

# **Assimilation and Dissimilation: Tatars in Romania and Gagauz in Moldova**

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# INTRODUCTION

The Tatars in Romania and the Gagauz in Moldova represent the case study of my thesis. Romania and Moldova are strategic examples of states where assimilation policies were applied to minority groups and the Tatars and the Gagauz share certain commonalities in their historical experience. Both are Turkic, formerly nomad, coming from Central Asia and having settled in the Black Sea area during their invasions to west.

The two national minority groups have never been studied together given the parallels that exist between them: the geographical position, the Ottoman heritage, the communist regime and the Turkish influence. Both ethnic groups have gone through a colonization policy with Romanian population in Romania and with Russian population in Moldova, resulting in acculturation process in long term. After 1989, with the fall of the Soviets, the Tatars and the Gagauz were offered the possibility of a national/ethnic revival and have taken different directions. Romania and Moldova provide two different patterns to deal with multiethnic societies. Thus, Romania is shown as an ethnic cohabitation model<sup>1</sup> while Moldova is seen as a country too tolerant to its minorities.<sup>2</sup> The Tatars in Romania maintained the assimilatory path, while the Gagauz fought for a national revival which ended in gaining territorial and cultural autonomy.

The research consists in presenting their historical background in chronological order with an emphasis on the differences and the commonalities throughout their existence. The search for the policies applied in both countries and the patterns of development led to the application of the comparative method. The methodology consists in examining variables

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<sup>1</sup> See Levente Salat and Lucian Nastașă, *Romanian Model of Ethnic Relations. The last ten years, the next ten years* (Cluj Napoca: Fundația CRDE, 2000)

<sup>2</sup> See Paula Thompson, "The Gagauz in Moldova and Their Road to Autonomy", in ed. Magda Opalski, *Managing Diversity in Plural Societies – Minorities, Migration and Nation-Building in Post-Communist Europe* (Ontario: Nepean Forum Eastern Europe, 1998), 128-147; Vladimir Socor, "Gagauz Autonomy in Moldova: A Precedent for Eastern Europe?", *RFE/RL Research Report 3* (1994): 33, 20-28.

such as demographical changes, economic resources, geopolitics, democratic values, threat perception, inter-ethnic relations, role of leadership, linguistic and cultural development. The perceptions of individuals will answer why the assimilation and the dissimilation processes take place and what the consequences are. The information that my research rely on originate from different sources: the available literature of the scholars and the opinions of some members of the two communities. Based on the results of the comparative analysis of the roles of cultural, economic and political factors in the dynamics of groups, I will draw a conclusion on the factors that triggered the assimilation, or respectively the dissimilation process.

I will demonstrate that even if the Tatars and the Gagauz followed different paths, the main cause of the assimilation of the Tatars and the dissimilation of the Gagauz is similar. Moreover, neither of the groups used the right to develop culturally and promote the language, firstly due to lack of interest of the younger generations in their ethnicity and secondly of a lack of a political elite to highlight the need of culture in the group's survival. In other words, I will argue that it is not about the danger of losing one's culture and language, but the interest lies in gaining self-esteem in the society through economic and political status. The answer also lies in globalization trends that aim at homogenization where people look to reach a social status, which is not acquired by emphasizing the cultural differentiation aspect.

Despite the importance of this research, most of the professional and scholarly literature has neglected the comparative study on small ethnic groups living in this region. Most research in ethnic relations in Romania has tended to analyse the Hungarian or Roma minority,<sup>3</sup> and the relations between Russian and Romanian ethnic groups in Moldova.<sup>4</sup> The Tatars in Romania and the Gagauz in Moldova are relatively small groups that have not been

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<sup>3</sup> See *Barometrul relațiilor etnice 1994-2002. O perspectivă asupra climatului interetnic din România* (The barometer of ethnic relations 1994-2002, Perspective over the interethnic climate in Romania), available at [www.edrc.ro/docs/docs/bare/001-014.pdf](http://www.edrc.ro/docs/docs/bare/001-014.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> See Flavius Solomon and Alexandru Zub, eds., *Basarabia, Dilemele identității* (Bessarabia, Identity Dilemmas) (Iași: Fundația Academică A.D.Xenopol, 2001).

paid too much attention and are little known in the world. The shortage of a comparative analysis on such small ethnic groups adds more inconsistency to the theoretical framework on assimilation and dissimilation processes.

My contribution consists in testing if theories of ethnicity match the reality of the Tatars and the Gagauz. Moreover, a search of the literature at the time of writing produced no references to scholarly reports on people's responses to the assimilation and dissimilation processes, gap which I try to fill in. A brief literature review will illustrate the lack of research on the social change processes in Tatar and Gagauz case. One similar research that I came across with belongs to anthropologist Ali Eminov whose study case was the Muslim population in Bulgaria. He provides a detailed socio-political description of populations which have undergone forced assimilation but without containing a quantitative and qualitative analysis of individual perceptions.<sup>5</sup> What has been done is mostly research based on historical approaches, but not anthropological or social.

The history of the Tatars in the region was written by Tatar historians Mehmet Ali Ekrem and Mehmet Ablay, who show how history contributes to ethnic passivity of the Tatar minority. Mehmet Ali Ekrem's research is focused on the reality of "national homogenisation", hiding the ethnic minorities and creating a homogenous and unique socialistic nation<sup>6</sup>, while Mehmet Ablay presents the group as highly differentiated and loyal to the Romanian state.<sup>7</sup>

Research on the consequences of the Tatar population after their incorporation into Romania in 1878 has been directed by Constantin Iordachi.<sup>8</sup> The author's argument is that in order to foster the national and economic incorporation of the region the Romanian

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<sup>5</sup> Ali Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Mehmet Ali Ekrem, *Din istoria turcilor dobrogeni* (From the History of Dobrogean Turks) (București: Kriterion, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Mehmet Ablay, *Din istoria tătarilor* (From the History of Tatars) (București: Kriterion, 1997)

<sup>8</sup> Constantin Iordachi, "Citizenship, Nation and State- Building: the Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania 1878- 1913", *The Carl Beck Papers 1607* (2002): 1-86.

government adopted colonialism and assimilation strategies on the local populations, including the Tatars. The data of census offered by Nicolina Ursu sustains Constantin Iordachi's statement.<sup>9</sup> Brian Glyn Williams dedicated a book to Tatars in Crimea mentioning the Tatars that settled in the Romanian region of Dobrogea while exploring their role in Ottoman Balkan society and their culture in this little studied corner of Europe.<sup>10</sup> Ali Eminov carried out research on the Turks and the Tatars of Bulgaria and the Balkans, nevertheless mentioning the Tatars in Romania.<sup>11</sup> Last but not least, Fredrick de Jong made a serious contribution in exploring the Muslim minority in Romania, the Turks and the Tatars, while presenting their history and their present- day condition, though the study dates to 1986.<sup>12</sup>

Moldova has been a more researched area from the point of view of the national identity and its national ethnic groups. Nationalism and national mobility has been a characteristic of Moldova's last decade, as seen from the numerous articles published on this subject. However, the contribution of the Gagauz scholars to their history is very scarce and the one that has been made it is in only in Russian and not been translated. The collection of articles gathered by Pal Kolsto under the title "National integration and violent conflict in post- Soviet societies: the cases of Estonia and Moldova", with the contribution of Igor Munteanu and Alla Skvortsova, offers an insight on the meaning of ethnicity for the Gagauz from historical and political point of view. Igor Munteanu argues that divided societies face particularly difficult obstacles in their attempts to develop or maintain democracy because of their inability to solve a series of crucial strategic dilemmas. He considers Gagauzia as "the

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<sup>9</sup> Nicolina Ursu, "Turco-tătarii dobrogeni în recensăminte și statistici românești (1878-1916)" (The Dobrogean Turco-Tatars in Romanian census and statistics 1878-1916), in *Originea tătarilor. Locul lor în România și în lumea turcă* (The Origin of the Tatars. Their Place in Romania and in the Turkish World), ed. Tahsin Gemil, (București: Kriterion, 1997): 307- 312.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora Experience and the Forging of a Nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Ali Eminov, "Turks and Tatars in Bulgaria and the Balkans", *Nationalities Papers* 28 (2000): 139-166.

<sup>12</sup> Frederick de Jong, "The Turks and the Tatars of Romania", *Turcica Revue d'études turque* 18 (1986): 165-189.

invention of a nation in building a state”.<sup>13</sup> Alla Skvortsova argues that a unique combination of particular factors that reflect elements or different conflict theories played a role in the eruption of violence in Moldova, which is typical for borderland people squeezed between more powerful neighbours. She mentions that the social and political life of Moldova was changed in the same way as in the other newly acquired Romanian provinces.<sup>14</sup>

Charles King is probably the only western scholar who has been able to carry out research of such depth into the region’s history, providing not only from a historical perspective the construction of a new Moldovan national identity and its gravity, but he also conducted numerous interviews with leading political and cultural figures in the region.<sup>15</sup> Not least important is William Crowther’s research in Moldova<sup>16</sup> on the context of the national revival of the Gagauz, giving a deep analysis of the relationship between the political reforms and the dynamics of change during 1987-1989, when popular mobilization was most intense. However, this article was published in 1991, when the reforms towards democratization were still seen as moderate and when the Gagauz elite had just started its revolt against the central government.

A collection of articles on Moldovan national identity was the result of a conference organized by Germans together with Moldovans in Chisinau, talking about regional and national identities in the European context. Stefan Troebst’s article “The autonomy of Gagauzia in Moldova, an example of ending ethno political conflicts?” is very important for understanding the political circumstances in which the special status of Gagauzia was given.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Igor Munteanu, “Social Multipolarity and Political Violence”, in *National integration and violent conflict in post-Soviet societies: the cases of Estonia and Moldova*, ed. Pal Kolsto, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 197.

<sup>14</sup> Alla Skvortsova, “The Cultural and Social Makeup of Moldova: A Bipolar or Dispersed Society?”, in *National integration and violent conflict in post-Soviet societies: the cases of Estonia and Moldova*, ed. Pal Kosto, 159.

<sup>15</sup> Charles King, *The Moldovans, Romania, Russia and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2000) and Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan-Romanianism, *Slavic Review* 53 (1994): 345- 368.

<sup>16</sup> William Crowther, “The politics of Ethno-National Mobilization: Nationalism and Reform in Soviet Moldova”, *Russian Review* 50 (April 1991): 183-202.

<sup>17</sup> Stefan Troebst, “Autonomia Găgăuziei în Republica Moldova, un exemplu de soluționare a conflictelor etnopolitice?” (The Autonomy of Gagauzia in Republic of Moldova, an example to cease ethnopolitical

However, it is relevant to notice divergent views of the scholars regarding the political influences that led to the current position of the Gagauz. Iulian Frunțașu thinks that Russia were accomplice with the Gagauz in revolting against the Romanization policy,<sup>18</sup> while Vladimir Socor sees the strong relations of the Gagauz with the Moldovan government and accuse Russia for its monopoly and control in the region.<sup>19</sup>

The study is organized in three chapters, the bulk of which deal with theories of assimilation and dissimilation, colonialism and acculturation steps and the aftermath. The first chapter presents the causes and the implications of the complex social issues of assimilation and dissimilation from the point of view of sociologists and anthropologists. The second chapter describes the origins of the ethnic groups, their role during the Ottoman Empire and their place during the communist period, particularly focusing on their politics of culture, economic situation, minority rights and ethnic consciousness. Post- 1989 political scene and the cultural development received more attention as education and language is the main marker in one's ethnicity. The third chapter contains the analysis of interviews carried out with individuals from Romania and Moldova. In conclusion, I illustrate the causes of assimilation and dissimilation policies by suggesting why Tatars integrated and are loyal to the Romanian state, while Moldova failed in gaining the support of the Gagauz and followed a separate development.

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conflicts?), in *Moldova între est și vest: Identitatea națională și orientarea europeană* (Moldova Between East and West: National Identity and European Orientation), ed. Valeriu Moșneagă (Chișinău: Captus, 2001): 243-248.

<sup>18</sup> Iulian Frunțașu, *O istorie etnopolitică a Basarabiei (1812-2002)* (Ethnopolitical history of Bessarabia) (Chișinău: Cartier, 2002), 338.

<sup>19</sup> Vladimir Socor quoted in Bollerup and Christensen, 222.

## CHAPTER ONE: Theories of assimilation and dissimilation

This chapter presents definitions of assimilation and dissimilation processes of sociologists, anthropologists and schools of thought, stressing the factors and the implications the theories suggest. Most of the research on social change with emphasize on assimilation process has been conducted in the United States, therefore the theories correspond to the realities there, a different type of process than in Europe. But even in the United States the assimilation phenomenon has been ignored for a long period of time. Olivier Zunz argues that this generation of social historians to large extent neglected assimilation and the scholars focused more on groups that dissimilated.<sup>20</sup>

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and particularly during its last decade, disagreements over who belongs together within a common state and who should have states of its own- the core of the national question- have spawned wars and throttled democracy.<sup>21</sup> According to John Berry the available options to individuals and to groups living together in a society are: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization.<sup>22</sup> By following these options, some republics have experienced massive nationalistic upheaval while others remained relatively stable in comparison.

Ethnic identities are not inherent but are fluid products of social learning; therefore the ethnic groups have to adjust to ever new political, social and cultural conditions. During the last decades there has been a significant change in how the world is organised and ruled and how people choose to live. We are experiencing globalization and transnationalism, movements of people, commodities, ideas, capital, as well as possible political alignments across the boundaries between sovereign states which are not ethnically homogeneous.

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Kivisto, "The Revival of Assimilation in Historical Perspective", in *Incorporating Diversity, Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, ed. Peter Kivisto (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), 17.

<sup>21</sup> Philip G. Roeder quoted by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *Nationalism after communism: lessons learned*, eds. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Ivan Krastev (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004), 200.

<sup>22</sup> John Berry, Acculturative Stress, in *Psychology and Culture*, eds. Walter J. Looner, Roy S. Malpass (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994), 212.

The societies of the ex communist block, most of them made up nations, dealt with two problems, one of national identity and the other of ethnic identity, while the western European countries solved the ethno-linguistic minorities' problem by emphasizing the citizenship aspect, creating euro-regions and supra state identities. As the borders of a state rarely contain a uniform population, there are two situations to solve the problem of minorities: by integration and by separatism. The two possibilities and their implications may differ significantly. Katherine Verdery calls the process trans-ethno-national when members of a nation change their identity, by assimilation and acculturation, and the other when the members refuse to accept different identities, insisting on the right to maintain one's identity.<sup>23</sup>

“Just as there is a homogenising, globalizing, border- obliterating trend, so there is a process of disintegration and fracturing within political cultures and nations, with subgroups moving to challenge the dominant national identity and claim cultural and even territorial rights.”<sup>24</sup> “Ethnicity is today a more relevant social force despite major assimilative processes that have brought groups within many societies, and even across societal lines, into closer interaction.”<sup>25</sup> Both processes will continue strongly in the years ahead.

Shibutani and Kwan view the struggle between the advocates of assimilation and of autonomous development as essentially a struggle between conservative and liberal modes of political context.<sup>26</sup> They also say that those who favour assimilation adopt the values of the dominant group and argue that sooner or later everybody will be absorbed and the sooner this happens, their problems will be solved. Those who insist on cultural pluralism want to return to traditional values of their ethnic group, arguing that the new ways can only lead to

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<sup>23</sup> Katherine Verdery, “Beyond the Nation in Eastern Europe”, *Socil Text* 38 (Spring, 1994): 5.

<sup>24</sup> Monroe Price, *Television, the Public Sphere and National Identity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 41.

<sup>25</sup> J. Milton Yinger, “Toward a theory of assimilation and dissimulation”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 4 no. 3 (July 1981), 261.

