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Marius Vasiluță Ștefănescu (Editor)

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

EMERGING PERSPECTIVES



PRO
UNIVERSITARIA

Marius Vasiluță ȘTEFĂNESCU

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	V
Notes on contributors	XV
Acknowledgments	XXVI
List of Tables	XXVII
List of Figures	XXIX
Table of Contents	XXXI
 Chapter I- Professional Success Of Romanian Female Managers, Brigitta IELICS, Marius VASILUȚĂ ȘTEFĂNESCU	1
 Chapter II- New Approaches and Applications of Social Innovation by Using the Potential of New Technologies and the Alternatives of Social Economy, Mironică CORICI	10
 Chapter III- Exploratory Study of The Mobbing Phenomenon Impact on Job Satisfaction and Organizational Climate, Dănuț CRAȘOVAN, Daniela Cristina IOVIȚĂ, Delia Nicoleta TOMICI	18
 Chapter IV- Byron’s Undermining of the Dandy and Don Juanesque Representations of the Feminine in “Don Juan”, Roxana Diana CRUCEANU	26
 Chapter V- Cultural Identity vs. Ethnic Identity in Relations between Romanians and Ethnic Minorities in Banat, Ileana Simona DABU	37
 Chapter VI- Social Welfare Policy Makers Can Alleviate Poverty by Integrating Individual Development Accounts and Microenterprise Programs, Marius DANCEA	49
 Chapter VII- Turkish-Tatar Community Analysis. Between Saving the Cultural Heritage and Celebrating Diversity in Dobrudja, Melinda DINCĂ	61
 Chapter VIII- Social Problems and their Solutions: The Case of Latvia, Signe DOBELNIECE	79

Chapter IX- Some Considerations Regarding the Efficacy and Safety of Energy Drinks at Athletes, Șerban GLIGOR, Răzvan GLIGOR	90
Chapter X- Developing Resilience for Victims of The Family Violence: Principles And Methods for Addressing Post-Traumatic Stress, Victoria GONȚA	100
Chapter XI- Ethnicity and Cultural Identity: „Little Romania”, Camelia BURGHELE.....	115
Chapter XII- Parental Models and Marital Satisfaction. Assessing the ‘Personal Development’ Moderation Effect, Andreea IONESCU	124
Chapter XIII- Philosophical Counselling as Alleviation of Corporeal Image-Related Existential Suffering, Florin LOBONȚ	140
Chapter XIV- Adolescence: Precursor Stage to Adulthood – Socio-Pedagogical Implications, Maria LUNGU	151
Chapter XV- Convict at ”The Canal”: Memory of Deportation between Trauma, Stigmatization and Resilience, Sorin PRIBAC, Atalia ONIȚIU	163
Chapter XVI- Aspects Regarding Stress Levels among Elite Sportsmen from Timișoara, Șerban GLIGOR, Corina PANTEA, Sorin GRĂDINARU	171
Chapter XVII- Migration Flows in the Turkish and Tatar Community in Dobrudja, Sînziana PREDA	178
Chapter XVIII- The Influence of Family on School Children (Age 7-8) during the Selection Process for Professional Swimming, Mihaela-Giorgiana VARGA.....	197
Chapter XIX- Current Labour Market Realities in Latvia, Viola KORPA	206

Chapter XVII
MIGRATION FLOWS IN THE TURKISH
AND TATAR COMMUNITY IN DOBRUDJA
Sînziana PREDA

Abstract

This research paper concerns the mobility level in a particular ethnic group (the Turkish and Tatar communities from Dobrudja, a region in the South East part of Romania) which is less visible within the ethnic minorities of Romania. On the other hand, we are interested in observing the migration routes of the communities' members, to see if the patterns are similar to those identified in other ethnic groups. The most consistent source of our analysis was a number of semi structured interviews: based on the fieldwork, we were able to determine some typologies of migration, structured according to historical age, social and economic status, family patterns, and education. Personal motivations also played an important role.

Keywords:

Turks, Tatars, Mobility, Migration, Ethnic Minorities of Romania.

Introduction

The Dobrudja Turks and Tatars' mobility after 1990 involves several points of view. Transformations occurred at the demographic, cultural, and identity building levels, facing different challenges during the transition decades. We can identify the following major characteristics: it is a movement from East to West; it does not represent an organized flow, but an occasional emigration; from the space point of view, it takes place in two directions, from the countryside to the domestic urban environment and from these to the metropolises of the Occident and to the Turkish Republic.

