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Why did They Leave? Perceptions on the Turkish Emigration from Dobrogea to Turkey (1918-1940)*

Neden Gittiler? Dobruca'dan Türkiye'ye Türk Göçlerine İlişkin Algılar
(1918-1940)

Metin OMER**

Abstract

In this paper I try to present the perceptions of a process that marked not only the evolution of the relations between two countries (Romania and Turkey) but also determined some important social changes in the Turkish-Tatar community from Dobrogea, Romanian province known as Dobrudja in the Turkish historiography. In order to obtain an accurate image we used in our research documents from Romanian and Turkish archives, Romanian press, Turkish press and the press of Turkish-Tatar community from Dobrogea. In our analysis we consider Dobrogea, the main region of Romania where Turks and Tatars leave, a “*contact zone*”, a term used by Mary Louise Pratt (1992: 4) for “*social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other*”. We also consider the emigration from Dobrogea to Turkey in the interwar as part of “*balkanlaşma göçleri*” (Balkanization migration), a term used by Turkish researcher İlhan Tekeli to designate the emigration from the ex-Ottoman territories in the Balkans to Anatolia (or more specifically within the new borders of Ottoman Empire/Turkish Republic). Tekeli (2013: 44-45) argues that “Balkanization migration” has a direct connection with the process of formation of the national states in the Balkans.

Keywords: Romania, Turkey, Dobrogea, Turkish community in Romania, emigration

Öz

Bu makalede, Romanya-Türkiye arasındaki ilişkilerin gelişimine damga vurmakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda Türk tarih yazımında Dobruca olarak bilinen Romen Vilayeti Dobrogea 'daki Türk-Tatar topluluğunda ortaya çıkan bazı önemli sosyal değişimleri de belirleyen bir sürecin algıları sunulmaya çalışılmıştır. Doğru bir resim elde etmek için araştırmamızda Romanya ve Türk arşiv belgelerinin yanı sıra, Romen basını, Türk basını ve Dobruca'daki Türk-Tatar topluluğunun basınından yararlandık.

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Analizimizde, Romanya'daki Türklerin ve Tatarların terk ettiği başlıca bölge olan Dobruca'yı, Mary Louise Pratt'ın "farklı kültürlerin buluştuğu, çatıştığı ve birbirine tutunduğu sosyal alanlar" için kullandığı bir terim olan "temas bölgesi" (Pratt, 1992:4) olarak ele almaktayız. Aynı zamanda, Dobruca'dan Türkiye'ye gerçekleşen iki savaş arası göçleri, İlhan Tekeli'nin eski Osmanlı topraklarından Anadolu'ya (ya da daha spesifik olarak Osmanlı'nın / Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin yeni sınırlarına) göçü tanımlamak için kullandığı "balkanlaşma göçleri" nin bir parçası olarak ele almaktayız. Tekeli "balkanlaşma göçünün" Balkanlar'daki ulusal devletlerin oluşum süreci ile doğrudan bağlantılı olduğunu savunmaktadır. (Tekeli, 2013: 44-45)

Anahtar Kelimeler: Romanya, Türkiye, Dobrogea, Romanya'daki Türk topluluğu, göç

Introduction: An overview of the emigration from Romania to Turkey in Interwar period

The Turkish presence in Dobrogea is attested from the first contacts of Turkish people with the Eastern Europe. However, the first group that has settled permanently in Dobrogea, was a group which came from Anatolia under Sari Saltuk's command. They settled in Babadag in 1263. In the following centuries, many other Turkish groups have come in Dobrogea, so that in XVth century, the province became part of the Ottoman Empire. Another important Turkish element which became part of Dobrogea was represented by Tatars. Even though their presence in Dobrogea is attested since XIIIth century, they, to a high extent, migrated from Bugeac, Southern part of Bessarabia, and Crimean Peninsula after 1783 when the Crimean Khanate was annexed by the Russian Empire. The Crimean Tatars came to the land between Danube and Black Sea in several waves, the most important is the one after Crimean War (1853-1856).

