

Ethno-demographic changes that occurred in Dobruja as a result of the colonization policies implemented between 1878 and 1940 (I)

Enache Tuşa

Known in antiquity as Schytia Minor, and later, after the fifteenth century as Dobruja (Ciorbea 2008), the region is characterized by a highly complex demographic evolution which was in part determined by the various states that ruled the land and colonized on its territory various groups (Neagu 2004). As a result of the various historical variables, Dobruja became subjected to a series of colonization policies that were imposed by the Romanian administration after 1878. During the centuries when the region was under Ottoman rule, the demographic landscape became increasingly *Ottomanized*, which in fact proved to be reversible, as we can notice in the present. The name Dobruja came into use after 1420, as it is stipulated the historical sources, before that the territory was known as Podunavia or Terrarum Dobrotich, as it is stated by Anca Popescu. As with some other cases, the region's name is given by that one of its former rulers.

The manner in which Dobruja was politically and militarily organized closely followed the prerogatives stipulated by the Ottomans. The measures that were imposed through the Peace of San Stefano (3rd of March 1878) and the Treaty of Berlin (June-July 1878) impose a series of actions, some involving compensations that the Ottoman Empire had to give to the Russian Empire in order to pay for a part of the losses that the latter part suffered, this included ceding Dobruja to Romania. From a basic perspective, in 1878 Dobruja was in the middle of a territorial reconfiguration within the region, the changes closely following the desires of the Russian Empire that were protected through a series of treaties (Ciachir 2011).

The province was negotiated between the Great Powers which wanted to consolidate their influence within the Black Sea region and the Balkans, coming to the point in which the territory that was granted to Russia to be split between Romania and Bulgaria. This partition was made with the purpose, which was not officially declared by the Great Powers, to win the sympathy of the two newly created states (Bulgaria and Romania) and to make them willing to cooperate within the quest

of fulfilling some European interests, especially those that were more closely aligned to the likings of the Germans. This can be proved through the place chosen to host the Peace Congress from 1878. The northern part of Dobruja, from the Mouth of the Danube to Silistra, was granted to Romania, while the southern part was given to Bulgaria in order to stimulate the newly-founded state to give support toward its support for sustaining the European interests in the region. Dobruja was ceded to Russia by the Ottoman Empire as part of the post-war reparations, the Russians reserved their right to give the territory in exchange of the three counties from southern Bessarabia (Ciorbea 2008). As a result of the treaty, Romania incorporates Dobruja's territory which counted approximately 15.000km² which was inhabited by numerous ethnic groups that were listed in various surveys, some of which are to be analysed in detail in the following paragraphs. Once the territory of Dobruja became assimilated within Romania's borders, several administrative reforms were put into play: organizing the local administrative institutions in a systematic manner, to consolidate the public power within the region and to colonize the territory with Romanian-speaking groups. Romania's intention to modernize the newly-acquired territory can be noticed through the first reforms that the administration applied after 1887.

The social and political changes that occurred within this territory had the main goal of irreversibly changing the ethnic and demographic landscape, as well as the institutions and administrative structure from Dobruja. The start of the colonization policies was marked in 1878, and it is important to mention that it was the first series of policies of its kind drafted and implemented by the authorities from Bucharest. Throughout its long history, Dobruja was subjected to long-term rule from foreign powers, as it is the case of the Roman and Ottoman eras (Jelavich 1999). Under the Ottomans, the territory was mainly colonized with Islamic groups, most of which were Turks and Tatars, a few Christian groups, mostly representing Greeks, Armenians, Gagauzians, *Lipovans* (Russian Old Believers), Germans.

Beginning with 1878, Dobruja came under Romanian administration, a moment that marked the start of the colonization of Romanians in the new territory, the colonization lasting until the second half of the twentieth century. The changes that the colonization of Romanians had on the territory were easy to spot in various aspects of social life, having a great deal of complexity.

The central administration from Bucharest, as well as the local institutions, had to manage a series of problems that were directly linked to the colonisations: the transportation and the settlement of people into temporary households, guaranteeing the needed amenities for a decent life, the creation of permanent settlements and granting agricultural land to the colonists.

