

THE BULGARIAN PRESENCE IN DOBRUDZHA ON THE PAGES OF LOCAL NEWSPAPERS ADVERTISING THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE (LATE 19TH CENTURY – THE FIRST DECADES OF THE 20TH CENTURY)*

БЪЛГАРСКОТО ПРИСЪСТВИЕ В ДОБРУДЖА НА СТРАНИЦИТЕ НА МЕСТНИ ВЕСТНИЦИ, ПРОПАГАНДИРАЩИ РУМЪНСКИЯ ЕЗИК (КРАЯ НА XIX – ПЪРВИТЕ ДЕСЕТИЛЕТИЯ НА XX в.)

В статията са изследвани страниците на румънската преса за обяви и реклами – все още неизследвана територия, без значение за кой исторически период става въпрос. Проучено е съдържанието на обявите и рекламите, публикувани в местната преса в Добруджа в края на XIX и първите десетилетия на XX в. Представена е разнообразна информация, като например имена и фамилии на българи, техните професии (не само земеделци и скотовъдци), както и подробности относно социалния им статус. На базата на сведенията от пресата е направен изводът, че българите напълно са се интегрирали в добруджанското общество и често са били отдадени на решаването на проблемите му (най-важният от които било признаването на румънско гражданство на всички жители на Добруджа). Според авторката представените обяви и реклами предоставят убедителна информация. От една страна, те са свидетелство за изграждането на модерно общество и с появата си доказват, че Добруджа участвала в процеса на развитие и модернизация. От друга страна, те са доказателство за дейност, която целяла насърчаването на развитието на икономиката и търговията, като по този начин били неделима част от мерките за икономическото развитие на Добруджа и демонстрирали нивото на качеството и количеството на произведеното в края на XIX в. и през първите десетилетия на XX в.

Информацията от рекламите и обявите дава основание на авторката да заключи, че българската общност в Добруджа е имала ясно очертан етнически профил, че отношенията ѝ с други общности и особено с мнозинството (румънското население) били основани на чувства на приятелство, уважение, подкрепа и търпимост. В статията е изказано мнението, че посетилите Добруджа и оставили бележки пътешественици, са описали срещнатите българи точно и обективно, включително и най-малки подробности, изясняващи особености на характера. Историята на Добруджа би била непълна без информацията за приноса на българската общност от края на XIX и първите десетилетия на XX в. Със своето присъствие българите осигурили необходимия импулс за икономическото, социалното и политическото развитие на Добруджа.

Ключови думи: реклама, българска общност, Добруджа, преса, края на XIX век – първите десетилетия на XX век.

A summary about the Bulgarians in Dobrudzha (the end of the 19th century – the first decades of the 20th century)

In respect of Dobrudzha and its people there were written quite a significant number of lines, and yet, its mix of nations is a particular issue for the Romanian researchers. From their work¹ we know that the population of Dobrudzha consisted of four to five large groups „and two or more smaller groups, speaking more than a dozen different languages. The colourful mosaic becomes even more colourful, if one takes into account that some of the groups differ in their origin, physiognomy and clothes” (Dr. Paul Traeger 2011: 284). Among those the Bulgarians, whose number is very difficult to establish, occupied a distinct place. The information that has been published so far displays an ethnographic image of Dobrudzha at the respective period – the time of the last Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), as follows: according to the Frenchman Leon de Rosny “after 1885 the Romanians are the most numerous, followed by Tatars and the third are the Bulgarians”. A. E. Luxury points out that the total number of the population in 1886 was 185 634, of whom 68 268 Turks and Tatars, 46 140 Romanians, 38 420 Bulgarians, 17 045 Russians, 4 768 Greeks, 3 547 Jews, 3 024 Germans, 2 178 Gypsies, 1 020 Armenians, and 1 221 of other nations. A German traveller, J. F. Pompecky assumed in 1897 the following proportion: one third Romanians, one third Bulgarians and Russians, one sixth Turks and Tatars. The Swiss French Eugène Pittard received evidence from the Director of the gymnasium in Constanța, I. Brnescu, who previously had been a school inspector and lived in Dobrudzha according to the rule of the Romanians. That year showed the following data: 118 816 Romanians, Bulgarians – 42 021, Tatars – 29 437, Russians – 26 789, 11 533 – Turks, Greeks – 9 6647, Germans – 8 779, 4 462, Jews – 2 583, Armenians and Italians – 1 485, and others (Gypsies, Kurds, etc.) – 3 778. It leads to the total number of 259 339 inhabitants and means that the data are close to the truth and that within 15 years there had been an increase of 100 000 souls” (Dr. Paul Traeger 2011: 278). The number of the Bulgarians is the figure of the Romanian side: in 1905 – 51 978; in 1908 – 47 884 (Dr. Paul Traeger 2011: 280). The Bulgarians had a centre of their settlement. They lived in the extreme South and North of the sea area like Tacaul, Babadag, Cerna, across the Danube to Isaccea in a significant number of large and small villages. “Appreciation of 35 000 Bulgarian souls living on the territory of Dobrudzha could be right” (Dr. Paul Traeger 2011: 286).

