49</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 104 vol. 1/1939, ff. 38-39 r-v, 42 r-v.

<sup>50</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 137/1929, f. 88 v.

<sup>51</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 137/1929, f. 89.

<sup>52</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 137/1929, f. 87 r.

<sup>53</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 137/1929, f. 112.

that chapter of impressions from which future draws its most fertile examples and inspirations of patriotism." In other words, school trips were a concrete expression of learning by practical experience ("education through life"), which was meant to teach children "to love their country by experiencing this love."<sup>54</sup> As expressed by another graduate: "Trips have a greater influence on the child's delicate mind. Seeing the beauties of nature, the child grows an aesthetic sense and the love for his country."<sup>55</sup>

At the same time, the "seminary student-teacher also had to attend to the establishment of a rural library, which would become not only a centre of culture, but primarily a centre of Romanian culture for both students and adult Muslims."<sup>56</sup>

Seeing that the adult Muslim population also needed education, Medgidia seminary graduates also included among their preoccupations the establishment of an adult school, more precisely of "evening classes for adults." Within this education process, adults had to acquire "knowledge absolutely necessary for practical life, for example, reading and writing, arithmetic, their rights and duties within the state" that would help them "find their way in society."<sup>57</sup>

Such a desideratum served the national goal of building the nation of Greater Romania from a double perspective: the integration of Turkish and Tatar minorities as citizens with full rights of the Romanian state, and their acceptance of Romania as their adoptive country. Thus, most of the seminary graduates advocated the integration of the Muslim population within the Romanian society as an alternative to emigration to Turkey or other Muslim countries, indicating the acquisition of Romanian language and culture by ethnic Turks and Tatars as an essential tool in this respect. To this effect, one of the graduates of the educational institution in Medgidia stated that "The role of seminary students is to teach Romanian language and culture to the Muslim population. It is really necessary for the Muslim population to learn them as a sacred duty, for only by knowing Romanian language and science can we consider ourselves worthy and conscious citizens of this country, which widely opened all paths for the advancement of Muslim population."<sup>58</sup>

Seminary graduates also established some concrete objectives which would guide them in their "enlightenment" activity of the Muslims in Dobruja. For one of them, the active presence of a former seminary student in Medgidia was a guarantee that "there, people no longer think about emigrating and people are more hard working, more moral and there's more order and love for the country."<sup>59</sup> For the future imam of Murfatlar village, education was "the centre of all his concerns" "at any moment." Thus, he proposed to teach those under his spiritual care "good manners, respect, love of the country, love of truth and beauty", to teach them how to write, read and compute, to help them "speak the language of the country, learn the local customs, and admire the beauties of nature."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 129/1937, f. 102 v.

<sup>55</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 137/1929, f. 114.

<sup>56</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 137/1929, f. 114; file 111/1933, f. 50.

<sup>57</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 137/1929, ff. 93, 95 r, 114.

<sup>58</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 137/1929, f. 89 and also f. 95 r.

<sup>59</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 133/1921, f. 43.

<sup>60</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 133/1921, f. 93.

Being aware of the multi-ethnic reality in Dobruja, another graduate wished that the Muslim population would take everything he thought was best from the other nationalities with whom they coexisted: "I would like to turn the small children and people I was assigned to guide into hard-working and thrifty people like the Bulgarians, wise and neat like the Germans, devout and faithful like the Muslims, enterprising like the Armenians and the Greeks, fighters and good patriots like the Romanians."<sup>61</sup>

## Conclusions

My chapter analyzed the way in which the nation building policy started by the interwar Romanian state was reflected in the functioning of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia. To this effect, my chapter focused on three issues related to the evolution of the seminary, namely, the debate on moving the seminary from Medgidia to Silistra, the curriculum, and the papers written by students who graduated from this institution.

In the first case, I showed how all stakeholders tried to prove that placing the seminary in Medgidia or Silistra would best answer the national interests of the Romanian state. The final decision of the Ministry of Religions Affairs and Arts was based on an argument which indicated that an institution of the Romanian state, such as the Medgidia seminary, could better serve its interests in a territory which had belonged to Romania for a longer period of time, as was Old Dobruja.

The analysis of the seminary curriculum showed that Romanian language and history remained the main study subjects, sometimes exceeding the number of classes per week of courses specific to the profile of this institution of religious education. Last but not least, the analysis of the seminary graduates' essays indicated their concern for dedicating a significant part of their professional activity to the national education of their coreligionists, as a culmination of the knowledge they had acquired in school.

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<sup>61</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts*, file 133/1921, f. 100 v. Also see file 133/1921, f. 42.

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# **The Muslim Community of Dobruja during the Communist Period (1948-1965)**

*Manuela Marin, Adriana Cupcea*

## **Introduction**

The present chapter aims to present the evolution of the Muslim community in the historic region of Dobruja during the communist regime (1948-1965). My analysis of the topic takes into account two dimensions. *The institutional perspective* concerns the evolution of two of the main Muslim institutions, namely *the mosque* (the place of worship) and the staff who served in these places, generically identified under the name of *hodjas*. This analysis will highlight the fact that the repressive intervention of the communist authorities was not the only cause of the weakening of the activity of Muslim religious institutions. The Romanian government's desire to reduce the influence of religion on the lives of its citizens was mainly didactic in nature. It focused on the "materialist and scientific" education of the population, whose understanding of the world was supposed to reject the ubiquity of supernatural forces.<sup>1</sup> Although it failed in its attempt to displace religion from the life of the "new socialist man", atheist propaganda, and especially the social and economic changes triggered by the implementation of a socialist modernization program, contributed to a restructuring in the relationship of ordinary people with religion. As I will show in what follows, the reduction in the number of mosques was the result of the decision taken, under certain conditions, by the senior leadership of the Muslim religion, the Muftiate, in response to a decrease in the number of believers served by a particular place of worship. In the wake of an ambitious industrialization process, a significant part of the Islamic population migrated to the urban areas. This had an impact on mosques, which were mainly located in rural areas and were left with no believers to serve, or served only a small number of believers. Similarly, the falling clergy numbers was not only the consequence of the Romanian authorities' interference, which reduced by half the number of students attending the seminary in Medgidia, the main institution responsible for training Muslim clergy, or of the 1952 arrests which also targeted some of the Dobruja imams. As I will show in what follows, the fall in the number of Muslim clergy was also the result of personal choice, since for some it seemed more advantageous to occupy a position in the professional system of the socialist state than to become imams. In this context, it should be noted that the under financing of the Muslim religion, for which the Romanian government was only partly responsible, meant that the closing of mosques became a financial necessity, and a main reason for religious clergy to seek a new career.

The evolution of the Muslim community of Dobruja will also be analyzed from a microhistorical perspective, namely that of "Everyday Islam". The concept of "Everyday Islam" refers to the way in which the Islamic religion was practiced and

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<sup>1</sup> See, Sonja Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style. Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2011, pp. 1-10.

understood by Muslim believers in the context of their daily life.<sup>2</sup> I do not deny the involvement of the communist government, through its special bodies, in influencing the relationship Romanian citizens of Turkish and Tatar origin had with religion. However, my view on the topic is different. Thus, I will examine not only the way in which the daily experience of Islam was influenced by the communist state, but also how Muslim believers reacted to such interference in their lives.

As I will show in what follows, the analysis of archival information, corroborated with data from our oral history investigation, indicates that the role of Islam was declining in the everyday lives of Dobruja Muslims. In retrospect, the atheist policy of the Romanian communist regime failed to displace Islamic faith at an individual level, the Muslim faith remaining the essential element in the ethnic identification of Turkish and Tatar minorities in this part of the country. However, atheist propaganda was successful in displacing and therefore in marginalizing Islam as part of the public discourse intended for the Muslim community. Consequently, Islam ceased to be the sole moral and ethical frame of reference according to which the everyday life of Muslim believers was organized. This happened all the more because a part of the Turkish and Tatar minorities joined in the effort of socialist construction, which led to the valorization of civic and professional commitment as a main significant life experience,<sup>3</sup> to the detriment of one based on faithful compliance with the ritual prescriptions and restrictions imposed by the Islamic religion.

These developments, alongside the reduction in the activity of Muslim religious institutions, the dwindling number of religious texts available to believers as a result of the severance of relations with Turkey and generally with the international Muslim community, and the gradual disappearance of institutionalized forms of religious education all led to a “domestication” of the Islamic religion. This “domestication” of religion refers to the symbolic displacement of the centre of gravity of religious life from the public space (the mosque) to the private space (the home), and the simultaneous limitation of participation in religious ceremonies to family members and their relatives.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, preserving and transmitting religious traditions related to the important Islamic holidays or the main events in the life of a Muslim believer (baptisms<sup>5</sup>, marriages, funerals) were the responsibility of

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<sup>2</sup> Maria Elisabeth Lauw, *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia*, Routledge, London, 2007, p.7.

<sup>3</sup> On this subject, see Adriana Cupcea, *Construcția identitară la comunitățile turcă și tătară din Dobrogea. Studii de Atelier. Cercetarea Minorităților Naționale din România*, nr. 49, Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, Cluj Napoca, 2013, <http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/uploads/WP49-11-10.pdf>, last entry 21 November 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Sonja Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style*, p. 9; Tamara Dragadze, „The Domestication of Religion under Soviet Communism”, în C.M. Hann (editor), *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Local Practice*, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> In the Islamic religion, there is no baptism ritual similar to the Christian one. At birth, the child is considered a Muslim because his soul comes directly from God and he still remembers God. Usually, a child is named three days after birth in the presence of an imam, in the case of both newborn boys and girls. Usually, the muezzin recites the Islamic call to worship (*ezan*) three times to the right and left ear of the child, then he states three times the name of the newborn to his/her ear and then to the four cardinal points. This ritual means that the infant

the family, and more specifically of its older members.<sup>6</sup> Thus, for the vast majority of Muslim believers who belonged to the active population of the country, the relationship with religion was marked, only occasionally, but in compliance with Islamic tradition, by the holidays included in the official calendar of the religion or by the festive events necessary for the affirmation of the individual as a member of the Muslim community. In this context, observing religious traditions helped consolidate the individual's sense of belonging to his or her ethnic community.<sup>7</sup> However, as I will show in what follows, observing Islamic traditions in the face of the restrictions imposed by the Romanian communist regime also became a form of resistance, which, according to Michel de Certeau, "acts as a conservative force which is associated with a slow but persistent refusal to adapt [*to change*]."<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion, the radical changes determined by the establishment and consolidation of the Romanian communist regime gradually and indirectly pushed the Dobruja Muslim community towards a process of *social secularization*. This process (quantified by a series of sociological measures of the vitality of religious life such as the number of followers, religious experiences, participation in devotional acts identified through prayer or pilgrimage<sup>9</sup>) led to an adjustment of the way in which individuals interacted with the Islamic religion in the face of the constraints and lifestyle imposed by communist rule. Although it failed to displace the Islamic faith at an individual level, this process of social secularization meant that Dobruja Muslim believers could choose "Everyday Islam" as a "lifestyle option amongst other possible lifestyles."<sup>10</sup>

The present chapter is mainly based on archival information, namely documentary and statistic materials about the Muslim religion preserved both in the archives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and in the archives of Romania's secret communist police, the Securitate. At the same time, in order to analyze aspects regarding the role of the Islamic religion in everyday life, a series of 10 interviews were conducted with representatives of the Turkish and Tatar communities from different towns in Constanța county.

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will lead a life in accordance with the laws of God. When a child comes into the world, a festive meal is organized by parents and relatives who thank God for the child. What most of those interviewed by us call *baptism* refers to the circumcision ceremony for Muslim boys (*sunnet*) which takes place by the age of 12-13, a ceremony followed by a party. See Mehmet Naci Önal, *Din folclorul turcilor dobrogeni*, Editura Kriterion, București, 1997, pp. 115-117; Mark Sedwick, *Islamul și musulmanii*, Editura Niculescu, București, 2010, pp. 138-141.

<sup>6</sup> Adriana Cupcea, *Construcția identitară la comunitățile turcă și tătară din Dobrogea*, pp. pp. 22-23.

<sup>7</sup> Adriana Cupcea, *Construcția identitară la comunitățile turcă și tătară din Dobrogea*, pp. pp. 22-24.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Ben Highmore, „Introduction: Questioning Everyday Life,” în Ben Highmore (editor), *The Everyday Life Reader*, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> Bryan S. Turner, „Islam, Public Religion and the Secularization Debate”, în Gabriele Marranci (editor), *Muslim Societies and the Challenge of Secularization. An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Springer, Dordrecht, 2010, pp. 12-13.

<sup>10</sup> Bryan S. Turner, „Islam, Public Religion and the Secularization Debate”, p. 13.

