

# THE OTTOMAN LEGACY IN DOBRUDJA

CEZMİ KARASU

In Northern Dobruđja, a historical region of modern Romania, the traces of the Ottoman legacy can be frequently observed. In general, “Dobruđja” refers to the area between the Danube and the Black Sea, stretching along the region between Silistra and Sulina. The region Dobruđja consists of two districts, Constanța and Tulcea.<sup>1</sup>

The Turks and Tatars living in Romania under Ottoman administration are still located in the same region. By the time Dobruđja was annexed to Romania in 1878,<sup>2</sup> these two Muslim groups made the majority of the inhabitants of the region. At that time, the towns of Constanța and Tulcea had a population of around 180,000.<sup>3</sup> The ratio of Muslims in Dobruđja to the total population of the region decreased gradually because of immigrations. After 1878, Dobruđja began to be densely settled by native Romanians,<sup>4</sup> but at the same time witnessed an increasing migration of its Muslim population (Turks and Tatars) to such countries as Turkey, the USA, Canada, etc. Thus, the Muslims constituting the majority of the population of Dobruđja in the 1860’s soon began to lose their demographic supremacy, and by the year 1889 fell to 22%.<sup>5</sup> Today, the same Muslim groups constitute only 5% of the population of Dobruđja.

The first Muslim group – the Turks – settling in Dobruđja came to the area from Anatolia, between 1400 and 1600. Tayyip Gökbilgin called these new settlers *Evlad-ı Fatihan* (Children of Conquerors),<sup>6</sup> and maintained that the second wave of settlers migrated from Crimea, mostly after the Crimean War.

---

<sup>1</sup> Müstecip Ülküsal, *Dobruca ve Türkler*, Ankara, 1966, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> For laws concerning Dobruđja’s integration into Romania, see Sorin Mureșeanu, *Integrarea Dobrogei*, in vol. *Istoria românilor*, București, 2003, vol. VII/2, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Ion Alexandru, Ion Bulei, Ion Mamina, Ioan Scurtu, *Enciclopedia de istorie a României*, București, 2000, p. 295.

<sup>4</sup> The Romanian population increased by 19% on average from the war of independence to World War I. But still, the ratio of the population increase in the Dobruđjan towns to the rest of the population of the country remained far above the average figures, mainly because of the new migrations (Constanța 81.7%, Sulina 25.1%, Medgidia 91.7%, Cernavodă 159.7%, Măcin 40%, Babadag 37%, Hârșova 28.7%, Mangalia 29.2%) – *ibidem*, p. 304.

<sup>5</sup> Cezmi Karasu, *Bağımsızlıktan I. Dünya Savaşı'na Romanya*, in vol. *Balkanlar El Kitabı*, vol. I, Ankara, 2006, p. 525.

<sup>6</sup> Tayyip Gökbilgin, *Rumeli'de Yörükler, Tatarlar ve Evlad-ı Fatihan*, Istanbul, 1957, p. 13 sqq.

At this point, it is important to dwell a little on Medgidia. The town was founded after the Crimean War to settle the immigrants from Crimea. A small village, Karasu, located 45 km away from Constanța, developed into a large town. The name also changed to Medgidia, in honor of the Ottoman Sultan Abd al-Mecid, the builder of the town.<sup>7</sup> The governmental offices and the mosque built at that time<sup>8</sup> are still in use.

The first group of immigrants, who were Turks, settled in Tulcea, Babadag, and Isaccea, while the second group of immigrants, i.e. Tatars, settled in Constanța, Medgidia, and Mangalia. All of these towns settled by Turkish and Tatar groups during the Ottoman era managed to keep their own historical designations with little phonetic change, for instance:

<b>Tulça</b> – Tulcea
<b>Babadağ</b> – Babadag
<b>Isakça</b> – Isaccea
<b>Köstence</b> – Constanța
<b>Mecidiye</b> – Medgidia
<b>Mangalya</b> – Mangalia
<b>Maçin</b> – Măcin
<b>Ibrail</b> – Brăila