About occupations and their way of being information had been available since the late 19th century. Thus, the Bulgarian “is building his house and its yard differently arranged, differently both from the Romanian and the Tartar, the Turk, the Russian or the German” (Dr. Paul Traeger 2011: 286). The households were surrounded by high fences of woven twigs. There never was a missing barn (*Koliba*) all of the trellis, high above the ground on poles (Captain M. D. Ionescu 1904: 327). Ingenious artificial irrigation in fields and gardens denoted the Bulgarians as farmers and gardeners which shows that worthy” (Dr. Paul Traeger 2011: 287), their basic

occupations (Captain M. D. Ionescu 1904: 327–328) being known both for the large number of animals and the quality of vegetables grown.

Looking at the pace of life of the people in Dobrudzha, German researchers have found the significant differences among them. Thus, “unlike the silence of the Turkish or Tatar settlements, in contradiction are the work and animation of the Bulgarian villages. They had a special charm, strange coloured clothes, richly embroidered, coloured girls and women. Their beautiful embroidery and colourful blankets were stacked in private houses in incredibly large quantity” (Dr. Paul Traeger 2011: 288; Captain M. D. Ionescu 1904: 327).

To know better the Bulgarian lifestyle in Dobrudzha it is necessary to make several references to the physical appearance of the Bulgarians. According to Captain Ionescu’s reports, “the Bulgarian is of robust constitution, generally with a weak, oval face, the nose more right than curved, with small eyes, eyebrows well arched, and soft blond hair. Facial expression shows that they have intelligence and are serious. The physiognomy is quieter and with gentle turns” (Captain M.D. Ionescu, 1904: 327). “The character of a person is marked by seriousness and clear mind, being firm in plans, thus persevering in his work. Modest and very economical, always calculates exactly the advantages and easily prone to distrust” (Dr. Paul Traeger, 2011: 245–246).

“The women are beautiful. Unfortunately they get old quickly because of excessive domestic work” (Captain M. D. Ionescu, 1904: 327).

I insisted on these traits to demonstrate that the presence of the Bulgarians in Dobrudzha was very significant for the Romanian society. Fully benefiting from their contribution to the economic, social and political effort in conjunction with others, Dobrudzha succeeded shortly to prosper, becoming an annex of an important province of the Romanian state.

The Bulgarian presence in Dobrudzha as reflected in the advertising pages of the Romanian local press (the end of the 19th century – the first decades of the 20th century)

An unexplored item of interest and yet so little known in Romanian press, regardless of the period we refer to, is the advertising pages. Analysing the content of ads published in the local press from the late 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century we have identified a range of information such as names and surnames of Bulgarians (and abbreviations appear in some cases, probably due to limited printing space), their occupations (we will see that they were not only farmers and breeders) and other details of their social status. However we consider as viable arguments to show that Bulgarians were fully integrated within the framework of Dobrudzha society, often involved in its problems (the most important being the recognition of Romanian citizenship to all the inhabitants of Dobrudzha), as shown in the table below. It contains the name of the person who makes the advertisement,

what content to be published in the press and other details that come under the heading comments.

