

**Adriana-Claudia CÎTEIA, Mădălina LASCA**  
(University “Ovidius” of Constanta, Romania)

## **THE CULTURAL IMAGE OF THE BULGARIAN COMMUNITY IN THE DOBRUDZHA PRESS AT THE END OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

### **КУЛТУРНИЯТ ОБРАЗ НА БЪЛГАРСКАТА ОБЩНОСТ В ДОБРУДЖАНСКАТА ПРЕСА В КРАЯ НА XIX В.**

Статията разкрива образа на българската общност през XIX в., според данните в тогавашната преса. Зад мултикултурните проблеми в Добруджа българите преодолели трудните времена, дължащи се на етнически и културни различия. Пресата дава подробна информация относно ролята на българската общност в икономиката, религиозното образование и местната администрация (*Istrul, Farul Constanței, Constanța, Centrul Dobrogei, Dobrogea Jună, România Mare*). Публикациите в гореспоменатите вестници описват българите като чудесни занаятчии, забележителни архитекти, изграждащи училища и църкви, и като хора, които добре се вписали в румънското общество.

Публикация в тулчанския *Istrul* припомня качествата на българите (предприемчиви, сериозни, спестовници), като изтъква просперитета на обитаваните от българи села. В статията се анализират основните аспекти на българо-румънския културен синтез в Добруджа през XIX в.

**Ключови думи:** културен образ, българска общност, добруджанска преса.

Being in a certain space and depending by a specific custom supposed in a Paristrarian political religious context, a very long process of defining the cultural matrix, and a big effort of cultural and political anamnesis.

The exterior space of the Byzantine mobile border was clearly defined both from the immediate policy perspective of the Empire, as symbolic.

Approached from the perspective of ontologic realism, the border separates a rigorous circumscribed space from the external simple world. Regarding Byzantium perathologic case, the external world mean a number of ethnic drawn in Byzantium influence sphere by missionary means or pure political act – Bulgarian example being eloquent. The border (peras) wasn't a simple form of expressing property feeling, as sending to the exterior space, the place where the adventure of self-religious and political self unfolded in relation with the world. Political authology may define cultural and political proximity of Byzantium Empire and Ottoman Empire that succeeded. Notion of proximity could be approached from two distinct points of view:

a) direct relationship – which can be constantly seen through political history of Byzantium, and post-Byzantine East European space, from the contacts with Germanic nations to tacit acceptance of the first enslavement, Bulgarian tsars or Islam proximity;

b) non-presence relationship (Husserl 1994: 144-147), in which *the other* is perceived through indirect contact – for example the Danube regions case in VII–X century (Barnea, Ștefănescu 1971: 7-23).

This type of non-presentation allowed the provinces with political reflux to evolve in a genuine manner and to found a personal political identity. It would be an example the Thema Paristrion, actual Dobrudzha's territory.

Non-presentation means learning political and cultural presence of “the other” (Husserl 1994: 145), euxinic attitude from religious point of view and stromatic configuration of some contact zones (Obolensky 2002: 56-84).

Fundamentally in defining Dobrudzha's provincial space was collective interrogatory mechanism, the punctual intersection of past and present. Local cultural matrix was conditioned by border mobility, diplomatic conception of imperial institution based on the inclusion in local influential sphere of a heterogenic community structure.

The cultural stromatism of the Danubian provinces was in essence the consequence of the universalist vocation of the Byzantine Empire, of the necessity of contestation and exceeding of its own boundaries. Result of failures and successes political and cultural, Paristrion stromatism marked the history of these areas in post-medieval ages too.

In Dobrudzha area, the path of the past played a fundamental role. Nostalgic to a row-model, placed in a political, administrative and cultural port, defining of an archetypal relationship between communities and inside one community, calling traditions are obviously seen among the Romanian and Bulgarian people. Our study is proposing to define them using the arguments of local press.

In our case, the other represents Bulgarian community in Dobrudzha. The aim of this study is perceiving, knowing and evaluation of the Bulgarian minority in Dobrudzha, where there is a local press who offers enough information regarding the fundamental aspects of life, activity and areal of this ethnographical group. Certainly, being only one source, namely the press, we will achieve only a partial analysis, with obtaining a diffusive image of the Bulgarian community.