After 1878, when, according to the Treaty of Berlin, Romania received Northern Dobrogea, on the territory between the Danube and the Sea, 71,146 (31.5%) Tatars, 48,783 (21.6 %) Turks, 46,504 (21%) Romanians were living, from a total of 225,692 inhabitants¹. Immediately after the war, in 1879, d'Hogguer Baron (1879: 40) was reporting that 6,424 Tatars and 4,812 Turks were living in Dobrogea. Even though these numbers are probably exaggerated, being hard to believe that the region was quite devoid of inhabitants in such a short time, they show as, in any case, an important decrease of the Muslim population. This sudden decline was due to the war conditions: a great part of the Muslims retreated from the Russian army towards the Ottoman Empire, in 1880, and about 80-90,000 refugees were temporarily settled in Edirne and Istanbul². The next period, even though part of the population returned once the peace treaty was signed, the number of Tatar and Turkish people recorded a continuous decline. This way, in 1900, Captain M. D. Ionescu (2010: 342) was reporting that only 28,320 Tatars and 12,306 Turks remained in Dobrogea³.

1 Correspondance Politique des Consuls. Turguie (Tulqa).1 (1878) 280-82 apud Karpat, 2010: 413 – 414.

2 A. Ubicini, "La Roumeli Orientale depuis le traité de Berlin", in Revue de Geographie, vol. VI, Paris 1880, apud Ülküsal, 1987: 39.

3 For the same year, Grégoire Danesco offers the following numbers: 12.459 Turkis and 28.450 Tatar, see Danesco, 1907: 141.

A sudden increase of the Tatar and Turkish population was recorded in 1913, after the Second Balkan War, when South Dobrogea was incorporated to Romania. As a consequence of the redrawing of the Romanian borders, 150,773 Turks and 22,092 Tatars were recorded in 1930. 38,430 Turks and 4,661 Tatars from these were from Caliacra and 90,595 Turks and 2,085 Tatars from Durostor (Manuilă, 1938: 33), the two counties that formed Southern Dobrogea.⁴ The emigration process continued during the entire inter-war period, hastening especially after 4th of September 1936, when *The convention regarding the Turkish and Tatar population from Dobrogea* was signed. The first two articles were establishing the areas, the places and the emigration phases. This way, the Turks and the Tatars, who lived in Caliacra, Durostor, Constanța and Tulcea counties, were within the scope of the Convention. The emigration process was meant to take five years. The first year, starting with 15th of April 1936, 15,000 inhabitants, who already had sold their properties and had the documents ready, had to leave. The next year, it was stated that those who were 8 km. away from the Romanian-Bulgarian border; the third year, those from the Bazargic, Ezibey and Kurtpinar areas; the fourth year, those from Akkadinlar and Turtucaia/Tutrakan and the last year, those from Silistra and the rest of Dobrogea were to leave (“Mukavele. Dobruca Türk Halkının Göç Şartları”, 1936: 1).

It is hard to say to which degree the provisions of the treaty were respected, particularly because of the fact that illegal emigration, by which the convention between Romania and Turkey wasn't respected, continued, and the provisions of the treaty regarding the fifth year of emigration weren't applied anymore as the war broke out. But it is sure that the authorities both from Bucharest and Ankara were interested, especially, in the emigration promotion from Cadrilater, a territory with a lot of Tatars and Turks, Romanian citizens of one generation.

As a consequence of the emigration waves, in 1941, *Baş-Mufti*, the religious leader of the Muslims in Romania, was stating that there were 35,250 Muslims in Dobrogea (A.N.I.C., Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor fond, vol. 182/1941: 174).