## Mosques

A first element in the institutional analysis of the Muslim religion in Dobruja in 1950-1960 is the evolution in the number of places of worship. The Statute for the Organization of the Muslim Religion in the People's Republic of Romania, approved by the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly in July 1949, mentioned the existence of three categories of places for prayer: *mosques*, *djamis* and *masjids* (houses of prayer).<sup>11</sup>

The evolution in the number of Muslim places of worship in Dobruja is difficult to ascertain, for several reasons. These concern the quality of the existing archival documents, but also the fact that certain archival collections that would be useful for the purpose cannot be accessed. The analysis of the organization and development of religious life in Dobruja Muslim communities is mainly based on documents created centrally by the Ministry/Department of Religious Affairs, or on those resulting from the correspondence exchanged between this body and its territorial units. These documents contain sporadic references and usually offer contradictory data on the existing number of Muslim places of worship. Furthermore, the modest professional training of those who worked within the Ministry/Department of Religious Affairs is obvious from the fact that statistic materials do not provide any details regarding the existing categories of places of worship. Also, throughout these documents, the terms of *mosque* or *djami* are incorrectly used to designate all Muslim places of worship. Moreover, this information cannot be verified or completed because the archives of the regional unit subordinated to the Ministry/Department of Religious Affairs have not yet been handed over to the Constanța County Department of the National Archives, while the archive of the Muslim Muftiate of Romania is still not accessible. At the same time, the information about the organization of the Muslim religion existing in the documents of the former Securitate is taken, in most cases, from materials provided by the Ministry/Department of Religious Affairs. Consequently, the analysis of the data regarding the evolution of the number of Muslim places of worship will reflect, in its turn, all the shortcomings and inconsistencies that exist in the archives available for research.

Thus, in May 1941, on the territory of the historical province of Dobruja, there were 125 mosques. By the end of 1943, there were 121 mosques, out of which 105 were located in Constanța County, and 16 in Tulcea County. In addition to these, there were another 5 mosques located in different regions of the country.<sup>12</sup>

The following data available on the number of places of worship is supplied by the 1947 religious census. The census identified a number of 101 such religious establishments located in the main regions of the country. It also contained a statistical report on the categories of Muslim places of worship. Thus, the 101 establishments belonging to the Dobruja Muslims were divided as follows: 84 djamis

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<sup>11</sup> Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (Central National Historical Archives, hereafter abbreviated as ANIC), *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 72/1957, f. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (hereafter abbreviated as ACNSAS), *Fond Documentar*, file 11324, ff. 193-194.

were located in Constanța County, and 15 djamis were situated in Tulcea County. The remaining two places of worship were located in the historical region of Oltenia.<sup>13</sup>

In 1952, a new statistic identified a number of 98 places of worship, as follows: 87 in the Constanța region, 9 in the Galați region, one in the Bucharest region and one in the Gorj region.<sup>14</sup> In 1955, there were 90 djamis, out of which 84 were located in the Constanța region.<sup>15</sup> A new statistic of 1959 indicated a total of 105 Muslim places of worship.<sup>16</sup> The following data on the number of Muslim establishments dates back to 1979 and indicates the existence of 77 djamis, 3 masjids and one mosque in the town of Constanța.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the scarcity of reports on the number of Muslim places of worship, one can notice a clear falling trend throughout the period analyzed. The inclusion of data from outside the period which is the object of the study aims to compensate for the lack of information and, implicitly, to demonstrate the weakening in the organizational activity of the Muslim religion. As previously shown, this research was based on archival material resulting from the activity of the Ministry/Department of Religious Affairs. The latter's perspective on the subject is unilateral and most likely excludes the repressive dimension of the intervention of the communist government in this respect. On the other hand, the present analysis identifies multiple causes for the decline in the number of Muslim religious establishments during the communist period. At the same time, this analytical perspective will confirm that, although the main objective of the communist state policy was to eliminate the religious dimension from its citizens' lives, the method chosen was to avoid direct repressive interventions against established religions.

Thus, archival documents indicate that Muslim places of worship were closed at the Muftiate's request and that the Romanian government financially supported the renovation or even the reconstruction of some of these establishments. In this context, it should be noted that the Muslim places of worship that existed in the period studied had been built before the onset of the communist regime. At the same time, owing to the predominantly rural character of the Turkish and Tatar populations and to the merely incipient urbanization before 1948, these Muslim religious buildings were not a regular presence in the Romanian urban landscape.<sup>18</sup>

The financial support granted by the Romanian government through the Ministry/Department of Religious Affairs was directed at renovating Muslim places of worship which, through their historical and architectural value, were landmarks for the Muslim population as well as for outside visitors. Thus, the Mosque in Constanța was festively reopened on November 8, 1953, after almost a year of repairs. The money necessary for this purpose came from the Muslim community or the Muftiate,

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<sup>13</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 92/1954, f. 26.

<sup>14</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 66/1952, ff. 10-12.

<sup>15</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 2877, vol. 2, f. 272.

<sup>16</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 84/1959, f. 8.

<sup>17</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 19631, f. 119 f.

<sup>18</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 19631, f. 119 f.

as well as from the Romanian authorities.<sup>19</sup> Similar financial support was granted to the Muslims between 1956 and 1957 for the repair of the Hunchiar Mosque in Constanța, also a listed monument.<sup>20</sup> The mosque in Galeșul commune, Medgidia district, Constanța region, was in a different situation, which could have led to its closing. This place of worship was located on the intended construction site of the Danube-Black Sea Canal. Therefore, in 1951 the mosque was demolished with the Muslim community's approval, and the General Directorate of the Canal financially supported the rebuilding of that mosque in another part of the city.<sup>21</sup>

Although these are important examples, they do not necessarily reflect the actual situation of the Muslim establishments during the period studied. Thus, in 1952 the Mosque of Valea Neagră village, Medgidia district, was repaired only with the financial support and voluntary work of local Muslim believers.<sup>22</sup> The difficult situation of the Mosque in Isaccea town received a less favourable resolution from the Romanian authorities. Thus, the Department of Religious Affairs decided to limit its financial contribution for the repair of this place of worship solely to "money for painting the mosque". This was due to the fact that only 77 Muslim families were left in Isaccea in 1963, and they no longer frequented their mosque. Moreover, the mosque had no committee, and the last three Imams recognized by the Department of Religious Affairs requested to be transferred to other cities "motivating that there is nothing for them to do there, as nobody comes to the mosque".<sup>23</sup>

The solution adopted in the case of the Muslim place of worship in the Mihail Coiciu neighbourhood of Constanța demonstrates that the Ministry of Religious Affairs never manifestly intended to close the mosques. In this situation, we cannot disregard the possibility that the intervention of Mufti Iacub Mehmet, or his close relation with the Great National Assembly's President, Petru Groza, may have contributed to this favourable resolution regarding the situation of the mosque. At the beginning of 1957, the Muslim Muftiate's request to start repair works to the house of prayer located in the Mihail Coiciu neighbourhood was approved by the Department of Religious Affairs. Seeing that "this house of prayer does not meet at all the requirements for location and hygiene, as it was an insanitary, overcrowded and damp building", the imam Seit Omer decided to demolish and rebuild the mosque, without any approval from the Muftiate or the local Romanian authorities. Under the circumstances, towards the end of 1957, the regional representative of the Department of Religious Affairs recommended that his superiors in Bucharest should not grant a permit for the new building to operate as a mosque, while the Mufti argued the opposite view by stating that the new place of worship "is absolutely necessary to the population" of the Mihail Coiciu neighbourhood.<sup>24</sup> The field research I conducted in October 2013 revealed that the building in question has been functioning as a mosque

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<sup>19</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 102/1953, ff. 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 73/1957, f. 1.

<sup>21</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 102/1953, f. 2.

<sup>22</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 102/1953, f. 2.

<sup>23</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 63/1963, ff. 1-3, 5.

<sup>24</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 75/1957, ff. 3-11.

since the communist period. The construction year inscribed on the building is 1958, which proves that the Muftiate's approach in this matter prevailed over the one initiated by the regional representative of the Department of Religious Affairs. Another indirect development might have contributed to this result, i.e. the increase in the number of Turks and Tatars who lived in Constanța, as a result of their migration from rural to urban areas.<sup>25</sup>

As previously shown, the initiative of closing some mosques belonged to the Muslim Muftiate. Such decisions were motivated by financial considerations. Thus, due to the decrease in the number of believers, these places of worship were no longer cost-effective, especially since the religious organization was chronically underfinanced. Thus, in 1961, the Muftiate requested that the Sulina mosque be demolished. Damaged during the war and not repaired due to lack of funds, the building of the mosque "had become a ruin" and was "insanitary". Moreover, in his communication addressed to the Department of Religious Affairs, the Mufti Iacub Mehmet also claimed that "the number of believers has reached a minimum, most of them moving to other cities in the country".<sup>26</sup> The following year, a similar decision targeted the small mosque of Mangalia. Its demolition was justified by the precarious state of the building and also by the fact that "the existence of another mosque in Mangalia [was] not needed", since the Muslim community could go to the main mosque of the city, named Esmahan Sultan.<sup>27</sup> Giving up the premises occupied by certain mosques was sometimes motivated not only by the decrease in the number of Muslim believers or by the improper condition of the buildings, but also by purely financial reasons. Thus, the signatories of a collective letter addressed to the Department of Religious Affairs demanded the Mufti's dismissal, mentioning in support of their request, among other irregularities, the fact that he had sold the Muslim mosque and cemetery in Greci commune, Galați county, part of the land belonging to the mosque in Ion Corvin village, as well as the mosque in Horea (Șiriu) village, Constanța county, without the approval of the community or of the synodic council.<sup>28</sup>

### Religious staff

A second element in the institutional analysis regarding the Muslim religion is the religious staff, generically designated under the name of *hodjas*. This term refers to all the categories of Muslim clergy (*Imam, khatib, muezzin, caium*). Like in the case of places of worship, materials drawn up by the Ministry/Department of Religious Affairs or by the former Securitate generally do not make a clear distinction

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<sup>25</sup> See *Recensământul populației din 21 februarie 1956: structura demografică a populației*, Vol. 3, *Numărul și repartizarea teritorială a populației; Starea civilă; Naționalitatea; Limba maternă; Nivel de instruire; Familii*, Direcția Centrală de Statistică, București, 1961; *Recensământul populației și locuințelor din 15 martie 1966*, Vol. 1. Rezultate generale, Direcția Generală de Statistică, București, 1969.

<sup>26</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 61/1961, ff. 1-3.

<sup>27</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 52/1962, ff. 1-5.

<sup>28</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 70/1958, f. 3.

among these categories of Muslim clergy. Therefore, the term of *hodja* is mostly used to identify a cleric who fulfilled the function of an imam within a Muslim place of worship. There are two possible explanations for this fact. The first refers to the modest level of training of those who drew up the documents analyzed who, in general, had only basic knowledge of Islam. Secondly, the responsibilities of an imam were close to those of a priest or minister. Therefore, the imam acted as the representative of the Muslim community in a particular territorial unit.<sup>29</sup>

An analysis of the evolution in the number of Muslim clergy reveals a falling trend throughout the period under consideration. This situation, comparable to that of Muslim places of worship, was the result of the repressive measures initiated by the communist government against imams, of the decrease in the number of Muslim communities in Romania, and, last but not least, of the personal choice of those who chose this profession.

The data supplied by the religious census of February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1943 indicates that there were 106 Muslim communities in Romania; they were served by 201 persons belonging to the four categories of Muslim clergy, including the Mufti. The 1947 census registered a decrease not only in the number of Muslim communities (94), but also in the number of Muslim clergy (128).<sup>30</sup>

The numbers of Muslim clergy continued to fall in the period that followed. Thus, in 1951 there were 56 imams, out of which 45 received wage benefits from the government.<sup>31</sup> According to the records of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in 1952 the 119 Muslim communities were served by 67 imams, out of which 52 were employees of the Romanian government. Of the latter, only 45 were active within their communities, 7 being “suspended” from work.<sup>32</sup> In 1957, the existing data confirmed the existence of 115 Muslim communities, with a number of 66 imams (51 occupied state budgeted positions, 15 did not).<sup>33</sup> According to the records of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in 1959 there were 60-62 leaders registered for the 95 Muslim communities existing throughout the country.<sup>34</sup> Ten years later, statistics indicated a number of 63 Muslim communities and 37 affiliated congregations, served by 56 graduates of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia who had chosen to be imams.<sup>35</sup>

As shown in the data previously cited, the most significant drop in the number of Muslim clergy was recorded in the early 1950s. This situation was caused

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<sup>29</sup> Yahiya Emerick, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam*, Alpha, Indianapolis, 2004, p. 239.

<sup>30</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 92/1954, ff. 26-27.

<sup>31</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 2877, vol. 2, f. 158.