As for the reasons to do so, they are mainly related to personal life projects and the (re)discovery of a segment of one's own identity, in this case, related to the world heritage and to the heritage of the Turkish culture. Other reasons are determined by economic considerations, by the options and problems encountered by the Turks and Tatars in Dobrudja, which were

not different from those of the majority population. The change of status of those included in the mobility process is no less important: their perceptions and the perceptions of those who stayed in the country are also subject to our interest.

Discussions

Compared to the departures of other ethnic minorities, after 1989, most of the Turks and Tatars in Dobrudja left to a much lesser extent than the Transylvanian Saxons or Swabians and Czechs in Banat. 'The first who left Romania for good, between 1990 and 1992, were the ethnic Hungarians and Germans, who settled in their origin countries. Part of the Turks in Dobrudja also left to Turkey, but the phenomenon was not significant' [1]. The mythical aura created around the Federal Republic of Germany, the *Heimat*¹, comprises elements associated with the German minority and it explains, among other things, this group's large attraction and migration from the '90s.

Romanian Muslims headed only in a small number to the Republic of Turkey, and, above all, in order to visit their relatives and for touristic purposes. 'Immediately after 1989, a large number of our fellow countrymen traveled to the sister country, either individually or in groups' [2]. The economic component became more visible after the collapse of communism, in the form of mobility oriented towards finding a better paid job. The migration of workforce was directed to the countries of Western Europe, to the United Kingdom and Canada and, to a limited extent, to Turkey. Here they had the advantage provided by knowing the language, customs, and practice of the same religion, plus the existence of family networks built up over the past century; all these support points make the physical and mental boundaries easier to overcome.

In the de-industrialization stage, a part of the workforce still available (both from the rural and from the urban environment) after factories/

¹ 'Heimat' is a concept related to the identity of the German ethnic group from Romania (the Banat Swabians and the Transylvanian Saxons); it refers both to the place of birth and to a place of personal and community formation, a space invested with deep feelings and memories.

enterprises were shut down, hoped to find abroad a higher salary than at home. Leaving your place of origin is a difficult decision, an option you consider only after everything else has failed. Expatriation – although sporadic – of some of the active population often leaves behind individuals who are past the age of sustained effort. The absence of people who can work results in an imbalance in the social and economic development, which is visible in small settlements, where agriculture is the most affected sector.

Unemployed youths (or those who earn very little) as well as elders with farmer pensions do not have the funds necessary to purchase farming equipment to work their land profitably. *‘Very few people actually work their land today, due to lack of financial resources’.*² In villages, subsistence farming remains one of the few solutions for those who cannot find (or who have lost) a job. There are some examples when city residents – as they became unemployed – are moving to rural areas, if they own there some land they can capitalize in some way. *‘Some start gardening; there are some young people who have returned to the countryside’.*³ However, the cases of mobility from the city to the village are reduced in number. Here, the absence of a job (or reduced possibility to find one) is felt even more acutely and in a differentiated manner, based on gender.

*‘(What would be the problems of the village? Its biggest problems?) – Jobs. Jobs for women. For women it would be great...For example, if they made a garment factory, a...I don’t know any kind of factory! There are women who commute to the factory in Constanța, to “Dobrogea” (a well-known bread factory in Constanța town).’*⁴

But in several settlements, people have no possibility to commute because of the distance from urban centers and the lack of funds. In such cases, one method of making a living is working abroad for a longer period of time, saving a certain amount of money and then coming back to build or buy a house. The only compact Turkish community in Romania,

² G. V., born 1970, female; interview conducted by Sînziana Preda and Melinda Dincă in Independența village (Constanța County), July 23, 2013.

³ C. L., born 1975, male; interview conducted by S. Preda in Ovidiu (a town in Constanța County), September 25, 2013.

⁴ A. A., 41 years, female; interview conducted by M. Dincă in Cobadin village (Constanța County), July 25, 2013.

