

SOME NOTES ON THE TEMPLES IN DOBROGEA DURING THE 1860'S (ACCORDING TO OTTOMAN SOURCES)

CEZMI KARASU

Romania, known in that time as the United Principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia), was in the 1860's under the rule of Alexandru Ioan Cuza. However, Dobrogea was not a part of that unit. In the 1860's, both in the United Principalities and in Dobrogea there were a lot of temples repaired or built. This was possible to be done because some old restrictions bumped off and laxed, for example hard permission rules on building temples, in addition some dimension problems of buildings, highness, greatness etc. Another important point was that in the land of the Ottomans (Memalik-i Mahruse) it was impossible to build a church higher than a local mosque. In order to build a church on acceptable dimensions in that time another important issue was needed, the permission of the Sublime Porte (Babiali – İnalta Poartă). To get such a permission was highly difficult.

Connected to these points, this study will try to put some new notes about temples in Dobrogea according to Ottoman archive sources.

At first it is necessary to present a general panorama of Dobrogea in the third quarter of the XIXth century. It is known that in these years a lot of immigrants came to this area. Firstly, after the unsuccessful rebellion in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, which was done by the Hungarians in 1848, a little group of refugees landed in Dobrogea¹. But a great immigration wave to Dobrogea came from Russia (especially Crimea) after the Crimean War. These immigrations changed the ethnic panorama of this area². For example, Medgidia was built in these years³. But all these changes caught the Sublime Porte unpreparedly⁴. In Dobrogea, the direct government of the Sublime Porte weakened the local administration especially economically and politically⁵. After 1859, namely the union of the two principalities (Walachia and Moldavia) accelerated this weakness

¹ Ahmet Refik, *Türkiye'de Mülteciler Meselesi*, İstanbul, 1926. Also see BOA, DUIT, no. 82.

² BOA, İrade Meclis-i Mahsus, no. 961.

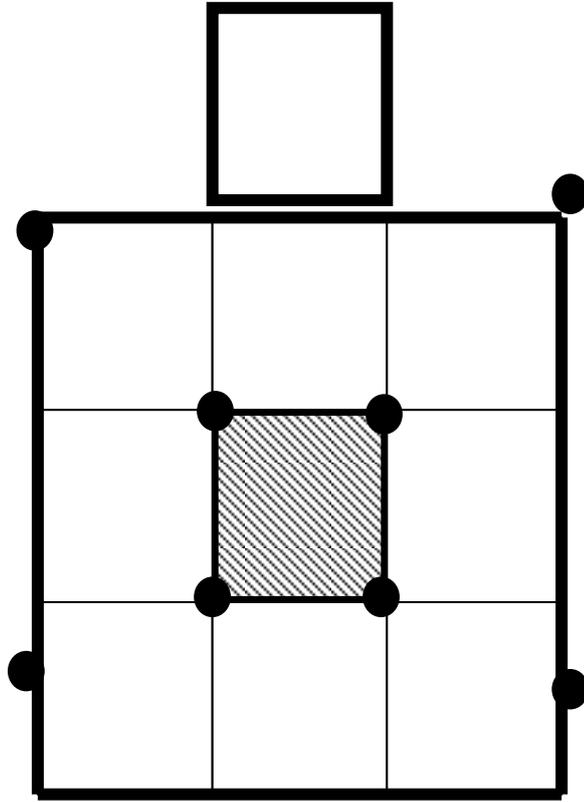
³ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Urbanizm, The Crimean Immigration to Dobruca and the Founding of Mecidiye (1856–1878)*, in "International Journal of Turkish Studies", III, 1985, no. 1, pp. 1-19.

⁴ The first "Immigration Law" was prepared after this great immigration in the Ottoman Empire; BOA, İrade Dahiliye, no. 22622.