<sup>32</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 66/1952, f. 8; file 92/1954, f. 2.

<sup>33</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 66/1952, f. 67.

<sup>34</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 84/1959, f. 8; ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 2877, vol. 2, f. 293.

<sup>35</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 19631, f. 118 v.



by a combination of factors, among which the repression initiated by the Romanian communist authorities played an important, but not a defining role.

A 1952 document mentions that the Muslim Mufti adopted a series of measures in order to reduce the number of clergy to the “strict minimum”. Thus, the imams who were employed in the school system were urged to follow a teaching career exclusively. On the other hand, “the honorary hodjas” who had chosen this path in order to be exempted from military service “were advised to embrace other occupations”.<sup>36</sup> A special situation was registered at the Măcin mosque at the end of 1951. “Seeing that, despite the relatively high number of believers, he cannot cover expenses because of the indifference of Muslim believers towards the Church”, the khatib Nazit Geanacai resigned from the “clergy” and moved from the city “to get a job in production”.<sup>37</sup>

The decrease in number of imams was also the result of arrests carried out by the Securitate from 1952 onwards. Thus, in May-June 1952, 6 imams were arrested for “hosting Crimeans who escaped from the USSR.”<sup>38</sup> The arrests continued in the following period as well, with three Imams of the Constanța mosque among those who were held. In order to deal with the situation, Mufti Iacub Mehmet transferred some of the staff, but most of the posts of those arrested were temporarily not filled by replacements. According to the Mufti’s testimony, this caused “within the Muslim population [...] a sense of discontent for being left without Imams”. In early 1955, 18 “Mohammedan clerics” were “arrested for counter-revolutionary activity, brought before justice and condemned.”<sup>39</sup>

The situation seems to have gone more or less back to normal after the 1952 arrests, as in the draft budget for 1954 the Muslim Muftiate requested the inclusion of salary expenses for nine clergy positions.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, in the statistics on the number of believers assigned to one religious servant, the Muslim religion registered a satisfactory position in comparison with some of the most important religions recognized by the Romanian government, namely there were 438 believers per Muslim religious servant for a total of 32,429 Muslims.<sup>41</sup> The number of Muslim clergy decreased again, which led the Muftiate to request for the year 1960 only 56 budgeted positions for imams and khatibs out of the 75 positions proposed for funding by the Department of Religious Affairs.<sup>42</sup> Under these circumstances, in order to ensure the necessary staff, Mufti Iacub Mehmet asked for derogation from the provisions of the legislation in force in order to fill the vacancies in the mosques. Thus, the head of the Muslims asked for graduates of the Medgidia seminary, under the age of 26 and who had not been summoned for military service, to join the Muslim clergy until further order of military enrolment. This derogation was

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<sup>36</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 92/1954, f. 6.

<sup>37</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 4064, vol. 1, f. 10.

<sup>38</sup> For further details on the subject, see Adriana Cupcea, *Construcția identitară la comunitățile turcă și tătară din Dobrogea*, pp. 9-10, 14-15.

<sup>39</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 2877, vol. 2, ff. 158, 165, 168, 275.

<sup>40</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 72/1957, f. 16.

<sup>41</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 71/1958, f. 6.

<sup>42</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 2877, vol. 2, f. 33.

necessary because “according to the provisions in force”, no graduate of the Muslim seminary could serve as an imam employed by the Romanian state unless he had fulfilled the military service or was at least 26 years old.<sup>43</sup>

The decrease in the number of Muslim clergy should also be seen in connection with the situation of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia. In this context, it should be mentioned that holding a position in the Muslim religious hierarchy was conditioned by the graduation of this institution. Therefore, the decrease in the number of Muslim clergy should be seen in connection with the situation of the Medgidia seminary graduates. The Romanian authorities were not the only ones responsible for reducing the activity of the institution, and the present analysis will discuss a series of no less important aspects regarding the conditions in which the seminary functioned, as well as some personal choices expressed by members of the Muslim community in what concerns their attendance of the seminary.

The general restructuring of religious organizations in the early stages of the Romanian communist regime radically changed the status of the Muslim seminary in Medgidia. Thus, the duration of study was reduced from 8 to 4 years, the seminary being reorganized as a secondary school. Under these circumstances, the number of students fell accordingly, from 80-150 to 25-45 students, after the 1948 reduction in the period of study.<sup>44</sup> Despite this reduction in the activity of the seminary, the communist regime did not intend to close it. Thus, Romanian authorities continued to pay the teachers' salaries and students' scholarships throughout the entire period in which the Medgidia seminary was open. Furthermore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs financially supported the repair works carried out on the seminary building and the modernization of its plumbing, which were undertaken because the seminary risked being refused the sanitary operating permits for the school year 1954-1955.<sup>45</sup>

Despite all this financial support from the Romanian authorities, the material situation of the seminary continued to be difficult until its closure in 1967. Thus, the annual reports drawn up by the regional representatives of the Ministry/Department of Religious Affairs repeatedly highlighted the improper conditions in which the seminary functioned, as well as the various shortages seminary students had to endure. Classrooms were equipped with old and worn out furniture, and there were no textbooks and teaching resources for subjects specific to the Muslim seminary. The boarding school dorms had “an aspect of negligence”, “beds and bed linen” left “a lot to be desired” as they were not uniform and were dirty, while the walls were smoke-stained and dirty because of the stoves. Daily food was modest because kitchen staff prepared meals using groceries bought with money coming from school fees and ingredients students brought from home. Because most of the students came from “needy families”, they could not afford to pay the fee in full in one instalment, so they were usually overdue. Food brought by students from home was insufficient for

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<sup>43</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 76/1960, ff. 1-4 f-v.

<sup>44</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 94/1955, f. 6.

<sup>45</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 105/1953, ff. 11-14, file 73/1957, f. 1, file 83/1956, f. 11.

everyone and, most of the time, students brought the same food. Therefore, there was a surplus of that particular food, while other ingredients needed to prepare meals were missing. For instance, most of the students brought beans, which were cheap and easy to store, hoping that others would bring oil, onions, etc. Another problem the management of the Muslim seminary had to cope with was the lack of funds for the purchase of solid fuel for the heating of the building and the boarding school. Therefore, the bathroom and dining room were unheated, and dorms were heated only in the evening. Sometimes, in order to save wood, classes were held in the dorms. According to reports written by regional representatives of the Ministry/Department of Religious Affairs, these difficulties in the operation of the seminary continued because of the Muftiate, which took no interest in the matter, and failed to fulfil its commitment to support the seminary financially.<sup>46</sup>

This explanation only partially reflects reality and does not take into account several other aspects regarding the manner in which the Muslim religion obtained revenues, in addition to the funds provided by the Romanian government. As a 1951 document of the Ministry of Religious Affairs admitted, additional revenues were very difficult to obtain by the Muslim religion “because believers are not used to contributing to these costs”. At the same time, the low level of income registered by the Turkish and Tatar minorities could also explain their lack of “enthusiasm” in making voluntary donations to mosques. Also, lands owned by Muslim places of worship were ceded to the Romanian government during the collectivization of agriculture, and the few *Waqf*<sup>47</sup> in the towns of Constanța, Tulcea, Hârșova and Cernavodă registered only minimum incomes. Also, the organization of the Muslim religion did not allow sales of religious objects that might have generated additional sources of income (such as calendars, candles, icons). Under the circumstances, the payment of contributions due to the Muftiate, which were established depending on the number of Muslim families or Muslim believers in that particular local community, was “almost always disregarded”.<sup>48</sup> This financial situation explains not only the insufficient subsidies provided by the Muftiate to the Muslim seminary in Medgidia, but also the delays in money transfers for the purchase of materials needed for the good operation of the institution (for instance, wood to heat the building and the boarding school during winter).

The main reason for the closure of the Medgidia Muslim seminary in 1967 was lack of students. Except for a few years (1948-1949, 1953-1956), the number of students enrolled in the first year or who completed their studies in Medgidia with a diploma examination was in a continuous decline. Moreover, starting with the school year 1959-1960, due to the low number of students, the Muslim seminary could no longer organize courses for all years of study. The situation worsened in the autumn

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<sup>46</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 74/1957, ff. 3-6 f-v, file 103/1953, f. 1, file 72/1958, ff. 5-6, file 60/1961, f. 3.

<sup>47</sup> The *Waqf* was a religious foundation which owned several donations in the form of land or buildings and which used the resulting income for religious and charitable purposes. See, Gabor Agoston, Bruce Masters, *The Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, Facts On File, 2009, New York, 2009, p.75.

<sup>48</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 2877, vol. 2, ff. 5-6.

of 1963, when none of the students who had completed the first year came back to start their second year, preferring to continue their studies in another school. Moreover, in the same year, no candidates took the 1<sup>st</sup> year entrance examination.<sup>49</sup>

At the same time, not all graduates of the Medgidia Muslim seminary chose to pursue a career in the Muslim clergy.<sup>50</sup> This influenced, in its turn, the decrease in the number of imams functioning in the Muslim communities of Dobruja. Thus, between 1948 and 1953, only one graduate of the seminary chose to enter the clergy. Alongside the arrests in early 1950s, which targeted Islamic clergy who had been involved in helping Tatar refugees from the Soviet Union, this contributed to a considerable fall in the number of imams. Although the above-mentioned difference existed throughout the period studied, the number of graduates who entered the Muslim clergy increased gradually, reflecting an increase in the number of students of the seminary between 1953 and 1956. The inability of the Muftiate to fill all the 75 budgeted positions offered by the Department of Religious Affairs for the year 1960 may have multiple explanations which vary from the retirement of some Muslim clergy to their voluntary resignation or their demise.

The decline in the number of students, and implicitly in the number of future imams, was the consequence of the new professional opportunities and educational alternatives which became available to young Turks and Tatars after the communist regime came to power in Romania. These new opportunities were more financially and socially appealing than a position in the Muslim clergy, all the more so since the attitude of the regime towards the “Muslim nationality”<sup>51</sup> was neither one of assimilation nor of discrimination.

A series of memoirs confirm that, at least in terms of payment, the position of Imam was not one that brought many satisfactions: “Before 1989, our Imams earned salaries below the minimum, which is why their merit is that they managed to hold their own. Most of them had to take a second job in order to survive, but those who believed in their profession resisted. We mustn’t forget the merits of the elderly, who didn’t leave when the average salary was 500 lei, but stayed in their job for 180-200 lei. And in those times people were poor, one could not go as an imam to a family, to a funeral, to a service and claim large amounts of money”<sup>52</sup>. Azis Osman, the current Imam of Bucharest, recalls that during the communist period he had to do “proletarian-socialist” work as well, in addition to that of an imam, in order to make a decent living. Thus, in 1962 he became an imam in Pelinu village, Comana district, currently Constanța county, and at the same time he took a job as a warehouseman at a farm nearby. Subsequently, in 1964 Azis Osman became the assistant of the

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<sup>49</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 2877, vol. 2, f. 18; ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 94/1955, f. 6; file 76/1960, f. 7; file 51 bis/1962, f. 2; file 62/1963, ff. 3-19.

<sup>50</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond documentar*, dosar 2877, vol. 2, f. 18.

<sup>51</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 10775, vol. 1, f. 205.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Prof. M. F., PhD, 74 years old, member of the Tatar community. Interviewed by Adriana Cupcea, on January 29th, 2013, in Constanța, Constanța County. Interview available in the archives of the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (hereafter RIRNM).

Techirghiol Imam, while also working in “boilermaking at Electrica” in order to supplement his income.<sup>53</sup>

Maintaining a low salary level for the Muslim clergy was part of the same policy of no direct repression pursued by the communist authorities. By indirect means, this policy aimed at the estrangement of citizens from their religion, and at undermining (also economically) the main religious institutions. In this war of “attrition”, reducing the revenues of Muslim clergy and forcing them to take a second job in the socialist industrial or agricultural sector was an attempt to de-professionalize them, but also to offer them solid arguments for a possible change in profession.

### ”Everyday Islam”

The second part of the present chapter will analyze, within the context of 1950s-1960s Dobruja, what Maria Elisabeth Lauw called “everyday Islam”,<sup>54</sup> i.e. how the Islamic religion was practiced and understood by Muslim believers in their day-to-day life, given the constraints imposed by the Romanian communist regime on the manifestation of religion in the public sphere.