### ***Localisation***

On 27<sup>th</sup> of November 1879 no. 14 of the newspaper “Steaua Dobrogei” (Constantin-Zamfir, Georgescu 1985: 99) tells us that Bulgarians dwell only in the village Silistra Nouă (Rădulescu, Bitoleanu 1979: 44) precisely the region Almalău<sup>1</sup>. Two years later another local paper “Farul Constanței” (Constantin-Zamfir, Georgescu 1985: 160) the official county information paper presents in the editions (Farul Constanței, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1882, no. 81; 10<sup>th</sup> March 1882, no. 82; 26<sup>th</sup> March 1882, no. 83) the information according to witch of the total number of population (76 000 people) on that date, 5000 where Bulgarians living in Constanța, Cernavoda, Hârșova, Mangalia, Medgidia and Ostrov towns.

According to the publicised statistics, in Constanța dwelled the most (244), followed by Cernavoda and Hârșova (140 and 100 people). The least dwelled in Mangalia and Medgidia (60 and 45 Bulgarians).

In Constanța County, Bulgarians did not form villages<sup>2</sup>. Only one small community lived in Mangalia region. It's name was Copaci village. Palazu Mic could not be named Bulgarian because it's inhabitants were equally Romanians and Bulgarians. In Constanța region only Gargalok village was inhabited almost totally by Bulgarians (Farul Constanței, second year, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1881, no. 38: 4). In Silistra Nouă region Bulgarian population was only a quarter but equally with Romanians. They lived with Romanians, Turks, Tatars, Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Russians and other nationalities representing a third of Dobrudzha minority population.

From 1879 until 1881 the number of inhabitants (Cojoc 2006: 49-52) increased due to births and emigrations. Of the emigration and immigration informs us the Tulcea magazine "Dunărea de Jos" (Constantin-Zamfir 1985: 142) in the three editions (Dunărea de Jos, first year, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1885, no. 40; first year, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1885, no. 41; second year, January 1886, no. 2) on the situation of Tulcea County in 1885. It was noted: "Emigration's: registration contains a few families this year compared to the other years and most of them are banished Bulgarians. Actual event in Bulgaria and Rumelia made them return to their homes as they did not like uncertainty and perspective of a war. There were twelve families and return a lot more from Bulgaria to the Babadag region. Immigrants are: two Romanian and six Bulgarian families settled in the village Beidaud<sup>3</sup> and Zebil, Babdag county" (Dunărea de Jos, second year, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1886, no. 2: 3). Because they found in Dobrudzha villages land and homes left by the Turks and Tatars, Bulgarians who wanted to reach Russia or came back from there made them to stay in Dobrudzha. It happened right before 1877.

Communities with bigger income in 1880 were Bulgarians from Gârlița, Canlia and Almalou – Silistra Nouă (Farul Constanței, second year, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1881, no. 38: 3). Communities with little income were Palazu Mic (inhabited both by Bulgarians and Tatars) (Farul Constanței, second year, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1881, no. 38: 3). It was hoped by local authorities that "these villages of Romanians, Turks, Bulgarians, Christian and Moslem peasants, will develop the power of the new region of Romania" (Farul Constanței, second year, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1881, no. 40: 4).

### *Spoken language*

It is known that in Dobrudzha all the population – Bulgarians, Greeks, Armenians, Cossacks and Lipovenians spoke Romanian language. From a letter with notes about Dobrudzha in 1850 we know that even in "Rusçuk where Bulgarians are a majority, they spoke Romanian. Bulgarians did not understand the language of religious books sent from Russia, so they preferred Romanian books from the Principate" (Tufescu: 413; Boboc 2005: 13-43).

The annexation of Cadrilater (Platon 2003: 18-20) gave possibility to Gheorghe Silvan, ex-volunteer soldier in Regiment 47 (Romania Mare, first year, July 1914, no. 17-

18: 131) to note that passing through Cadrilater: “In almost all the villages, genuine Bulgarian I met romanian language and a lot of similarity with our municipal organisation from the left of the Danube” (Buletinul Camerei de Comerț și Industrie Constanța, 24<sup>th</sup> year, December 1913, no. 9: 96-102). In Dobrich, a town near Silistra, the author felt like in a Romanian city. Romanian language was spoken in restaurants and majority of the stores. The same author recommended the governors “thrust more Bulgarians to nationalise Cadrilater; thrust no Turks” (Dobrogea Jună, anul IX, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1913, no. 18: 2). This information confirms the views of chronicle writer Cassius from “Romania Mare” newspaper in November 1913 that Bulgarians “our people” (România Mare, first year, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1913, no. 3: 45) will learn Romanian language, in need to defend their interests and rise to the general cultural level” (România Mare, first year, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1913, no. 3: 45).