Başpunar/Fîntîna Mare (Constanța County) is comprised of '60% pensioners, while young people in their 20s or 30s are a rarity.' [3]. Those who can work go not only to Constanța, but also to Turkey and Germany, where there is a strong Muslim community. The sentiments of those left behind range from sadness to joy that immigrants cope well with the challenges of dislodgement [3] and to the conviction that things in Romania will never change, although, for two decades, the political and economic framework has been different: *'Anyway, you know how it is, right? Nothing works here!'*⁵. In rural settlements, parents believe that their children can have access to opportunities by migrating to urban centers in the region.

*'I wouldn't like my son [to stay here, in the village] because there's no future here. (And where would you like him to go?) – Hmm, well, closer to the city, where the living standard is different...There, he can develop, build a career. Here no (I don't want him to stay here) because, first, there are no jobs for young people.'*⁶

Among the Romanian immigrants from Western countries there were also ethnic Tatars and Turks. *'In Germany, Italy, and Spain, many left from Cobadin'*⁷ (in Cobadin there is an important Muslim community). They worked in agriculture, cleaning, constructions. After an expatriation period, some of them managed to accumulate enough resources (a reason for not returning to the country, where they believed they couldn't make a living). However, *'since in Spain things started to go wrong'*, others have returned to Romania *'and still get unemployment benefits'*.⁸ But Spain still remains a favorite place for emigration, as about half of the Tatars who left the country are there.

A 2002 statistic [4] about the number of unemployed people according to their ethnicity and duration of unemployment mentions 1,427 Tatars; the population who had declared Tatar ethnicity at that time was comprised of 23,935 people [5]. Of the 1,427, 1,003 lived in towns and cities, while 424 – in villages. Turks, an ethnic group of 32,098 in 2002, had 2,301 unemployed members, with the following distribution: 1,958 in cities and 343 in villages. In both cases, approximately two thirds were men. A longer

⁵ I. I., born 1992, male; interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, July 27, 2013.

⁶ G. V.

⁷ A. A.

⁸ A. A.

period of inactivity was associated with an increasing number of unemployed people (in the case of Turkish and Tatar men and Turkish women; decreasing numbers were recorded for Tatar women). Taking into consideration the criterion of residency, we can find certain differences between Turkish and Tatar unemployed people dwelling in cities if we look at their distribution per periods of inactivity. Thus, as at the date of the study, 356 Turks had been unemployed for less than 6 months, while 692 had exceeded 27 months of inactivity. There were 240 Tatars who had been unemployed for less than 6 months and 234 – for more than two years [4].

The opinions on the expatriation determined by economic reasons, by the identification of a survival strategy in a socio-economic climate marked by involution, differ depending on the age, personal experience, residence environment and level of education. Most people undertaking a mobility project do not want to permanently settle elsewhere. When the financial situation is difficult and leaving abroad is seen as a last resort, the emigrant struggles, living *'away from everyone, everyone who you love'*⁹. Whenever allowed, they return on vacation, and where possible (and if the time spent abroad is longer), emigrants also take their families (or some of the members). It is believed that *'for the money, you make sacrifices'*.¹⁰

The accumulated income will be spent in Romania, *'the country where we were born, where we have all the rights. For us this is home, it's beautiful in Turkey, but I wouldn't live there, we got used to living here, our family and friends are here'*.¹¹ Future is the projected here, under the form of a house, of various material goods (car) or, sometimes, the capital used for starting a business. Generally, the money earned abroad is not capitalized: it is used immediately, contributing to the increase in the living standard of that famil. We cannot say that the income from working abroad is so high or so well invested that it transforms the economic landscape in the migrants' places of origin. This is also because of the low percentages of Tatars and Turks in the demographics of the villages and towns where they come from.

⁹ A. I., born 1968, female; interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 3, 2013.

¹⁰ A. I.

¹¹ I. S., born 1995, female; interview conducted by S. Preda in Lumina village (Constanța County), September 22, 2013.

Another important reason for emigration is the desire to study in an education system appreciated as being more efficient compared to the one at home. This time, mobility has a different face, and its protagonists are young people, whose purpose is first of all related to personal fulfillment. One category includes the future students (BA or PhD students) in countries like the UK, France or Canada. A second group includes those who intend to learn Islamic theology (in order to become imams), because Romania does not provide such opportunities¹², at the higher education level; in this regard, Turkey is the first destination¹³ (some countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, have also been mentioned). Some young people, especially those who fall under the first category, are supported financially by their families. In families like these, with a solid financial status, parents – some of them with college degrees of their own – project their own example on their children. Children and teenagers are educated to understand that good results at school are not just what their parents want from them, but also a means to succeed in life.