Similarly, other towns and villages also kept their original names, thanks to the tolerance of the Romanian administrations toward the Ottoman legacy:

<b>Amzaca</b> – Amzacea	<b>Osmança</b> – Osmancea
<b>Aziye</b> – Agigea	<b>Palaz</b> – Palazu Mare
<b>Çukurova</b> – Ciucurova	<b>Rahman</b> – Rahman
<b>Hırşova</b> – Hârşova	<b>Ramazanköy</b> – Ramazanu
<b>Sebil</b> – Zebil	<b>Şirin</b> – Siriu
<b>Kalfa</b> – Calfa	<b>Tekkeköy</b> – Teche Chioi
<b>Karaibil</b> – Caraibil	<b>Tekirgöl</b> – Techirghiol
<b>Kobadin</b> – Cobadin	<b>Topraksari</b> – Topraisar
<b>Kuruca</b> – Curugea	<b>Tuzla</b> – Tuzla
<b>Laz</b> – Lazu	<b>Uğurluköy</b> – Urloaia
<b>Mahmudiye</b> – Mahmudia	<b>Urumbey</b> – Urumbei
<b>Nasreddin</b> – Nastredinu	<b>Haydar</b> – Haydar

<sup>7</sup> Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Urbanism, the Crimean Immigration to Dobruca and the Founding of Mecidiye (1856-1878)*, in “International Journal of Turkish Studies,” vol. III, 1985, no. 1, pp. 1-19.

<sup>8</sup> Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (hereafter: BOA), İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ, no. 18903.

### The Architectural Legacy

Gazi Aali Pasha Mosque in Babadag, first built in 1610, was restored by the Turkish and the Romanian Governments jointly, under the high patronage of presidents in both countries, namely Süleyman Demirel and Ion Iliescu, in 1996. This act must certainly be regarded as a striking example of Romanian tolerance towards the Ottoman legacy.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, as far as Dobrudja is concerned, the Ottoman architectural monuments are much more abundant. The most important include:

**Constanța Hunkiar Mosque:** built by the Ottoman Sultan Abd-al Aziz in 1869<sup>10</sup> and still open for prayer.

**Mecidiye Mosque:** built by Sultan Abd-al Madjid in Medgidia.<sup>11</sup>

**Mangalia Esmâ Sultan Mosque:** the oldest mosque in Dobrudja, built in 1590.<sup>12</sup>

**Isaccea Mosque:** built in 1864 at Isaccea.<sup>13</sup> The Ottoman architectural style of the building acquired an Arabic character after a restoration in 1995, financed by an Arab businessman.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> A well-known story of Aali Pasha further confirms it: in 1595 Michael the Brave (Mihai Viteazul), the Prince of Wallachia, waged war against the Ottomans and triumphed over a great Ottoman army commanded by Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha. Subsequently, he managed to set up an independent country uniting the principalities of Wallachia (Eflak in Ottoman sources), Moldavia (Boğdan) and Transylvania (Erdel) under his own administration, and rule over this new country until 1601. That year he was killed because of some quarrels. Michael's seven year rule of the independent and united principalities, in fact, turned out to be one of the most important periods in Romanian history.

Before long, however, the Ottomans established their suzerainty over these principalities thanks to the assistance of Gazi Aali Pasha, the Commander of the Ottoman Danubian troops. It is said that at that time Aali Pasha crossed the Danube River forty times with his army. – Manole Neagoe, *Mihai Viteazul*, Craiova, 1976.

<sup>10</sup> Ibram Nuredin, *Romanya Türklerinin Gelenekleri ve Adetleri*, Constanța, 2003, p. 32. See also BOA, İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ, no. 25944.

<sup>11</sup> BOA, İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ, no. 18903.

<sup>12</sup> Ibram Nuredin, *loc. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Filiz Halil, *İsakça'da Türk İzleri*, Constanța, 2004, p. 69.