We have not chosen Dobrogea from all the Romanian territories with no reason. The territory between the Sea and the Danube, how it is also known this area, was inhabited by a compact community of Turks and Tatars during the centuries. Even though an important Turkish community existed in Ada-Kaleh⁵ also, the differences regarding the Romanian politics towards

4 Southern Dobrogea, known as Cadrilater in Romanian historiography, was formed by Durostor and Caliacra, two counties incorporated by Romania in 1913. During the First World War, for a short period of time, the Central Powers occupied all of the Dobrogea. The Treaty of Bucharest signed in 1918 stipulated that all the Southern Dobrogea and part of the Northern Dobrogea were part of Bulgaria. As the Allied Powers emerged victorious at the end of the war, Romania regained its lost territories in the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine signed in 1919. In any case, this situation lasted until 1940 when the Treaty of Craiova was signed. According to this treaty, the South Dobrogea became part of Bulgaria. Today Caliacra is Dobrich province in Bulgaria and Durostor is Silistra province in Bulgaria.

5 Ada-Kaleh was a small island on the Danube populated mostly by the Turks. The island was submerged in 1970 during the construction of the Iron Gate hydroelectric plant. Ada-Kaleh was situated near Romanian port city Orșova.

these areas and more important the fact that in the studied period has not existed a trend regarding the emigration from the island, made our attention to be focused on Dobrogea.

The reasons behind the emigration, a phenomenon that affected the Turkish and Tatar community, were complex, and need to be sought both at internal level, within the transformations inside the community or within the effects of the changes from the Romanian society and politics, and external level, within the geopolitical resetting in the region or the politics promoted from Istanbul and later from Ankara, after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The Turkish and Tatar community from Romania was constantly affected by the transformations happening in the Ottoman Empire or later in the Turkish Republic. This community was all the time influenced by the evolutions from Anatolia, adopting, for example, without problems, the Kemalist reforms. At the same time, after becoming citizens of the Romanian state, the Turkish and the Tatars benefited from laws and of an Western style education system, but, at the same time, they confronted with some abuses of the local administration or politics like the colonization of Aromaniens⁶.

Causes of emigration

Turks and Tatars' emigration from Dobrogea to Turkey represented a major event for both countries. This phenomenon, even in the inter-war period, can be seen from Turkish researcher's perspective, İlhan Tekeli. He calls "*balkanlaşma göçleri*" (Balkanization migration) Muslims emigrations from Balkan states, ex-ottoman territories, toward inside of Ottoman Empire who was retreating. In Tekeli's opinion, Muslims from new created states from Balkans, were forced to migrate as a result of the pressures conducted on them. These states, influenced by nationalism, did not want within their borders to exist other ethnical groups (Tekeli, 2013: 44).

Emigration from Balkans continued after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The successor of the Empire, The Republic of Turkey, continued to represent an attraction for Turks and Muslims from the Balkan Peninsula. This time, Anatolia was not just a place for those who were seeking protection, but being in a process of redefining the identity with strong accent on the ethnical component against the religious one, Ankara promoted migration within the resources it had. In other words, as it happened with the states created after the retreat of the Ottoman Empire, after the First World War, the Republic of Turkey began to transform to a national state.

A practical factor had a contribution to the migration policy. After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the new authority in Ankara was confronted with a new problem: the demographic deficit. In order to repopulate great areas of Anatolia, the new Turkish authorities promoted the emigration process of the Turkish populations from the Balkans.

An idyllic image of the Anatolian space was created in order for these to be lured in the emigration process. The promotion of the Kemalist reforms played an important role in constructing this