<sup>26</sup> Tamotsu Shibutani and Kian M. Kwan, “Assimilation into the Larger Society”, in *Incorporating Diversity, Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, ed. Peter Kivisto, 79.

degradation and decay.<sup>27</sup> Factionalism occurs during the dissolution of any group. In Europe, with its long history of conquest and reconquest, people favour cultural pluralism. The philosophy of cultural pluralism, the coexistence of different ethnic groups under a common government that guarantees autonomous cultural development of each, has long been advocated by minority peoples.

Bollerup and Christensen argue that the reasons of national movements should be found at the societal level of analysis using macrosociological theories. They say that ethnic mobilization occurs only if certain structural conditions are present and they give two directions of schools of thought to explain nationalism: primordial and instrumental. Primordialists focus on the strong emotional attachments that accompany national revivals and they explain this fact as a consequence of the deep rooted, almost natural quality of ethnic belonging.<sup>28</sup> Further on, they describe how instrumentalists view ethnic and national identity, which is not as primordial constant but as a social construct. Instrumentalist theories refer to economic, political and cultural interests of a group. The primary assertion of instrumentalists is that national identity is instrumental in terms of achieving desired ends because it can serve as a basis for mobilization in the competition between groups and elites for control over scarce resources.<sup>29</sup>

Based on these theories, Sampson see the politics of ethnicity and nationalism just another kind of politics.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the result of this process is the building of a nation group which essentially is an imagined political community. Another instrumental opinion belongs to Hechter. He believes that the theory of internal colonialism leads to a cultural division of

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<sup>27</sup> Shibutani and Kwan, 78.

<sup>28</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, *Nationalism in Eastern Europe: causes and consequences of the national revivals and conflicts in late-twentieth-century Eastern Europe* (New York: San Martin's Press, 1997), 36.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

<sup>30</sup> Samson quoted in Bollerup and Christensen, 42.

labour, which implies that “objective cultural differences are superimposed upon economic inequalities” and this can be easily extended to include political and cultural inequalities.<sup>31</sup>

Unquestionably, the most important components of one’s ethnicity are: ethnic self-consciousness, language, religion. The economic status is one factor that leads to losing one of these components. The political context ultimately determines the success or failure.

### **Assimilation theories**

Robert Park was the founder of the school of sociology at the University of Chicago and researching race and ethnicity, he came up with the first definition of assimilation in 1921. Later on, Park updates his theory and says that “assimilation is the name given to the process or processes by which peoples of diverse racial origins and different cultural heritages, occupying a common territory, achieve a cultural solidarity sufficient at least to sustain a national existence”.<sup>32</sup> This definition was later completed and updated by Milton Gordon in 1964, saying that it is “a vision of society increasingly unified in the course of gradual boundary reduction between group participants.”<sup>33</sup>

Sociologists are more likely to use “assimilation”, while anthropologists use “acculturation”. Anthropologists like Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton and Melville J.Herskovits view acculturation the phenomena which result when “groups of individuals with different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups”.<sup>34</sup> Sociologists Robert Park and Ernest Burgess defined assimilation as follows: “assimilation is a process of interpretation and fusion

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<sup>31</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 43.

<sup>32</sup> Park, “assimilation, social”, in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, eds. Edwin R.A. Seligman and Alvin Johnson, (New York: The Macmillan CO., 1930): 281, quoted in “The nature of assimilation”, Milton Gordon, 97.

<sup>33</sup> Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American life* (New York, 1964) quoted by Ewa Morawska, in *Incorporating Diversity, Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, ed. Peter Kivisto, 128.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton and Melville J. Herskovits, “Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation”, *American Anthropologist* 38 (January-March 1936): 149.

in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common life”.<sup>35</sup>

John Stuart Mill and other nineteenth century thinkers considered assimilation a positive phenomenon. Among the arguments Milton Yinger brings in favour of assimilation are: greater equality, weakens the source of discrimination, increases individual freedom, and helps create a more flexible society.<sup>36</sup> At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Park considered assimilation attractive because he saw the modern societies as individualistic. He went on saying that people will seek to enhance their own opportunities and expand their life options, and that one way of doing so is to refuse to permit the parochial constraints of the ethnic group to limit self- realization.<sup>37</sup>

Ewa Morawska thinks that this theory must be updated to our times and historicized, as the theory given by Park does not match with the reality anymore.<sup>38</sup> She gives some clusters of factors for assimilation to evolve: 1. minimal or non-existent life of ethnic networks and institutions; 2. minimal or non-existent cultural barriers to personal social contacts between ethnic group members and members of the majority group; 3. absence of a relationship of economic dominance/ subordination in the local environment; and 4. minimal or non-existent prejudice at the individual level on the part of the members of the dominant group.<sup>39</sup>

Jozef Chlebowczyk writes that assimilation policies and policy of denationalization or simply denationalization were used in all times against smaller ethnic groups no matter if they represented a threat or not. There were activities aimed at interfering in the sphere of

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 735.

<sup>36</sup> Milton Yinger, “Toward a Theory of Assimilation and Dissimilation”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4 (July 1981), 260.

<sup>37</sup> Kivisto, *Incorporating Diversity, Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, 10.

<sup>38</sup> Ewa Moravska, “In defense of the assimilation model”, in *Incorporating Diversity, Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, ed. Peter Kivisto, 129.

<sup>39</sup> Morawska, 130-131.

linguistics, ethnic and nationality relations, a policy in which a wide range of methods were use, from preferential treatment to discrimination and repression.<sup>40</sup>

According to John Berry, acculturation literally means “to move toward a culture”. He mentions that acculturation was first identified with change resulting from contact between two autonomous and independent cultural groups. Non dominant groups often accept or may be forced to accept the language, the laws, religion, and educational institutions of the dominant group. He goes on adding that acculturation is also an individual level phenomenon, requiring individual members of both groups to engage in new behaviours and to work out new forms of relationships in their daily lives.<sup>41</sup>

To understand what causes ethnic assimilation, we should establish what factors contribute. Assimilation is limited to cultural behaviour and values, not the fusion of races by interbreeding or intermarriage. Assimilation refers to the fusion of cultural heritages, and must be distinguished from *amalgamation*, which denotes the biological mixture of originally distinct racial strains.<sup>42</sup> Berry believes that on one hand, individuals may have toward acculturation various orientations, like maintenance and development of one’s ethnic distinctiveness in society, deciding whether or not one’s own cultural identity and customs are of value to be retained; the desirability of inter-ethnic contact, deciding whether relations with other groups in the larger society are of value and are to be sought; while, on the other hand, the maintenance of a traditional way of life outside full participation in the larger society may derive from people’s desire to lead an independent existence, as in the case of separatist movements.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Jozef Chlebowczyk, *On small and young nations in Europe: nation-forming processes in ethnic borderlands in East-Central Europe* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolinskich Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1980), 60.

<sup>41</sup> John Berry, “Acculturative Stress”, in *Psychology and Culture*, eds. Walter J. Looner and Roy S. Malpass, (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1994), 211.

<sup>42</sup> Brewton Berry, *Race Relations* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951), 217.

<sup>43</sup> Berry, 212.

From the individual level, Tajfel and Turner see social identity as dependent of three variables: social mobility, perceived system legitimacy and perceived system security.<sup>44</sup> When the social mobility or the perceived possibility of individual movement is high, then the individuals are less likely to contribute to the ethnocentrism of their own group, searching for a higher status in other groups that would satisfy their self-esteem.

Berry says that the degree of pluralism is also influencing the acculturation process.<sup>45</sup> He adds that culturally plural societies, in contrast to culturally monistic ones, are likely to be characterized by two important factors: the availability of a network of social and cultural groups which may provide support for those entering into the experience of acculturation; secondly, the greater tolerance for cultural diversity.

In assimilationist societies, there are a number of factors operating that will plausibly lead to a greater acculturative stress than in pluralistic societies. Berry adds that if a person regularly receives the messages that one's culture, language, and identity are unacceptable, the impact on one's sense of security and self-esteem will be clearly negative. If one group is offered admission only on terms specified by the dominant group, then the potential for social conflict is also increasing. He also adds that assimilationist policies and actions on the part of the larger society can be plausibly linked to greater acculturative stress when compared to integrationist policies.<sup>46</sup>

Characteristics which are present before the contact and those during the process of acculturation are the prior knowledge of the new language and culture, the prior intercultural encounters of any kind, motives for the contact (voluntary, involuntary) and attitudes towards the contact.<sup>47</sup> The extent to which ethnic groups actually differ from one another is not necessarily related to the development of widespread demands for autonomous development.

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<sup>44</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 30.

<sup>45</sup> Berry, 214.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

People repudiate their ethnicity due to insecurity and a desire to be accepted into the mainstream. Assimilation involves a transformation of the self- conception. At the beginning there is a period of alienation when habits and culture are rejected. Shibutani and Kwan say that if the ethnic group is one that is despised or ridiculed, a person becomes especially sensitive to those particular features that are singled out as objectionable.<sup>48</sup> That person will work hard to eliminate those characteristics or to make them less conspicuous. People are concerned with winning rights in the larger community. If there are no barriers against upward mobility, the assimilating person is absorbed into the dominant group.

Those who are assimilated tend to think of themselves as inferior and envy the members of the dominant group. Realizing that they are still identified with an ethnic minority, many learn to despise it.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, they see their group as primitive, while the dominant has all the characteristics of a more evolved group, with all the characteristics of a modern person. Since they adopt the values of the larger society, proponents of assimilation strive to make themselves worthy of those by whom they wish to be accepted. This leads to emulation of the status symbols of the dominant group.<sup>50</sup>

Most people who are assimilating are bilingual, but they prefer to speak the language of the dominant group. They are reluctant to use their ancestral tongue especially in public, even if some are able to speak fluently. Those who are assimilating try to eliminate in themselves the traits that are disapproved. They try to alter those symbols of ethnic identity. Altering the names has occurred in order to obscure the ethnic identity.

The proponents of assimilation fight against all efforts to preserve the traditional culture of the group. In addition to language, the main constitutive features of the social ties of a linguistic- ethnic group were common customs codified in case- law and the force of tradition. The extremely strong traditional customs which were of a sacral character

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<sup>48</sup> Shibutani and Kwan, 60.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 62.

constituted the strength and at the same time the basic weakness of these communities. The patterns of customs handed down from generation to generation produced a feeling of affinity and fellowship. However this was the main source of conservatism in customs and mentality of the entire group and its individuals. Fragmentation and a relatively closed, isolated way of life were the specific features of these communities; this was due to the underdevelopment of the social division of labour and the resulting stationary character of population relations. These circumstances preserved the original linguistic and ethnic character for centuries and protected it from the influence of an alien surrounding with its assimilating influence.<sup>51</sup>

They regard advocates of cultural pluralism as dangerous and may even form contrast conceptions of them, since they are seen as the party responsible for keeping the minority group in its “backward” condition and for blocking acceptance in the larger community. The ones who reject their ethnic identity refuse to join minority group organizations, many even question the desirability of having them.<sup>52</sup>

The development of a literature in the minority language is important. A language can not survive in competition with others that are more widely used unless there is something of value that can be expressed in it. In recent years, with the rise of nationalism throughout the world, groups that have never had a distinctive language are trying to develop them.<sup>53</sup>

Two factors lay at the roots of the growing assimilation process, Chlebowczyk says: the constant influence and radiation of the language and the culture of the majority group, and the increased need for new ways and means of expression. The need stimulated the dialect speakers to learn the more developed language of the majority group.<sup>54</sup> The language is the main element of cultural heritage and the basic factor of its continuity, and cultural heritage is

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<sup>51</sup> Chlebowczyk, 83-84.

<sup>52</sup> Shibutani and Kwan, 62.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>54</sup> Chlebowczyk, 29.

the essence of the feeling of national individuality, which grows in strength as the nation forming process develops.

In the level of development of individual ethnic and linguistic groups, the progress of education became a powerful stimulus intensifying and accelerating the effect of assimilation process. By being educated, the parents think about the career and life as the same with all the other participants in the larger society. They believe that only those who live up to the standards of the dominant group will be given equal opportunity.

Schools had great success in spreading and strengthening belief in the superiority of the majority group. By acquiring education, an individual almost automatically won access to the culture and the language of the majority group, and they felt that their social promotion depended on learning the language of the majority group and adopting its culture.<sup>55</sup> In an area with multilingual structure a minority group has to learn the language of the majority and give up its linguistic particularism, this being required by social division of labour, progress in a commodity exchange and public and cultural life, which transcend the boundaries of individual linguistic and ethnic communities.

The level of development of individual communities was the most important factor of assimilating ability. Another factor that helped the expansion of the culture of the majority was the gradual liberalization of relations and democratization of public life: the development of the press, organizational life and various forms of self- government. Service in the army left deep traces in the mentality and the personality of the members of minority communities. The assimilation trends were helped by the consequences of the capitalistic system which created possibilities for development and stimulated new, more progressive forms of management, production and collective life, new customs and manifestations of modern

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<sup>55</sup> Chlebowczyk, 87.

material and spiritual culture, as well as the consequences of industrialization and urbanization.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, state assimilation made important progress.

The most common, Shibutani and Kwan add, is that the culture of minority groups undergoing transformation is a hybrid culture, containing norms that are traditional as well as some values of the dominant group. Many educate their children in the new ways while preserving some features of the old. As the elders decline in numbers, religious practices rigidly rooted in tradition are abandoned.<sup>57</sup> However, the culture remains distinctive to a certain extent. Those who have the opportunity to choose, their decision depends upon the extent to which an individual believes that he can pursue his personal values in one social world or the other.

In conclusion, attempts at cultural homogenization are successful due to the exercise of political rights and when the minority has been denigrated and suffers from inferiority complex, feels insecure and has a desire to be accepted into the mainstream.

### ***Dissimilation theories***

Groups maintain their identity when the existing hierarchical system of group differences is perceived as legitimate and when the groups system is perceived as secure. The difference of status differences is considered secure when the dominant group will use its power to discourage other groups to take a social action.

Prejudice and discrimination stymie assimilation. Nathan Glazer believes that in recent years it has been taken for granted that assimilation is to be rejected.<sup>58</sup> The decisive causal variable of social identity theory is the need for self-esteem and the individuals choose

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<sup>56</sup> Chlebowczyk, 87-88.

<sup>57</sup> Shibutani and Kwan, 74.

<sup>58</sup> Nathan Glazer, "Is Assimilation Dead?", in *Incorporating Diversity, Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, ed. Peter Kivisto, 113.

the identity that is most likely to enhance their self-esteem. Why is cultural or national recognition important to people? There are two possibilities given by theories of microsociology: one sees nationalism as the result of a rational choice and the other sees it as some kind of human predisposition.<sup>59</sup>

The two most prominent theoretical and ideological directions of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, liberalism and Marxism say that the liberal was that the ethnic divisions would inevitably lose the boundaries due to the education, communication and integrated economic and political systems; the Marxist was that the salience of ethnic divisions would decrease, but only to make room for the primacy of class divisions which for their part would eventually disappear after a revolution.<sup>60</sup>

The groups faced with the necessity of deciding which way of development to choose, the first possibility was to join the general current of integrating socio-economic, civilizational and cultural trends brought by capitalism. The price to be paid was the possibility of benefiting from the achievements of leading societies and renouncing not only of exclusiveness but also of ethnic and linguistic individuality and customs.<sup>61</sup>

The socio-economic transformations, the urbanization processes connected with them, and the growing disintegration of rural customs began with increasing effectiveness to burst the previous self-containment of individual linguistic and ethnic groups, loosen their internal cohesion, and restrict the territorial reach of traditional ties.<sup>62</sup> Progress in material and spiritual culture, together with the expansion of the vocabulary contributed to the “national revival”. The efforts made in this view, the defence of the individuality of such a language and of its purposefulness, the struggle to introduce it in schools and to ensure it full equality in various spheres of public life, there were the main aims of this phase of the nation forming

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<sup>59</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>61</sup> Chlebowczyk, 85-86.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 86.

process or national movement, in so far as it was promoted by certain individuals (the elite) and later by the entire social group.<sup>63</sup>

Among the political and moral arguments in favour of dissimilation, Kivisto mentions the preservation of subculture differences, ethnic groups can protect valuable cultural resources that are lost in a basically one way assimilation process, and can reduce anomie and the sense of alienation by giving individuals an identity.<sup>64</sup> Lack of aspirations for passive assimilation meant the desire to preserve linguistic and ethnic individuality, and opposition to all manifestations of fusion with an alien environment; lack of active assimilation aspirations signified a voluntary renunciation of any attempts to assimilate the local population, since assimilation requires readiness on the part of the majority group to absorb a minority group.<sup>65</sup>

Those who desire to separate are often characterized by a high degree of ethnocentrism which is reinforced through rituals, celebrations, religious acts, etc. and tend to live with their own kind of people and participate almost exclusively in their own organizations. Many of them admit that they feel almost exclusively in the presence of outsiders and do not care to have anything to do with them. Those who stress separatism usually link it to biological lineage.