<sup>14</sup> A new trend recently emerged in the Balkans, namely to purge the Ottoman legacy, whereby the Ottoman architectural buildings restored by Arabic foundations or businessmen lost their original style and became more Arabic in character. Finally, the process was completed by the change of the names of the monuments. In the end, the Ottoman monuments became Arabic. In Prizren (Kosovo), for example, the Ottoman Seydi Bey Mosque was replaced by Kurila Mosque. The destiny of another one, the Mustafa Pasha Mosque, which is still under restoration, remains unclear.

The mosques built in the villages of Dobrudja under Ottoman administration were:<sup>15</sup>

<b>Boğazköy</b>	1756	<b>Karaibil</b>	1861
<b>Mahmudiye</b>	1832	<b>Dokuzsupu</b>	1865
<b>Karatay</b>	1848	<b>Engez</b>	1866
<b>Morgöl</b>	1849	<b>Kara Ömer</b>	1867
<b>Amzaca</b>	1850	<b>Köstel</b>	1870
<b>Kaşıkcı</b>	1850	<b>Bayramdede</b>	1870
<b>Kalaycı</b>	1854	<b>Musurat</b>	1870
<b>Hendek</b>	1856	<b>Taşaul</b>	1871
<b>Karakuyusu</b>			
<b>Pervel</b>	1856	<b>Çukurköy</b>	1871
<b>Dobromir</b>	1858	<b>Aşçılar</b>	1872
<b>Palaz</b>	1859	<b>Acemler</b>	1873
<b>Şirin</b>	1859	<b>Horozlar</b>	1873
<b>Başpınar</b>	1860	<b>Gelincik</b>	1873
<b>Muratan</b>	1860	<b>Defçe</b>	1874
<b>Maçın</b>	1860	<b>Alakapı</b>	1877

Undoubtedly, the most important example showing the Romanian tolerance towards foreign cultures is the King Mosque in Constanța. The architectural style of this mosque is non-Ottoman. It was built by Carol I, the first Romanian King.<sup>16</sup> In the Balkans, to see rulers inclined to destroy the Ottoman architectural legacy is something usual, but to see such figures build new ones, as Carol I did, is something exceptional. In the year 1969, the gigantic carpet (122 sq m and 450 kg) sent as a present by the Ottoman Sultan Abd al-Hamid II to the Adakaleh Mosque was brought to the King Mosque.<sup>17</sup> Nowadays, the King Mosque salutes the visitors in memory of the two monarchs.

<sup>15</sup> İbrahim Nureddin, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>16</sup> Besides the King Mosque, King Carol I assigned a building site for the Muslim society of Bucharest. The second mosque built on this new site is located in the center of a wide park. In 1957, Nazım Hikmet, the famous Turkish communist poet, visited Bucharest, and joined a prayer here. Nazım was accompanied by Mustafa Ali Memet, the pioneer young communist (who afterwards became a historian) – Osman Baymak, *Mustafa Ali Memet ile Röportaj*, in “Bay,” Pristina (Kosovo), year 10, 2003, no. 81, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Adakaleh (Iron Gate) was an island on the Danube River with a Turkish population. The island was annexed to Romania by the Lausanne Treaty (1923). After a dam was built over the Iron Gate, the island was evacuated, and the destiny of its people changed. The Turks of Adakaleh migrated to Constanța, Istanbul, and Şimian island. The latter was rebuilt according to the model of Adakaleh.

There are two important tombs in Babadağ, one of Sarı Saltık Baba, the champion of Islamization in the Balkans, and the other one of Koyun Baba. The latter is visited by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.<sup>18</sup> Among the tombs, the one of Ishak Baba in Isaccea<sup>19</sup> must be added to the list.