Several Tatar interlocutors think that in their ethnic group, the percentage of individuals with university degrees is high compared to other ethnic groups. ‘The Tatar and Turkish ethnic population in Constanța County is of almost 12% [6]; according to Gelil Eserghep (the president of Tatar Union from Romania), the number of those who received awards in school competitions is of 23%’[7]. Education, indicated within the Tatar group as ‘our main desire’, is a passport to success, a way in which a representative of an ethnic minority proves that he/she is by no means different from the others. Some of the young people get to learn in another system, either supported by their family or through a scholarship system, obtained through a partnership between the Romanian and Turkish state. *‘10-20 young people leave each year [...] Most of them come back, a small number get married,*

¹² At the high school level, education can be done at the Theology Department of the ‘Kemal Atatürk’ National College from Medgidia.

¹³ Turkey continues to be a preferred option for various reasons, including a grant system, the Turkish state offering one year of funding for Dobrudja students. After graduation, some of them decide not to return, justifying their choice by saying they could never build the future they want back home. Under the influence of foreign cultural models, the discourse of the young generation shows disbelief in the possibility to make a future for themselves in their country of origin. Time spent abroad only deepens the gap between what they believe is the spirit of the modern world and the stagnant, backwards society from home.

especially girls'.¹⁴ The accumulated know-how is a plus for getting a job in Turkish or international companies operating in Romania.

The 'brain drain' phenomenon is not new among the ethnic groups we are interested in. It is estimated that most of those who left and permanently settled abroad (in Europe, USA and Canada) have pursued some form of higher education.¹⁵ Many of the people of superior education emigrated, legally or not, both during the communist era and during transition ('the first wave [after 1989] included the engineers, technicians and doctors, who left for the USA, Canada or France' [8]). Thus, in some cases, strong communities have formed, such as the Tatar communities of Toronto, Hamilton, Mississauga – with immigrants from Crimea and Romania [9]. One of the roles of these communities (in areas where they created associations that fight for the preservation of their own cultural identity) consists in supporting recent immigrants. 'Immigration and settlement in a new country can be exciting' [9], but without the know-how of earlier immigrants it is harder to integrate.

On the long run, the constant, profound fostering of relationships between different waves of immigrants of the same ethnicity provides the opportunity of recreating a spiritual community. (Iskender Ibram, president of the Tatars Cultural Association from Canada, believes that 'The community of Qirim Tatars in Canada was created based on the dream that one day, all Tatars in North America would reunite and form a single, strong family. Unification brings power') [9]. Moreover, the spiritual communion can be rebuilt together with other ethnic groups from the originating, based on accounts of similar experiences lived there [10].

The freedom gained after 1989 opened, for an increasing number of young people, the door to other education models and gave them the possibility to a correct appreciation of chance in another environment. Many of them only go there to study, wishing to come back and contribute their education in Romania. *'My best friend is going to study in the States. But still with the intention to come back here!'*¹⁶ The representative organizations for

¹⁴ E. I., born 1975, male; interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 4, 2013.

¹⁵ 'Most of them left during Ceaușescu's time' – G. E., born 1967, male; interview conducted by S. Preda and M. Dincă in Constanța, July 22, 2013.

¹⁶ I. S.

the two ethnic groups (UDTR, i.e. The Turkish Democratic Union of Romania and UDTTMR or The Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania) support young people¹⁷ and wish for them to stay in the country, where they would be of use for their own group, as well as for the Romanian society, as a whole. In some cases, the opportunities seem to be only abroad. Even if there were major political and economic changes, it is still believed that Romania stagnates; placed in a comparative perspective, it is the place where people say *'it's better!'*¹⁸ abroad.