Full name	Content of the advertising	Observations
Sava Donceff	Bookseller, printer, was responsible for collecting all amounts from our newspaper. He will issue a receipt printed to all the cash), urban and rural owner, general agent of the insurance company National Bank Director "Danube", was vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce and a current member of that room" ("Ecoul Tulcei", 1 st year, no. 2, 12 October 1908: 3).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Tulcea, in 1859, Bulgarian, father of five children. • Prove a signed testimony of five people in Cernavoda, certified by the police in 1898 that he lived there from April 1876 to July 1877. Tulcea City Hall certified registration "with the census of voters" ("Ecoul Tulcei", 1st year, no. 2, 12 October 1908: 3) lists from 1885 on, appearing until 1911. Same institution shows that the city's population was stable. Donceff presents a passport issued by the Tulcea Romanian Prefecture in 1885 to obtain Romanian citizenship.
Dimitrie Savoff	Merchant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owned "the largest leather shop, accessories and sewing machines for shoe repairing (Tulcea, Stefan cel Mare Street), large deposit of fine and popular footwear, made in-house, selling wholesale and Detail, famous sewing machines "Neumann" with all the necessary accessories, shoe repair shop, large order is received and promptly performed. Very low prices" ("Ecoul Tulcei", 1st year, no. 2, 12 October 1908: 3).
Dușan Ivanovici	Merchant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate "with Anton Nedelea and others for commercial exploitation of automobiles, based in Constanța" ("Expres-Comercial", Constanța, 1st year, no. 21, 7 November 1912: 3).

Vasile Marcoff	Merchant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renowned trader at the time. Does not even advertise. According to the notice of competition: “My clients would like to inform honourable clients that I moved my store next to Mr. Vasile Marcoff” (“Ecolul Tulcei”, Ist year, no. 2, 12 October 1908: 3). Thus we realize that his name was well known and appreciated, presenting serious guarantees.
Stoian Sopof	Merchant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He has a beverage marketing to Gargalâc, the Court declared Constanța (“Expres-Comercial”, Constanța, Ist year, no. 20, 30 October 1912: 3).
Tudor N. Petrof	Merchant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He has a company marketing products to grocery Hârșova, the Court declared Constanța (“Expres-Comercial”, Constanța, Ist year, no. 20, 30 October 1912: 3).
Marin G. Rainof	Merchant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He has a company marketing products to grocery Caranasuf, the Court declared Constanța (“Expres-Comercial”, Constanța, Ist year, no. 20, 30 October 1912: 3).
I. Penacof	Lawyer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As announced his office was located on Vasile Alecsandri Street, Constanța. (“Expres-Comercial”, Constanța, Ist year, no. 23, 25 December 1912: p. 3).
Ath. Rainoff	Lawyer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As announced his office was located on Epictet Street, Constanța („Expres-Comercial”, Constanța, Ist year, no. 23, 25 December 1912: p. 3).

Skimming through the pages our attention is drawn to a specific advertisement (because the character is written) that brings to the public “that in our city (not Constanța) the company of C. Tzonciu Brothers was opened, an international agency with a branch in Dobrich for import and export, a general trade representative for Romania and the East. The monthly magazine “Le Phare du Comers” (“Lighthouse of Commerce”) under the Directorate of Mr. IC Tzonciu degree in business is to be considered. (“Expres-Comercial”, Constanța, 1st year, no. 22, 21 November 1912: 3). The establishment of that company “with a branch in Dobrich” (“Expres-Comercial”, Constanța, 1st year, no. 22, 21 November 1912: 3) shows the interest that the brothers Tzonciu had in this city, known at the time for producing fabrics, leather products and handicrafts of copper and agricultural products like wheat, flax, wool and cheese. Another category of ads are the advertisements. And here we find the names of Bulgarian individuals in Dobrudzha as ordinary citizens that offered for sale land or houses through the local press advertising pages. Interestingly, these notices contain besides the name of the person who sells and other details such as for example asking the price for a possible future buyer. Thus, we can realize according to the price which were the preferred regions by the Bulgarians. The persons that sold land in those regions (e.g. Caranasuf or Caratai) set a higher price.