The only school (= *medreseh*) inherited from the Ottoman period is the “Seminar of Medgidia.” The building of the school as the “Medreseh of Gazi Aali Pasha” occurred in the early seventeenth century in Babadag. Aali Pasha set aside a vast land of 8,000 hectares to finance this *medreseh*.<sup>20</sup> After the reorganization of the school in 1889, the *medreseh* was moved to Medgidia in 1901. Here the *medreseh* was changed into a modern school with an 8 year education cycle and renamed the “Seminar of Medgidia.” The period between 1920 and 1930 was a time of flourishing for the school.<sup>21</sup> During that time the “Seminar” had a good budget and brilliant staff members. Mehmet Niyazi, for example, the most famous Dobrudjan Tatar poet, writer and journalist, taught Turkish language and literature at this school.<sup>22</sup>

### The Linguistic Legacy

In Romanian, there are a lot of words of Turkish origin used in the everyday language.<sup>23</sup> Here are some words of Turkish origin (the first column in Turkish, the second in Romanian):

#### Clothes

<b>Basma</b>	Basma
<b>Çorap</b>	Ciorap
<b>Kemer</b>	Chimir
<b>Pabuç</b>	Papuc
<b>Şal</b>	Şal
<b>Takke</b>	Tichie

<sup>18</sup> Ibram Nuredin, *loc. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Filiz Halil, *loc. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi, Gazi Ali Paşa Vakfiyesi, Vakıf Defter no. 633.

<sup>21</sup> See for lessons, teachers, students and budget, etc.: “Anuarul Seminarului Musulman al Statului din Medgidia,” printed intermittently from 1904 to 1933.

<sup>22</sup> For Mehmet Niyazi’s biography, see Agi-Amet Gemal, *Dicționarul personalităților turco-tătare din România*, Constanța, 1999, p. 225. See also Müstecip Hacı Fazıl, *Büyük Bir Gaip*, in “EMEL,” 1932, 1, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Cintian Bărbuleanu, *Monografia oraşului Babadag*, Bucureşti, 1998, p. 293.

### Food

<b>Akide</b>	Acadea	<b>Lâle</b>	Lalea
<b>Baklava</b>	Baclava	<b>Macun</b>	Magiun
<b>Çay</b>	Ceai	<b>Meze</b>	Mezel
<b>Çorba</b>	Ciorbă	<b>Musakka</b>	Musaca
<b>Çullama</b>	Ciulama	<b>Nohut</b>	Năut
<b>Dut</b>	Dud	<b>Pilav</b>	Pilaf
<b>Fasulye</b>	Fasole	<b>Rakı</b>	Rachiu
<b>Fıstık</b>	Fistic	<b>Razakı</b>	Razachie
<b>Helva</b>	Halva	<b>Sarma</b>	Sarma
<b>Kadayıf</b>	Cataif	<b>Şerbet</b>	Şerbet
<b>Kaşkaval</b>	Caşcaval	<b>Yahni</b>	Iahnie
<b>Kaymak</b>	Caimac	<b>Yoğurt</b>	Iaurt
<b>Köfte</b>	Chiftea		

### Household Objects, Furniture, Buildings

<b>Cam</b>	Geam	<b>Köşk</b>	Chioşc
<b>Çarşaf</b>	Cearşaf	<b>Oda</b>	Odaie
<b>Divan</b>	Divan	<b>Perde</b>	Perdea
<b>Dolap</b>	Dulap	<b>Pervaz</b>	Pervaz
<b>Döşeme</b>	Duşumea	<b>Raf</b>	Raft
<b>Han</b>	Han	<b>Soba</b>	Sobă
<b>Havuz</b>	Havuz	<b>Tavan</b>	Tavan
<b>Kanape</b>	Canapea	<b>Tezgah</b>	Tejghea
<b>Kerpiç</b>	Chirpici		

### Other Objects and Materials

<b>Çanta</b>	Geantă	<b>Leğen</b>	Lighean
<b>Çomak</b>	Ciomag	<b>Lüle</b>	Lulea
<b>Cüzdân</b>	Ghiozdan	<b>Makara</b>	Macara
<b>Fildişi</b>	Fildeş	<b>Mangal</b>	Mangal
<b>Fıtıl</b>	Fıtıl	<b>Satır</b>	Satâr
<b>Kantar</b>	Cântar	<b>Sefertası</b>	Sufertaş
<b>Kapak</b>	Capac	<b>Takım</b>	Tacâm
<b>Kazma</b>	Cazma	<b>Tava</b>	Tavă
<b>Kibrit</b>	Chibrit	<b>Tuç</b>	Tuci