For most of the subjects of the oral history investigation, the desire for professional accomplishment represented a form of integration, and thus of voluntary participation in the organization and operation of the local structures of the Romanian socialist society. Motivated either by material advantage or by personal satisfaction given by the conscientious fulfilment of one’s duties, this participation became the central point, and sometimes the only focus of the daily life of Dobruja Muslims. Thus, devotion towards one’s profession came before the expression and manifestation of Islamic belief:

“But during [...] agricultural work, not so much, because there was no time. If, for example Bayram was on a weekday, we were busy, my husband worked in agriculture, in the evenings we barely had the time to leave Kogălniceanu, to go to visit our relatives in Constanța, because in Kogălniceanu we had no relatives [...]. Therefore, we didn’t have the time to observe traditions, I mean we didn’t have trouble from the government, from the State, we just didn’t have time for that because we were very, very busy all the time.”<sup>55</sup>

From the Muslim believers’ point of view, the fact that religion came second in their everyday life did not exclude their participation in the religious service organized on Fridays, for the two greatest Islamic celebrations or for other events that marked the existence of the Muslim community (such as baptisms, weddings, funerals):

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<sup>53</sup> București: Aziz Osman: „Un om fără religie este ca un corp fără cap“, în *Adevărul*, on-line edition, 12 September 2009, [http://adevarul.ro/news/bucuresti/bucuresti-aziz-osman-un-om-religie-corp-cap-1\\_50bdfc947c42d5a663d147d1/index.html](http://adevarul.ro/news/bucuresti/bucuresti-aziz-osman-un-om-religie-corp-cap-1_50bdfc947c42d5a663d147d1/index.html), last entry 11 November 2013. <sup>54</sup>

Maria Elisabeth Lauw, *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia*, p.7.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with N. I., 68 years old, Romanian teacher, member of the Tatar community. Interview by Adriana Cupcea, on January 29, 2013, in Constanța, Constanța County, available in the archives of the RIRNM.

“We went to the service on Fridays in general and to the services held to celebrate the two Festivals. Funerals were a must, and we certainly went to the memorial meals organized for our community members.”<sup>56</sup>

“Regardless of age, everybody participated in the Bayram festivals (Kurban Bayram<sup>57</sup> and Ramazan Bayram<sup>58</sup>), there were no more seats in the mosque for the Bayram services.”<sup>59</sup>

In addition to the fact that personal time was monopolized by professional activities, the “domestication” of religion must be seen in connection both with the expression of a certain reluctance of the Muslim community to express their beliefs in the public sphere, and with the way in which rituals specific to Islamic religion are organized. Thus, the protective sanctuary of the home became the preferred place where the extended family marked its main religious celebrations:

“I didn’t go to the service because I didn’t have time, because my work didn’t allow it [...] I always celebrated Bayram with my family, always with my family and my brothers. We were a big family, we were 25-30 people who celebrated Bayram together, both Kurban Bayram and Ramazan Bayram.”<sup>60</sup>

Few people participated in wedding, baptism or funeral ceremonies and, according to the Islamic tradition, these were held in the private space of the home and not at mosques:

“Here in Kogălniceanu, there is a compact Tatar community as well, to which I was invited for wedding or baptism ceremonies, and for different activities, so that I didn’t feel a strong pressure [...] upon the minority from the authorities of the time.

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with Professor M. F., PhD, 74 years old, member of the Tatar community. Interview by Adriana Cupcea, on January 29, 2013, in Constanța, Constanța County, available in the archives of the RIRNM.

<sup>57</sup> Kurban Bayram (Feast of the Sacrifice) honours the willingness of Prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice his own son in obedience of a command from Allah. As a reward, Allah sends him a wether to sacrifice instead of his son, who survives. After prayer (Bayram Namazı), which always takes place in mosques, and after men visit the houses of those dead over the year to recite from the Quran, four days of feast follow in which traditional dinners are held, and visits to parents, grandparents, relatives and friends are paid, consolidating the family and community. See Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea: repere de viață spirituală și învățământ în limba maternă*, Ex Ponto, Constanța, 1998, p. 55.

<sup>58</sup> Ramazan Bayram (Festival of Breaking the Fast, the Sugar Festival) is, alongside the Festival of the Sacrifice (Kurban Bayram), the second important religious holiday celebrated by Muslims. This holiday is an opportunity to strengthen the Turkish community. The 30 days of fasting have the role to physically and mentally fortify the believer, and end with the Bayram service (Bayram Namazı), followed by three days of joy, relaxation and reconciliation. See *Ibidem*.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Professor M. F., PhD, 74 years old, member of the Tatar community. Interview by Adriana Cupcea, on January 29, 2013, in Constanța, Constanța County, available in the archives of the RIRNM; interview with K. R., 91 years old, member of the Turkish community. Interview by Adriana Cupcea, on January 29, 2013, in Constanța, Constanța County, available in the archives of the RIRNM.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with I. A., 68 years old, agricultural engineer, member of the Tatar community. Interview by Adriana Cupcea, on January 29, 2013, in Constanța, Constanța County, available in the archives of the RIRNM.

Well, we weren't that visible either, because in our community everything is celebrated in the family, weddings as well, there were few guests invited, and they were not held in restaurants or anything like that."<sup>61</sup>

"Usually the religious wedding was held at home, because it's simpler, the imam comes to our house and doesn't go to church. Actually, all religious customs were much easier for us, because the imam went from house to house. Baptism as well, baptism is held at home too, religious wedding ceremonies, we did all that."<sup>62</sup>

Because the five daily prayers (*salat*) could be done outside the mosque, Muslim believers could pray at home. This was even more of an advantage due to the fact that for the active segment of the Turkish and Tatar minorities going to the mosque presupposed taking on a potential risk for the stability of their work place:

"People were more reluctant, probably because [...], working within the public administration of that time, in various institutions, and knowing the philosophy of the communist regime, they were reluctant in practicing religious values in everyday life [...] It is very rare to see parishioners participating in all five services [*actually, all five prayers*]. Most of them prayed at home. [...] It was very difficult to practice all five obligatory services in the community."<sup>63</sup>

As revealed by the fragments cited above, some of those interviewed talked about the reluctance of the Muslim community in publicly expressing their Islamic belief. This was rather a precautionary measure against possible corrective action from the Romanian authorities, and not the result of an actual personal experience in this regard. Moreover, as previously stated, the atheist policy promoted by the Romanian communist government did not aim to use force or repressive means to displace religion from its citizens' lives. Such corrective interventions of the Romanian authorities existed, but rather targeted those particular religious practices which were not covered by the articles of the statute of the Muslim religion adopted in 1949. The practices of this "unofficial Islam"<sup>64</sup> were limited to perpetuating religious traditions. They represented a reaction of resistance on behalf of some members of the Muslim community against the accelerated changes and the sometimes intrusive and disrespectful actions of the communist authorities against Islamic religion.

Among the cases that have been identified, one first example of this "unofficial Islam" is a religious school that functioned illegally over a relatively short period of time (one week). At the end of 1953, the regional representative of the Ministry of Religious Affairs discovered that Imam Idait Omer of Măcin town had held in his own house "classes with educational religious character" for 12 children,

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with S.T., 52 years old, teacher, member of the Turkish community. Interview by Adriana Cupcea, on January 31, 2013, in Constanța, Constanța County, available in the archives of the RIRNM.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Y.M., 36 years old, Mufti of the Muslim Religion in Romania. Interview by Adriana Cupcea, on January 31, 2013, in Constanța, Constanța County, available in the archives of the RIRNM.

<sup>64</sup> Adeed Khalid, *Islam after Communism. Religion and Politics in Central Asia*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 2007, p. 105.

who were also enrolled in the local Turkish school. The imam taught these classes as a result of the insistence of some parents who “were more mystical in their faith and wanted to make sure that their children [...] still think about the Mohammedan law”. During classes, in addition to “religious songs and prayers”, children were also taught lessons from a booklet. Although the representative of the Ministry of Religious Affairs considered that the booklet contained religious writings, this was, in fact, a primer used for teaching children the alphabet and Osman Turkish language<sup>65</sup>.

In their turn, Muslim women came to the attention of the Romanian authorities for having “illegally” organized meetings with other believers. Thus, at the beginning of 1962, the regional representative of the Department of Religious Affairs recorded the fact that a certain woman named Raima Aivaz of Medgidia kept on “gathering in her home other Muslim believers, for big holidays, reading to them from the Quran, and receiving in exchange money from each believer”.<sup>66</sup> Organizing such meetings outside the formal framework of the mosque was a traditional practice for the Muslim community in Dobruja, but unknown and seen with suspicion by the regional representatives of the Department of Religious Affairs. Because reading the Quran was not possible for all believers, one member of the Muslim community, man or woman, used to recite excerpts from the holy book during informal meetings like those mentioned above. For his or her service, that particular Muslim believer was indeed rewarded financially by those present.<sup>67</sup>

The solution given in the case of Isac Baba's grave in the town of Isaccea in 1953 is illustrative not only for the particular vitality of the local Muslim traditions, but also for the way in which the locals' attachment to this local landmark of Islamic religion put an end to a brutal action taken by the Romanian military authorities. For the Muslims in Isaccea, Isac Baba was both the founder of their city and a personality who had acquired the status of patron saint (*veli*). Thus, in his report, the regional representative of the Religious Affairs stated: “For hundreds of years, [*Muslims*] honour this grave, where they go on Fridays and light up candles, and for important holidays, such as Bayram, they go and pray at this grave, where the traditional wether is killed as a sacrifice”. This order was destroyed when a military unit moved into a building next to the grave. Because it needed more space, the unit enclosed an area that extended to the land where Isac Baba's grave was located. Moreover, when “a comrade colonel came for auditing” he asked the President of the People's Council and the President of the local Muslim community “to move the grave, because they needed space”. This order gave birth to “great dissatisfaction” among the Muslim followers, who refused to move the grave and filed complaints to the Muftiate and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The regional representative of the Department of Religious Affairs intervened to resolve the existing conflict and managed to find a compromise solution, satisfactory for both sides involved: the grave remained in

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<sup>65</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 104/1953, ff. 2-3. I thank my colleague Metin Omer, PhD student at the Hacettepe University in Ankara, for helping us to decipher the content of the booklet.

<sup>66</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 1/1961, f. 10.

<sup>67</sup> I thank my colleague Metin Omer, PhD student at the Hacettepe University in Ankara, for providing further information and details related to this kind of events.



place “given its importance for the Muslim community” and a fence was built in order to separate the funerary monument from the premises of the military unit.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusions

The present chapter has analyzed the evolution of the Muslim community in the historic region of Dobruja during the first years of the Romanian communist regime (1948-1965), from two perspectives: the institutional perspective, and that of everyday life history. This double dimension of analysis underlined that there were multiple causes for the decline in the activity of Muslim religious institutions and in the participation of Muslim believers in religious services organized at mosques. Without excluding the actual or potential intervention of the government in this matter, the chapter analysed the clear weakening of the role of religion in the life of Turkish and Tatar minorities in Dobruja against the wider background of the social and economic changes triggered by the onset of the Romanian communist regime, as well as the way in which all of these impacted the relationship of the ordinary Muslim with religion. Although Islamic faith became merely one option among several possible lifestyles available in the new political and social setting, it survived and acted as a binding element of ethnic identity.

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<sup>68</sup> ANIC, *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts-Education Department*, file 105/1953, ff. 1, 4.

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# **Manufacturing a New Political Identity: Turkish and Tatar Women between the Years 1948-1960. A Case Study - Săteanca, Femeia and Dobrogea nouă**

Manuela Marin

## **1. Introduction: Topic, Methodology, Sources**

The communist regime established in Romania in 1948 marked the beginning of an ambitious program of transforming the entire national economic structure according to the socialist model. Besides the obvious objective of stimulating economic development, this program, by the changes it made in the population's material living conditions, was supposed to encourage the emergence of a new human type, the new socialist man. However, in order to create this new human typology, the transformation of the economic structure (through industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture) had to be seconded by a process of *education* of the population in accordance with the guiding ideology of the new political regime.

In this context, the term *education* does not refer to the process taking place within the national education system. Like Matthew Lenoe, I believe that the Romanian communist regime used *propaganda* as the main means of educating the population.<sup>1</sup> Thus, as the present analysis will show, raising the “cultural level” of the masses involved the eradication of illiteracy or the acquisition of professional or any other type of knowledge, in close connection with following the objectives of the *political socialization* process. This phrase is generally used in reference to the youngest segment of the population, which by definition has to be politically socialized. However, I consider it useful to expand the target group of the *political socialization* process to the entire population, implemented as such by the Romanian communist regime and its propaganda apparatus in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, for two reasons. The first one is related to the significance attached to this process, while the second is connected to the Romanian political context between 1948 and 1960.