6 Aromanians are the Romanian communities in the Balkans also known as Vlachs, Macedo-Romanians or Cutzo-Vlahi.

image. The Turkish diplomats were organizing meetings with the local elites, where they were presenting the transformations happening in the Turkish Republic and were asking for the implementation of the reforms promoted in Ankara among the Turks and Tatars in Dobrogea. The Romanian authorities, who were watching carefully the developments within the Muslim communities in Romania, noted several times this kind of actions of the Turkish diplomats or politicians. In a report by the Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie of Constanța, it was stated that on 18th of June 1935 Talat Bey, the vice-principal of the colonization office from Turkey, Ulyse Bey, president of the emigration commission of the Turks from Romania, Apti Bey, ex-general secretary of the Turkish Consulate from Constanța, joined by members of the local Turkish elite, such as Sali Zandali and the teacher Mustafa Emin, organized a meeting in the house of the latter. Some influential leaders of the Turks from the region were invited to the meeting which took place in secret, at night: the mufti of the county, Efraim Geamil, the president of the Muslim community from Caliacra county, Mustafa Riza, ex-deputy, Aptula Hoaredin, Ruşit Amet, county counselors, Memet Amet, local counselor, Sali Hagi CaraIbraim, the manager of the Turkish school from Bazargic and more teachers from Bazargic. During these meetings, the representatives of Turkey asked to those present to use only the Latin alphabet in schools, so that the Turkish History and Geography textbooks sent from Ankara could be used and to “*intensify extremely*” the propaganda for the emigration towards Turkey (A.N.I.C., Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei fond, vol. 18/1933: 196).

In this sense, a special attention was given to the transformations in the new Turkish Republic within the pages of the Turkish and Tatars newspapers in Dobrogea. For example, in the article “Hostility against emigration”, published in the *Türk Birliği* (The Turkish Unity) newspaper, an organ of the *Young Turks Association*, initially under the influence of Feridun Necati, an active member of the Young Turks, and later strongly influenced by the Minister of Ankara in Bucharest, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, the Turkish territory was considered the only space where the community in Dobrogea could preserve its “*ethnic identity*” (“Göç Aleyhdarları”, 1937: 1).

In order to support their position, those who were promoting the emigration process turned to articles published in the Turkish press. The following statements were in this kind of article, taken from the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper (The Republic): “*10.000 emigrants were settled in the Çorlu area. The state gave them lands; villages were created, ensuring of their safety and welfare. Most of these emigrants came from Romania after they sold their lands. Generally, their situation was a good one; the state provided those with help regarding the house and the land*” (“Muhacır İskânı”, 1934: 1). Also, in order to convince the community’s members to emigrate, the houses prepared by the Turkish state for the emigrants were presented idyllically: “*a house for each emigrant. The houses waiting for them are big, white, and ideal*”; also, they were told that “*the land promised to them was ready to be sown*” (“Her göçmen bir ev sahibi olacak”, 1936: 1).

In an article, from the *Deliorman* newspaper, printed by the teacher Hakki Ibrahim from Silistra, the emigration was seen as an opportunity offered by Turkey for the “*social and cultural revival*” (“Göç ve Aksi Propagandacılar”, 1937: 1). The emigration process was treated as a duty

towards the country (referring to Turkey). In this sense, the importance of the „*demographical increase*” politics was underlined, and the Turks from Dobrogea were urged to sustain this process, choosing to step towards Anatolia (“Münakasa ediyoruz. Göç politikası memlekete neler kazandıracaktır?”, 1936: 1). Further, in the article published in the *Tuna* newspaper (The Danube), run by Ibrahim Kadri Efendi, professor at the Muslim Seminary of Medgidia⁷, the emigration was seen as a “*necessity*”, part of “*defending the nation*”. The article also mentioned the positive effects of migration for Turkey: “*army’s growth*”, “*economic development*”, “*labor boost*” (“Münakasa ediyoruz. Göç politikası memlekete neler kazandıracaktır?”, 1936: 1).

The intellectuals, in favour of emigration, had in mind some more practical aspects of this phenomenon. They warned about some problems regarding emigration and tried to solve them. In the *Ceardak* (The veranda) newspaper, declared as the “*defender of the Turkish peasantry’s rights*” and printed by the teacher Mehmet Muzekka, the lack of some stipulations regarding the provision of properties in Turkey, having a similar value to the ones left in Romania, was underlined (“Millet sesi hak sesidir”, 1937: 1). Another reason for the Turkish and Tatar intellectuals from Dobrogea to worry was the uncertainty of finding a job in the country where they were immigrating (“Göçmen Türk mualimleri ne olacak?”, 1937: 1). This concern had a fundament, as there was no law or treaty to assure a job for the immigrants in Turkey.