### ***Education***

Tulcean magazine “Istrul” acknowledged economic development of Bulgarians due to their qualities noting that “defeating Romanian element of the economical territory must have been foreseen, because of Dobrudzha Romanian has a lot of weaknesses, but the Bulgarian hardworking, sober and saving” (Istrul, first year, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1898, no. 14: 2). That was proven by the prosperity in the Bulgarian inhabited villages; they first took care in building of churches and school. They had churches<sup>4</sup> while Romanian architects were just planning the cathedral (Lascu 1999: 128). Bulgarian children had new school buildings, while Romanian children learned in rented locations, latter they study in modern institutions.

Founding Bulgarian churches is noted by the press in Mangalia and Medgidia (Farul Constanței, second year, 22<sup>nd</sup> 1881, no. 41: 3). In Tulcea, too Bulgarian community sustained a church by payments made by each family: Bulgarians paid six lei for a family both for school and church (Scheletti 1879: 13).

In “briefing of towns and villages budget in Constanța County in the fiscal year 1881–1882” published in “Farul Constanței” we read that a portion from the Silistra Nouă region was given to Gârlița, Canlia<sup>5</sup> and Almalău localities in order to build schools. Because the materials needed for building were gathered, measurement and plants made, the administrator were appointment by the prefect of the county to “lay the first brick in the name of the government” (Farul Constanței, second year, 22<sup>nd</sup> 1881, no. 41: 3). In the Tulcea they will build a modern school, to stained by the government and later every suburb with the self-sustained primary school. “Lessons from a,b,c must be taught in Romanian language, no concessions made in that respect, absolutely none. It was allowed, however option a lesson in Bulgarian, German and so on, as the suburb was inhabited by Bulgarians, Germans etc” (Scheletti 1879: 15).

### ***Occupations***

A few years later, in Tulcean publication “Istrul” (Constantin-Zamfir, Georgescu 1985: 190), the author of the article “Bulgarians before Romanians took over Dobrudzha”

noted that on the arrival of the Romanian army and administration in Dobrudzha “it was worse, vegetables became more expensive because there were no more Bulgarians to seed them. You couldn’t mend a slipper. Millet beer was more expensive, because all Bulgarians acceded to higher jobs. Chief Calciu Uzunof, the gardener became judge; Dimo Crastiu, the shoemaker is now a policeman, Stoiu Jeliu, the juicemaker from uptown became the right hand of a police deputy. There were spoiled poor men who have forgotten even their professions. Vegetables, shoes and millet beer became more expensive and Bulgarian nobles acceded function in local Tulcean administration (Istrul, first year, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1898, no. 9: 3). So, weekly magazine “Constanța” (Constantin-Zamfir, Georgescu 1985: 83-85) in its 40<sup>th</sup> issue dated from 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1893 informed the readers that although “in Tulcea the population was formed from many nations, even more that of Constanța, we do not remember the communal councils had ever contained other members but Bulgarians and Romanians, as in Constanța the combination of the election nominee lists always contained, as tradition, at least one representative of each community (Constanța, second year, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1893, no. 40: 1). Also in Tulcea two courts functioned, civil servants being chosen from among the Bulgarians, four of them called from Basarabia. The mayor Gheorghe Geneff was also Bulgarian assisted by “honourable mister Ceauceff, with the same origin. Such county council was selected, in which members of the permanent community were Bulgarians, under the presidency of the honourable tradesman Șopoff, the cashiers were Bulgarians etc” (Scheletti 1879: 10).

### ***Romanian-Bulgarian relationship***

Looking through the pages on the same newspaper “Constanța” we find another article, written on the occasion of the visit in our country of Prince Ferdinand (Popa, Matei 1983: 64) (the ruler of the Bulgarian Principality) and his wife Princess Maria-Luisa, that proves “there is no coldness reason between the relationship of the Danubian states” (Constanța, seventh year, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1898, no. 259: 1). The same article illustrated the development of the Bulgarian communities continually, too. That development is proving two things: “Bulgarians are doing well in Dobrudzha and there is no need for a special law in encouraging Bulgarian productivity, as done in the neighbouring Principality” (Constanța, seventh year, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1898, no. 259: 1). In the end of the article the author praises Bulgarian inhabitants naming them “the spoilt children of Romania” (Constanța, seventh year, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1898, no. 259: 1) and draws panslavic Bulgarian attention on stopping rumouring about Dobrudzha because “Bulgarians from here are doing better compared to those in the Principality” (Constanța, seventh year, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1898, no. 259: 1).