After 1878, Dobruja's two main subdivisions (north and south), administered by two different states (Romania and Bulgaria), were subjected to massive colonisations as a means to successfully integrate the new territory within the state's borders. Consequently, Bulgaria Bulgarianized Southern Dobruja in its attempt to wipe out the legacy left by the Ottomans. Things were similarly done by the newly-created Romanian state, which Romanianized Northern Dobruja. The cultural influences that were present in the Balkans contributed to the crystallization of a highly unique human geography within the region which, in fact, led to the birth of a unique sense of ethnic identity among the region's people which is sometimes characterized by a specific type of collective memory. The inhabitants of Dobruja which became Romanian citizens accepted more willingly, or not, the new political authority from the region. The current paper is keen on analysing the specific type of ethnic and demographic changes that occurred in Dobruja from the last decades of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century. It must be taken into account the fast pace that characterized the demographic changes which occurred in this region. Especially for the time period that we are studying, usually significant demographic changes take centuries to occur within a community. In Dobruja's case, the situation was quite the opposite, the dominant group, represented by collective formed by the Turks and Tatars, switched places with the Romanians, the latter one becoming the dominant group in less than fifty years. Its status as an independent state which it gained after 1878 gave the possibility for the Romanian administration that was placed in Dobruja to create a stable ground for development and for the spread within the region of Romanian culture. The present study is interested in highlight the specific characteristics of success of the colonisation in such a short time span, taking into consideration that the territory was Ottomanized for almost 500 years. We are also interested in pointing out the way in which the colonisation policies were perceived by the ethnic groups that had Dobruja as their homeland prior to the Romanian annexation and chose to stay after it became fully in effect. Basically, we are talking about a succession that took place between two political and social systems: one that was represented by the Ottoman Empire, having most of its laws derived from the Quran and the Romanian system represented by a secular state that was inspired from the Western World, and was subsequently imposed in Dobruja (Oswell 2006). The continuity between these two systems was closely overseen by the Western powers that intervened at San Stefano and Berlin, it was so as it had a decisive effect on the political balance within the region in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The political and cultural consequences of the succession between the two systems constituted to be preoccupied by the Western powers that intervened at San Stefano and Berlin, as the continuity

between the two would guarantee political stability in the nineteenth century. Even so, at the beginning there was a huge shock over the loss of the southern Bessarabia, the Romanian intelligentsia rejected Dobruja as territory that would be given in exchange. This was mainly due to the fact that there was a very limited knowledge regarding the characteristics of this region, but gradually they changed their opinion. The leaders accepted all the conditions that were part of the peace treaties and the opportunities that Dobruja would bring became more visible to most of the leaders, the new territory accelerating the pace in which Romania would develop in the late nineteenth century and during most of the twentieth century.

This was mainly correlated with the generous seaside that Dobruja would give Romania, which was more convenient for the construction of a maritime infrastructure than the coast of southern Bessarabia. Through colonization we should not understand only the expansion of imperial powers outside the territories that they already control, but also placing people groups in territories that are sparsely populated, which also have a big agricultural potential (as was Dobruja), or that has a substantial amount of unexploited natural resources. In such a scenario, the demographic characteristics slowly change until the indigenous peoples become a minority, in a well-structured displacement of new groups of people in the territory that is subjected to colonization (Colțescu 2005). The data that we have available from the surveys that took place in Dobruja clearly show us that the colonisations that took place in were well organized and had a very well defined purpose, that of assimilation by the Romanian colonists of all of the ethnic groups that were inhabiting the territory, thus giving it a more homogenous structure. The pace in which the colonization took place determined a series of government-drafted policies that were implemented after 1880.

At the end of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of the twentieth century, Romania was marked by significant social changes and by a substantial demographic growth. The demographic growth significantly changed the social structure and the need for land became more obvious, the land was still, in a large proportion, owned by the elite which was in part represented by big landowners. This, along with some of the other aspects that we previously mentioned, determined the government to encourage the displacement of groups of people to certain provinces, in order to counterbalance the land ownership inequalities, Dobruja was a good option as it had a lot of land that was not exploited and numerous settlements that were left deserted after the war. Taking this into consideration, we can surely affirm that there was a certain strong economic interest for Romanianizing Dobruja after 1878.