For Romanian society, Muslims migration was an intensive debated subject. On one hand there were voices which were seeing in migration the possibility to consolidate the Romanian presence in a territory which was recently taken within the borders of the state, on the other hand there were groups of the society which were not thinking that a minority that has never created problems and which has integrated very well to go was a good solution. In Romanian society’s case was a practical reason as well. The Bulgarian minority from Dobrogea had never accepted the Southern Dobrogea to become part of Romania. In contradiction to Bulgarians, Turks and Tatars were not claiming for any territory. That’s why a part of Romanian society was considering that it is not desirable an ally to go when facing territorial request from Bulgarians. At the same time, there were parts of the society which were claiming that after the Muslims leave, the empty territories can be repopulated by Romanian colonists brought from inside the country or by the Aromanians from the Balkans.

Because of that, the Romanian press associated emigration to “*external causes and external agents*” (Sarry, 1937: 1), classifying emigration propaganda “*as a cheap deceit*” (Neicu, 1937: 1). A large article about emigration was published in *Analele Dobrogei*. The causes of emigration identified by the author were: “*Bulgarian action for displacing the Turkish block in Cadrilater*” (Roman, 1936: 98), “*The propaganda of Turkish emissaries to make Muslim population emigrate*” (Roman, 1936: 101), “*Propaganda through local newspapers written in Turkish and Romanian languages*” (Roman, 1936: 102), “*The abuses of local administration*” (Roman, 1936: 102-103).

7 For a detailed presentation of the history of this seminary see Adriana Cupcea, Manuela Marin, Metin Omer, Seminarul Musulman din Medgidia. Documente și memorie/The Muslim Seminary of Medgidia. Documents and Memory, Editura Institutului pentru Studiarea Minorităților Naționale, Cluj-Napoca, 2016.

Amongst the reasons above, except the actions of Turkish emissaries, all the other causes were related to Bulgarian land claimings. Thus, the newspapers which impelled Turks and Tatars to emigrate were “*secretly financed*” (Roman, 1936: 102-103) by Bulgarians and the inappropriate treatment of local administration were due to “*administrative conquest by Bulgarians*” (Roman, 1936: 102-103).

The Romanian diplomats were pointing out in their reports the importance of Turks regarding Bulgarians claims. In a Romanian Legation⁸ from Ankara report from 1933 were mentioned the following: “*If the Government encourages the migration trend regarding the Muslims from Dobrogea, it risks to bring a consistent argument to support the Bulgarians point of view which whenever make a claim at the League of Nations against Romanian Government do not omit to invoke our authorities trend to persecute minorities from Cadrilater forcing them to migrate thus taking their properties in Cutzo-Vlahi's (Aromanians) colonists favour. Secondly, if our authorities are intending to colonize in Dobrogea elements that can only be Macedonians (Aromanians) while migrating the Muslim element, we risk instead of having a peacefully population to introduce an element whose relations with Bulgarian minority by definition can have an irritating character and due to that to get exposed to a series of conflicts which Bulgarians will not hesitate, according to the tradition, to present them with the hole amplitude in front of League of Nations*” (A.M.A.E., 71/ Turcia fond, vol. 65: 32).

The different perspectives regarding the migration's reasons existed in the diplomatic relations of the two countries as well.

The emigration and the diplomatic relations

After the First World War, the Romanian Kingdom and the Republic of Turkey, despite of small misunderstandings which they solved⁹, had been allies, cooperating to ensure the security in the region. Romania and Turkey were founding members of the Balkan Pact in 1934; an alliance which aimed the maintaining of the *status-quo* in the region. The Romanian and Turkish officials conducted several visits to Ankara or Bucharest, a sign of good relations.