*'(Do you want to stay in Romania?) – Yes, I would like to. But if it's not ok where you, you realize I will have to leave. (Are you thinking about leaving, because other colleagues, friends have left?) – Yes! Probably because of this; 'cause...Anyway, you know how it is, right? It's not working here! (Is leaving a trend or rather a necessity?) – I think it's a necessity. (Where did your friends live?) – They are in several countries [...] Ah, no, no, not in Turkey, I don't think it's a good choice. I don't know... Many of them are in Europe, in the West, North part.'*¹⁹

For the years before communism, we have numerous sources regarding the numbers of Turks and Tatars who left Romania (but also other data, such as the places they settled after leaving the country.) And for the years that follow, our main sources are oral, and they do not quantify the immigrants numerically. According to the accounts of several members of the community, it was relatively frequent among them to move to Turkey indefinitely. During the years of people's democracy, under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's presidency, expatriation was hindered by Turkey's reputation in Romania and by the resistance of a part of the Muslim community in Dobrudja to the politics of the Bolshevik regime.

Turkey had received successive waves of Turks and Tatars from Dobrudja; a continuation of this migration would have affected the image of the communist regime [11], who considered the Turkish state to be an

¹⁷ UDTTMR president has declared: 'This is why I came to the Union: to get involved in promoting young people and in preparing our future. We have a low birth rate, our only chance is to excel in terms of quality.' [7].

¹⁸ I. I.

¹⁹ I. I.

“‘agent of the imperialist espionage’”.²⁰ Turkey was criticized for its economic and social status in the articles published by the official publication of the communist party, *‘Dobrogea Noua’*²¹, which was ignoring the radical transformations that were leading the country towards an open system, a free market, a situation on the other side of the spectrum from what was going on in communist Romania. *‘In our country, many Turks migrated to Turkey. As during the communist period they had the right to leave to Turkey. So, during the communist period, in Romania, those who wanted to do so, submitted a request’*.²² Back then, expatriation meant not just letting go of your family, friends, acquaintances and lifestyle, but also giving up properties and other rights. The decisions to leave took into consideration several factors: the presence of relatives in the Republic of Turkey, the persecutions by the political leadership, the impossibility to continue their existence under a terror regime. The fear of the unknown (reduced by the presence and help of relatives and friends who were there) was followed by the discovery of another way of life, of a colorful and exotic world, where the prohibitions from home were annulled. The example of those who managed to get to Turkey determined more and more people to submit tourist visa applications.

*‘[...] He said to me, “You know, I applied for a Turkish tourist visa, for three days, five days, huh? What do you think?” I say “If you want, you can stay”. “I am sitting and thinking, I don’t know what to do”. Brother Bora told me the same thing: “What will you do, Lamia”?’*²³

In those times, expatriation was an event with a highly emotional impact, a fact surrounded by the stories of family, friends, and acquaintances. Collective memory has also been communicated to the recent generations, who did not always come in contact with their emigrated relatives, but who know their experiences transmitted through their family memory. *‘Most Tatars left before the revolution. And stayed there, did not*

²⁰ ‘Procesul grupului de spioni și trădători în slujba spionajului imperialist’ [‘The trial of spies and traitors group in the service of imperialist intelligence’] (July 1, 1950, p. 2), in *‘Dobrogea Jună’* newspaper, cited by [11], p. 259.

²¹ [11], p. 259, notes 21 and 22.

²² S. T., born 1965, female; interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 23, 2013.

²³ L. K., born 1933, female; interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 5, 2013.

return. At least as far as I know; I have a few relatives who left and stayed there. Anyway, it's better than here!' ²⁴. Stories not only refer to the difficult political situation in the communist period, but also to the economic hardships, which became more and more obvious after Ceausescu's visit to North Korea, China and North Vietnam. The poor living was a motivation for emigration, especially for those persecuted by the regime; after getting out of prison – themselves or their relatives – finding a job proved to be a difficult challenge. 'I said: "I haven't got a penny in my pocket for years. I haven't seen my uncle for so many years. I don't know what's waiting for me in Istanbul, in a capitalist country, I don't know", I said, but when I got there... ' ²⁵.