*Political socialization* is defined as “a learning process through which political rules and behaviour deemed acceptable for the existing political system are communicated from one generation to another”.<sup>2</sup> The main purpose of political socialization is to make the subjects familiar with the main features of the political system (e.g., adhesions and alliances, rules and rituals, symbols and types of behaviour, personalities) and to create, based on such features, a set of beliefs, feelings and information intended to help individuals understand, evaluate and relate

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the masses. Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers*, Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley Allen Renshon, „Assumptive Frameworks in Political Socialization Theory” in Stanley Allen Renshon (editor), *Handbook of Political Socialization: Theory and Research*, Free Press, New York, 1977, p. 5.

to the political world around them.<sup>3</sup> In the Romanian context of the 1940s and 1950s, the political socialization of the entire population was necessary from the perspective of the new political regime, and especially from the perspective of its professed socialist values.

For the purposes of this analysis, *propaganda* will be defined as an organized and deliberate process of communicating certain ideas and values. Its goal is to persuade people to think and act in a way that ensures the fulfilment of specific objectives for the benefit of the organizers of this process.<sup>4</sup> The Romanian communist regime used various means of propaganda (such as the printed press, or the radio) or organizational settings (meetings, informal gatherings) to broadcast its ideological message to the population at large.

Starting from these preliminary considerations, the present chapter will explore how the Romanian party propaganda, represented by three publications (two magazines for the female audience, *Săteanca* and *Femeia*, and a local newspaper, *Dobrogea nouă*), constructed, between 1948 and 1960, a new political identity for ethnic Turkish and Tatar women. I used the verb *to manufacture* in the title of the present chapter because I believe that the purpose of the articles that appeared in these three publications was to identify and popularize, by using different types of texts, a number of qualities or features that were supposed to individualize the activity of the new woman, regardless of her nationality or the environment she came from. This set of qualities or features also illustrated and gave substance to the elements of the new feminine political identity proposed by the Romanian communist regime and its propaganda apparatus.

Consequently, my view on (women's) identity is that, at the level of discourse, it is built through communist propaganda (in the printed press), and in accordance with the official ideological guidelines. From this point of view, "identity construction refers to a process by which identity is imposed".<sup>5</sup> At the same time, according to Judith Butler, identity is *performative*, meaning that it is built through discourse. This discourse constantly reiterates certain norms or sets of norms, which finally become decisive in defining identity.<sup>6</sup>

Another concept I consider useful for the subject of the present chapter is Paul Ricoeur's concept of *narrative identity*.<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, women become both agents and characters of the action described by the official discourse, and their identity is defined by what they do rather than by what they are. In this case, identity

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<sup>3</sup> Richard E. Dawson, Kenneth Prewitt, *Political Socialization*, Little Brown, New York, 1969, pp. 16-17.

<sup>4</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind. A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2003, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Călin Morar-Vulcu, *Republica își făurește oamenii. Construcția identităților politice în discursul oficial în România, 1948-1965*, Editura EIKON, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Brian Longhurst, Greg Smith, Gaynor Bagnall, Garry Crawford, Miles Ogborn, Elaine Baldwin, Scott McCracken, *Introducing Cultural Studies* (Second Edition), Pearson Education, Harlow, 2008, pp. 133, 142.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, pp. 113-168.

building appears as a process which permanently defines and redefines women's identity<sup>8</sup> in relation to a set of officially sanctioned values and actions.

In conclusion, the present chapter will analyze the content and the way in which the discourse of communist propaganda created and imposed as mandatory certain benchmarks of political identity for ethnic Turkish and Tatar women between 1948 and 1960. As I will show in what follows, women's involvement in the local social, political and economic activity became the main element around which their political identity was structured and exercised. In this regard, the present chapter will mainly examine the way in which communist propaganda created a political identity for women in general, in order to show whether and to what extent the official discourse of the Romanian regime regarding the political role of women was a specific discourse, adapted to the representatives of the Turkish and Tatar minority in Dobruja.

Another element that defined the political identity of women was *gender*. Although the communist state supported the full emancipation of women and the eradication of gender differences, the official discourse on the role of women in the socialist society essentially used and consolidated traditional gender differences related to the public and private space.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the clearly didactic tone of the texts published in women's magazines, the emphasis laid, in the same context, on women's lack of education and on their reluctance to participate in any form of training, their professional choices, as well as the nature of women's social and political activism extensively covered in the printed press, contributed not only to the consolidation of the gender stereotype, but also to the creation of a term of comparison that would give substance and meaning to the new codes of conduct prescribed for working women in the rural and urban environment.

*Săteanca* was a monthly magazine published between 1948 and 1974 by the mass organization of women in communist Romania, *The Democratic Women's Union of the Romanian People's Republic* (*Uniunea Femeilor Democrate din Republica Populară Română*, hereafter abbreviated as UFDR), renamed during the 1950s as *The Democratic Women's Committee of the Romanian People's Republic*. The target audience of this magazine was the category of ordinary women who lived and worked in rural areas.

*Femeia* magazine, also a monthly publication, issued throughout the entire Romanian communist period, was addressed especially, but not exclusively, to readers in urban areas. It was published by the same *Democratic Women's Union of the Romanian People's Republic*.

*Dobrogea nouă* was the official newspaper of the Constanța Regional Party Committee and of the Constanța People's Council, published six times a week. Unlike the previously mentioned publications, *Dobrogea nouă* addressed all categories of readers in the urban and rural areas in the Constanța region.

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<sup>8</sup> Călin Morar-Vulcu, *Republica își făurește oamenii.*, p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> For an excellent analysis on the subject, see Luciana-Mioara Jinga, „Femeile în cadrul Partidului Comunist Român. 1944-1989”, teză de doctorat, Universitatea „Al. I. Cuza”, Iași, Université D'Angers, Franța, 2011, pp. 168-211.

These publications were chosen in order to ensure the representativeness of the propaganda discourse regarding the construction of the political identity of women in general and that of ethnic Turkish and Tatar women in particular. The choice of *Săteanca* magazine was motivated by the fact that in the 1950s a significant part of ethnic Turks and Tatars still lived in rural areas.<sup>10</sup> The period chosen for the analysis of articles that appeared in the three previously identified publications, 1948-1960, roughly corresponds to the period in which the Romanian communist state applied a maximalist policy regarding national minority rights.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. “The illiterate man stands outside of politics” (Lenin)

As noted above, besides the development of the *structure*, or the base, the construction of socialism also required a transformation of the *superstructure*, or of the way in which people thought, acted and behaved. From the point of view of Marxist ideology, the two components were in a relation of interdependence and mutual conditioning. Material circumstances stimulated and encouraged the emergence of the *New Socialist Man*, but in order for them to occur, the contribution of superstructure was a decisive one. However, this participation in the action of building socialism depended on the acquisition of a particular kind of political knowledge, which was supposed to assist and help people understand the importance of its role in achieving the goals of the socialist transformation of the country and also to provide the intellectual “equipment” that would enable them to understand the radical, but beneficial character of the changes proposed by the new political regime. Obviously, such acquisition of knowledge mainly required the political education or socialization of the population.

In the context of the '50s, in Romania, literacy courses were the main tool used by the communist regime for the political education of a significant part of the population. Thus, the articles that appeared in the publications analyzed used the metaphor of *light* in order to report the consequences of women's access to education, especially of those in rural areas, where most of the illiterates lived. However, as I will show in what follows, the education that was meant to ensure women's “enlightenment” also acquired a broader meaning, i.e. the meaning of women's

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<sup>10</sup> Adriana Cupcea, Manuela Marin, „Migrația internă a comunităților turcă și tătară din Dobrogea în perioada regimului comunist. Considerații generale”, in *Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis, Series Historica*, Vol. X, 2013, pp. 169-180.

<sup>11</sup> Robert King, *Minorities under Communism. Nationalities as a Source of Tension among Balkan Communist States*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973, pp. 146-157. Robert King mentions that the communist regime granted to its national minorities similar privileges to those enjoyed by the Romanian population in addition to other political, cultural and linguistic rights. This situation lasted until shortly after the Hungarian revolution when the Romanian Party gradually began to pursue a policy of integrating the national minorities. In my text, when I speak about a maximalist policy I refer to the period before the 1956 when the press underlined the regime's preoccupation for granting and observing full rights to its minority populations.

“cultivation”. Similarly to the Soviet case,<sup>12</sup> the term referred to women's acquisition of a set of knowledge that was meant to assist them in the radical transformation of their daily life.

An important number of articles published in *Săteanca* and *Femeia* magazines indicated the best methods for attracting women to literacy courses. This task was usually entrusted to the activists of the UFDR. Because women were “busy with housework (...) others were shy”, in most cases, the “impulses and canvassing of mentors” were necessary to make them decide “to start learning”.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, the UFDR activists organized gatherings in women's private homes or even in their own homes in order to introduce them to the “light of letters”.<sup>14</sup> Also, in order to attract women to literacy courses, they organized reading clubs or groups where they read from different texts to the participants: newspapers and magazines, book chapters and, occasionally, specialized brochures about the Soviet Union. At these clubs, organized both in rural and in urban areas, women “started to like reading and are happy to come; they bring their needlework, they knit and read by turns, then discuss what they have read. (...) They like very much to discuss what they have read and to draw useful lessons”.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to some methodological articles, the analyzed publications insisted on the benefits of women's participation in informal literacy gatherings and on how this participation radically changed their lives and made them rethink their occupational prospects. This was also the case of a countrywoman for whom the day when she read the first newspaper page remained a memorable one: “She still remembers how she laughed with joy when she realized for the first time that she could read the news in *Scântea* newspaper, that she could share the secrets of her heart with her loved ones, in writing. By learning how to read and write, Bistriceanu Victoria could work harder, achieved a greater number of work days and the collective farm where she works acknowledged her accomplishments”.<sup>16</sup> In their turn, three other women “who recently started to learn how to read and write” became “tireless agitators. Due to their hard work, they can now create beautiful articles that women read at their gatherings in the community centre, showing how useful literacy can be”.<sup>17</sup> Another category of women whose access to education changed their lives was the group of rural librarians. Once they completed the literacy courses, they agreed to take care of the libraries in their places of residence. From this position, the

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<sup>12</sup> See Vadim Volkov, “The concept of Kul'turnost” , in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalinism. New Directions, Stalinism. New Directions*, Routledge, London, 1999, pp. 216-226.

<sup>13</sup> N. Gheorghe, „Omul analfabet este în afara politicii”, in *Femeia*, no. 5, 1949, p. 5

<sup>14</sup> “Adevărata lumină a vieții satului”, in *Săteanca*, no. 12, December 1955, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> “Realizări și lipsuri ale județenelor UFDR în munca culturală”, in *Săteanca*, nr. 1, January 1950, p. 2. Also, see V. Dolsa, “Aspecte din munca de alfabetizare”, in *Femeia*, no. 3, 1950, p. 30; D. Iordăchescu, “Tot mai multe femei în acțiunea de culturalizare a maselor”, in *Femeia*, no. 9, 1950, p. 27; Saricu Cere, “Din munca comitetelor satești UFDR”, in *Săteanca*, no. 4, March 1950, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> D. Ionescu, “Să luptăm împotriva neștiinței de carte”, in *Săteanca*, no. 19-20, 1951, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> Maria Filip, “Nici un neștiutor de carte să nu rămână în afara cursurilor de alfabetizare”, in *Săteanca*, no. 9, 1952, p. 12.



new librarians were actively involved in attracting a large number of fellow citizens to reading books.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. “Today, we shall stop being ignorant!”<sup>19</sup>

As previously stated, the endeavour to educate women aimed not only at the acquisition of literacy. Emphasizing that access to education was the result of the party's policy to ensure equal rights for all Romanian citizens, press articles pointed out how literacy opened new educational and professional opportunities for women and significantly improved the quality of their work. From this perspective, women's participation in the construction of socialism became an attribute of their new political identities. Thus, being “enlightened” by “the great teachings of socialism”,<sup>20</sup> women could reinforce “the army of conscious builders of socialism”.<sup>21</sup> As another woman put it, the electoral support granted to the communist party was motivated by the support it had showed for women's social and political emancipation: “So that we no longer be ignorant, like we used to be, as we didn't even know the name of the country we lived in”.<sup>22</sup>

The articles stated that women's acquisition of specific knowledge as a result of their participation in various forms of “cultivation” (reading clubs, book presentations at work or at the community centre, listening to radio shows together, clubs or courses for the acquisition of certain knowledge, etc.) positively influenced the quality of their work. In order to prove the veracity of this idea, the published articles sometimes included women's testimonies in this regard. Thus, one of them mentioned that her participation in a reading group in the commune of Drăgănești, Olt county, was motivated by the fact that she could always learn something new and useful in her work: “I have a lot of work and I wouldn't have come but I want to hear something new, 'cause that's the only way we can enlighten our minds”. Another participant in the same reading club admitted that “we learn many useful things by reading together. For example, how could we have known that if we plant forests, we can attract rain, if we hadn't read about it in the brochure that said that the Soviet people knew how to overcome drought”.<sup>23</sup>

In their turn, the articles published in *Dobrogea nouă* mentioned that women's access to education significantly improved the quality of their work. In this respect, one of the articles described how, by acquiring knowledge on cattle breeding and keeping, a group of female workers from the livestock department of the Tătaru collective farm unit (GospodărieAgricolă Colectivă, hereafter GAC) managed to increase their labour productivity. In order to raise the level of professional education

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<sup>18</sup> See, Silvia Micu, “Cultura aduce tot mai multă lumină la sate”, in *Săteanca*, no. 8, 1952, p. 6; “Biblioteca”, in *Săteanca*, no. 1, January 1952, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Maria Balmuș, “Azi nu mai stăm cu capu' n traistă”, in *Săteanca*, no. 3, 1948, p.15.