⁵ For example, although the Sublime Porte promised to pay the transporting prices to the local cartwriths for transport of goods of immigrants, it couldn't. So transporters had to abandon their claims from the Porte. See abandonment of Şumnu, Balcık, Pravadi, Mangalya, Hacıoğlupazarçık, and Constantza Local Councils; BOA, İrade Dahiliye, no. 23609.

of local administration in Dobrogea. But on the other hand, the Sublime Porte was not the unique force in the area any more. For the Sublime Porte the advices of alliances till the Paris Treaty were much more important.

Now it is time to understand how one could raise temple buildings in the light of these developments. An interesting example will show how it was possible to break old rules on building a new church. In that example there was a mending permission from the Sublime Porte. After a new church was built, in which the form of the new one surrounded the older one and used the corner beams of the old little church as main beams, the walls from the old one were pulled down. Dizdar Village/Hırşova will be a good example for this way of building new churches⁶.



Hırşova Dizdar Willage Church Plan
(The inside diagram represents the old little church)

⁶ BOA, İrade Hariciye, no. 9591.

After that model the way was opened for other churches like the Bulgarian Church in Sarıköy/Babadag⁷ and the Cirilka Willage/Babadag Church⁸.

The Sublime Porte made things much more difficult for the Lipovens (a minority living in the Danubian Delta) on preparing and building their churches. In here this was based on the international supervision after the Paris Treaty in 1856. So the Porte didn't give them permission to raise their church⁹. After efforts during many years and a letter from the Bishop of Dobrogea to the Porte, the Lipovens were able to get the permission to build a new church¹⁰.

In this term again also Catholics and Jews built their new temples, for example the Catholics of Malkoç Village/Tulcea¹¹. In the same way a Catholic Church was built in Atmaca Village/Babadag in the early 1860's for Hungarian immigrants, who were landed in the area after their unsuccessful rebellion¹². The Catholic Churches of the central cities – named Tulcea and Constantza – were also built in this term; Tulcea's in 1860¹³ and Constantza's in 1870¹⁴. A Jews' Synagogue in Constantza began also in these years (1868)¹⁵. The vacant lots of this last one were obtained by the Sublime Porte, because of the crisis on properties of churches between Alexandru Ioan Cuza and Episcopacy¹⁶.

As to mosques, after the great snowballed Crimean immigration in this years a lot of new Tartar villages were founded and new mosques and schools were built in these places traditionally. For example: Hasanca (now Valul lui Traian), Osmanca (now Osmancea), Azaplar (now Tătaru), Bülbüller (now Ciocârlia de Sus and Ciocârlia de Jos), Hendek Karasuyusu (now Valea Dacilor) etc.

Regarding great mosques it is necessary to speak firstly about the Medgidia Mosque. After the construction of the Medgidia town¹⁷ a lot of new

⁷ BOA, İrade Hariciye, no. 7990.

⁸ BOA, İrade Hariciye, no. 8196.

⁹ BOA, İrade Hariciye, no. 9312

¹⁰ BOA, İrade Hariciye, no. 12359, 12854.

¹¹ BOA, İrade Hariciye, no. 11939.

¹² BOA, İrade Hariciye, no. 9680.

¹³ BOA, İrade Hariciye, no. 9572.

¹⁴ BOA, İrade Hariciye, no. 14642.

¹⁵ BOA, İrade Hariciye, no. 13403.

¹⁶ This crisis needs a separate and intensive research, because there are very many documents in the Ottoman Archives. For example even that two files alone (BOA, HR.SYS, 1038/1 and BOA, HR.SYS, 1045/1) have hundreds of pages.

¹⁷ At first the name of the town was Karasu, after then in honor of its founder Sultan Abdulmedjid the name changed to Mecidiye.

public buildings were constructed here. A new mosque was built (1859)¹⁸ here and in addition to this the courthouse, prison, law court etc.

Abdulaziz, successor of Abdulmedjid, had build a new mosque in Constantza (1869)¹⁹. This mosque (Gemiea Hunkiar) is now near Ovidius square.

¹⁸ BOA, İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ, no. 18903.

¹⁹ BOA, İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ, no. 25944.