Voluntary sales		
Who?	What?	Where?
Petof Neicu	“Casapchioi sales 10 acres to G. Neicu Petrof for 2 000 lei” (“Expres-Comercial”, 1 st year, no. 21, 7 November 1912: 3).	“Expres-Comercial”
Ivanof Teodor	“Property in Constanța, Alex Lahovari Street, no. 5, to Mrs. Catherine Limbidi for 6 000 lei” (“Expres-Comercial”, Constanța, 1 st year, no. 20, 30 October 1912: 2).	„Expres-Comercial”
Petre Stoianof	Caranasuf sales 10 acres to Tudor B. Stoiciu for 4 090 lei (“Expres-Comercial”, Constanța, 1 st year, no. 21, 7 November 1912: 3).	“Expres-Comercial”

Penef N. Ștefana	Caratai sales 15 acres to Ștefan Petrofcu for 5 000 lei (“Expres-Comercial”, Constanța, I st year, no. 24, 2 December 1912: 2).	“Expres-Comercial”
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The local press, such as the newspaper “Expres-Informator” and its corresponding advertising pages also contain lists of people who visited during the summer the city of Constanța. Thus, we find the range of people listed at one point and Ivan Popoff, a guest who travelled from Varna to Constanța (“Expres-Informator”, Constanța, Ist year, no. 16, 30 September 1912: 1).

All of the advertising pages are about one of the most important institutions, namely **the National Bulgarian Bank**. According to the ad and the information brought to the readers, “little financial crisis due to rumours of war did not have degenerated into a general mess, fact which was owed to the Bulgarian National Bank. Cautious policy of the Bank has made its home to gather a large metal stock. It is known that the Bank can issue twice as many banknotes in relation to house metal. The Bank is not a foreign debtor and seems well prepared for a war in the Balkans” (“Expres-Comercial”, Ist year, no. 15, 23 September 1912: 1).

Some conclusions

These commercials are part of our analysed denoting advertising, informing, address and reason to convince anyone that argues. On the one hand, advertising is a means to construct modern society, demonstrating by its appearance that Dobrudzha is involved in the process of modernization and progress. On the other hand, advertisements are symbolic signs/numbers of activities in order to promote economy/commerce, thus forming an integrated part of Dobrudzha’s economic development plan and demonstrating the level of production quality and quantity that was accomplished at the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. Moreover, in our opinion, the advertisements to which we refer, once again demonstrate that the Bulgarian community in Dobrudzha was structured according to a strong shaped identity profile, their relations with the others, particularly with the majority of the population (the Romanians) were based on feelings of friendship, respect, support and tolerance. Thus, we believe that the authors who met in their journeys the Bulgarians in Dobrudzha have described them accurately and objectively, surprising their character and traits in the smallest details. Dobrudzha’s history cannot be written without the contribution that does not take into account the Bulgarian community in the late 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. The Bulgarian presence, for example, gave the necessary impulse to the province of Dobrudzha for its further economic, social and political development.

NOTES

¹ The history of Dobrudzha and its people is presented of in two fundamental works: the first one, “Dobrudzha on the Twentieth Century Threshold. Mathematical Geography, Physics, Political, Economic and Military”, was written in 1904 by Captain MD Ionescu and published in Bucharest; the second is “Bilder aus der Dobrudscha 1916–1918” (*Images of Dobrudzha 1916–1918*), printed in 1918 in Constanța by the German Administration in Dobrudzha.

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