Regarding the migration, although divergence between Bucharest and Ankara existed, they were solved without very tense negotiations. The divergences regarding migration had appeared mainly towards identification of causes of this phenomenon. In Turkish diplomats' opinion migration was caused mainly by the Romanian authorities' abuses while diplomats and politicians from Bucharest were defending themselves trying to demonstrate that in fact, Turks from Dobrogea are migrating due to Ankara's propaganda. The main reason of these contradictions at the diplomatic level was to get advantages. The Turkish side was trying to get as many advantages as possible for

8 The diplomatic missions of Romania and Turkey were raised at Embassy level in 1939.

9 See Florin Anghel, “O relație, două case: Istanbul și Ankara. Diplomația româno-turcă la începutul alianței (1927-1928)” (One relation, two houses: Istanbul and Ankara. The Romanian – Turkish diplomacy at the beginning of the alliance (1927-1928)), *Studii si Materiale de Istorie Contemporană*, 2012, 11:42-53.

migrants (the facilitation of migration, to get free passports for those who wanted to emigrate, a higher amount of money for the left lands by migrants), while Romanian officials were wanting to use the migration process to solve some of the disputes with Ankara and most of all to benefit by bringing in Muslims place Aromanian colonists.

An important issue which the two countries have tried to solve was that of illegal emigration. Until the Convention concerning Turkish-Tatar population from Dobrogea was signed on 4 September 1936 much of the Muslim population in Dobrogea emigrated illegally, without getting the authorities approval. Those who wanted to emigrate requested the passport in order to visit their relatives but once in Turkey, they would not come back. The Romanian authorities have tried to stop this phenomenon urging the Turkish authorities to take action. Turkish leaders have ensured the Romanian authorities that they will do everything possible to stop this phenomenon. However, in a statement sent by the Turkish Ministry of Interior on 26 May 1932 to the Bucharest Legation, after presenting the promises made to the Romanian authorities, the Minister was instructed to inform Romanian officials during private conversations that the Republic of Turkey cannot keep its promises. The motivation was: *"... increasing pressure on Turks in Romania. The Turkish communities occasionally faced with assassinations, chores are getting harder, the Turks food is collected without pay, although there are complaints against those who are guilty the states does not take any measures. This lasts for years and the population has no more patience"* (B.C.A., 030.10.116.809.3.3.). In order to explain his position, the Turkish ambassador recalled a Turkish peasant saying: *"We'll leave everything we have, even if we beg or we will have a hard life, we will go to Turkey."* (B.C.A., 030.10.116.809.3.3). In the document the colonization of the Vlah population, which was supposed to ensure *"a Romanian majority in the area"*, was also mentioned (B.C.A., 030.10.116.809.3.3).

According to Turkish officials, the desire of the Romanian authorities to colonize the territory of Dobrogea with Aromanians, could be used as a *"bargaining chip"* to solve the problem of emigration of Turks and Tatars. Consequently, the Turkish Minister, after specifying that the Romanian government makes considerable efforts for the settlement of the Macedo-Romanians, argues that *"in Romania there are 200,000 Turks who want to emigrate and Romanian state using the properties they would leave behind could solve the housing problem for the settlers"* (B.C.A., 030.10.116.809.3.4).

The Turkish Minister, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, also demanded to expedite the procedures for the conclusion of an agreement on immigration because, in his opinion, because of the hardships faced, the Turks from Dobrogea will choose to leave sooner or later, regardless of the conditions offered, regardless of the destination country. Another reason for the urgency of an agreement was obtaining benefits for Turkey. Tanrıöver argued that Turkey should demand compensation for properties that migrants left in Romania. These do not necessarily have to be money, being accepted also products such as petroleum or timber. Turkish ambassador stated that if it starts an unorganized mass migration process, Turkey will no longer obtain advantage (B.C.A., 030.10.116.809.3.4).