The dissimilation leads to tightening of the boundaries of one or other ethnonational group, a result often known as “nationalism”.<sup>66</sup> Nationalism refers to expressed ideas, sentiments, or political rhetoric as a fundamental value of the “nation” or the “people” in the ethnic sense. Verdery says that “nationalistic” rhetoric usually presupposes that the “nation” ought to have political control over its fate though controlling its own state apparatus, regardless of who else might be living there too.<sup>67</sup> Verdery also mentions the complex

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<sup>63</sup> Chlebowczyk, 32.

<sup>64</sup> Kivisto, *Incorporating Diversity, Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, preface.

<sup>65</sup> Chlebowczyk, 50.

<sup>66</sup> Verdery, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

situation in which members of a nation identify with some other nation that does have its own state, the “divided loyalties”.

Herbert Gans names the two groups that take different position acculturationists and retentionists.<sup>68</sup> The retentionists are proud of they group symbols. Attempts are made to win official recognition of their language so that it can be used in schools and government. The young people though find the vernacular of the dominant group far more useful to finding jobs and in everyday life.

Laitin’s elite incorporation model says that the decisive question is whether the elite in the centre has incorporated the peripheral elite or not. If the peripheral elite have been incorporated it means that it has rights and privileges equal to those of the centre elite. In this case, the elite of the regional territory will be co-opted in the power establishment of the centre and over generations, this situation leads to the assimilation of the lower periphery strata into the dominant culture.<sup>69</sup>

If the local elite have not been privileged, only a lesser part of the elite will seek co-optation in the centre. This situation paves the way for a national revival because the new generations in the periphery find that they face barriers to mobility. The idea of full political independence is attractive to the aspiring elite because they would gain access to powerful jobs in a new state.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, Laitin’s theory suggests that we should search for power inequalities between different ethnic groups in order to explain national revivals.

According to Bollerup and Christensen, the cultural explanation of national revivals is linked with the non- recognition or misrecognition of the nation group. Kallas defines it as a

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<sup>68</sup> Herbert Gans, *Toward a Reconciliation of Assimilation and Pluralism: The Interplay of Acculturation and Ethnic Retention*”, *International Migration Review* 31 (1997): 139.

<sup>69</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 43.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

result of cultural deprivation which is experienced when discrimination or insult takes place on account of a person's national identity, language, religion, habits, tastes, and so on.<sup>71</sup>

The revival of small languages has become fashionable in our times, just as assimilation was a century ago. Deutsch says that when assertiveness outruns assimilation, separatist movements and national mobilization are likely to result.<sup>72</sup> Perceptions of threat make groups aggressive. Minorities with a very clear identity are seen as a security threat and for this reason efforts are made to assimilate them. In turn, minority peoples fear extinction of their cultural heritage and fight back. Groups seek leaders to mobilize and defend them. Breuilly assumes that elites and leaders construct ethnic identities and conflict by manipulating history, myths, and symbols as well as actual needs.

Among the facts commonly accepted are that conflict is more likely when minorities are spatially concentrated, there is a previous history of conflict and the country is transiting from authoritarian rule. Evidence on the role of ethnic heterogeneity is mixed, with one group of scholars arguing that it has a significant relation to conflict, while another argues that it does not and the only variable that matters is the size of the dominant group.

On internal democratic conditions there is less agreement, with Collier claiming that political rights, democracy and dictatorship made no difference in triggering ethnic conflict, while Sambanis argues that a democratic neighbourhood decreases the likelihood of civil identity war. Clearly, political instability matters, and transition regimes are more at risk than stable regimes. Ethnic conflicts, says Collier, are a phenomenon of low income countries, and the overall level of development and the dependency on natural resources as the main export commodity, not income inequality.<sup>73</sup> Sharing will always produce conflict and although development eases the consequences of conflict and developed societies are better equipped

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<sup>71</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 44.

<sup>72</sup> Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, "Sense and Prejudice in the study of Ethnic Conflict: Beyond System Paradigms in Research and Theory", in *Nationalism after Communism: lessons learned*, 21.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

to control it, development cannot eliminate conflict.<sup>74</sup> Suny claims that the political actors are capable of employing various identities, constituted both historically and by elites that shape attitudes and actions in domestic and international arenas.<sup>75</sup>

In conclusion, the national revivals arose during central institutional decline or during economical dynamics in a culturally peripheral region. Groups seek convenience and demanding a state for a linguistic group is tended to be viewed as rational behaviour. Fighting for the use of one's language in the state administration is the need for self-identification and political affirmation. Language plays both a symbolic role, indicating the group's status, and an instrumental one, providing access to resources controlled by a group or state.

When the central resources are in decline, some regional elites tend to mobilize the masses to secession, using a propagandistic speech that refers to the specific culture of the group that can only develop alone. It is not the regional nationalisms that lead to the disintegration of the centre, but it is the failure of the centre that makes the regional groups mobilize and favour autonomy. The nationalistic movements are not caused by the cultural differences, but rather by the failure of the law.

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<sup>74</sup> Mungiu-Pippidi, 35.

<sup>75</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, "Provisional Stabilities. The Politics of Identities in Post- Soviet Eurasia", *International Security* 24 (1999-2000): 139.

# CHAPTER TWO: Historical overview of the Tatars and the Gagauz

This chapter is devoted to the historical process of the transformation of a traditional community of peasants into a politically mobilized secular nation. It focuses systematically on the position of the two Turkic minorities, the Tatars and the Gagauz in East European history. I cover the Crimean Tatars' and Gagauz history chronologically from their ethno genesis in the pre-Ottoman era right up to the present after being freed from communist and Soviet rule. I review the social, economic and political experience in the Ottoman and post-Ottoman periods, especially during the Communists, and since 1989. I draw a parallel between general theoretical works and their application to historical research, in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the dimensions.

## **2.1. Ethno- genesis**

Before examining the development of the Tatars and the Gagauz, I will provide the data on the birth of the ethnic group and the ethnonym, the divergent opinions over their origins and their main occupations. Using a variety of sources from many languages, the Kipchak- Oguz- Turkic origins of the Tatars and the Gagauz are explored here. This chapter shatters their image as a race of nomads and shows the context these groups migrated and settled in the territories they now live.

### **2.1.1 The Tatars**

Initially, the Tatar ethnonym was indicating some tribes in Central Asia, more specifically in the north east of Mongolia. The arguments on the origins of Tatars are

divergent. Some researchers claim the Mongolic genesis, while others support the Turkic one. Later on, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, foreign neighbouring populations identified the Tatars with the population of the Golden Horde<sup>76</sup> with its builder in the person of Genghis Han's nephew, Batu Han.<sup>77</sup> The Horde was comprised and ruled by Mongols, Tatars and Turks. The Tatars, coming from a powerful tribe of Mongolic origin, assimilated the Turkish language which had become a principal component of Genghis Han's empire, and as this empire spread towards south east of Europe, the more the empire was identified with the Tatars.<sup>78</sup> Having a common language, traditions, beliefs, religion, the homogenization process happened at a rapid phase.<sup>79</sup> Therefore it has been created a new synthesis of the Turkish element, composed of all the characteristics of each ethnic branch. The ethnic synthesis process that has been taking place for centuries is also characterized of the continuation of the national features of the Turkic populations.

After the break up of the Golden Horde in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the people underwent thus a fragmentation. Beginning with the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this fragmentation would be aggravated by the liquidation of the Tatars as a result of Russian expansion. All these segments, apart from the Crimean Tatars, whose close links with the Turks were preserved until the destruction of their state in 1783, would live in isolation from the Turkish-Islamic world outside the Russian Empire, as well as from one another.<sup>80</sup>

Throughout the history the name of the Tatars has been distorted, picturing them as "cruel barbarians". The religious propaganda through sermons delivered over hundreds of years a quite consistent cliché. Having lost their statal entity on the threshold of modern history, the Tatars have been unable to withstand the attacks, striving and succeeding in

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<sup>76</sup> designation for the Mongol, later Turkicized khanate established in the western part of the Mongol Empire after the Mongol invasion in the 1240s.

<sup>77</sup> Mehmet Ali Ekrem, *Din istoria turcilor dobrogeni* (From the History of Dobrogean Turks) (București: Kriterion, 1994), 23-24.

<sup>78</sup> Mehmet Ablay, *Din istoria tătarilor* (From the History of the Tatars) (București: Kriterion, 1997), 17.

<sup>79</sup> Ali Ekrem, 25-26.

<sup>80</sup> Tahsin Gemil, "Problema etnogenezei tătarilor" (The Problem of the Tatars' Ethnogenesis), in *Originea tătarilor*, ed. Tahsin Gemil (București: Kriterion, 1997), 63.

making the Tatars the scape-goats of unsuccessfulness in the historical development of other peoples.

Tatars all over the world number as many as 12 million people, differentiated according to the area they live in. Currently two peoples are using the name of “Tatar” as their official identity: firstly the Tatars from the Volga- Ural region numbering some seven million (Tatarstan, Bashkurdistan, and the neighboring regions) and the second the Crimean Tatars (Crimean Peninsula- Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Romania etc.). Although their forefathers once ruled over part of the world within the limits of well-defined and thoroughly organized states, nowadays Tatars are scattered in a large number of states all over the world, with communities dispersed in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and United States.

The earliest movement of Tatars to Dobrogea<sup>81</sup> coincided with the crumbling of the Empire of the Golden Horde during the fourteenth century. Sporadically over the next several centuries groups of Tatars from Russia, the Crimea, and the Caucasus would continue to arrive and settle in Dobrogea, where there was already a diverse population made of Albanians, Greeks, Bulgarians and others.<sup>82</sup> The Russian conquest of Crimea in 1783 and the Crimean War (1853–1856) precipitated a general exodus of Tatars from the Crimea and northern Caucasus, many of whom settled in Dobrogea.<sup>83</sup>

In Romania, there are mainly two different groups of Turkic people, namely the Crimean Tatars and the Anatolian Turks. One part of the Crimean Tatars in Romania uses the name Nogay for their subnational identity and they have a native tongue which is a branch of the Kipchak language. Mehmet Ablay speaks of groups of Tatars that settled in Dobrogea in the thirteenth century, when the area was ruled by commandant Nogay. The other group

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<sup>81</sup> the area south of the Danube delta from Tulcea in Romania to Varna in Bulgaria; among various spellings: Dobrogea (Romanian), Dobruca (Turkish), Dobruja, Dobrugea, Dobrudzha, Dobrudja, etc.

<sup>82</sup> Mehmet Ali Ekrem, 26.

<sup>83</sup> Mehmet Ablay, 221.

comes from the coastal parts of Crimea and has a native tongue which is very close to Ottoman Turkish and belongs to the Oguz language branch. Among the Turkic tribes that settled in Dobrogea there were Selchuks, Osman Turks, Oguz Turks, from Anatolia and the Balkans. These and other facts (for example Anatolian Turkish cultural influence) led to chaos in defining a name for the national identity of the Tatars in Dobrogea. Even though the different names do not contradict each other, the Tatars were named Dobruja Tatars/Dobruca Turks, Turk-Tatars, Nogay-Turks of Romania-Romanian Muslim Turkish Tatars, Romanian Tatar Turks etc.<sup>84</sup>

### 2.1.2. The Gagauz

The Gagauz are a Turkic group that is thought to have begun to settle in the Balkans long before the beginning of Ottoman conquests in the region, perhaps as early as the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>85</sup>

The origins of the Gagauz are disputed. Over the years they have been regarded as the descendants of Greek, Bulgarian, Albanian, or Wallachian Christians who had maintained their religion but had been Turkified during the Ottoman period. A more popular traditional view held that they are of Anatolian Turkish origin. The researches of T. Kowalski<sup>86</sup> in Dobrogea established a close connection between the Turkish spoken by the Gagauz and Anatolian Turkish. The researches of Paul Wittek<sup>87</sup>, Włodzimierz Zajaczkowski<sup>88</sup>, Kemal

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<sup>84</sup> Nadir Devlet, "The Question of National Identity among Tatars in the 20th century", in *Originea tătarilor* (The Origin of the Tatars), ed. Tahsin Gemil, 38.

<sup>85</sup> H.T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 146- 155.

<sup>86</sup> See *Les Turcs et la Langue Turque de la Bulgarie du Nord-Est*, (Krakow: Commission Orientaliste de l'Academie de Cracovie, 1933); "Les elements ethniques turcs de la Dobrudja", *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 14 (1938): 66–80.

<sup>87</sup> See Yazicioghly 'Ali on the Christian Turks of Dobruja," *BSOAS* 14 (1952): 639–668; "Les Gagaouzes, les gens de Kaykaus"(The Gagauz, people of Caucasus), *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 12 (1952): 12–24.

<sup>88</sup> See "Gagauz," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. 2 (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1965), 971– 972; "Kethnogenezu Gagauzov"(The ethno genesis of Gagauz), *Folia Orientalia* 15 (1974): 77–86.

Karpat<sup>89</sup>, and others support this hypothesis. However, more recent analysis of historical and linguistic evidence indicates that the Gagauz are a synthetic population, formed from the melding of Pechenegs, Uz, Cumans, and Anatolian Turks.<sup>90</sup>

Halil Inalcık speaks of a group of Turcoman nomads from the Byzantine Empire who joined Sultan Kaykavus in his refuge in Dobrogea, land offered to him by Emperor Michael VIII Paleologus. These Muslim Turks came under strong Christian missionary pressure and many returned to Anatolia between 1307 -1311, while those who remained converted to Christianity.<sup>91</sup> Paul Wittek also supports the theory that the Gagauz are descendants of Turkic Oguz tribes that were living in Dobrogea in the first half of the thirteenth century and continued to live in Dobrogea until the Russo- Turkish wars, when they migrated to south Bessarabia.<sup>92</sup> They were often treated as a single population, one Russian observer from the 19<sup>th</sup> century naming them “illegitimate children of Turks and Bulgarians”.<sup>93</sup>

## 2.2. Demographics

The size of the community and the continuous modifications in the social structure of the population contribute to easier access and success of assimilation processes. The Tatars and the Gagauz did not enjoy their development in a modern state of their own, but they are scattered in the Black Sea region. Due to several factors (wars, famine, corruption, compulsory military service, etc) big number of Tatar population left the Romanian province of Dobrogea, migrating to Turkey. The Gagauz finally settled in southern Moldova attracted

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<sup>89</sup> See Kemal Karpat, “Gagauz’ların tarihi mensei üzerine kısa bir bakış” (A short look at the history of Gagauz) *I. Uluslararası Türk Folklor Kongresi Bildirileri 1* (1976): 163–177.

<sup>90</sup> See Harun Gungor and Mustafa Argunshah, *Gagauz Türkleri: Tarih-Dil-Folklor ve Halk Edebiyatı*(The Turkish Gagauz: History-Language-Folklore and Popular Literature) (Ankara: Kultur Bakanlığı Yayinlari, 1991); and *Diinden Bugüne Gagauzlar* (The Gagauz from the Past to Present)(Ankara: Elektronik İletişim Ajansı Yayinlari, 1993).