<sup>20</sup> D. Iordăchescu, “Tot mai multe femei în acțiunea de culturalizare”, in *Femeia*, no. 9, 1950, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> V. Dolsa, “Aspecte din munca de alfabetizare”, in *Femeia* no. 3, 1950, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Maria Balmuș, “Azi nu mai stăm cu capu' n traistă”, *Săteanca*, nr. 3, 1948, p.15.

<sup>23</sup> Petruța Dacă, “Așa ne luminăm mintea”, *Săteanca*, nr. 6, aprilie 1950, p. 17.

of newly “promoted” women in the animal husbandry sector, the activists of the women's committee organized a mobile library “in the very cow barn”. Seeing that the women did not show any interest in reading certain specialist literature, the same activists organized “collective presentations of a few brochures”. This strategy yielded results because:

“Discovering that, by learning from brochures, they can better keep the cows and obtain an increasingly higher milk production, some women, including Geta Gălicel, Leana Snagov and Feride Mustafa, started to borrow brochures in order to read them in their spare time. As they acquired more and more knowledge from those books, these women's standards regarding the quality of their own work began to rise. They proposed to discuss the issue of some cattle keepers who came late to work or who didn't perform quality jobs”. The article showed, with concrete examples, how these women's labour productivity was influenced by raising their level of professional education. Among them, two stood out, i.e. Nasia Izmi who achieved “from her four cows, an average production of 2,668 liters of milk per cow, and Memnune Vait - with 2,200 liters of milk per cow”.<sup>24</sup>

Attending various vocational training courses was another element of women's new political identity. Thus, press articles emphasized that the party's policy of granting them equal rights with men allowed women not only to attend training courses, but also to benefit from an education that would allow them to fill positions which were generally occupied by men.

A number of articles that appeared in the publications analyzed mentioned that some of the “best women, the most industrious UFDR members, (...) those who were mostly exploited” attended the courses of the UFDR instruction schools. In doing so, they learned “how to fight their enemies, how to better understand their guile and how to convince their fellow villagers of the fight they need to carry out on this new road to a better and better life”.<sup>25</sup> However, the true measure of the UFDR mentors' new political identity is revealed by the enthusiasm with which they acquired knowledge in order to pass it on to the other women in their place of residence. Thus, glad to have had “the fortune of enlightening their own minds”, the new mentors enthusiastically engaged in “the cultural work” “of bettering the village”.<sup>26</sup> They organized literacy courses, reading groups, gatherings where women read articles from magazines, newspapers, brochures and even books. But the essence of their activity consisted of “the heart-to-heart canvassing”. Thus, the activists used all the opportunities to show women “the importance of collective farm units for the working peasantry” and to urge them to come “to work on a regular basis, showing them that they will be rewarded only based on their work and that the industrious ones will take home their harvest in a cart, and the others in a bag, depending on how much each of them has worked”. The activists also tried to instruct women on other

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<sup>24</sup> Musebie Nasurla, “Cartea ne-a ajutat să obținem producții mari”, in *Dobrogea Nouă*, 19 March 1961, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Elisabeta Dumitru, “La școala de îndrumătoare de la Sibiu”, in *Săteanca*, no. 1, January-February 1949, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> “Realizări și lipsuri ale județenelor UFDR în munca culturală”, in *Săteanca*, no. 1, January 1950, p. 2.

practical aspects of collective work which at first sight were disadvantageous to them, such as setting and delivering quotas established by the state. These mentors were also responsible for persuading and mobilizing women to finish agricultural work “on time and without losses”<sup>27</sup> or to perform certain tasks for the benefit of the community.<sup>28</sup> For their work to be “thorough” and yield “better and better results”, these mentors were aware that they had to complete the training started within the UFDR and “to read more and more, which will enrich their cultural and political knowledge”.<sup>29</sup>

Some of the articles presented examples of women who, by gaining access to education, were given the opportunity to work in fields previously dominated by men. By attending a vocational school, they began to work as tractor drivers or agricultural technicians in the new farms and to use new machines and tools, to work as founders, welders or simply as skilled workers in different industries. Newspaper articles stated that these women successfully carried out their duties, being motivated by the party's concern for ensuring and protecting their rights, and especially by the fact that they were aware of the importance of their work for the socialist transformation of the country, which was undertaken only for the general welfare of the country and its inhabitants.<sup>30</sup> Such egalitarian rhetoric masculinised the image of the female, but this masculinization did not go beyond the threshold of their work place. After having fulfilled their “masculine” work duties, women regained femininity. Thus, a group of tractor drivers and agricultural technicians spent the evening together singing, making plans for organizing an artistic brigade or thinking about what they would buy with their wage money. Furthermore, some articles noted that women's work also continued at home, where they took care of their house and family, or, in some cases, engaged in work for the benefit of the community, which, as I will show in what follows, was an extension of their domestic activities.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4. The Collectivization of Agriculture

*Săteanca* magazine also published a series of articles written by women correspondents describing an idyllic image of life in the collective farms. In this case,

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<sup>27</sup> Petruța A. Dacă, “Din experiența unei îndrumătoare”, in *Săteanca*, no. 1, ianuarie 1950, p. 2; Ștefania Vlădulescu, “Despre munca de îndrumare”, in *Săteanca*, no. 13, September 1950, p. 14; Talangescu Maria, “Despre munca de îndrumare”, in *Săteanca*, no. 7, May 1950, p. 14; Ioana Dobrogeanu, “Cum învață fiicele poporului”, in *Săteanca*, no. 4, 1-15 April 1949, p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> “Femeile din raionul Medgidia pun în practică cele învățate la cursurile politice”, in *Dobrogea Nouă*, 6 February 1959, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Talangescu Maria, “Despre munca de îndrumare”, in *Săteanca*, no. 7, May 1950, p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> Maria Răzor, “Dragă Elenico”, in *Săteanca*, no. 4, 1-15 April 1949, p. 11; Ioan Vâlceanu, “Sovromtractor, o uzină în care zeci de femei luptă pentru pace și pentru construirea socialismului”, in *Săteanca*, no. 3, February 1950, pp. 16-17; Lia Epureanu, “Mecanizatoarele”, in *Săteanca*, no. 2, February 1955, pp. 8-9; S. Manda, “Turnătoarea”, in *Săteanca* no. 4, April 1953, p. 3; “Fire trainice”, in *Săteanca*, no. 5, May 1953, p. 5, etc.

<sup>31</sup> Lia Epureanu, “Mecanizatoarele”, in *Săteanca*, no. 2, February 1955, pp. 8-9; *Săteanca*, no. 5, May 1953, p. 5.

they laid emphasis on presenting the material benefits that work in a collective farm supposedly brought to the local community and on how fulfilling their work quotas also contributed to increasing the welfare of community and of its members. In this context, it is important to mention that the signs of this collective welfare identified by women were related to their maternal preoccupations and to the organization of family life. Thus, one of the correspondents described the collective farm as “a family who equally enjoy all our achievements”, and gave examples of what would be, in her opinion, the defining elements of collective life as a family: a nursery where mothers could leave their children while they went to work in the fields, as well as the existence of qualified personnel who could provide children with the necessary medical care:

“Our farming unit now has a nurse who cares for the sick. When Pătruț, the son of Maria Motronea, fell ill, the nurse stayed at his bedside for three nights; the doctor constantly came to see him. Now the child’s fine, he’s healthy. He plays at the nursery”.<sup>32</sup>

The prosperity brought about by work in collective farms went beyond living conditions. Wire broadcasting speakers, but especially the radio became the mark of an “enlightened” existence because they allowed women to “listen to (...) conferences, plays, our beautiful folk music and Soviet music, without having to go to the community centre in any kind of weather”.<sup>33</sup>

In retrospect, all the beneficial changes that occurred in women's lives after joining the collective farms made their initial fears and reluctance towards this organization of agricultural labour seem unfounded. In this regard, the published texts pointed out that the lack of “education” was the main reason for women's reluctance to join the collective farms. Thus, women who were “enlightened” by the socialist values admitted that their ignorance had influenced their decisions and had made them give credence to the rumours about collective work spread by the kulaks.

In an article published in *Săteanca*, one of the mentors described the difficulties she encountered in her endeavour to persuade women to join the collective farm: “Then I read to them from a brochure about what collective work meant and we discussed what we’d read. At first they said I was wrong, saying they’d better die than make a collective farming unit. I worked a lot with them, patiently showing them the benefits of collective work. I showed them that what kulaks say are lies and that collective work is the only way in which we’ll get to live a happy life”. At the end of the meeting, convinced by the mentor's arguments, women accepted to join the collective farm.<sup>34</sup>

*Săteanca* also published the accounts of some women who, in retrospect, regretted not having joined the collective farm earlier and explained their initial reluctance by the fact that they were not “enlightened” about the organization of

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<sup>32</sup> Maria Muja, “Cele înscrise în statutul model al gospodăriilor colective capătă viață”, in *Săteanca*, no. 9, July 1950, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Maria Muja, “Cele înscrise în statutul model al gospodăriilor colective capătă viață”, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Petruța A. Dacă, “Din experiența unei îndrumătoare”, in *Săteanca*, no. 1, January 1950, p. 14. Also, see C. Stoica, “Să fim necruțători față de uneltirile dușmanului de clasă”, in *Săteanca*, no. 2, February 1952, p. 5.

collective work: “I sometimes think, and now I'm upset with myself for being so reluctant about joining the collective farm. (...) When comrades from our organization came, I left and wouldn't even listen to them. That's because I didn't know what collective farms were and I had no idea what it was like to work in one. Also, I didn't read much. I was just learning how to read and write and I listened to what the neighbours and relatives said, and I often listened even to the rumours spread by the kulaks. It was only when I started to listen more closely at UFDR meetings, to read what the brochures said about the Soviet kolkhozes, that I became more enlightened”.<sup>35</sup>

## 5. Religion and Superstitions

An “enlightened” existence also meant giving up religion and all kinds of superstitions that often guided women's everyday life. In the materials published by the Romanian press, as well as in official statements, religion and superstitions were seen as connected to ignorance, to a low level of education, which supposedly provided a favourable context for the exploitation of the people by the “old regime”. Thus, the offensive of the Romanian communist regime against religion and other forms of belief in the supernatural involved a massive investment of material and human resources for “the enlightenment” of the people. In this way, the population was to acquire a set of values and knowledge meant to form the base of a rational perspective capable of providing scientific explanations for the phenomena and events of the material world.<sup>36</sup>

The articles that appeared in the analyzed publications reproduced and recycled in contexts familiar to women the idea that the old regime and its local representatives, the kulaks, used religion and superstitions in order to exploit them and keep them in the “darkness of ignorance”. Thus, using as a starting point a story about “an old witch in the service of a kulak lady, who sought to sow hatred and discord between spouses”, the women participating in one reading group began “to give examples of how they had been fooled until then with sorcery and spells, and of how they were kept in the dark” and how even now “the kulak women” used the argument of supernatural intervention in order to prevent them from going “to the meetings”.<sup>37</sup>

Published texts also denounced the message of passivity, of resignation in the face of an unpredictable destiny supposedly transmitted by religion and used by the representatives of the old regime in order to consolidate and maintain their exploitation of the people. Such a mentality allegedly contributed to the preservation

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<sup>35</sup> Maria Bolocan, “De ce sunt astăzi fericită”, in *Săteanca*, nr. 9, September 1951, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> See Manuela Marin, “The Romanian Communist Propaganda and Public Opinion. The Case of Atheist-Scientific Propaganda in Alba County”, in *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XXI, Supplement no. 3, 2012, pp. 473-483; Zsuzsánna Magdó, “Mass Enlightenment, Atheism and the Romanian Socialist Nation: The Society for the Dissemination of Culture and Science, 1949-1963”, in Lucian Năstasă, Dragoș Sdrobiș (eds), *Politici culturale și modele intelectuale în România*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2013, pp. 120-153.