The problem of emigration also concerned the highest Romanian politics circles. On 12 December 1934, the Turkish Minister in Bucharest, was invited by the Romanian King to discuss issues of Dobrogea Turks. During the meeting, Carol II, testified that the departure of the Turks, considered educated, faithful to Romania, provokes deep sorrow. Taking advantage of these sayings of Romanian King, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver questioned the injustices of the authorities towards the Turkish community in Romania: *“Even if according to the law of expropriation every owner of land must yield a quarter, in fact, the state takes half or even more because the settlement of Macedo-Romanians and Romanians from Banat is not organized well, and Romanian families are accommodated in the Turks’ homes, all materials, wood, coal, food needed for the construction of Bulgarian-Romanian border police stations are hauled from long distances without pay with the carts of Turkish peasants”* (B.C.A., 030.10.247.668.13.2). To show the importance of emigration process for Ankara, Tanrıöver stressed that Turkish government asked several times to personally deal with immigration. For this purpose: *“I went three times from village to village in Dobrogea and Deliorman. It was not possible to stop the movement. Although the Turkish population saw every and any occasion, respect and protection offered by the King, deficiencies, material needs hardships are more important than these sincere feelings”* (B.C.A., 030.10.247.668.13.2). King Carol tried to put these problems into account of Ottoman laws; however, the Turkish official flatly rejected this assumption and went on to enumerate the hardships caused by Romanian laws addressing the issue of passport: *“Turks sell their properties to 300-400 lei¹⁰ in order to obtain a passport. I have not received any response from the king on these words”* (B.C.A., 030.10.247.668.13.2).

In the years 1934-1935, meetings between the Turkish ambassador in Bucharest and Romanian officials were more frequent and were intended to resolve certain issues pertaining to the emigration of Turks and Tatars. The reason was the desire to intensify talks between both parties to sign a Convention to regulate immigration. One important meeting on the subject was held on February 13, 1935 between Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver and Ion Inculeț, the Interior Minister in the Government in Bucharest. The meeting between the two began with the exposition by the Turkish representatives of the causes of emigration:

- “1. Poor use of the expropriation law*
- 2. Drudgery of Turkish peasants to maintain the border police station*
- 3. The settlement of Romanian colonists in Turks houses*
- 4. High passport taxes*
- 5. Failure to enforce the king decisions regarding the Turks*
- 6. Impunity for those who took actions against the Turks”* (B.C.A., 030.10.247.668.16. 2).

10 Lei is the currency of Romania.

Following the discussion, the Turkish Minister showed to Inculeț that Turks arriving in Turkey recount the emigration hardships that they had to go. Tanrıöver mentioned that Turkey considers Romania a friendly country and would not want to spoil relations with it in the future because of difficulties encountered by those wishing to emigrate (B.C.A., 030.10.247.668.16. 3.).

By signing the Convention concerning Turkish-Tatar population from Dobrogea on 4 September 1936, both countries managed to regulate the migration. Starting this moment, the officials from Ankara and Bucharest have not had disputes regarding migration, showing as Eugen Filoti, the Romanian Minister in Turkey was mentioning that the two countries are two good allies (A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, vol. 65: 77).

Public opinion and emigration

A special place in the publications of the period was assigned to the relationships between Romanians, Turks and Tatars. Romanian press as well as the press of the two communities was crowded with reciprocal positive assessments. The departure of Turks from Romania caused unhappiness. They were considered *“until today some citizens of our Country, who proved themselves, during decades, loyal and honest towards the State and their cohabitants...”* (Sarry, 1937: 1). The regret caused by the departure of Turks and Tatars from Dobrogea was also expressed in an article from *Țara lui Mircea* newspaper in 1939, well-known for its nationalist orientation: *“Of all minorities which Dobrogea sheltered and still shelter, Turks were the kindest, most of the times outrunning in correctness and honesty the masters of this ground. Poetical and dreamer in nature, the Muslim from Dobrogea spreads all over the beauty and the care whose value he could not realize and whose immaculate happiness touched with all their gifts the Romanian soul. On the ground of the oldest Romanian land, the Turks were a balance of justice, a model of honesty and dedicated work, identifying themselves, assimilating themselves with the respect and love for the country that they always blessed”* and the article concluded: *“...O, our mother Dobrogea is losing her millenary adoptive sons, and instead of them remain and will be brought others. One who doesn't know the temper of the Turk, he will never understand the loss we are feeling because of this sad exodus. The Turks are leaving...Together with them...the silence and poetry of Dobrogea...”* (“Pleacă turcii...” 1939: 4).