<sup>91</sup> Eminov, *Major Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria*, 76-77.

<sup>92</sup> King, *The Moldovans*, 210.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 211.

by the tsar's offer to populate the lands that were destroyed and emptied after the Turco-Russian Wars at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### 2.2.1. The Tatars

The conquest of the Balkans by the Ottoman Turks set in motion important population movements which modified the ethnic and religious composition of the conquered territories. This demographic restructuring was accomplished through Ottoman colonization of strategic areas of the Balkans with Turkish-speaking settlers from Asia Minor and Anatolia. Occupied by the Turks in 1420, Dobrogea remained under Ottoman control until 1878.

Tatars were brought to Dobrogea by the Ottomans following the increasing power of the Russians in the region and its annexation of Crimea in 1783. After the Crimean War, a number of 100,000 Tatars were forcibly driven away from Crimea, immigrating to then-Ottoman Dobrogea, which had one of the most ethnically diverse populations in Europe: Turks, Tatars, Romanians, Bulgarians, Russians, Greeks, Armenians, Serbs, Jews, Germans, Italians, Albanians and Arabs. The Ottomans offered them military positions and they acted as privileged legal category of border warriors.<sup>94</sup>

The wars between the Ottomans and the Russians from 1768 to 1829 were largely fought in Dobrogea. These wars were disastrous for the agricultural economy and the population of the area. By the end of these wars large areas of Dobrogea became depopulated. As a consequence, the population in 1829 fell to 40,000 inhabitants, then rose to 100,000 by 1850.<sup>95</sup> In the 1850s the Ottoman government felt a need to advertise in European newspapers

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<sup>94</sup> Constantin Iordachi, 8.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

for potential immigrants to settle in Dobrogea, “promising them land for agriculture, tax exemptions, and a variety of religious and cultural incentives.”<sup>96</sup>

The statistics of the population of Dobrogea differ substantially due to the strong political implications and even official data provided conflicting data and tend to take altogether the Tatars and the Turks and count it as Muslim population. Ali Eminov considers that although the settlement of Tatars and Turks from Asia Minor and Anatolia and from other parts of the Empire continued throughout the Ottoman period, a demographic balance between Christians and Muslims was achieved by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. This demographic balance began to be reversed in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878. During and following the war, large numbers of Turks and other Muslims (most of the Tatars) left the Balkans with the retreating Ottoman armies, initially to areas in the southern Balkans still under Ottoman control, and later to Turkey.<sup>97</sup>

Kemal Karpat argues that to settle large numbers of immigrants over a short period of time the Ottoman authorities called for the establishment of an entirely new town, the town of Mecidiye<sup>98</sup>, in Dobrogea “specifically to accommodate refugees from Crimea and to serve as a centre for the economic development of central Dobrogea.”<sup>99</sup> Tatars together with Albanians served as gendarmes, who were held in high esteem by the Ottomans and received special tax privileges. The Ottoman's additionally accorded a certain degree of autonomy for the Tatars who were allowed governance by their own *kaymakam*, Khan Mirza.

Romania is recognised as independent in 1878 and gains the territory of Dobrogea from the Ottoman Empire. After the 1878 war, Russia received Northern Dobrogea, but forced Romania to change a region partly overlapping to the so-called Southern Bessarabia with it, as Russia wanted a direct access to the Mouths of the Danube. Constantin Iordachi

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<sup>96</sup> Eminov, 132.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 131.

<sup>98</sup> Medgidia in Romania today.

<sup>99</sup> Eminov, 132-133.

argues that in order to foster the national and economic incorporation of the multi-ethnic province, Romanian political elites adopted three strategies: ethnic colonization, cultural homogenization and economic development.<sup>100</sup>

Many Romanian politicians perceived the province's geopolitical location and multiethnic population as a danger to the country's ethnic homogeneity and political stability. The strategy of assimilation and integration of the province had the following levels: colonization by ethnic Romanians, nationalization of landed property, cultural homogenization, establishment of a highly centralized political regime, which promoted the interests of Bucharest -based political elites and weakened regional political resistance, and the exclusion of Dobrogea's non-Romanian economic elites from political rights.<sup>101</sup>

At the time when the Romanian administration had been installed in the province the economic and social situation was not very bright. Many Turkish and Tatar families who ran during the war were waiting to take their houses and their land back.<sup>102</sup> According to Rădulescu and Bitoleanu, the Romanian state administration supported the Turkish and Tatar population to move back and granted them social status.<sup>103</sup> Supporting this opinion, Ali Ekrem says that they enjoyed the rights they had during the Ottoman times, having their own representative in the town's council and maintaining in the function the same *mufti* who owned the position during the Ottoman Empire. Their political rights were the same with the other citizens of the Romanian state. Article 3 of the Organization Law of Dobrogea claimed that "all the inhabitants of Dobrogea who, on the day of 11<sup>th</sup> of April 1877 were Ottoman citizens become Romanian citizens."<sup>104</sup> The same law revised in 1882 aimed at augmenting the

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<sup>100</sup> Iordachi, 2.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>102</sup> Ali Ekrem, 73.

<sup>103</sup> Alexandru Rădulescu, Ion Bitoleanu, *Istoria românilor dintre Dunăre și mare* (History of Romanians between the Danube and the Sea) (București: Editura Științifică 1979), 358–360.

<sup>104</sup> Ali Ekrem, 81.

number of the population in Dobrogea (especially the Romanian population), but also maintaining the existing autochthon element.<sup>105</sup>

From 1877-1878 it is estimated that between 80,000 and 100,000 Crimean Tatars emigrated from Dobrogea to Anatolia, which continued in smaller numbers until the Second World War. The Romanian data eliminated any doubt about the existence of a state policy to determine the migration.<sup>106</sup> The reasons for the emigration were several. In 1883 the Romanian government enacted a law requiring compulsory military service for all Romanian subjects including Tatars who were concerned that serving a Christian army was not in accord with their Muslim identity and that it might pose a threat to their religious beliefs and *hılal* (food taboos).<sup>107</sup> A report made at the time by S. Zefechide the emigration of the Tatars was due to their habits to nomadic life, as well as the foreign propaganda and recruitment.<sup>108</sup>

The greatest catalyst of migration was the enactment of a series of laws from 1880 to 1885 that confiscated the land of the Tatars. Fredrick de Jong speaks of 30 years of terror in which the lands were taken by the Romanian authorities.<sup>109</sup> During the period 1889-1912, the state confiscated 127,483 hectares of land from native Dobrogeans, and more than half were redistributed to ethnic Romanian colonists.<sup>110</sup>

A second migration took place because of the famine which swept through Dobrogea after a failure in harvest in 1899. Other factors of migration were the attempts of the Romanian authorities to vaccinate them, the continuous calls for *hijra* to the soil of Ottoman Empire, a tendency to get education in Istanbul.<sup>111</sup> The reasons Mehmet Ali Ekrem gives for the migration of the population were the fact that the Tatar population could not adapt to the changes in the legislation of the landed property and the corruption of the local clergy men

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<sup>105</sup> Ali Ekrem, 85.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Williams, 280.

<sup>108</sup> Ali Ekrem, 87.

<sup>109</sup> De Jong, *The Turks and the Tatars of Romania*, 169.

<sup>110</sup> Iordachi, 32-33.

<sup>111</sup> Müstecip Ulküsai, *Dobruca ve Türkler* (Dobrogea and the Turks) (Ankara: Türk Kültürü Arastırma Enstitüsü, 1966), 29.

towards all the population, no matter the race. The lack of water, the fact that the given lands were away from the villages they lived in, the priority given to Romanians and Bulgarians to get land or buy it for less money and the independence of Turkey in 1923 determined the Tatar population to migrate.<sup>112</sup>

The census always included Tatars and Turks in the same category of Muslims. In 1879, in Dobrogea, there were 271 villages with 134,662 Muslims and 87,900 Christians. In 1900, there were 120,015 Romanians and 40,626 Tatars and Turks; in 1911: 186,334 Romanians (54% of the population) 35,922 Turks (21,350 Tatars, representing 5.6% of the total population of Dobrogea); in 1930, there were present 154,772 Turks and 22,141 Tatars. At that time, The Romanian population was growing fast due to colonization policies.<sup>113</sup>

The pace of emigration of Turks from Romania picked up in the 1930s, precipitated by the expropriation of Turkish landholdings, the worsening of the economic situation brought on by the worldwide depression, and the generally negative political climate for most minorities in Romania at that time. The signing of the Turkish–Romanian Convention in 1936 facilitated emigration of Turks and Tatars to Turkey. Within a very short period of time, 1937–1939, some 130,000 to 150,000 people emigrated. By the end of the Second World War the combined Turkish and Tatar population of Romania had been reduced to about 55,000, comprising 6–7% of the population of Dobrogea compared with 21% in 1930. In the 1948 census the combined total of Turks and Tatars was only 28,782.<sup>114</sup>

In the Soviet period the national consciousness was suppressed and popular or scientific discussion on the topic was forbidden. Although at the beginning in the 1960s Tatars and Turks became targets of assimilation, these efforts were relatively benign when compared with the policies of the Zhivkov regime in Bulgaria. From the end of the Second

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<sup>112</sup> Ali Ekrem, 128.

<sup>113</sup> Ali Ekrem, 103-104 and Nicolina Ursu, “Turco-Tătarii Dobrogeni în recensăminte și statistici românești (1878- 1916)”(The Dobrogean Turco-Tatars in Romanian census and statistics), in *Originea Tătarilor* (The Origin of the Tatars), 308-309.

<sup>114</sup> Eminov, 134.

World War until the 1960s emigration of Tatars from Romania to Turkey virtually ceased, a reflection of the generally unfriendly relations between Turkey and communist Romania. One consequence was a steady increase in the Tatar population in Romanian Dobrogea from 20,469 in 1956 to 22,151 in 1966, 23,107 in 1977, and 24,596 in 1992.<sup>115</sup>

Today in Romania the number of Tatars is less than 25,000, about 0.2% of the total population. In 2005 The Democratic Union of Muslim Tatar-Turks claimed that there are 50,000 Tatars in Romania, believing the census estimate is artificially low because most Tatars intermarry Turks or identify themselves as Turks.

### 2.2.2. The Gagauz

The Gagauz people settled on the east side of the Black Sea during the Middle Ages, coming later on under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The *millet* system and the Tanzimat reforms allowed certain autonomy to its citizens and to its non- Muslim population, including the Gagauz. There are an estimated 12,000 Gagauz in Bulgaria, about 30,000 each in Greece and Romania. Most of the Gagauz today live in Moldova and the Ukraine.<sup>116</sup>

The first Moldovan state was created at the middle of 14<sup>th</sup> century and its borders laid from the Carpathian Mountains to the Black Sea and the Dniester River, having to defend against its neighbours: the Poles, Hungarians, Tatars and Turks. Squeezed between more powerful neighbours, Moldova has been moved back and forth from the power zone of one foreign authority. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the south territory of Moldova has been under Ottoman rule. In 1812 the eastern part of the Moldovan principality (today the Republic of Moldova) was annexed by the Russian empire as a war trophy and most of its Muslim population migrated. Therefore the area remained unpopulated. During the Russian- Turkish

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<sup>115</sup> Eminov, 134.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

wars in 1768- 74 and 1806-12 the Gagauz fled north attracted by the Russian tsar's offer of land and special privileges like release from tax payment and the military service. They moved to southern Bessarabia due to the devastating Russian- Turkish wars in the area for economical reasons, being attracted by "a better life" offer from the Russians. Shifted from a nomadic style of life to sedentary, choosing the farms and the cattle breeding. Bulgarians, Greeks, Albanians were also invited by the tsar to populate Bessarabia.

The population increased from 300.000 to two million by 1897. The census held in 1897 by Russia has not listed the Gagauz in Bessarabia, but reported 55,790 Ottoman Turks, that probably included them.<sup>117</sup> In 1871 the province lost its privileges and became a province under the name of Bessarabia with Chişinău as capital. The integration into the Russian empire led to economic, political and social changes and a diversification of its ethnic population by moving to the region Ukrainian and Russian people as well as Gagauz, Germans and Jews from other territories.

In June 1940 the Soviet Union forcibly annexed Bessarabia, as a consequence of Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty. Soviet policy aimed at creating cleavages between the Moldovans and the Romanians, in order to give an independent identity to the Moldovan nation. The famines and forced deportations in the 1940s and the exchange of populations (sending Moldovan people in Romania and bringing Russian and Ukrainian in Moldova) altered the demography and russified the region.<sup>118</sup>

According to the 1989 census, the Gagauz made up 3.5% of the population. The majority (92%) inhabits in the most southern region of the republic, concentrated in three districts. Gagauz Eri comprises three towns: Comrat, Ciadîr- Lunga and Vulcăneşti, 23 villages and three suburban townships. Gagauz Eri itself is a multiethnic quilt that includes 5.5% Bulgarians, 5.1% Russians, and about 4% Ukrainians, most of them living in rural

<sup>117</sup> King, *The Moldovans, Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 211.

<sup>118</sup> King, "Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan- Romanianism", 349.

communities, interspersed with Romanian speaking Moldovan villages.<sup>119</sup> In this complex patchwork, the ethnic Gagauz population forms an absolute majority in only two subterritorial units: Comrat and Ciadîr- Lunga.

### **2.3. Culture**

As most of the minority groups in Eastern Europe were on a very low level of development at the time when modern social consciousness was taking shape, the languages they used were poorly developed. Both Tatar and Gagauz languages are on UNESCO's endangered language lists, marked as seriously endangered. There are a small number of children who learn the language, but few if any of them become active users. Today, of all Turkic peoples, Christianity is predominant only among the Gagauz.

These languages were no more than local dialects, each with a small basic vocabulary and an uncodified grammatical structure which was passed on from one generation to another. Under these circumstances, the existence of related ethnic and linguistic groups led to the emergence not so much of bilingualism.

In pre-capitalist Eastern Europe certain individuals and entire communities were excluded from the collective life of even the poorest rural communities and the urban communities that could hardly satisfy their most basic needs.<sup>120</sup> The rural population of Tatars and Gagauz being outside the reach of assimilation had preserved its original ethnic character, started to flow into towns. This began to change the structure of linguistic and ethnic relations. Contact between individuals and groups speaking different languages widened and grew in strength, leading to the increase in the role of language as a means of communication.

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<sup>119</sup> Troebst, 244.

<sup>120</sup> Chlebowczyk, 47.

Starting with 1980s, the population began to address questions such as the lack of sufficient language education in urban areas, the depreciation of the national culture, and the deteriorating knowledge among members of the younger generation.

### 2.3.1. The Tatars

Crimean Tatar is a Kipchak language from the Western Turkic language group which, however, has been strongly influenced by Oguz through Ottoman Turkish. The Tatars speak various local dialects developed in a foreign linguistic environment. This process is very complicated and has continued to the present day. The Tatar language does not have a literary variant, as the official language was Ottoman Turkish during the 500 years of occupation. For a considerable section of the Tatar community, Tatar remains a means of communication among elderly people only.

By the time of the incorporation into the Romanian state, the Tatar population in Dobrogea was mostly rural and poor, and therefore mostly illiterate due to the lack of schools. The communities could not protect as their leaders did not have enough training and authority over the population.<sup>121</sup>

After 1878, the Romanian political elite acknowledged the major role of education and culture in the process of nation-building in Dobrogea. Primary education became state sponsored in 1864 and aimed at promoting the national identity. Primary schools contributed to the process of cultural homogenization by overcoming the local parochialism and segregation that characterized communitarian life in the province.<sup>122</sup> Article 17 of the education law in 1880 guaranteed the freedom of education in the Tatar communities with the condition that the schools are under control of Public Instruction Minister and that in each

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<sup>121</sup> Ali Ekrem, 128.