In Turkey, Muslims from Dobrudja got integrated more easily than other categories of immigrants, their language and their religion being the two important elements they had in common with the local population and which worked as a starting point. They only broke their ties with Romania gradually as, for a while, newcomers would settle in communities of compatriots or of the same ethnic background. Thus, the town of Eskişehir is home to a very populous community of Tatars originating from Dobrudja, who moved there both before and after 1989. In fact, Tatars from Caucasus, Crimea, Dobrudja and Bulgaria had been heading for this central Anatolia province ever since the 19th century [12]. The construction of modern Turkey was an opportunity for Muslims in Romania: those who did not adapt to the changes that came after the union of Dobrudja with the United Principalities ²⁶ (in 1878), those who lived with the nostalgia of the Ottoman Empire and the status that went with appurtenance to an oriental state and culture answered the call of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

'There were emissaries in Turkey, who then came here and so people left! Thinking that they would live in a Muslim country, with people of the same religion. That's why there are so many in Eskişehir. Eskişehir used to be barren. Eskişehir was established by Tatar colonists that started out from here, from Dobrudja. There was massive immigration back then.' ²⁷ Today there are '180,000 Tatars here, of which 150,000 of Romanian ethnicity –

²⁴ I. I.

²⁵ L. K.

²⁶ The Romanian United Principalities, including Wallachia and Moldavia.

²⁷ G. E.

from Dobrudja'²⁸. In 2013, the city had approximately 685,727 dwellers [13]. In Eskişehir province [14] – known as the area with the highest concentration of Tatars – they can be found in approximately 33 rural settlements, plus 11 more in the Polatli region [15].

While oral sources mention several examples of people who decided to permanently leave the country, statistics indicate a growth of both ethnic groups. From 20,469 Tatars in 1956 [16] to 22,151 in 1966. Ten years later, 23,369 Tatars were recorded [17]. In 1956, 14,329 persons declared themselves as ethnic Turks; 18,040 in 1966, and 23,422 in 1977 [17]. Departures, even appreciated as frequent, did not change the size of the Muslim community in Dobrudja.

At a first glance, we would be tempted to correlate statistical data with the fieldwork narratives. Our observations are the following: permanent emigration was not though an exodus; a clearer picture could be obtained based on the information regarding the natural growth rate and general fertility rate of the populations we are interested in.²⁹ The conditions in which censuses were conducted and the reasons for declaring oneself in one way or another (the hetero and self-identification ways) must also be taken into account.³⁰ A final aspect related to the Crimean Tatars, who, following

²⁸ G. E.

²⁹ Unfortunately, we do not dispose of such data; as censuses did not intend to obtain them (for any minority): in fact, such an objective requires longitudinal studies. We know that concerning the Romanian population, 'between 1947 and 1955, mortality decreases suddenly, while the birth rate is at a high level, after which it follows a downward trend until 1966' [18]. According to regional criteria, along with Moldova, between the two world wars, Dobrudja recorded the highest fertility rate. More specifically, we find out that 'the area mainly inhabited by Romanians have higher fertility than those mainly inhabited by Hungarians, but lower than those inhabited by Tatars and Turks'. A positive natural increase, a higher fertility (compared with regions where Romanians are majority) are reported to some minorities in Dobruja: Ukrainians, Lippovans, Tatars, Turks [19].

³⁰ The above mentioned figures come from the censuses conducted in the communist period. Given the national-communist ideology promoted by the regime of Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej and intensified by Ceaușescu (the ethnic groups assimilation policy) it is possible that the ethnic self-identification options (at least officially) may have been influenced by the communist pressure. In this case, the number of ethnic Tatars and Turks may have been higher than shown by the official records. Political persecutions (the arrests and crimes of the Gheorghiu Dej time) against some community members (especially intellectuals and religious leaders) (including against their closer or more distant relatives) have also exerted an influence on the declaration of their ethnic belonging.

the Stalinist persecution, sought shelter in Romania (we do not have any concrete data on the number of those who stayed here; however, according to the discussions with some ethnic Tatars, the figure appears to be insignificant). In conclusion, our interlocutors' representations and the data collected by our teams of census takers must be interpreted in light of several aspects, related to a certain period, a system of data collection, personal choices and experiences.

Also, the mobility Turks and Tatars from Dobrudja concurrently took place within the Romanian state, from villages to cities, especially toward those nearby.³¹ Getting established in the urban environment meant, on the one hand, improving the standard of living, and on the other hand, adopting new values and practices (and reducing some gained within the appurtenance group). The city world was perceived as attractive, offering comfort, a job (and services) that, although difficult, was preferable to working in the agricultural production cooperatives. Freedom – in the sense of becoming detached from a moral considered to be traditionalist – was another asset. Relocation led to an increase in the independence of Muslim women in Dobrudja, who began to have access to various jobs, specific for the urban environment; in their case, social position transformations are also explained through the increasing valuing of education.³² Last but not least, we should bear in mind that a substantial number of young population moved to the city, thus projecting their own future and the future of their descendants, a phenomenon that gradually led to the aging of the population left behind in the villages.