After 1878, we are witnessing a rapid development of the province's cultural landscape, mainly through contribution given by non-Muslims. Independence was a direct result of the diplomatic negotiations that took place. They were marked by a few stipulations that had to be respected, one on which was the territorial exchange between the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Romania (Ionescu 2002). The Romanian elites made it their agenda to make the Dobruja issues known to the European diplomats. How much did Dobruja contribute to the development of Romania as a modern state and which the costs of „integration”? How was Dobruja's integration within the territory of Romania and which were the particularities that the province had at the moment of becoming a Romanian territory?

The particularities that were mostly associated with Dobruja were mainly a consequence of the Ottoman heritage and the Islamic culture that was dominant in the region for about half a millennium. The region's integration into Romania came with some massive change within the demographic structure of the Dobrujan villages (Cushing 1998). Dobruja's assimilation came hand in hand with a massive shift in the dominant pre-existing mindset. The main focus of our study stands on three highly distinctive characteristics of Dobruja from the end of the twentieth century:

a) The first has to do with the fact that it was an Ottomanized province that hosted a big number of ethnic groups.

b) When it was incorporated within the territory of Romania (1878) Dobruja was the region where one could find the most inconsistencies when it came to aspects linked to the territory's demographic structure, culture, economy and administrative structure. These differences came to highlight even more the already existing gaps that were present between the country's region, that were caused by some aspects linked to the local culture of each territory.

c) These differences were also in part linked to the fear of the local communities to integrate in a new social system. These tendencies continued even after 1900 and it can also be easily spotted with Greater Romania after 1918. Secondly, Dobruja was part of the Balkan Peninsula which had in fact numerous consequences on its culture and political system, which came to coexist with the Romanian national culture. Thirdly, Dobruja was still dependent on a highly primitive system of agricultural production which was not capable of exploiting the province's true potential. The region almost had no infrastructure, and the one that existed was in a terrible shape. The region scored one of the slowest pace when it came to development at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century due to the social and economic system that was inherited from the Ottoman Empire, which was mostly rooted in the teachings of the Quran. After 1878, the

Romanian authorities implemented a modern model with more liberal social norms and a drastic reform in the economic sector. In Dobruja, at 1900, there were numerous groups that spoke different languages and belonged to various religions which inhabited the territory before its incorporation in Romania. Each of these groups remained faithful to their cultural heritage, maintaining their own sense of national identity. Taking this into consideration, we can state that Dobruja is a melting pot of cultures, which overlapped each other as a result of them inhabiting the same territory for centuries. There are some regions in the proximity of the Black Sea that also are characterized by a multicultural profile, such as the Northern Caucasus, but unlike Dobruja the interethnic relations from these regions are mainly marked by conflict (Golopenția 2002).

After 1878, the Romanian political class was deeply influenced by elitisms, coming from the strong ties that Romania had with France during this era. The studies that were conducted by Sabin Manuila were mainly focused on the study of the common social traits that were shared by most of the ethnic groups that inhabit Dobruja, and not so much on the particularities which give each groups its unique identity.

During 1878 Dobruja's population was estimated between 125.000 and 222.000 people as it is shown by the data that was made available at that time:

District	Cities, towns, villages	Muslims	Non-Muslims	Total
Tulcea	17	2.838	15.426	18.264
Isaccea	10	68	5.298	5.366
Chilia (Danube Delta)	9	31.412	30.022	61.434
Sulina(Danube Delta)	12	31.900	602	32.502
Mahmudia	10	12.248	17.868	30.116
Babadag	58	24.625	7.344	31.996
Măcin	26	24.044	1.818	25.862
Kiustengea	34	2.790	5.196	7.986
Hârșova	39	326	1.700	2.026
Medgidia	56	4.384	2.626	7.010
Total	271	134.662	87.900	222.562

This survey was made by Jean-Henry-Abdolonyme Ubcini, a French ethnologist, which received this duty from the Sublime Porte in 1876, two years before Dobruja became part of Romania.