<sup>37</sup> Jeni Zambrea, “Grupe de citit la Moroieni”, in *Săteanca*, no. 16, November 1949, p. 21.

of the existing social and political status quo, since the fulfilment of individuals by rising above their condition was a goal achievable only in “the next world”.<sup>38</sup> The truthfulness of this official message on religion was confirmed by the accounts of several women, reported in the various articles. Once “enlightened” by political knowledge, they started to see the true face of religion and of its instrumentalization by the class enemy, who, in this context, was the clergy. A woman who had attended religious service summarized the preacher's message as follows: “Every man has his own fate: one is poor, one is rich, as God has willed it; therefore, the poor should not seek to rail against his fate. He should be happy with what he has, be obedient to the rich man, and not envy his wealth”. Another testimony noted that the religious personnel urged women to abandon “learning” because it alienates “man from the sacred things and because, in heaven, where all the happiness awaits him, the more short-witted he is, the better he is received”.<sup>39</sup>

The role of religion as a means of restricting personal development was best highlighted in the case of Muslim women. In this regard, *Femeia* magazine published the story of a young girl, Nida Omer, who lived in Medgidia. Her uncle, who took over the paternal role after the death of her father, refused to give her his consent to attend aviation school. His arguments referred to the condition of women whose social interaction, but also clothing options were restricted by Islam: “In my time... look, look at your mother! She was an imam's daughter, and she would not go out without a veil! You weren't supposed to see her face, her neck, the tip of her fingernails. And you ... You! Skydiving! Aviation!”. Although this contradicted the (religious) education she had received, and aware of the fact that the world had changed, Nida's mother gave her consent for her daughter to enrol in the school of aviation. This made her feel a strong inner conflict that brought her to the mosque on a Friday. There, sobbing, she engaged in a dialogue with divinity and with her dead parents, asking them to forgive her for what she had done and “letting the wrath of heaven and of Allah fall on her”. This wrath never came. Nida proved to be a brilliant student who succeeded in showing her family that there was no incompatibility between being a Muslim woman and attending a school, even one of aviation.<sup>40</sup>

## 6. Social Activism

Both *Săteanca* and *Dobrogea nouă* reported the participation of women in general, and of ethnic Turkish and Tatar women in particular, in organizing the activity of the collective farm where they worked. Besides the established number of work days, women's activity also sought to improve the living conditions of the local community members. Thus, although official propaganda claimed that collective farms offered women new opportunities to put their initiatives into practice, this emancipatory discourse in fact absorbed and integrated into the socialist rhetoric an

<sup>38</sup> “Superstițiile, rod al neștiinței”, in *Femeia*, no. 8, August 1951, p. 30; Sidonia Drăgușanu, “Să smulgem masca de pe fața dușmanului”, in *Săteanca*, no. 9, iulie 1949, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Sidonia Drăgușanu, “Să smulgem masca de pe fața dușmanului”, in *Săteanca*, no. 9, iulie 1949, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Luiza Vlădescu, “Nida Omer”, in *Femeia*, no. 9, 1955, p. 8.

old gender-driven separation between the public and private space. Moreover, as I will show in what follows, the activities in which women were involved were an extension into the public space of the duties pertaining to their traditional-maternal role.

In order to properly prepare the day of August 23, a group of village women decided to perform volunteer work. They participated in repairing, painting and cleaning the local school building and its surroundings.<sup>41</sup>

“The Muslim plough women” of Valea Țapului, Ostrov, “performed volunteer work at the community centre, at the Milk Centre, where women take turns preparing and distributing milk to children and mothers. They whitewashed and cleaned the fountain”.<sup>42</sup> Also, in 1958, women in Medgidia district, the majority of whose population was ethnic Tatar and Turkish, did “40,000 hours of volunteer work for various public interest activities” and got involved in setting up and ensuring the operation of 357 home libraries serving over 5,000 readers.<sup>43</sup>

The same desire to serve the common wellbeing influenced the professional choices of several young women. Thus, one of them committed herself to increasing her political and cultural knowledge because she wanted to attend the “teacher-training school, to become a teacher, to raise children as [she understood] to do it”.<sup>44</sup> The establishment of the “popular democratic power” also enabled Abdula Murvet, daughter of collective farmers in the village of Lungeni, to fulfil her dream of becoming a teacher and educating “the young offspring in the spirit of love for their country”.<sup>45</sup>

## 7. Women in the Political Life

Women's involvement in politics was another element of the political identity assigned to them by the Romanian communist regime. This involvement concerned two main areas: women's participation in elections as candidates, but especially as voters, and their support for the peace policy of the regime, an aspect which will be dealt with at a later stage.

The analyzed publications paid increasing attention to women's preparation for the national and local elections. Some articles presented in an accessible manner the content of the new electoral law and its amendments regarding the political status of women, such as equal rights with men or the exercise of the right to vote. Another theme that interested the authors of these articles was presenting the significance of

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<sup>41</sup> Lucia Godeanu, “23 August să ne găsească în plină muncă”, in *Săteanca*, no. 9, 1950, p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Ana Slav, “Plugărițele musulmane din Valea Țapului sunt recunoscătoare Partidului clasei muncitoare”, in *Dobrogea nouă*, 28 July 1949, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Gevrie Memet, “Noi succese în munca comitetelor de femei din raionul Medgidia”, in *Dobrogea nouă*, 28 April 1959, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Lucia Godeanu, “23 August să ne găsească în plină muncă”, in *Săteanca*, no. 9, 1950, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> I. Stoicescu, “Oameni noi din rândul minorităților naționale”, in *Dobrogea nouă*, 22 August 1953, p. 3.

the electoral process for the future development of the country in general, and regarding the role of women in public life in particular.<sup>46</sup>

Using the character of the party activist, the articles published in *Săteanca* and *Dobrogea nouă* detailed for their readers the importance of their participation in the electoral process. By their vote, they enabled those elected to contribute to the organization of the entire activity within the collective farm in question, and they could influence higher-level political decisions regarding its activity. Additionally, these local female representatives could intervene with local administrative bodies or could get directly involved in solving the villagers' current problems. With regard to this, women's opinions presented in the analyzed publications underlined their awareness that, by expressing their electoral option, they finally had a say in political affairs and could influence the decisions that affected their lives. In this respect, a reader stated that: "I'll vote for the Members of the People's Council and I'll also come to work to help them do a good job, 'cause everything that's being done is for our benefit".<sup>47</sup>

For Tair Cadrie, as *Dobrogea nouă* assured its readers, "the joy of casting a vote equal to that of other citizens" was that of voting "for a new life that she would live in peace".<sup>48</sup> As this quotation suggests, for ethnic Turkish and Tatar women, exercising their right to vote also represented a confirmation of the just way in which the communist regime ensured equal rights for all its citizens, regardless of their nationality. In this respect, Turkish and Tatar women made a comparison between the current situation and the one before August 1944, a comparison which was naturally favourable to the socialist present. Participating in a meeting with their candidate for the Parliament, Sabrie Memet, aged 55, reported that: "During the bourgeoisie (...) not even our men had the right to vote; let alone us women. Now we feel we are regarded and appreciated as real people".<sup>49</sup>

When exercising her right to vote, Gevrie Memet, the secretary of the Medgidia District Women's Committee, declared the following: "We used to be twice oppressed, first because we were poor and then because we were Turks. Now it's different. We have the same rights as the Romanians. The state equally takes care of us. Our children are in schools, and we and our husbands can work anywhere. For

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<sup>46</sup> See, "Medgidia, sărăcită și năpăstuită de lăcustele moșierești devine un important centru agricol, industrial și de trafic", in *Dobrogea nouă*, 9 October, p. 3; Hussein A. Iusuf, "Naționalitățile conlocuitoare au participat cu entuziasm la alegerile pentru deputați în Sfaturile Populare", in *Dobrogea nouă*, 7 December 1950, p. 2; Gevrie S. Memet, A. Andriadis, "Femeile din regiunea noastră își aleg deputatele de pe lângă sfaturile populare", in *Dobrogea nouă*, 29 April 1953, p. 2; N. Simion, "Întâlniri dintre candidați și alegători. Întâlnirea alegătorilor din circumscripția electorală regională nr. 67 cu candidata lor Aișe Abibula", in *Dobrogea nouă*, 6 February 1958, p. 1; „Lisaveta a aflat de sfaturile populare”, in *Săteanca*, no. 1 1949, pp.1-2; Coca Ștefan, "Chemată la sfatul țării" și Nicoară Cosașu, "La Casa Alegătorului", in *Săteanca*, no. 1, 1957, p. 10, etc.

<sup>47</sup> *Săteanca*, nr. 5, 1950, p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> "Tair Cadrie este veselă", in *Dobrogea nouă*, 25 March 1958, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> "Alegerile din raionul proaspăt cooperativizat-Medgidia", in *Dobrogea nouă*, 6 February 1957, p. 2.



example, my family and I, we live in a plastered house, with electric light, not like before, in a hut that was damp and dark”.<sup>50</sup>

Women's involvement in political life also placed them in the position of candidates, not only in that of voters. During elections for the people's council or the Grand National Assembly, *Săteanca* and *Dobrogea nouă* published various articles regarding the women elected by their community to represent their interests at the local or central level. Their portrait comprised a series of features and actions that frequently characterized their public performance. First of all, due to their ambition, all these women became foremost workers and received honours or awards that officially confirmed their merits. Secondly, the communist regime took the merit of having fostered their evolution from the condition of uneducated persons to the condition of foremost literate workers. Last but not least, the duties undertaken by the candidates also included actions for the benefit of the local community.

A letter sent to *Săteanca* magazine by the voters of Orlat commune, Sibiu region, included a detailed description of the activities in which their deputy was involved. She was “an industrious woman” who worked in the local UFDR organization and in the local state administration. Despite the fact that she had a large family who needed her permanent attention, the deputy was fully committed to her social mission: “Comrade Găină is no longer a young woman; she has 5 children and enough difficulties. But we don't see her complaining. First the public interest and then her own things. She is at the People's Council every day. (...) And she takes care of everything, she is concerned about all our needs”. Among the achievements of her mandate were the rebuilding of the village road, the cleaning of the communal pasture, the renovation of the community centre, where she also became involved in the organization of cultural events, and, last but not least, the establishment of a seasonal kindergarten for the children whose mothers worked in the fields during the farming season.<sup>51</sup>

Another exemplary biography was that of Senia Idris, who was an activist in the regional UWY (*Union of Working Youth*) organization of Adamclisi. Coming from a family of collective farmers in Tătaru village, Senia attended the school for UWY staff for 3 months, and returned to “work as an activist, with extensive Marxist-Leninist knowledge, leading the school and pioneer department at the district level”. As she proved to be “very eager” and “worked with great dedication”, her colleagues at the UTM organization proposed her as their candidate for the district People's Council.<sup>52</sup>

## 8. Women and the Fight for Peace

As already mentioned, women's involvement in supporting the communist regime's peace campaign was another element of the new political identity proposed

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<sup>50</sup> “Votează alegătorii de naționalitate turco-tătară”, in *Dobrogea nouă*, 4 March 1958, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Maria Bărbuț, “Sătencele despre deputatele lor. Ne mândrim cu deputata noastră”, in *Săteanca*, no. 10, 1951, pp. 12-13.

<sup>52</sup> “Senia Idris”, in *Dobrogea nouă*, 27 November 1950, p. 3.

by the publications analyzed. One of the many Soviet imports to Romania, this peace policy was a discursive and ideological construction designed to legitimize the division of the world into the two camps of the Cold War. From the Soviet perspective, at the end of World War II, the world was divided between the peace-loving forces led by the Soviet Union and the capitalist bloc, led by the United States of America. According to the same Soviet perspective, the capitalist world was on the verge of a deep economic crisis, which made the outbreak of a conflict between the countries of this bloc seem very probable. Such a confrontation was a threat for the existence of the Soviet state and of its European allies. Therefore, Soviet propaganda emphasized that accelerating the process of socialist economic and political construction was the only way in which the Eastern Bloc countries could resist the alleged war started by the capitalist world against them.<sup>53</sup>

The analyzed publications also subscribed to this Soviet interpretation of the Cold War geopolitical reality. Thus, the articles interpreted each major policy initiative or decision of the Romanian regime as a necessary step in the consolidation of the popular democracy and, implicitly, as a contribution to defending the socialist cause of world peace. In this context, every aspect of women's activity described in the analyzed publications acquired a political meaning.