The list of reasons that led to leaving (almost completely, in some cases – particularly in the second half of the 20th century) several peasant communities also included the impossibility to seek medical services and to attend a form of education. On the other hand, for those who had got a job in the city, distance had become an issue, in the absence of asphalt roads and means of transport. Getting established for good into the city was preferred to commuting, which was time and resources consuming. The

³¹ 'With time, some of the Tatars in Dobrudja, although few in number, will move to other areas of the Romanian territory (Bucharest, Braşov)' [20].

³² 'More and more Tatar women became engineers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, managers, working side by side with men' [21].

displacement of many families mostly affected small communities, as it happened to the old Cherticpunar (Kertikpınar in Turkish) or Curcani as it is known today. The decrease was gradual: starting with the '70s, locals left their village, with the desire that their offspring would have easy access to education [22]. The census from 2002 recorded 19 inhabitants [23]. In the spring of 2009, three Tatar families were still living there [22].

The dissipation of village communities – not only the Tatar and Turkish ones – was triggered and overlapped with the industrialization process. *'People started to leave starting with the late 60's...close to the '70s. Around 1970. Why? Because their life in the city was easier'.³³* Like other compatriots, Muslims in Dobrudja have taken advantage of the possibility to relocate to urban areas. *'Roads connecting villages to towns were built. Up to that point, Constanța was a closed city. In '65 they opened it up, so that whoever wanted to move there, like people from the village, could do that. So, as we didn't have it well in our village – we didn't have a house or anything, we thought of moving to Constanța. And so we came here.'³⁴*

In the wake of this general tendency of relocation, the dissipation of old rural settlements started gradually, but surely. From another point of view, migration to a space invested with the attributes of wealth came like a breath of fresh air, reviving the communities that we are researching. Young people especially could learn trades and got jobs in production or services. Their children could study and graduate college. Education has been and continues to be seen as a way to become successful, personally and socially. In the years of collectivization, of dispossession of everything that was sacred for the Romanian farmer (regardless of ethnicity), relocation to cities was seen as an alternative. Its immediate result was access to easier work (in comparison to working the land). On the long run, it led to a much higher pension than those received by farmers.

The relocation to an urban setting triggered an acceleration of the acculturation process. Those who have abandoned the countryside have contributed to the alteration of the cultural heritage of their own ethnic group, as they were no longer active players (or they were involved to a lesser extent) in its performance and conservation process; migration meant

³³ N. I., born 1944, female; interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, October 9, 2013.

³⁴ S. A., born 1938, female; interview conducted by S. Preda in Constanța, September 2, 2013.

also the insertion of new value orientations in the mentality of rural population, connected to the 'modernization' leit-motif. *'[...] the Tatar communities from the villages, and towns were – how should I put it? – homogeneous. There were many Tatars; these were well developed, well represented communities. But after that, if Tatars also scattered in different cities – they were given this opportunity – they moved [...] and of course, all customs were forgotten, at least some of them.'*³⁵

Newer generations, born in the city, learned about the customs through stories rather than by doing. In the (many) cases where connections to the village were maintained (through the kinship system), young people born and raised in the city experienced and even became familiar with a number of customs (mainly during their childhood, as they were raised by their grandparents, during their holidays, on the occasion of different celebrations). Where the same relations took only sporadic forms, the limited contact with the cultural heritage turned customs into tradition: a series of practices and events have ceased to occur, getting instead, to 'the preservation of a model'.³⁶ Our interlocutors' opinions differ regarding the current situation of the specific customs of Turks and Tatars in Dobrudja, but they all believe that leaving the well-connected rural communities decreased the number of the ones supporting cultural life in these communities. *"Nevruz", was about the spring equinox, and there were all sorts of interesting and beautiful things. Our grandparents still celebrated it, but after our grandparents...Also, due to the fact that people moved from the countryside into the city, traditional outdoor parties rather took place in the villages.'*³⁷

Community disintegration – or, from another perspective, its opening – also meant a decreasing use of the native language. The prohibition to study it in the education system, along with the (explicit or implicit) pressure to use the official language have resulted today in a relatively low percentage of people who know well and practice the Turkish and Tatar languages.³⁸

³⁵ N. I.