### ***Conclusions***

It may be asserted for a certainty that Bulgarians in Dobrudzha lived together both with Romanians and other minorities, without changing their language, faith, culture and customs, increasing Dobrudzha’s charm. Side by side Romanians and Bulgarians worked together for the promotion and prosperity of the Dobrudzha region, paying respects and appreciated for their sacrifice at Plevna.

Stereotypes about them having thick necks or being very stubborn are no good as they manage to be known and kept in mind for their continuous seriousness and hardworking.

The image of the Bulgarian community in Dobruzha as reflected in the press is largely positive because the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is a period of peace and settling down of Romanian administration in Dobruzha who sustained measures for development of this region, that happened in relatively short period of time.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In the press of that time the geographical denomination is Almalfu too.

<sup>2</sup> “Istrul” – political, financial, scientific and literary newspaper published on Thursdays and Sundays in Tulcea, notes in its 26<sup>th</sup> issue from 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1889 that a capital newspaper with no name specified “is a taking with obstinacy Romanian administration in Tulcea, who changed a few village names from Bulgarian to Romanian denominations which was an arbitrary measure, illegal and nonconstitutional. In retort, Tulcean newspaper notes that in the whole district there is no Bulgarian village, the toponymy of entire Dobruzha being either Romanian or Turkish, but not Slavic or Bulgarian. They noted about a few villages inhabited by Romanians and Bulgarians that had Turkish names, not understood by their inhabitants and they translated them in Romanian, and now government duty was to recognize officially “these changes and complete the work started by its inhabitants”.

<sup>3</sup> Beidaud is the actual name. It is in Tulcea County.

<sup>4</sup> In Constanța County there were 9 Bulgarian churches, a large number for the Bulgarian community at that time and 25 churches belonging to the Romanians, a small number for a majority population. More than that in many Romanian villages there were no such cult locations.

<sup>5</sup> In the texts of the time geographical denomination is Canlia, too.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Barnea, Ștefănescu 1971:** Barnea, I., Ștefănescu, Șt. From Dobrodegea History, III. Bysantine, romanians and bulgarians at Lower Danube. Romanian Academy Publishing House. Bucharest.

**Boboc 2005:** Boboc, P. Peoples Romanian Words in Bulgarian Language. “Ovidius” University Press. Constanța.

**Cojoc 2006:** Cojoc, M. Constanța – International Harbour. Romania’s Trading trough Constanța Harbour 1879–1939. Publishing House “Universitary Book”. Bucharest.

**Constantin-Zamfir, Georgescu 1985:** Constantin-Zamfir, D., Georgescu, O. Commented and Adnoted Dobrodegean Press Bibliography. Constanța.

**Husserl 1994:** Husserl, E. Cartezian Meditations. Publishing House “Humanitas”. Bucharest.

**Lascu 1999:** Lascu, S. Time Proofs about Dobrodegea History. Constanța.

**Obolensky 2002:** Obolensky, D. A Medieval Commonwealth: Byzantium. Publishing House “Corint”. Bucharest.

**Platon 2003:** Platon, Gh. International relationships. – In: Romanian History. Vol. VII, tome II. Bucharest.

**Popa, Matei 1983:** Popa, M. D., Matei, H. C. Little Enciclopedy a Universal History. Bucharest.

**Rădulescu, Bitoleanu 1979:** Rădulescu, A., Bitoleanu, I. Romanian History between the Danube and Black Sea. Dobrodgea. Bucharest.

**Scheletti 1879:** Scheletti, C. P., Dobrodgea. Organisation. Tulcea.

**Tufescu:** Tufescu, V. Notes about Dobrodgea in the Letter in 1850. – In: Balcania. Tom V, no. 1.

***Press:***

Farul Constanței (1880–1938).

Dunărea de Jos, Tulcea (1884–1898).

Constanța (1891–1904).

Buletinul Camerei de Comerț și Industrie Constanța (1891–1916).

Istrul. Ziar politic, financiar, științific și literar, Tulcea (1898–1901).

Dobrogea Jună, Constanța (1904–1944).

Romania Mare. Revistă literară națională, Constanța (1913–1916).