First of all, women's involvement in the production process acquired another meaning, in addition to the emancipatory one. The woman's work was assimilated to a brick in the foundation of the socialist state. Thus, one of the women interviewed by the *Săteanca* reporters said that: "She knew that building socialism meant reinforcing the peace front. She knew all these things, and she also told this to those around her, to everybody she met everywhere". To the same effect, a slogan in *Săteanca* magazine read: "Long live foremost workers in production who, by striving to fulfil and exceed the state plan, consolidate our fight for peace".<sup>54</sup>

In the case of another woman, a war widow, the prospect of a war that might take away her only son motivated her to work "hard to raise the village, knowing that in this way she was strengthening our republic, which is determined in its fight for peace".<sup>55</sup>

Secondly, raising children ceased to be a private matter and became an argument in support of political action, i.e. the fight for peace. Thus, a reader wrote to *Săteanca* magazine about the fact that she had been elected in the Peace Fighting Committee, quoting from the speech prepared for the occasion: "The fight for peace shall guide me to my last breath, because I have to defend five young lives and with them the lives of all our children. I shall be tireless at work, in the fields, as I was among the first who understood we should join our collective farm unit. (...) Comrades, I know what war and exploitation are".<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Allan M. Winkler, *The Cold War. A History in Documents*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, pp. 20-23.

<sup>54</sup> Ioan Vâlceanu, "Sovromtractor, o uzină în care zeci de femei luptă pentru pace și construirea socialismului", in *Săteanca*, no. 3, 1950, p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> *Săteanca*, no. 1, 1950, p. 14.

<sup>56</sup> Zamfira Pătrașcu, "Am de apărât cinci vieți tinere", in *Săteanca*, no. 3, 1950, p. 5.

To Aişe, wife of Mustafa Ismail, President of the Caepaev GAC of Basarabi commune, Constanța district, her signature on the Call to Peace was not just a vote of confidence for the “forces of peace, led by the Great Soviet Union and by its beloved leader, comrade Stalin”. Her signature was also an investment in building a better future for her family and children: “I’m signing it because I want to raise my children in peace, because I want them to become useful for the collective farm unit and for our homeland and for us to enjoy a better life together”.<sup>57</sup>

In her turn, on the same occasion of signing the Call to Peace, Sali Amet, aged 78, also stated: “Now, although I’m old, I’m signing for the happiness of my three children, for my country, the RPR (*Romanian People's Republic*).”<sup>58</sup>

## 9. Models of the New Woman

The publications analyzed also informed their readers about the success stories of women who had managed to become full-fledged members of the new socialist society. Usually, their biographical narratives included a comparison that favoured the socialist present to the detriment of the pre-revolutionary past. Such a perspective insisted on the emancipation opportunities offered to women by the new regime and on how, through ambition and determination, some of them exemplarily succeeded in overcoming the position of social marginality which characterized their lives during the old regime.

An article published in *Săteanca* told the story of an illiterate woman whose destiny was meant to be symptomatic for women's lives during the old regime. One day, the kulak for whom she worked destroyed her reading primer, saying that she did not need any education to be a servant. After the establishment of the communist regime, this woman attended the classes for the eradication of illiteracy and became a theatre team leader at the club in her native village. Her ultimate revenge against the old regime consisted in using the newly acquired literacy in order to expose its representatives, the kulaks. Consequently, with the theatre team, she organized plays in which she countered, by mocking them, the hostile rumours launched by the kulaks about the socialist organization of agriculture.<sup>59</sup>

A similar story was the story of Afizea Osman, of Rariștea village, Adamclisi district, Constanța region. “The memory of the years when she was a servant” made her work zealously, and she became known in the collective farm as “Afizea the foremost worker”. In recognition of her merits, the management made her a team leader, and, in turn, this team ranked first in the competitions organized within the collective farm. Afizea Osman's team also stood out by its participation in various public activities such as cleaning and repairing the school premises, planting trees or clearing new land. As a culmination of her work for “the prosperity of the collective

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<sup>57</sup> “Oamenii muncii de pe ogoare întâmpină ziua de 1 Mai”, in *Dobrogea nouă*, 30 April 1951, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> “Pentru un Pact al Păcii, pentru viață”, in *Dobrogea nouă*, 18 April 1951, p.1.

<sup>59</sup> Constantin Amărescu, “Din analfabetă, activistă de frunte a căminului cultural”, in *Săteanca*, no. 8, 1950, p. 23.

(...) farm”, the members of the party organization decided to accept Afizea Osman as a party candidate.<sup>60</sup>

Also, *Dobrogea nouă* periodically published a wall of honour of the foremost workers in the agricultural sector. These foremost workers also included the ethnic Turkish and Tatar women who had stood out in their collective farm with a record number of work days performed (such as Sanie Suliman, a collective farmer at *Flacăra* GAC, Mereni commune<sup>61</sup>) or who became volunteer correspondents of the newspaper “with a rich balance of success in fulfilling her mission of honour and trust as servant of the truth” (such as Agi Mambet Pachize, a collective farmer at *Izvoru Mare* GAC<sup>62</sup>).

The *agitator* was another model of new woman popularized through press articles. This status was conferred by the type of activity performed, and especially by the specific way in which a woman’s work changed other women’s attitude towards the popular democracy regime.

A UFDR activist strongly involved in the life of the local community of the Coiciu neighbourhood in Constanța and mother of two, Pachizé Ibadulah, an ethnic Tatar, became “one of the most skilful mentors of the agitation centre no. 9. “During the electoral campaign, she “strongly” supported “the work of deputy Coca Arghira”. Thus, at the meetings of the agitation centre, Pachizé spoke “to the 90 Muslim women in their native language about the Constitution of the Republic (...), about the rights of women and national minorities”. She also constantly asked if all citizens who had the right to vote in her constituency had registered in the electoral roll. Her efforts did not remain unnoticed, and the example of her work inspired the other women, who asked to help her in her activity as an agitator.<sup>63</sup>

A less conventional female model which certified that the change in political regime allowed women to escape the traditional constraints and to assert themselves as members of the new socialist society was that of Nida Omer. As mentioned earlier, the young ethnic Turk attended the aviation school, in spite of the opposition of her extended family, and especially of her uncle’s preconceptions. The episode that concludes the article about Nida Omer is meaningful because it expresses the young woman’s commitment to her family traditions, which do not however represent her only element of social identification or a drawback for her professional fulfilment. Thus, at a gathering of her extended family, to the astonishment of those present, Nida Omer appeared “clothed in veils” and “started to sing an old, slow and sad song in which a young Muslim woman lamented her fate”. After she finishes singing, “The veil falls. The dark veils fall to the ground and from under the veils a handsome

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<sup>60</sup> Petcu Petre, “Șefa de echipă Afizea Osman este femeie”, in *Dobrogea nouă*, 19 December 1959, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> “Colectiviste fruntașe”, in *Dobrogea nouă*, 30 December 1951, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> “Correspondenți fruntași”, in *Dobrogea nouă*, 5 May 1959, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> M. Alexandrescu, “Pachizé Ibadulah agitatoarea”, in *Femeia*, no. 9, 1952, p. 13. Also, see “Agitatoarea Sahachian vorbește minorității naționale turce despre proiectul de Constituție în limba maternă”, in *Dobrogea nouă*, 22 August 1952, p. 2.

aviator in a blue suit rises, with a golden falcon on her shoulders. It is Nida Omer, daughter of Memet Sadie and of Omer Halit, the one who disappeared in the war”.<sup>64</sup>

## 10. Conclusions

My chapter analyzed the way in which Romanian party propaganda, represented by three publications (two women's magazines, *Săteanca* and *Femeia*, and a local newspaper, *Dobrogea nouă*), constructed, between 1948 and 1960, a new political identity for Turkish and Tatar women. In this context, my view on (women's) identity is that it was built by communist propaganda through the vehicle of the printed press, in conformity with official ideological dictates. Thus, the purpose of the articles that appeared in the three publications was to identify and promote, by means of various types of texts, a number of qualities or features meant to individualize the new woman's activity, regardless of her nationality or place of residence. At the same time, this set of qualities or features illustrated and gave substance to the elements of the new feminine political identity proposed by the Romanian communist regime and its propaganda apparatus.

The main idea underlying my analysis was that women's involvement in local social, political and economic activities became the main element around which their political identity was structured and exercised. In this regard, my analysis was structured along the following dimensions identified by communist propaganda as defining for the new political identity of women: their participation in courses for the eradication of illiteracy and in the collectivization of agriculture, their espousal of an atheistic view of life, and their involvement in social actions for the benefit of the local community or in the political life of the country.

At the same time, by analyzing the articles published in *Săteanca*, *Femeia* and *Dobrogea nouă* I have pointed out that although the communist state supported the full emancipation of women and the eradication of gender differences, the official discourse on the role of women in the socialist society essentially used and consolidated traditional gender differences related to the public and private space. Moreover, as I have shown throughout my chapter, communist propaganda made no significant differences between identity prescriptions for ethnic Turkish and Tatar women and those for the Romanian majority.

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<sup>64</sup> Luiza Vlădescu, “Nida Omer”, in *Femeia*, no. 9, 1955, p. 9.

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|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>CONTENTS</b>   |            |
| Introduction.....   | 5          |
| <b>Sînziana Preda.....</b>  | <b>6</b>   |
| Cultural Heritage and Ethnic Insularity.....  | 7          |
| Language Issues: Between Tradition, Acculturation and Generations.....  | 29         |
| Preserving Ethnicity in the Turkish Enclave from Dobruja.....   | 45         |
| Kırım Tatars: Constructing Self-identity in Late Modernity.....   | 55         |
| Bibliography.....   | 68         |
| <b>Adriana Cupcea.....</b>  | <b>75</b>  |
| Identity Dynamics in the Turkish and Tatar Communities of Dobruja (Romania) .....   | 76         |
| <i>Introduction</i> .....   | 76         |
| <i>Turks and Tatars in Dobruja: History and Demographics</i> .....  | 77         |
| <i>Turks and Tatars in the Communist period</i> .....   | 82         |
| <i>The Primary Cores of Ethnic Identity</i> .....   | 90         |
| <i>Self-image and hetero-image</i> .....  | 93         |
| <i>The perspective upon the Communist period: between conformity and repression</i> .....   | 98         |
| <i>Turks and Tatars: religious community in the Communist period</i> .....  | 102        |
| <i>Spirituality and ethnicity in the Communist period: traditions and the mother tongue</i> .....   | 106        |
| <i>The reference to the territory of origin: Turkey vs. Crimea</i> .....  | 108        |
| <i>Conclusions</i> .....  | 110        |
| <i>Bibliography</i> .....   |            |
| 115 Tatar Nationalism and Communism: The Fate of the Fazıl Family (1948-1989).....  | 120        |
| <i>Introduction</i> .....   | 120        |
| <i>The National Tatar Movement in Dobruja. The Committee for the Help of Crimean Refugees</i> .....                                       | 122        |
| <i>Conclusions</i> .....  | 134        |
| <i>Bibliography</i> .....   | 136        |
| <b>Melinda Dincă.....</b>   | <b>138</b> |
| Research Methodology.....   | 139        |
| Identity Elements of the Turkish-Tatar Communities of Dobruja, Romania...   | 143        |
| The Role of the Family in Preserving Islamic Cultural Heritage and Identity.....  | 159        |
| The Dynamics of Ethnic and Religious Identity of Muslim Families in the Christian-Orthodox Society and in the Secular Romanian State..... | 168        |
| The school.....   | 172        |



|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Bibliography.....  | 181        |
| <b>Manuela Marin.....</b>  | <b>183</b> |
| After the "Great War": the Muslim Seminary of Medgidia in Greater Romania.....   | 184        |
| Introduction .....   | 184        |
| The History of the Muslim Seminary of Medgidia .....   | 185        |
| Medgidia or Silistra? The Debate on Moving the Muslim Seminary.....  | 187        |
| School Subjects .....  | 191        |
| The Seminary Graduate and His Role in the Romanian Society .....   | 192        |
| Conclusions.....   | 198        |
| Bibliography.....  | 199        |
| <b>Manuela Marin, Adriana Cupcea.....</b>  | <b>200</b> |
| The Muslim Community of Dobruja during the Communist Period (1948-1965).....   | 200        |
| <i>Introduction</i> .....  | 200        |
| <i>Mosques</i> .....   | 203        |
| <i>Religious staff</i> .....   | 206        |
| <i>Conclusion</i> .....  | 216        |
| <i>Bibliography</i> .....  | 217        |
| <b>Manuela Marin.....</b>  | <b>219</b> |
| Manufacturing a New Political Identity: Turkish and Tatar Women between the Years 1948-1960. A Case Study - Săteanca, Femeia and Dobrogea nouă ..... | 219        |
| Introduction: Topic, Methodology, Source.....  | 219        |
| "The illiterate man stands outside of politics" (Lenin).....   | 222        |
| "Today, we shall stop being ignorant!".....  | 224        |
| The Collectivization of Agriculture.....   | 226        |
| Religion and Superstitions.....  | 228        |
| Social .....   | 229        |
| Social Activism .....  | 230        |
| Women and the Fight for Peace .....  | 232        |
| Models of the New Woman.....   | 234        |
| Conclusions.....   | 235        |
| Bibliography.....  | 237        |