<sup>122</sup> Iordachi, 41.

village, together with the Turkish language, the Romanian language should be taught too. Article 21 presumed that a Muslim seminar was to be made with state funding to train the leaders of the mosques.<sup>123</sup> In 1924 a new law took into account changing the Turkish names of the places into Romanian, some by translating the original name, so that the newly settled Romanian population would easily adapt to the new life.<sup>124</sup> The Muslim population also asked that the old Muslim law to be uninstalled. They considered that old customs like the harems, polygamy, marriage without the bride's will, women slavery are not longer up to date society.<sup>125</sup>

In 1900 Islam was thriving in Romania. There were 260 mosques open to worship in Romanian Dobrogea. The most important centre of Islamic learning was the religious college (*medrese*) at Babadag. This college trained religious teachers and other religious personnel to meet the needs of the Islamic community.<sup>126</sup> In the same year, most of the mosques on Romanian soil were allotted ten hectares of land for their maintenance. This provision was later formally embedded in the Land Law of 1921.<sup>127</sup>

The school remained in operation until 1964, when it was closed down by the government, ostensibly for lack of interest in religious education on the part of young Turks and Tatars. At the beginning of 1970s, restrictions on Islam were eased. Romania, in an attempt to improve its relations with the Islamic world, began to emphasize “the presence of a flourishing Muslim minority on its territory.”<sup>128</sup>

De Jong mentions that the closing down of the only theological school in the country in 1964 meant that by the 1980s the number of *imams* who performed “the functions of *muezzin* and *hatib* concomitantly” had decreased considerably because of lack of qualified

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<sup>123</sup> Ali Ekrem, 81.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>126</sup> Eminov, 135.

<sup>127</sup> De Jong, *The Turks and Tatars of Romania*, 169.

<sup>128</sup> De Jong, “Muslim Minorities in the Balkans on the Eve of the Collapse of Communism”, *Islamic Studies* 36 (1997): 416.

candidates and because the Romanian authorities were not endorsing appointment of new *imams* by the *mufti*. Lack of adequately trained religious personnel meant that mosques in many villages were not open to worship. *Imams* were appointed only to those mosques deemed to “have historical or artistic value.” Moreover, attendance at mosques that remained open, even on special occasions such as the two major Muslim festivals, was sparse, consisting mainly of men over 60 years of age.

Lack of religious instruction, shortage of well-trained religious personnel, scarcity of functioning mosques, and anti-religious propaganda combined to create a generation of Tatars and Turks ignorant about the fundamental principles of their religion. This was a genuine threat to the preservation of Islam in Romania.<sup>129</sup>

For practical purposes, however, during communist rule, the *mufti*, the High Muslim Council, and the local councils were not important in the lives of most Muslims in Romania. The *mufti* and the members of his administrative staff were salaried state employees and, as such, spokespersons for state policy. The *mufti*'s appointments and decisions were subject to confirmation of the powerful Department of Religious Cults. They represented the official version of Islam to the outside world, which often had no resemblance to the realities on the ground.<sup>130</sup> Since World War II the *mufti* and the members of his administrative staff have all been Tatars. While intermarriage was rare, Muslim and Christian groups lived side by side for centuries.

Between 1947-1957, Tatar schools began operating in Romania and in 1955 a special alphabet was created for the Tatar community. In 1949 Tatar and Turkish schools were established in accordance with the constitutional provision mandating that members of non-Romanian nationalities be provided education in their mother tongue. Soon after, the Romanian government initiated a policy of separate development for the Tatars. Most Turkish

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<sup>129</sup> De Jong, *The Turks and Tatars in Romania*, 180–181.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 182–183.

schools were designated as Tatar schools. A Tatar teacher training college was established in Constanța. Books in Kazan-Tatar were imported from the Soviet Union to replace the previously used Turkish books. A special Tatar alphabet was created and a number of publications appeared using this alphabet.

However, these experiments worsened the already low educational standards in these schools, prompting Tatar parents to send their children to Romanian public schools instead of Tatar schools. Declining enrolments in Tatar schools led to the closing of most of these schools. By the late 1950s only a handful of these schools remained open. In 1957 all the remaining Tatar- and Turkish-language schools were closed, less than ten years after their establishment, and a process of Romanizing the Tatars and Turks was begun.<sup>131</sup> According to Sarah A. Smith, in her article in *The Guardian*, ensuring the survival of the Tatar language is a concern. Although some older Tatars were educated in Tatar schools, these were eventually closed in the late 1950s, partly through their own choosing, says Yaşar Memedemin, a Tatar poet and a founding member of the union. “We wanted our children to be intellectual, to go to university. But having studied in Tatar they couldn't get in. So we asked for Romanian language schools to give them a better chance”. Although there was no law against schools teaching the Tatar language, “in reality, you'd be persuaded not to”.<sup>132</sup>

Since 1989 all restrictions on the Tatar and Turkish language and the practice of Islam have been lifted. Islam has also been an important part of Tatar identity since the tenth century AD. Therefore, religious self-identification is a crucial factor in preserving a Tatar's ethnic affiliation. As a cultural force, religion can be very helpful in maintaining one's ethnic identity. In Romania, centuries of Christian Orthodox proselytizing and later the atheistic nature of the Soviet regime contributed greatly to this process.

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<sup>131</sup> Eminov, 134-135.

<sup>132</sup> Sarah A. Smith, “Email from Constanța”, *The Guardian*, 9 December 2002.

In 1990 the Democratic Union of Muslim Tatar-Turks was established. It again became possible to offer classes in minority languages. So far Turkish classes are offered only at the pre-school level. During the 1990–1991 school year, 40 children were enrolled in Turkish pre-school classes with two teachers. By the 1993–1994 school year enrolment had increased to 156 children with seven teachers.<sup>133</sup>

### 2.3.2. The Gagauz

The Gagauz language is a dialect of Turkish written in a Cyrillic based alphabet, adopted under Soviet rule in 1957. Gagauz language belongs to West-Oguz group of the Turkic language family, along with modern Crimean - Tartar, Turkmen, Turkish, Azeri, Uygur, and Uzbek.<sup>134</sup> Orthodoxy was the religion recognized as the dominant religion for Gagauz people and it was under the authority of the patriarch in Constantinople. The Gagauz have retained their distinctive faith even during the Ottomans, using Slavonic and Greek as liturgical languages.<sup>135</sup>

The first national Gagauz revival took place at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and that's when the Gagauz became a written language, language that is similar to Turkish language but with some words adopted from the Russian. During the Romanian rule, Mihail Ciachir, a Gagauz priest started a national movement in 1920s and 1930s. He is also the author of the first Gagauz dictionary and grammar, and of the history of the Gagauz, the translator of Gospels and liturgical works.<sup>136</sup>

During the Soviet rule, the Gagauz issued many decrees that wanted to reorganize their cultural and educational life, but they were all rejected. In 1958, the Central Committee

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<sup>133</sup> Anuarul statistic al României, 274-277, in Ali Ekrem, 82.

<sup>134</sup> Baskakov quoted in Larisa Yakut, "Dynamics of the Development of Gagauz Culture", *Foundation for Endangered Languages*, available at <http://www.ogmios.org/134.htm>, Internet accessed May 2008.

<sup>135</sup> King, *The Moldovans, Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 211.

<sup>136</sup> Mihail Ciachir, *Istoria găgăuzilor din Basarabia* (Chişinău, 1934) quoted in <http://www.alewiten.com/harun24.htm>, Internet accessed May 2008.

Bureau of the Moldovan Communist Party opened the first Gagauz primary school, but soon its activity was banned. In 1961, the official language of instruction for minorities was decided to be Russian. Despite the lack of the available books and the education in Gagauz language, 87% of the population declared Gagauz as mother tongue in 1989.

Russification was the doctrine and the administrative practice applied in Moldova in order to disjoin the population from their prior ethnic and cultural allegiances. Administrative Russification consisted of introducing Russian institutions and laws and extending the use of the Russian language in bureaucracies and schools. Cultural Russification consisted of coercing local populations to adopt Russian culture, language, and religious forms as their own. During the Soviet rule 1940-1941 and 1944- 1989 Russian became the official language of the country, on 9 August 1940. The long range policies resulted in Russian cultural hegemony over Moldova's mostly rural indigenous culture. Coupled with colonization, the cultural and demographic outcome became a success.<sup>137</sup> One consequence was the consolidation of Russian culture in urban Moldova.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Gagauz illiteracy rates stood at 88% for men and nearly 98% for women.<sup>138</sup> The situation has not improved in the following years. By 1990, only 647 Gagauz were studying at institutions of higher education. Of a total of 2,975 teachers at institutes of higher education, only 15 were ethnic Gagauz.<sup>139</sup> There was little demand among the Gagauz population, especially in the villages, for using the language outside the family circle, as they were used to speaking Russian in the social environment, even when Romania ruled in Bessarabia.<sup>140</sup> Until 1990, only 33 books had been published in Cyrillic Gagauz, most of the cultural life of the Gagauz minority being practically featured in Russian. The first collection of poetry in Gagauz was published in 1964, but few other books appeared during

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<sup>137</sup> Andrei Brezianu, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Moldova*, 182-183.

<sup>138</sup> King, *The Moldovans*, 211.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

the Soviet regime. Most of the other works about the Gagauz or the literature of the Gagauz writers were in Russian, and occasionally translated into Gagauz.<sup>141</sup> In the post war period only 30-40 books were published in Gagauz.

The Gagauz music, dress and folk art in large part disappeared under the Soviet rule. The law about adopting the Romanian language as the official language in Moldova, together with the forces that fought to unite Moldova with Romania were supposed to help the people of the republic to get a national cohesion, but the result was the opposite, creating conflicts with the Russian and Ukrainian minorities in east and with the Gagauz in south, groups that never accepted the pro- Romanian orientation. As a result of the rise of Moldovan nationalism, a pro-Russian movement emerged, *Edinstvo*.<sup>142</sup>

At the beginning, the leaders only considered a cultural autonomy and not a territorial or administrative autonomy. In July 1991 the government decided to hold a week long celebration of Gagauz culture in the republic.<sup>143</sup> The assimilation of some Gagauz had been so successful that they did not perceive themselves as culturally colonized by Soviet regime. The pro-Soviet separatist group even adopted Russian as the official language,<sup>144</sup> but they focused on the danger of future deprivation in an independent Moldova or in a Great Romania.<sup>145</sup>

About 65% of the population in Moldova declares itself as belonging to Moldovan nation; they speak a language that is fully intelligible to Romanians; they worship many of the same national heroes as people in Romania; they declare Romanian in the census. However, the pan-Romanian union has not taken place after the fall of Iron Curtain and Moldova has remained a point of contention between Bucharest and Moscow.<sup>146</sup> Also, most leaders of Gagauzia are pro-Russian and tend to reject the Romanian Moldovans who constitute the

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<sup>141</sup> King, *The Moldovans*, 213.

<sup>142</sup> Crowther, 194.

<sup>143</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 225.

<sup>144</sup> Cavanaugh quoted in Bollerup and Christensen, 97.

<sup>145</sup> Nahaylo quoted in Bollerup and Chistensen, 97.

<sup>146</sup> King, "Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan- Romanianism", 348.

national majority. The Moldovan government encouraged the ties with Turkey and approved a Latin alphabet in 1993, which was endorsed by the official Turkish language Society in Ankara.<sup>147</sup>

Moldovan critics and foreign observers as well, allege that the Gagauz governmental entities use mainly the Russian language. Paradoxically, 90% of the people declared the Gagauz as their mother tongue in 1989 showing how important the language is for their identity and their cultural survival. 80% of the Gagauz and Bulgarians claimed they spoke Russian, and at the same time 90% of the Gagauz considered Gagauz their mother tongue. Yet the Gagauz were able to express themselves in their mother tongue to a very limited degree. They write and read with difficulty. They had the chance to study it in schools only between 1950s-1960s. They did not have the opportunity to develop their own language, literature or culture.<sup>148</sup> For social and professional purposes they definitely preferred Russian. Kolsto says that linguistic Russification did not mean a lack of identity but showed instead that the identity was in process of changing.<sup>149</sup> Despite the concessions received from the majority, the Gagauz identity remains confused because the majority of them continue to speak Russian instead of their native language.

It was part of the Soviet society that urban families were sending their children to Russian schools and kindergartens. This was opening more possibilities to getting better jobs and this was the main reason for acculturation into the Russian language.<sup>150</sup> After 1990, this situation gradually changed. The best argument against the language law voted by the Moldovans was that it reduced the possibilities for Gagauz to be employed in the public sector. The Moldovan government supported the Gagauz cultural demands in order to win them as an ally in the struggle against Russification. The Gagauz intellectuals originally in

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<sup>147</sup> King, *The Moldovans*, 214.

<sup>148</sup> Skvortsova, 171.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

1987 demanded better conditions for the Gagauz culture and for the language in particular, demands that the Moldovan government was ready to accommodate to a large extent.

Even the *bashkan* of Gagauz Eri, Mihai Formuzal, admits that “the Gagauz language is currently protected only to a small degree. The state does not allocate resources to its development. In schools, the main problem is that there are not enough books and, in some cases, there are no methodological materials [or] handouts necessary for studying the Gagauz language at all. In daily life, the population primarily uses Gagauz, especially in villages. Still, one can often hear Russian, Moldovan, and Ukrainian as well. However, one must admit that Gagauz society is very tolerant in this respect. Regarding the use of Gagauz in government bodies, unfortunately it is rarely heard”.<sup>151</sup>

In response to Gagauz demands, the central government established in 1992 a new University in Comrat, the main city of the autonomy. This happened even though there already existed in Chişinău, at the State Pedagogical University “Ion Creangă”, a Department for National Minorities to ensure Higher Education accessibility for minorities and the development of specialists to teach in the communities populated by minorities such as Gagauz and Bulgarians. The University was established thanks to donations from local individuals and village communities. Turkey and Bulgaria also donated funds for the university.<sup>152</sup> Because until now the subjects at the University of Comrat are taught in Russian, young people, in the majority of cases, are not familiar with either the Romanian or Gagauz languages.<sup>153</sup> The language of education at Comrat University, which was founded in 1991, is also Russian due to the pressures of local Russian leaders. The former regional government did not show much interest in changing this situation and respective efforts by the

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<sup>151</sup> Emmet Tuohy, Melinda Haring, “Moldova: The Example Of Gagauz-Yeri As An ‘Unfrozen Conflict’ Region”, , *RFE/RL*, 5 April 2007.

<sup>152</sup> “From Ethnopolitical Conflict to Inter-Ethnic Accord in Moldova”, *ECMI Report 1* (March 1998), 17.

<sup>153</sup> Ana Coretchi, Ana Pescaru, Cynthia Stevens, “The Republic of Moldova: Dimensions of the Gagauz socio-linguistic model” (paper presented at USA World congress on language policies, Barcelona, 2002). Available at [http://www.linguapax.org/congres/taller/taller3/article15\\_ang.html](http://www.linguapax.org/congres/taller/taller3/article15_ang.html), Internet accessed December 2007.

Moldovan Ministry of Education were met with a cool response. Moreover, a Gagauz library, organized by the opposition, was not supported, but harassed for political reasons.<sup>154</sup>

The fact that the cultural promotion of the Gagauz ethnicity is completed in the Russian language means maintaining it in the Cyrillic alphabet, and not developing Gagauz as a dialect of the Turk language. This fact supports the utopian idea of creating a new language, a Gagauz one, but in reality produces a population that remains hostage to the local political elite. For example, within University of Comrat a centre for the creation of the educational terminology and textbooks in Gagauz language was established. But the attempts to develop in the autonomy teaching in Gagauz language even in the primary school failed because of the lack of the qualified teachers and Gagauz textbooks. On the other side, the circulation and study of the language of the majority of the population is further marginalized.