### Qualities, Defects

<b>Derbeder</b>	Derbedeu
<b>Düşman</b>	Dușman
<b>Kör</b>	Chior
<b>Kusur</b>	Cusurgiu
<b>Leke</b>	Lichea
<b>Mahmur</b>	Mahmur
<b>Misafir</b>	Musafir
<b>Murdar</b>	Murdar
<b>Şirret</b>	Şiret
<b>Tembel</b>	Tembel
<b>Viran</b>	Viran

### Professions

<b>Camcı</b>	Geamgiu	<b>Hamal</b>	Hamal
<b>Çoban</b>	Cioban	<b>Yoğurtçu</b>	Iaurgiu
<b>Dülger</b>	Dulgher		

Turkish influences can be found even in the names of two Orthodox monasteries in Dobrudja. The first, Cilikdere (= Çelikdere) Monastery, is located near Tulcea, while the other, Dervent Monastery, is situated by Ostrov, near the Bulgarian border. It is interesting to note that both of them still keep their historical names.

### Other Considerations

In spite of the tolerant Romanian policy regarding the Ottoman cultural and architectural legacy in Romania, there are still problems to be solved for the survival of the Ottoman heritage in the region.

Some Ottoman monuments do not exist any longer. Galați Mosque, for example, was destroyed in the 1970's.

The same is also true for the Ottoman religious foundations (*waqfs*). It must be further underlined that even the registers of such foundations creating funds for social, religious and educational institutions, and the registers of the landed property assigned for the use of the above mentioned foundations are lacking today.

Especially the title deeds of old “mosques” and “schools” proved to be vital recently, since these deeds imply new rights to claim concerning the possession of

the historical heritage. As far as the “Tatar Mektebi” (= Tatars School) is concerned, oddly enough, the official records contain no detailed information about the location, foundation date, etc., but only about the name itself.

There are a lot of Turkish objects in museums in Dobrudja, for instance in Tulcea, Constanța, Babadag, Cobadin, and even Brăila.

### Additional List

The list below shows some of the foundations located in Dobrudja and registered at the Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi (Archives of General Directorate of *Wakfs* in Ankara/Turkey):

Location	Name of the foundation	Date of foundation	Register no.
Babadağ	Hasan Efendi Vakfı	1133 H. (1720-21)	623
Babadağ	El-Hac Yusuf Paşa Vakfı	1108 H. (1696-97)	628
Babadağ	Seyyid Mehmed Paşa Vakfı	1194 H. (1780)	627/737
Babadağ	Zaim Pir Mustafa Ağa Vakfı	1180 H. (1766-67)	624
Babadağ	Gazi Ali Paşa Vakfı	1091 H. (1680-81)	633
Babadağ	El-Hac İbrahim Ağa Camii Vakfı	1172 H. (1758-59)	1171
Babadağ	Ahmet Ağa Vakfı	1136 H. (1723-24)	734
Köstence	Hacı Ali Ağa Vakfı	1166 H. (1752-53)	626
Köstence	Hasan Ağa Vakfı	1160 H. (1747-48)	630
Karasu (Mecidiye)	Çıplak Hasan Ağa Vakfı	1189 H. (1775-76)	988
Karasu (Mecidiye)	El-Hac Ömer Ağa Vakfı	1135 H. (1722-23)	625
Karasu (Mecidiye)	El-Hac Ahmed Ağa Vakfı	1113 H. (1701-02)	725
Mangalya	Rikapdar Rodoslu Ahmed Ağa Vakfı	1211 H. (1796-97)	743
Mangalya	Seyyid Feyzullah Efendi Vakfı	1143 H. (1730-31)	624