The district in which the inhabitants were concentrated	District population
Tulcea District	43.000 inhabitants
Babadag District	41. 000 inhabitants
Kustenge District	23.320 inhabitants
Districtul Măcin	8.000 inhabitants
Medjidie and Cernavodă District	8.000 inhabitants
Total	123. 320 inhabitants

The data that was made available by Robert Kolb was heavily reliant on approximations, this is why we can see that some districts almost have the same number of inhabitants, which does not actually reflect reality very well. Another survey that was made by the Romanian authorities in 1880 shows that Dobruja had around 157.114 inhabitants which were split among various ethnic groups as shown here:

Ethnic origin or nationality	Inhabitants
Romanians	50.915
Turks and Tatars	45.902
Bulgarians	30. 643
Russians and <i>Lipovans</i> (Old Believers)	17.708
Greeks	4.271
Germans	2.736
Jews	1.135
Armenians	935
Total	157.114

In 1882 the statistics that are shown differ a lot among each other due to the various methods that were used to calculate the total population, some being more exact, while others relied more on approximations:

Author	Year	Inhabitants
I. Nazarettean	1882	166.812
M. Jackson	1884	134.735
A. E. Lux	1886	185.634
I.I. Nancian	1886	between 115.000- 160.000

Author	Year	Inhabitants
E.Pittard	1897	260.409

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>Constanța County</i>	<i>Tulcea County</i>	<i>Dobruja</i>
Romanians	93.806	51.422	145.228
Turks	7.245	3.351	10.596
Tatars	23.208	2.160	25.368
Bulgarians	12.245	29.633	41.978
Russians	502	15.282	15.784
Lipovans (Old Belivers)	1.601	13.734	15.335
Greeks	5.198	4.721	9.919
Gagauzians	-	3.758	3.758
Germans	4.110	4.110	8.220
Roma (Gypsies)	3.352	1.865	5.217
Jews	1.557	2.827	4.384
Armenians	1.978	973	2.951
Italians	480	1.207	1.507
Other nationalities	1.534	1.536	2.884
TOTAL	150.906	136.213	293.119

Dobruja's ethno-demographic landscape (1900 -1914)

Some changes occurred due to the fact that the Bulgarians, Serbians, Albanians and Turks migrated during this period from Dobruja due to the state of war in which the region was

Literature:

Bușă D., Modificări politico-teritoriale în sud-estul Europei între Congresul de la Berlin și Primul Război Mondial (1878-1914), București, Editura Paideia, 2003;

Ciachir, N., Istoria popoarelor din sud-estul Europei în Epoca Modernă (1789-1923), ediția a-III-a, revăzută, Târgoviște, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2011

Ciorbea, A. (coord.), Dobrogea 1878-2008. Orizonturi deschise de mandatul european, Constanța, Editura Ex Ponto, 2008;

Ciorbea, V., Evoluția Dobrogei între 1918-1944. Contribuții la cunoașterea problemelor geopolitice, economice, demografice, sociale, și ale vieții politice și militare, Editura Ex Ponto, Constanța, 2008;

Colțescu, G. (coord.), Vocabular pentru societăți plurale, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2005;

Constanței Rusenescu Territorial distribution and growth of the populațion between the Carpathians and the Danube, în the 19th and 20th centuries, în, Revue roumaine de geologie, geographie et geophysique, 1966;

Cushing, J. M., An introduction to structured population dynamics, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, 1998;

Enache Tușa ,Imaginar politic și identități colective în Dobrogea, București, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale, București, 2011

Golopenția, A., Opere complete, în special vol. II, Statistică Demografică și Geopolitică, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2002;

Ionescu, I., Politica navală a României între anii 1919 și 1941, Editura Companiei Naționale Administrația Porturilor Maritime, Constanța, 2002;

Manuilă, S., SLa populațion de la Dobroudja,, M.O. Imprimeria Națională. București, 1938;

Mustafa Ali Mehmet, Aspecte din istoria Dobrogei sub dominația otomană în veacurile XIV- XVII, în „ Studii- Revistă de Istorie”, tom 18, 1965;

Neagu, D., A fost Dobrogea pământ românesc?, Oltul cultural, 2004;

Oswell, D. Culture and Society - An introduction to Cultural Studies, London - Thousand Oaks (California), Sage Publications, 2006;

Oswell, D., Culture and Society, SAGE Publication, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, 2009;

Tasim, G.(coord.),Tătarii în istorie și în lume, București, Editura Kriterion, 2003;

Trebici, V., *Ce este demografia?* Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1982;

Zbucea, G., România și războaiele balcanice 1912-1913-Pagini de istorie sud-est europeană, Editura Albatros, București, 1999.