With initiatives of the Soviet government and turcologists the Gagauz received their alphabet in Cyrillic version on July 30, 1957. Classes and elementary schools in teaching of the Gagauz language followed. That spurred writing activity and publishing of textbooks in the native tongue. The schools were soon closed again in 1961, but in these three years Gagauz culture leaped forward with emerging of its first intelligentsia and scholars that continued the literacy process during this period of repression of cultural identity. For almost three decades, from early 60s to late 80s, Gagauz language and culture remained in stagnation. Usage of Gagauz was limited to a family encirclement and mostly to its older generation of speakers. The young Gagauz people, born in 70-80s, cannot speak or even understand their native tongue.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Claus Neukirch, "Autonomy and Conflict Transformation: The Case of the Gagauz Territorial Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova", ed. Kinga Gal, *Minority Governance in Europe*, Series on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues 1, (2002): 14.

<sup>155</sup> Yakut.

After Moldova's proclamation of independence, the Gagauz Section of the Moldova Academy of Sciences developed a Latin alphabet for the writing of the Gagauz language.<sup>156</sup> Since 1995 there has been a period of transition for Gagauz language from Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet, which is more suitable to its phonetics. The problem of literacy and preparing readers for newly published materials in the 60s has shifted in the 90s to the problem of inadequacy of teaching in new alphabet and availability of books in it.<sup>157</sup>

Along with other foreign languages, Gagauz was restored in schools in the status of a subject of study in 1986. Although Gagauz as a language is today taught in the region, there is no single school teaching the whole curriculum in Gagauz. As a result, the development of Gagauz language, culture and probably also identity did not develop as one should have expected as a result of the autonomy.

## **2.4. Economic situation**

When modernization emerged in East Europe, the Tatar and the Gagauz populations were predominantly dealing with farming and agriculture. Only few of them joined the urban elites and became part of the entrepreneurial class. With the communist regime, the populations in the rural areas joined the cooperative work in agriculture, while others enrolled in the working middle class.

### **2.4.1. The Tatars**

The Tatars and the Turks were the majority population before the annexation of Dobrogea in 1878 and they were the main group that "suffered" after the official Romanian

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<sup>156</sup> Brezianu, 80.

<sup>157</sup> Anatolieva quoted in Yakut.

nation- building campaign of homogenizing the region. During Ottomans, the *millet* system conferred fiscal, educational, and confessional autonomy to communities according to their religion. At that moment, the Tatars were living predominantly in the countryside and practiced agriculture and stockbreeding.<sup>158</sup> Together with the Turks, they owned almost 50% of the land and after the colonization period the Romanian state managed to acquire two-thirds of the Dobrogean lands from the *reaya* population that failed to redeem their tithes. The landlords feared a labor drain at a time when they needed agricultural workers the most, therefore they used this land to attract colonists from Romania's Diaspora. In 1889- 1914, the lands were redistributed to ethnic Romanians in order to strengthen the Romanian character of the province.<sup>159</sup>

Romanian political elites implemented a policy of modernization in Dobrogea which was considered a gold mine for the economical development of the country because of the potential and the advantages the sea has. Thus, the province benefited from important material investments in communication, transport, commerce. Soon, the harbor in Constanța became the major provider for the national economy. After the annexation, the state adopted a plan of urbanism in Dobrogea, changing a lot the demographics of the population. The Romanians monopolized the cities, while the other minorities were connected to the agrarian sector.

The consequence was the creation of a new Dobrogean elite composed mostly of Romanians. Among those who did not emigrate there was also a population that was incorporated in the urban middle class, attracted by the industrial development that started at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>158</sup> Müstecip Ulkusal, "Dobruca ve Türkler"(Dobrogea and the Turks), quoted in Ali Ekrem, 95.

<sup>159</sup> Toma Ionescu quoted in Iordachi, 31-32.

## 2.4.2. The Gagauz

Moldova was among the less developed countries in the Soviet Union and its development remains behind and its industrial economy lags behind national standards, while waste and fraud ran rampant in the agricultural sector. As late as the mid 1960s, it had the lowest productivity, capital investment, and industrial employment rates of any of the union republics.<sup>160</sup> The peasantry was deported as *kulaks* and suffered a forced collectivization.<sup>161</sup>

The perceptions of who is to blame for the backward economic state of the south territory of Moldova differed. The separatists blamed the Moldovans, while the autonomists blamed the Soviet centre. The anti-communist party supported the Moldovan demands for market economy reforms and asked for the break up of the *kolkhozy* and introduction of private ownership of the land. But Moldova's government argued that there is not enough land to satisfy the demands of the farmers.<sup>162</sup> The communists strongly opposed such demands and supported Soviet economics.

In Gagauz Eri, after the Law on Special Status of Gagauzia was adopted, the regional economic strategy took a 180% turn and factories started being given to the private sector. The resolution of political problems has therefore facilitated the economic development of some enterprises.<sup>163</sup> At this moment, the Gagauz Parliament started to aim at securing an independent functioning of their economy, as well as a separate financial and banking system.<sup>164</sup>

The Gagauz still rely on Chişinău to subsidize the local budget and they have proved unable to establish effective control over their territory.<sup>165</sup> Charles King believes that the Gagauz have been economically disadvantaged because they were working in agriculture at

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<sup>160</sup> Crowther, 185.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>162</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 95.

<sup>163</sup> *ECMI Report 1* (March 1998), 23.

<sup>164</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 95

<sup>165</sup> King, "Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan- Romanianism", 362.

the collective farms and their average standard of living was below the Moldovan average.<sup>166</sup> The Gagauz live in the poorest area of Moldova and unlike Transdnister do not threaten with the loss of industry and energy links.

## **2.5. Politics**

For one ethnic minority the leaders represent the mobilization engine and the participation of the ethno- cultural minorities in taking political decisions is an important aspect for the rights of the minorities. The electoral systems not always permit them to have elections or have their own representatives in the central government. Romania allows to the recognized national minorities to have a representative in the Romanian Parliament, even if the votes do not reach the 5% threshold. The Gagauz in Moldova have their own government and president (*bashkan*).

### **2.5.1. The Tatars**

The national awakening of the Crimean Tatars began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century nurtured by the rise of Pan-Islamism and the Pan-Turkish movements. Romania had not yet fully incorporated Dobrogea and Tatars were relatively free to organize politically and publish journals founded on nationalist ideas. The most influential in the Crimean Tatar Diaspora of the former Ottoman lands actually emerged from the small Tatar communities in Dobrogea.

İsmail Gaspiralı was considered by many to be the father of Crimean Tatar nationalism.<sup>167</sup> However, it is the poet Mehmet Niyazi who is most credited with spreading

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<sup>166</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 95.

<sup>167</sup> Sabirzyan Badretdin, "Pan-Turkism: Past, Present and Future", *Turkoman*, London, December 1998 available at <http://tatar.yuldash.com/079.html>, internet accessed December 2007.

nationalist ideas among the Tatars of Dobrogea. In the wake of the fall of the Crimean Tatar government in 1917, Dobrogea became the foremost place of refuge for Tatars from Crimea. Many of these refugees were inspired to join the Prometheus movement in Europe which aimed for the independence of Soviet nationalities. During this period, Müstecip Hacı Fazıl (later took the surname Ulkusal) was the leader of community in Dobrogea. He and other nationalists protested Tatar emigration from Dobrogea to Turkey, believing resettlement in Crimea was preferable.<sup>168</sup>

On the other side of the barricade, the newspaper “Türk Birliği” (the Turkish Union) of the Turkish population in Romania wrote in 1934 that “among the Balkanic countries only Romania is the one respecting the rights of its national minorities, allowing without discrimination to public education, jobs in the public administration and superior positions in the army. The newspaper’s motto was: “The country that is your homeland guarantees your rights and your life. Respect its laws and don not be afraid of anything!”<sup>169</sup>

The political representatives of the Tatar community in the Romanian Parliament showed loyalty to the Romanian state. A speech of 1919 said: “I declare in the name of the Muslim population in Dobrogea that we will be faithful and useful to Great Romania, our beloved nation land...”<sup>170</sup> S. Hamdi, the Tatar deputy, in an interview in “Tatar Birliği” newspaper said that “the biggest part of the population will not leave the nation land that they love”.<sup>171</sup>

Currently, Romania respects the minority rights of Tatars and does not follow any policy of Romanianization. Today the desire of Tatars and Turks to speak their language and to practice their religion is not seen as a threat to Romanian national security. Both groups

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<sup>168</sup> Badretdin.

<sup>169</sup> Ali Ekrem, 88-89.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>171</sup> *Türk Birliği*, 27 September 1934.

have benefited from the concessions to Romania's largest minority, the Hungarian minority.<sup>172</sup>

According to official declarations, ethnic minorities can use their native language in education. Ethnic minorities are offered native language access to public administration in towns and villages where they make up for more than 20% of the population. In towns and villages where they make up more than 30% of the population, local council meetings can be held in the minority language, provided that translation into Romanian is provided, and that official minutes are kept in Romanian.<sup>173</sup>

The political rights of the Tatars are represented by an elected deputy, who is a member of the UDTTMR (The Democratic Union of The Muslim Turco- Tatars of Romania) party. Among all the previous deputies, only Aledin Amet distinguished. According to a report on the activity of the deputies of the national minorities in Romania, Aledin Amet was the most active deputy among the other representatives of other minorities.<sup>174</sup> His law proposal to decree the national day of the Romanian Tatars, has been greatly supported by the Romanian Parliament. The flaws of the mandates of the minorities' representatives lie in the way they understand to represent the interes of the community, considering a lack of institutional mechanisms to impose a greater responsibility.

### **2.5.2. The Gagauz**

Moldova is a country with a big diversity of minorities and self-determination tendencies and lies between West and East, between orienting towards Romania and Europe

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<sup>172</sup> Eminov, 158.

<sup>173</sup> Romanian Information Centre in Bruxelles, Romanian Contemporary Society, European Commission, (April 2006), available at [www.crib.mae.ro/upload/docs/8862\\_1Romanian%20Contemporary%20Society.ppt](http://www.crib.mae.ro/upload/docs/8862_1Romanian%20Contemporary%20Society.ppt), internet accessed May 2008.

<sup>174</sup> "Monitorizarea activității parlamentare a reprezentanților minorităților naționale, September 2007", available at [http://www.edrc.ro/docs/docs/raport\\_monitorizare\\_1\\_final.pdf](http://www.edrc.ro/docs/docs/raport_monitorizare_1_final.pdf), Internet accessed November 2007.

or towards Russia and the former Soviet republics. Charles King names the independence of Moldova as a curse of the faith and history has “condemned Moldova to be a state”.<sup>175</sup>

Elvira Anghel says that the hatred among the people has been fuelled by the political discourse and not so much by the cultural differences. It set an example of both territorial autonomy and of minorities' collective rights, for the first time in Central and Eastern Europe since the fall of communism. The Gagauz minority, like others, took advantage of the political uncertainty and demanded rights that are in fact, contrary to international legislation.<sup>176</sup> The Gagauz followed a tendency seen in post- Soviet societies, but only accomplished in certain circumstances. Some researchers see the differentiation of the Gagauz people of Moldova as a way to cease conflict or as an obstacle for the society to democracy and stability because of the short experience in leadership and organizational management.

The political context with Ukraine’s declaration of independence and the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia led to a separation of Moldova from Russia. At that time Romania started the integration of Moldova into the Greater Romania by invading Bessarabia under the pretext of protecting military stockpiles and fighting the anarchy caused by Russian military units that had deserted from the Romanian front and by numerous peasant rebellions against the landlords.<sup>177</sup> On March 27 1918, due to political pressure from the Romanian government and Romanian troops present on the Moldovan territory, Moldova proclaimed a conditional union with Romania. By the end of the year, Bessarabia became an ordinary Romanian province.<sup>178</sup> Bessarabia stayed part of Romania until 1940, when the Soviet Union signed an agreement with the Germans. The victory of the anti-Nazi coalition finalized in Bessarabia’s return to Soviet territories, named Moldovan Union Republic, where the process of socialism

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<sup>175</sup> King, *Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan- Romanianism*, 345.

<sup>176</sup> Elvira Anghel, “Identitatea națională și cea europeană” (National and European Identity), in Moșneagă, 42.

<sup>177</sup> Skvortsova, 162.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

started being implemented. The cultures of all groups received a strong imprint of what was equally new to all of them- the Soviet lifestyle.<sup>179</sup>

The voices of the Gagauz started to be heard from 1986 onwards when the soviet policy of Perestroika allowed more freedom to the ethnic groups as freedom of speech and the right to organize collectively.<sup>180</sup> The national revival initiated at the same time with the Russo- Ukrainian, a mobilization against the Moldovan struggle to identify and unite with Romania and after the Moldovan language was declared the official language of the country in August 1989.

In 1990, August 19, Moldova became a sovereign state and its parliamentary report sustained that the Gagauz were not indigenous and they had to be considered simply an ethnic group without rights to its own territory. Consequently, a congress that took place in Comrat decided the secession and the proclamation of Gagauz Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>181</sup> In 1989, two political organizations were created, both aspiring for the dissimulation: the Gagauz People, pro- Russia made of members of the Communist Party and bureaucrats from the agricultural sector, and the Cooperation Movement, anti-communist comprised of former prisoners.<sup>182</sup>

The Gagauz refused to comply with the policies to become bilingual or to lose any chance of citizenship or occupational mobility within the republic. They reacted against the changes that took place in the transcript of the language from Cyrillic to Latin characters. Today they admit that switching to the Latin alphabet will open the borders towards the whole world.<sup>183</sup> Starting with 1990-1991, the freedoms of expression and association have been restricted in order to cool down the separatist tendencies. In exchange to the demand for statehood, the government in Chisinau agreed to allow the Gagauz a national territory, a

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<sup>179</sup> Skvortsova, 164.

<sup>180</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 79.

<sup>181</sup> Anatol Măcriș, "Găgăuzii din Basarabia", in *Curierul național*, 13 December 2003.

<sup>182</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 79.

<sup>183</sup> Anatol Măcriș, *Găgăuzii* (The Gagauz People)(București: Agerpress Typo, 1999), 32.

government with its own legislature. The currency and the foreign defence affairs remained under the jurisdiction of Chisinau. While the cultural and trade exchanges with other countries are decided by Comrat. In 1992 the president of Moldova Mircea Snegur refused the idea of turning the country into a federation of three republics: Moldova, Dniestria and Gagauz Eri.<sup>184</sup>

Munteanu says that the Gagauz People party turned to be more powerful and managed to subordinate the anti-communists. In November 1989 they proclaimed a Gagauz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic initiative which was immediately abolished by the government in Chişinău. Separate state institutions were created to help obtain the status of the Gagauz region as a federal subject of the USSR. The new created Parliament held its first elections in October 1990 and in March 1991 the population participated in a referendum on the proposal for a renewed USSR. The population that participated in the elections (83%) voted for the The Gagauz People leader, Stefan Topal, for president of the state. 90% of the electorate voted for an independent Gagauz republic as a constituent part of the USSR. The Gagauz national revival led to the formation of a separate state-like unit.<sup>185</sup>

According to Munteanu, the major reason for the absence of violence in Comrat was the lack of resources in the mostly rural Gagauz community as there were severe economic constraints on the secession strategies.<sup>186</sup> The two revivals, Transdnjesters and Gagauz, came at the same time and they were both directed towards the same nationalizing regime in Chişinău. The links between Comrat and Tiraspol were very strong and many. Moldovan radical activists sent busloads of armed thugs to the Gagauz settlement to teach them a lesson. Most observers agreed that blood would undoubtedly have been shed had it not been for the successful intervention of troops from the Soviet Minister of Internal Affairs.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Munteanu, "Social Multipolarity and Political Violence", in *National Integration and violent conflict in post-Soviet Societies: the cases of Estonia and Moldova*, ed. Pal Kolsto, 221.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>187</sup> Kolsto, "Conclusion" in *National Integration and violent conflict in post-Soviet Societies: the cases of Estonia and Moldova*, ed. Pal Kolsto, 268.