The same tone was found in the pages of Turk and Tatar communities press. It emphasized the good cohabitation and good relationships with Romanian administration. In an article published in *Hak – Söz* newspaper, the Romanian administration was described as *“very good and granted by very judicious laws”* (“În jurul schimbării nomenclaturii satelor din Durostor”, 1936: 1). A good example is the series of articles published in *Tuna* newspaper. The column “Cronica românească” of this newspaper hosted a series of articles signed by Romanian personalities (Al. I. Drăghici – university professor, Dumitru Timiș – teacher, I. Ștefănescu, Dimitrie Batova – Vice Director of *Revista scriitorilor și scriitoarelor români*, E. Melidon – lawyer, Vasile Culică – writer and publicist.

The articles signed by them conveyed the regret for the departure of Turks and Tatars, showing that: “*The Turks from Dobrogea and the other Romanian regions are the most obedient minority*” (Culică, 1937: 2), “*our loyal citizens, (...) peaceful, serious and skilled workers of the soil of Dobrogea*” (Melidon, 1937: 2), “*the most humanistic, often surpassing in honesty and integrity the very owners of the place*” (Batova, 1937: 2).

Yet, this cordiality had a more practical layer. Turks and Tatars were to Romania a secure minority, without land demands, being used to hamper Bulgarian land demands. This objective was understood by Turks and Tatars who called themselves: “*the guardians of Romania on the South border*” (“Turcii dobrogeni și revizionismul”, 1937: 1). In order to fulfill this role, they were urged “*to fill with Romanians the space left empty by their departure*” (“Romanya Türklerinin Vaziyeti”, 1935: 1). On the other hand, those who decided to leave were forced to sell their properties to the Romanian State. By this measure, Romanian authorities wanted to make sure that the properties of Turks and Tatars who emigrated were to pass to the Romanian colonists. The law proved to be necessary, especially because part of those who wanted to emigrate preferred to sell their properties to the Bulgarians who were offering a higher price. This “alliance” of Romanian administration with Turks and Tatars against Bulgarian demands, combined with the desire of Romania to hamper Bulgarian Land demands, was due to the actions of Bulgarian resistance members against Turks and Tatars.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, emigration was one of the most important processes that have marked the history of the Turks and Tartars from Romania. The scale of emigration transformed this issue in a major point of discussion in the relation between the two countries. Even if immigration issue has not created tension in Romanian-Turkish relations, the two sides have perceived this phenomenon differently. For Romania emigration was an opportunity to colonize Dobrogea, a newly incorporated territory. For officials in Bucharest, the biggest problem in Dobrogea was presented by the Bulgarian minority, which had land claims, not the Turkish-Tatar community. That's why the emigration of Turks and Tatars was for them an occasion to counterbalance the number of Bulgarians. Therefore the Romanian authorities have not tried to stop this phenomenon and public opinion appreciated the presence of Turks throughout the region.

On the other hand, emigration was an opportunity for Turkey to solve its demographic deficit after the war. There were times when Ankara encouraged emigration but on every occasion Turkish diplomats have tried first to solve some difficulties encountered by Turks in Dobrogea. The Romanian authorities have always blamed the propaganda coordinated from Ankara to explain the emigration but the Turkish officials opposed this point of view trying to argue that Turks emigrate because of the Romanian state policies.

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