³⁶ 'Customs refer to the repetition of certain events/practices, while tradition refers to the preservation of a model' [24].

³⁷ S. T.

³⁸ The situation of the Turkish language is much better compared with that of the Tatar language, since after 1989 it has been studied on the official education system. And to that

*'Language, is no longer spoken – I told you what the language situation is – and this way we've lost a lot, but we are now trying to fix as much as we can from what we've lost in our time, maybe from our fault, maybe because of...the then times, the situation then.'*³⁹

Conclusions

For whatever reasons leaving the villages – whether Tatars and Turks headed to the cities or abroad – has led to changes in the group identity. From a certain point of view, the phenomenon demonstrates the power of attraction that a city has over a part of the population who lives outside it. *'All those who live in villages somehow want to accede to the urban areas'*.⁴⁰ But a fundamental element required in order to understand what really happened in the communist and post-socialist era is the pressure of the political system. The state control during the Ceaușescu epoch, the lack of state involvement in the economic life of the past two decades, the poor management of economic resorts – they all explain, in many cases, the intention and decision to leave. On the other hand, dislocation opened the way to a more convenient and easier life. Traditional world – in the sense valued by the ethnographers – has largely disappeared. Those who were once part of it were subjected to the acculturation phenomenon, largely intensified in the standardizing space of the city. Uprooting was accompanied by changes in the practice of language, customs by which ethnic groups identified themselves, changes in mentality, and in the self-identification modes. Some of the respondents bewail these changes, as they have led to the disappearance of community spirit; this ensured the group cohesion and conferred it power, prestige, and distinction.

In the second half of last century, the dream of a higher education set afoot individuals and families, who headed to the city, leaving behind their relatives and the community. Moving to the urban environment was

we must add the influence of Turkish television shows, widely watched by the Muslim population in Dobrudja.

³⁹ N. I.

⁴⁰ C. L.

translated into a fairly radical transformation: this phenomenon cannot be compared with the rural-urban mobility today, and vice versa. There were consistent differences in the way of living, financial power, vision of the world, of the future, and of course, concerning the level and opportunities of education.

Mobility has a positive facet, especially for the last generations. We could say that they benefit from a better start due to their parents' effort the move to the urban area and to get a job (for which, most often they did not have a prior training). Getting hired brought a steady income, which reflected in the quality of life, in the improvement of the standard of living. After the fall of Ceaușescu's power, young people continued to be a consistent mobile category, by either migrating from the countryside to the city or by orienting their interests abroad. The urban environment (especially those from abroad) is invested with (great) self-realization opportunities; self-realization can be achieved either by perfecting one's education or through the opportunities that the city provides for finding a job. Mobility actors perceive themselves as involved in an emancipation process. Their discourse confirms it, as it is punctuated by terms like 'development', 'modernization'.

Understood as a transition to another stage of existence, mobility intensifies the capacity to adapt to new contexts and generates know-how, *savoir faire* which is useful in similar circumstances that the individual or other immigrants experience. Upon hearing the accounts of our interviewees, the experience of dislodgement (either as intra and inter-regional shift, or as migration) becomes more than a case study – it also provides reading matter regarding the dynamics of the two ethnic groups. The movements of their members recreate patterns that can be seen throughout the Romanian society. At the same time, there are particularities, originating in the history and culture of these communities. Thus, without access to a mother country, Tatars have headed in large numbers, since the 19th century, for Turkey, which has accepted and integrated them as people of Turkish origin. The immigration of Dobrudja Muslims was possible and it intensified on the background of major political changes: the incorporation of Dobrudja into the Kingdom of Romania, the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire, the creation of modern Turkey. Today, we encounter a far

lower degree of relocation, but there is a phenomenon of temporary migration for studies, professional training, business.⁴¹

Observing the changes caused by migration and settling in the urban environment, we estimate that the Dobrudja Tatar and Turkish communities have re-defined themselves most in the last 50 years. The factors with the biggest impact on the decision to relocate were the political, economic and social transformations in the Romanian society, some specific ethnic group mentality features and personal decisions designed as survival strategies and personal development.

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