The Gagauz never played a significant role in the Communist Party of Moldova because they were favoured by neither the federal nor the republican centre, considers Bruchis. The political deprivation was reflected in the fact that they were never assigned a separate administrative unit. According to Sheehy in 1987 only 2.3% of the posts were occupied by Gagauz.<sup>188</sup>

Bollerup and Christensen consider that the national revival could be explained by the liberal policies adopted by the formerly repressive Soviet regime and eased by already existing republican units and constitutional rights.<sup>189</sup> King believes that the concession made for Gagauz Eri is partly due to the more conciliatory tone coming from Chisinau and that the Gagauz government itself has in large part made a virtue out of a necessity.<sup>190</sup> A Gagauz politician admitted that 25 deputies made an agreement with the government in Chisinau in 2001. In exchange of their support, the Gagauz received the application of some demands of the special status of Gagauz Eri.<sup>191</sup> Therefore, the Gagauz leaders showed willingness to negotiate.

Iulian Frunțașu says that the ethnic mobilization was caused by the leaders helped by Russia and Turkey through financial assistance.<sup>192</sup> In 1993, an OSCE observer also reported that “the main reason for the secessionist demands is not ethnic, but political and ideological”.<sup>193</sup>

### 2.5.3. Pan- Turkism

Ethnic Turks and Muslims in the Balkans are populations that have been indigenous to the area for centuries and have tended historically to resort to Turkish nationalism as a means

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<sup>188</sup> Bollerup, and Christensen, 96.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>190</sup> King, “Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan- Romanianism”, 362.

<sup>191</sup> Frunțașu, 360.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 338.

<sup>193</sup> Bloed quoted by Igor Munteanu, ed. Pal Kolsto, 226.

of defence against overt assimilatory pressures from the successor states of the Ottoman Empire. For centuries Tatars had an alliance with the Turks from the Ottoman Empire and after with the modern state of Turkey. The Tatars gratefully evoke the protection wielded by Turkey to Tatars, wherever they may have been. The Tatar Diaspora in Turkey lobby the Turkish government to support them in their struggle to gain land and rights, to collect money for the construction of needed housing, schools and cultural organizations.<sup>194</sup>

Pan-Turkism orientation distanced the ethnic group from the pro-Slav and the Dniester organization. The infrastructure of the Gagauz autonomous unit is very poor and there were not many investments made there, except for some minor ones made by the Turkish government who gave a big support for their “revival” and the economic development. Turkey pledged to invest 35 million dollars in Gagauz Eri, via Moldova’s central authorities in Chişinău.<sup>195</sup>

Moldova’s policy toward its Turcophone Christian minority was praised by Turkey’s president Süleyman Demirel who visited Moldova in 1996 and 1998. He considered the autonomy as one of the best solutions to the explosive issue of national minorities after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He confessed: “Do not be concerned. Turkey will not abandon you. We have found each other and will not let go”.<sup>196</sup> Formuzal believes that the existence of the autonomy was made possible thanks to a great deal of support and assistance given by the Turkish Republic: “It is Turkey that played a decisive role in acknowledging Gagauzia as autonomous, and in resolving this international conflict peacefully. So I do esteem Turkey's contribution”.<sup>197</sup>

Sabirzyan Badretdin considers that in order not to jeopardize its relations with the West and Russia, Turkey has long been reluctant to play an active role in the Turkic revival.

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<sup>194</sup> Williams, 277.

<sup>195</sup> Brezianu, 213.

<sup>196</sup> “Demirel in Moldova”, *RFE/RL Daily Report* 105, 6 June 1994.

<sup>197</sup> Emmet Tuohy, Melinda Haring, “Moldova: The Example Of Gagauz-Yeri As An 'Unfrozen Conflict' Region”, *RFE/RL*, 5 April, 2007.

“Turkish expansionism has always been viewed with suspicion by the West and Russia. Therefore, it seems expedient to de-emphasize the political aspect of Turkey’s leadership role at the initial stage of Turkic integration and, instead, emphasize the cultural aspect of Turkey’s leadership”.<sup>198</sup> The goal of liberating Turkic peoples from colonial oppression and uniting them culturally, politically, and economically is a noble aim that any moral person ought to support.

## **2.6. Ethnic consciousness**

The construction of identity and ethnic consciousness in Romania and Moldova is relevant factor in the mobilization of one group. Ethnic self-consciousness can be defined as identifying oneself as a member of a certain ethnic group. This is perhaps the most important characteristic forming the basis of one’s ethnic identity. It argues that the Tatars and the Gagauz undergone repression and being a community scattered over time and space did not experience patriotic feelings.

While Tatars identify strongly with Romania and did not have a strong desire to emigrate, The Turks in Romania, on the other hand, have a stronger identification with Turkey than with Romania. Many consider Turkey their true homeland and hope to return there eventually. To them Turkey is a kin state which will come to their aid when needed. One reason why Romanian authorities have tried to privilege Tatars over Turks in matters of education and religion is that Tatars, to a much greater degree than the Turks, “tend to look upon themselves primarily as Romanian citizens, and only secondly as Muslims or Tatars.”<sup>199</sup> The Tatars, whose ancestors came from Crimea, may consider Crimea their homeland, but

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<sup>198</sup> Sabirzyan Badretdin, “Pan-Turkism: Past, Present and Future”, *Turkoman*, London, December 1998 available at <http://tatar.yuldash.com/079.html>, internet accessed December 2007.

<sup>199</sup> De Jong, *The Muslim Minorities in the Balkans*, 416.

Ukraine is certainly not a kin state to them. Ukraine does not want Tatars to return to Crimea, and it has no interest in the fate of Crimean Tatars living outside Ukraine.<sup>200</sup>

Williams considers that it is the concept of a lost homeland that provided the primary marker of Tatar group identity for members of its community in the various contexts.<sup>201</sup> Neither the subordinate Tatars group, nor the dominant Romanian group shows much ethnocentrism. Members of the inferior groups can choose to exit or to remain silent in passive acceptance of the state of affairs.

The fact that few Gagauz have been urbanized most probably contributed to preservation of a sense of social solidarity, says Bollerup.<sup>202</sup> The region of Gagauz Eri is predominantly rural. The inhabitants are mostly farmers and live in villages in two small towns. The land is a very important territorial bond with their ancestors that were given to from generation to generation. Self awareness of the Gagauz is very powerful. As seen from the research made by Kolsto, more people declared themselves Gagauz than Soviet.<sup>203</sup>

The national identity includes the political configuration of the society, not only the cultural and ethnic characteristics. The Gagauz population had to separate into two entities as a result of the propaganda that has foreseen imposing a certain political affiliation without researching and preparing the population. The Gagauz showed a strong ethnic base and national identity. Bollerup writes that unlike the Moldovan- Slavic relations, the historical record of Moldovan- Gagauz relations does not contain significant atrocities or large scale oppression.<sup>204</sup> Even if the Moldovans did not like the present the Russian tsar made to the Gagauz land firstly giving them land, the Moldovans did not consider them as their enemies as they were seeing the Slavs or the Hungarians.

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<sup>200</sup> Eminov, 136.

<sup>201</sup> Williams, 4.

<sup>202</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 82.

<sup>203</sup> Kolsto, 33.

<sup>204</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 85.

The Gagauz were no threat to the Moldovans as there were no significant resources there and no support from outside like a mother nation and they never turned against them like the Slavs did. The relations were always peaceful and the leaders of the pro-Russian organization could not succeed by using the hostility against the Moldovans like tool for gaining the autonomy.

Gurr and Harff describe the groups with a high degree of common identity suffer from what they consider grave injustice; they tend to unite in collective action in defence of their interests.<sup>205</sup> The Gagauz have a powerful force to assimilate others. While at the beginning of the 20th century Comrat was inhabited in equal proportion by Moldavians, Gagauz and Bulgarians, today Comrat's citizens are 68% Gagauz. Some leaders are Bulgarians that identify as Gagauz.<sup>206</sup>

A long cultural distance and a clear demarcation line between groups do indeed create strong identities on both sides of the boundary. Culturally mixed groups feel more vulnerable than do members of other ethnic communities. Their mixed identity represents an affront as well as an obstacle to identify mobilizing elites.<sup>207</sup> Vladimir Socor believes that the Moldovans did not perceive their instrumental interests in avoiding the economic and political deprivation to be in conflict with the interests of the Gagauz. The Gagauz were not perceived to be a cause of the deprivation and neither were they perceived to be a potential future threat in this respect. On the contrary, there was widespread acknowledgement among the Moldovans that the Gagauz had been even more economically underprivileged than them under Soviet rule and that the two nation groups had in common interest in opposing the Russian led Soviet dominance. The Moldovans did not perceive them as a threat to the

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<sup>205</sup> Kolsto, 249.

<sup>206</sup> Măcriș, *Găgăuzii* (The Gagauz people), 23.

<sup>207</sup> Kolsto, 250.

functioning of a Moldovan dominated democracy because of the sheer size. They also considered the cultural autonomy as compatible with their political interests.<sup>208</sup>

Tatars consider Romania their homeland, identify strongly with it, they wish to remain in Romania and do not have a strong desire to emigrate. One consequence is that Turks outside of Turkey have not developed strong identities with the countries in which they live. This is interpreted by authorities in Romania and elsewhere as a sign of unreliability and potential disloyalty. Since there is much emphasis upon the importance of ancestry, it is not surprising that intermarriage is condemned.

As approximately 90% of all Gagauz as of 1989 lived in the southern part of Moldova and in the contiguous Odessa Oblast in Ukraine, this was the only place which would make sense for a Gagauz nation-state. The so far misrecognized Gagauz had a strong primordial interest in striving, if not for an independent state, then at least for some kind of autonomous status, be it within the boundaries of the USSR or within an independent Moldova.

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<sup>208</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 222.

## **CHAPTER THREE: Causes of assimilation and dissimilation and future predictions**

In addition to critically evaluating the academic literature on the topic, my main research contribution consists in conducting and analysing interviews with members of the Tatar and Gagauz communities in Romania and Moldova. I will primarily link the theories to the literature on the case studies and test the results on the Tatar and Gagauz individuals.

In April 2008 I conducted a research trip in the capital city of Bucharest, my home town in Romania, Constanța, and the capital city of Gagauz Eri, Comrat. It was easier for me to have access to the Tatar community and conduct interviews because people felt sharing their views with someone who knew and understood their problems. The people that were interested more in this issue were members of UDTTMR (The Democrat Union of Muslim Turco-Tatars in Romania). When talking to Gagauz individuals, the communication met some linguistic obstacles due to people's powerful Russian accent, a language that I do not speak. The most people I met and talked to in Comrat were people that I contacted before and some were Turkish professors teaching in Gagauz Eri schools.

The sample of questions has targeted the perception of these people considering their culture, language, minority/citizen rights, religion, leadership and their views of the future of their community. The questions addressed at Tatars in Romania aimed at finding out what they believe about their culture, their rights, and the direction of politics. The Gagauz were asked what they feel about their culture and the results of autonomy, as well as the future prospects of the group.

A total number of twelve Tatars responded to my survey, while the number of the respondents in Gagauz Eri reached eight. The targeted group included males and females aged between 22- 50, but those who showed more interest in responding were the young people.

Further on, I will try to present the findings of the interviews according to the theme and divided into the causes and solutions people gave to the assimilationist/dissimilationist processes.

## ***The Tatars***

Beginning with the Tatar community in Constanța, the sample questions included questions on culture, language, political, as following:

1. How do you feel about the culture and the language of the Tatars in Romania? If you think they preserve/lose it, what are the causes?
2. What do you think about education in Tatar language?
3. How do you contribute to the preservation of the Tatar ethnicity and culture of the community?
4. To what extent do you consider that the community's leaders represent your rights?
5. How do you see the future of the Tatar community?

## **Culture and community's problems**

As a result of the answers concerning the culture of the Tatar and Gagauz culture, I learned that only the old people keep the traditional culture alive, while the young generations understand that the culture should be preserved but their interest in doing something pragmatic is very scarce. Asked how they feel about **the Tatar culture**, the majority agreed that the Tatars are losing their culture. Among the causes they perceived are: the small size of the community, parents do not teach and speak the mother tongue at home, ignorance towards the language and the traditions, the language is primitive, the lack of books and schools in the mother tongue, everyday life problems, mixed marriages and discrimination. Most of them

considered that their culture and language will not help them in the future. When talking about traditions, the younger subjects said that they do not know much about the traditions. The reason is that the young do not get involved in organizing baptism ceremonies, funerals or weddings and everything is done by the elder people. Three respondents said that the Tatars lose their culture because of ignorance. One subject added the shame felt. The parents are also blamed for the lack of education in the mother tongue.

Two respondents mentioned the size of the community, considering that assimilation is a natural process in case of small community of 25,000 inhabitants, which represents 0.1% of the whole population of Romania. One subject, L.Z. (41, female, professor), thinks that the cause lays in the adaptation to the modern life.

One respondent argued that even if there has been voted the national day of the Tatars in Romania, she does not know the meaning of this day. 90% of the respondents do not have the basic knowledge about the history of their people or about Tatar cultural heads. Many Tatars, especially among the younger generation, prefer to learn and speak Turkish and identify himself or herself as Turkish, admitting the usefulness of Turkish language in finding a job.

**Religion** is an important factor in defining one's identity. Being Muslim involves some attachment to customary practices and a distinction from other ethnic groups. The respondents understand its importance but they do not practice it. The religion becomes relevant only in marriage situations. All the respondents reject mixed marriages, thinking it is a sure way to assimilation. S.I.A. (female, 27, student) confessed that she has been taught that she must marry someone of Islamic faith even if she does not comply with everything religion says, but she knows that religion is for fewer people an obstacle in marriage.

Only one subject mentioned religion as important in maintaining one's identity. F.C. (male, 26) thinks that religion is the only one that can stop or at least slow down the

assimilation process, and it is the only marker to differentiate from the majority. L.Z. (female, 41, professor) understands the role of religion in her family only when she looks at her children and regrets the fact that she did not insist on teaching them what religion consists in. She says that this is also somehow normal as her children attend the religion classes (Christian Orthodox religion) given at school.

Two respondents out of twelve think that the Tatars are not assimilated and that they do not lose their culture. C.A (male, 40 years old, PhD candidate) denied the assimilation, saying that we are assisting to a national revival after 1989. The same opinion had S.A (female, 31, parliamentary counsellor) who said: “the Tatars are today a national minority with constitutional rights that tries by considerable efforts to keep and affirm its ethnical identity. I believe our history, culture, language and the religion are the essential elements of the identity as a nation, and the culture is the main factor that Tatars use to differentiate and culture is the main and most powerful factor the Tatars use.”

When asked how they **contribute to the preservation** of the Tatar culture and language, 80% of respondents answered that they are not involved anyhow in the community, but from an individual level, they try to learn and speak the language. L.Z. (female, 41, professor) is teaching the younger ones about the culture and making them listen to Tatar music. G.S. (male, 31) thinks he can contribute to the preservation of his culture by the traditions, the special foods wherever he travels in the world.

All the interviewed subjects declared they want **education in Tatar language** and that the language is being forgotten and not used anymore except by the older generations. Tatar language is declared as mother tongue by 92% of the population, while the rest consider Romanian as mother tongue<sup>209</sup>. 50% admit they do not speak Tatar. S.I.A. (female, 27, student) said that she speaks Tatar with her parents, but she speaks Romanian with her brother

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<sup>209</sup> The Romanian census held in 2002, available at [www.recensamant.ro](http://www.recensamant.ro), Internet accessed November 2007

and sister. The rejection of the mother tongue is mostly seen in children and teenagers. One interviewer, L.Z. (41, female, professor), said that even if she knows Tatar she does not speak to her children in Tatar because it is easier to communicate in Romanian.

Only one subject, S.A. (31, parliamentary counsellor), knew about the future prospects regarding the teaching of Tatar, which will be introduced in the curriculum after 50 years of break, starting with 2008-2009 school year. She hopes that in the future the Tatar language will take back its place in the education of each Tatar person. M.M, (female, 30) mentioned the similarity of Tatar and Turkish languages and considered the replacement of Tatar with the Turkish as language of study for the Tatar minority as one way of assimilation of the language.

About the **leaders of the community**, 80% does not have a good opinion or is not aware of their activities. S.R. (male, 28) puts the problem of the interest of the politicians in the context of education, saying that the leaders do not help the young people and that the funds of the cultural organizations remain unused or are used for personal expenses. E.C. (male, 28) considers that as long as his citizen rights are respected, he is not interested in the rights of one minority groups should have.

The other 20% trust the political leaders, arguing that they represent the rights of an ethnic community. But at the same time one says that she does not expect everything from them or consider only them to blame for the success or the lack of success of the community.

## **Future implications**

The future of the community has divided opinions, some see it as optimistic, and others see it negative, and most of the answers given say that the future depends on many conditions in order to be bright. Among the solutions they give are: interest of and towards the young generation, unity as people, education in the mother tongue, ambition, emphasize

on the traditions and religion. One subjects proposed establishing a museum of Tatar history. Three interviewers said that in the context that Romania offers all the rights that are necessary for a minority and Romanian state does not stop forbid the practice of the language, the religion, the culture, and the traditions, the Tatars have chances to ethnically survive. One subject, L.Z. (female, 41, professor), does not view the future optimistically because she does not believe in the young generations: “Slowly we will be totally assimilated with the language, the traditions that today only the older people keep. The young generation has too many vanities to be visionary too!”

## ***The Gagauz***

The respondents in Comrat were among the people I contacted before I travelled there, as well as people I came across with during the journey. The questions I asked were:

1. How important is the ethnic identity for you?
2. How do you see the autonomy of Gagauz Eri and its consequences? Was it a political trifle of the leaders or not?
3. What do you think about the usage of the Gagauz language in education and administration?
4. How do you contribute to the preservation of your culture and language?
5. How do you see the future of the Gagauz?

## **Culture and community’s problems**

Contrary to the passivity of the Tatar population in Romania, in Moldova the Gagauz fought for the recognition of their ethnicity as a nation with its own territorial and cultural autonomy and should have the freedom and the ability of developing their distinct culture and language. According to the answers received in Gagauz Eri, the accent on the two important

factors in preserving one's ethnicity has faded away in time. After gaining the autonomy, people experienced a powerful mobilization for revival but they now admit that they failed. Even if in the 1990s there was a campaign to teach Gagauz language in schools, today, due to political pressures and lack of interest, there's no longer education in their mother tongue, but the Russian language is predominantly used in all the sectors of life.

Among the causes mentioned for the problems they perceive: the lack of interest in the mother tongue, the immigration tendencies of the young population, incompetent leaders, and adaptation to the Russian culture.

Although 6 subjects are Gagauz and identify themselves as Gagauz, they say that **identity** is fading away with the new generations, they no longer identify as Gagauz or Moldovans, but as Bulgarian or Ukrainian. R.N. (female, 24, NGO worker) says that the young people present themselves as such, making connection with some grandparents that used to live in the neighbouring countries.

Asked about the main **consequences of the autonomy** of Gagauz Eri, the majority said the results are beyond the expectations and that the situation was the same if they were denied the autonomy. 90% of the interviewees has a negative opinion of the situation in Gagauz Eri even if ten years ago there were all the conditions for a cultural and economical development. The reality today is that, as my interviewees agreed on is that the young people leave to Russia, Turkey or European countries to find better life, but they also believe that this is the same for all the citizens of Moldova. One subject describes the problems of the investments in the region that might create employment. M.T. (male, 46, professor) says that there are trade and economic contracts with western countries in the areas of industry and agriculture. In agriculture, German technologies were used, whereas the agriculture is the main source of profit for Gagauz Eri. For the last two-three years, Germany is very willing to invest in this area. One subject blames the policy of the Moldovan government to drive away

the development. S.B. (male, professor) says: “Where as Byelorussia and Russia were the main importers of wines, already for two years the wines do not go there because of the Mr. Voronin's (the President of Moldava) policy and here autonomy can not do anything. One subject refers to a better quality of life after the autonomy saying that the well-being of Gagauzs has improved significantly.

In Gagauz Eri the basic **education** in schools is still given in Russian. As the interviewers told me, the Gagauz language is compulsory subject, one lesson per week and there are no schools in Gagauz language. Even if the subjects admit the lack of education in the mother tongue, the majority considers that the population does not need the language for their future. R.N. (female, 24, NGO worker) said that it is obligatory that the *bashkan* of Gagauz Eri must be fluent in Gagauz, as he will most probably not use the language. The Gagauz language is more used among people living in the rural regions.

About the **political leadership**, 80% of the opinions supported the idea of Turkish influence the area and not Russia. After the Soviet disintegration, the nationalities living in Moldova had been separated into two groups, Romanian and Russian speakers. And the Gagauz remained in the Russian speakers group. But in the current situation, they accept Russia and its language policy. N.R. (female, 24, NGO worker) believes that those people who were supporting the culture building in Gagauz Eri left the country for the same reasons the population leaves to more developed states (economical reasons). Also the first *bashkans* were more interested in economical situation and survival.

About the role of Turkey in the region's development, one subject said that it is helping in the development of TV broadcasting, textile industry and education. I.B. (male, 29) mentioned the existence of a Turkish college where education is given in Turkish and English. In other words, Turkey has a good image and it is welcome in offering help in the region.

## **Future implications**

The answers of the interviewees concerning the future of their community are doubtful and gloomy. They are all aware of the risks of globalization and feel sorry that the culture is not preserved. M.T. (male, 46, professor) thinks that the political elite and the young people are too proud to change something. The same opinion is shared by S.B. (male, PhD) says that in order to exist as a nation in this world, Gagauz people need Gagauz Eri so they will be able to get education in their mother tongue, talk their own language, continue their traditions and customs, but he is pessimistic there will be people to do that.

## CONCLUSIONS

Given the limited time and space, I hope I have managed to reflect some of the factors that led to assimilation and dissimilation, and elaborate what I consider the most important. From the available literature and the opinion excerpts of the Tatars and the Gagauz we can see that the assimilation and dissimilation consequences do not differ in many aspects. The factors mentioned by the theoreticians existed in each group's development but the consequences differ significantly. Both of the minority groups do not highlight, invest and promote their culture and language. Today because of the lack of demand, Tatar and Gagauz languages are not being taught in schools. The young generations speak the language of the dominant group; they do not speak their native language.

When Moldovan language was adopted as official language in Moldova, the Gagauz feared they will lose their jobs because they do not speak the language. Moreover, the ideas that Chisinau is responsible for the economical situation in Gagauz Eri and that deprivation will worsen in an independent Moldova received widespread support.<sup>210</sup> The dominant political party in Gagauz Eri did not perceive the cultural deprivation as important, but the leaders feared the economical and political consequences of the language law.

As shown in the interviews, the perceptions regard assimilation and dissimilation as natural phenomenon and there is a dichotomy between the traditional and modern way of life. There were opinions that sooner or later small minority group will be absorbed into the majority and the others saying that ignoring the traditional values of the group, the new way will only lead to decay.

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<sup>210</sup> Bollerup and Christensen, 96.

Undoubtedly, the causes of assimilation and dissimilation lie in the explanation given by instrumental theories. Therefore, I believe the assertion that ethnic movements rely on control over resources and political competition gained substantial support.

Gagauz Eri had followed a different path than the Tatars in Romania due to Moldova's complex cleavages. The Tsarist and Soviet ideology resorted to the so-called political and cultural inferiority of the Gagauz. *Perestroika* had the effect of allowing alternative groups to be formed, and it resulted in an identity crisis. In Romania the communist policy adopted to the minorities and the contemporary developments in social life transformed the self-perceptions of the Tatar population that saw in integration and adaptation the only solution. The process of installing democracy in Moldova is more likely a civic anomaly rather than an exaggeration of the xenophobic feelings and Moldova does not have the experience in governing an independent state. The republic has also been accused of being too tolerant with its minorities, which resulted in allowing special status to the Gagauz who received more than 10% of the republic's territory.

On one hand, the economic and political life was incomparably weaker in Gagauzia than in Dobrogea. The Gagauz did not take for granted that the Moldovans would have the will or the means to correct the economic deprivation of the Gagauz. On the other hand, the Gagauz elite enjoyed the support of some external patron such as Russia and Turkey. Among the Gagauz leaders, there was a dispute regarding the orientation of their culture and politics, either Turkish or Russian.

Comparing to the Gagauz, the Tatars never had a nation-state competing for their loyalties. Even if the Romanian constitution entitles its national minorities to education and use of mother tongue where the population's threshold surpasses 20%, the political leadership has not helped the development of Tatar culture. Some people are proud to call themselves Tatar even though they do not speak the language, are not familiar with the Tatar culture and

do not adhere to Islam. Among many possible reasons, the self-esteem and the quality of life are probably the most important ones. In order to be accepted in the society and have a social position, the Tatars had to give up their own cultural features. The rejection of assimilation and marginalization can contribute to low self-esteem and an inferiority complex. Most teenagers want to identify themselves with everything modern and fashionable.

The alternatives for ethnic survival are banned by other reasons that link to the modernization and lack of human and financial resources. The Tatars are seen as one piece of the puzzle that contributes to the multiculturalism of Romania and the preservation of ethnic diversity. Their nationalism could not have been ignited by an internal factor. The Tatars have no articulated sense of modern national identity or attachment to a secular “Fatherland”, so the assimilation has been unconditionally accepted.

In course of time the Tatar and the Gagauz populations have not managed to adapt to the requirements of the modern age and therefore to integrate into the modern society. Integration is an essential condition of modern life but integration does not mean that one should give up one’s nationality or religion or consider its own ethnicity inferior.

My overall conclusion confirms the hypothesis that the causes that contributed to the assimilation are many, but what contributed to integration and separation was the economic cause. It goes without saying that assimilation refers to losing culture and as demonstrated in previous chapters, it still persists even after the ethnic mobilization. Among the predictions, in my judgement, the social changes follow the modernization path, leaving behind the traditional life style.

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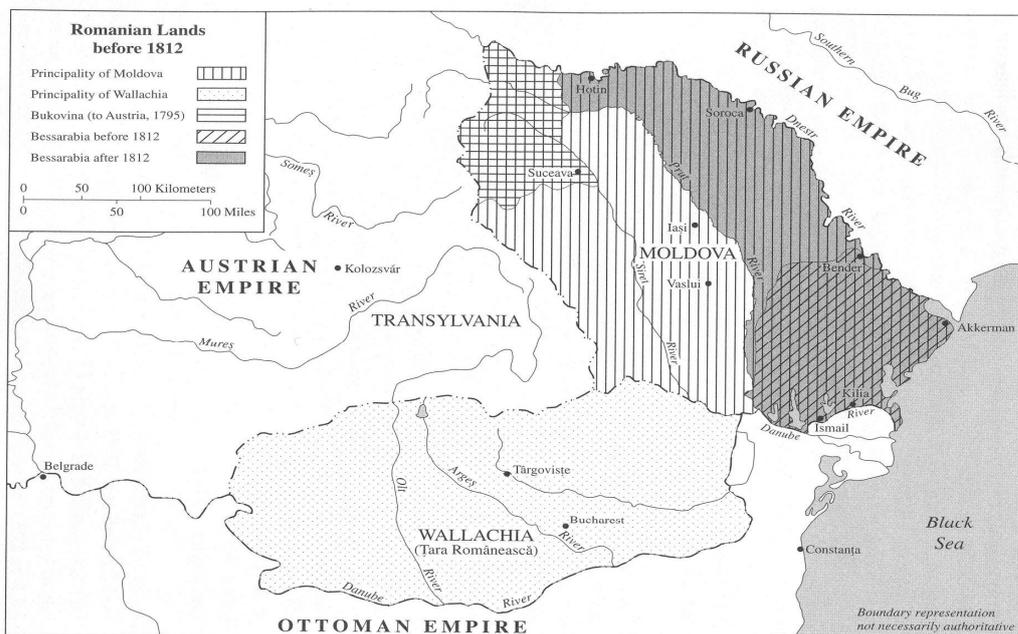
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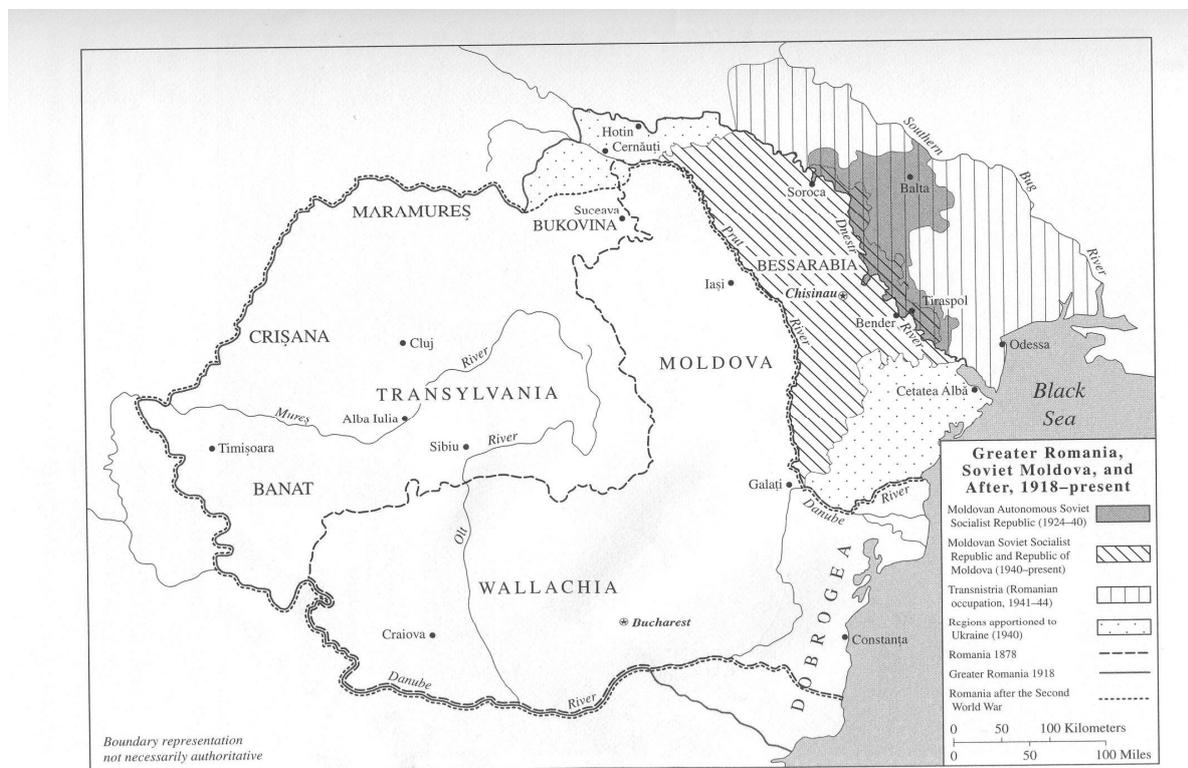
# MAPS



Map 1. Romanian Lands before 1812

## Map 1. Romanian Lands before 1812.

(Source: Charles King, *The Moldovans, Romania, Russia and The politics of Culture*)



Map 2. Greater Romania, Soviet Moldova, and after, 1918 to the Present

## Map 2. Greater Romania, Soviet Moldova and after, 1918 to the present

(source: Charles King, *The Moldovans, Romania, Russia and The politics of Culture*)



Map 3. Republic of Moldova

**Map 3. Republic of Moldova**

(Source: Charles King, *The Moldovans, Romania, Russia and The politics of Culture*)