

TULCEA – A MULTIETHNIC AND MULTICULTURAL CITY

ТУЛЧА – МУЛТИЕТНИЧЕН И МУЛТИКУЛТУРЕН ГРАД

Защо трябва да наричаме Тулча мултиетничен и мултикултурен град? Защото в него са живели и продължават да живеят повече от десет различни етнически групи (румънци, българи, руснаци-липовани, турци, татари, евреи, арменци, гърци, германци, италианци, цигани), всяка от които се е опитвала да запази своя език, традиции и обичаи. Въпреки злощастните исторически събития, които застрашават населението на Тулча и самия град, тези етнически групи успяват да преодолеят проблемите и недоразуменията си, приемат „другия” и намират сили да продължат напред.

Днес повечето от етническите групи в Тулча (българи, руснаци-липовани, гърци, украинци, турци и татари) имат свои центрове, в които се представят филми на родните им езици, срещат се членовете на дадената общност, учители обучават децата на езика на родителите им, както и на езика на страната, в която живеят. Членовете на общностите вземат уроци по танци, техни музикални и танцови формации се подготвят да участват в национални и международни музикални и танцови фестивали.

Поглед назад в историческото минало на града показва, че наличието на пристанище и на добър сухоземен транспорт е допринесло за увеличаването на населението и за разширяването на обитаемия периметър, като по този начин е давало нова перспектива на организирането на градския пейзаж на Тулча.

Последното преброяване от 2002 г. предоставя интересна информация относно етническата структура на населението на града и областта. Както показват данните, броят на представителите на различните етнически общности в Тулча е значително намалял, но техните представители полагат големи усилия да запазят живи езика, обичаите и традиционния си начин на обличане. Всички тези етнически общности живеят в хармония в Тулча, заедно отбелязват празници, особено празника на града, организиран всяка година в периода 12–15 август.

Авторът стига до извода, че тези етнически общности и особено българската, са се интегрирали прекрасно в градското общество и са негова активна част.

Ключови думи: Тулча, Добруджа, мултиетничност, мултикултурен, етническа общност.

Why should we call Tulcea a multiethnic and multicultural city? Because in Tulcea there have lived together and still live more than ten different ethnic groups (Romanians, Bulgarians, Russian-lipovans, Turks, Tartars, Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Germans, Italians, Gypsies), each of them trying to keep alive their ethnic language, traditions and customs. Despite the ill-fated historic events that endangered the

population of Tulcea and the town itself, these ethnic groups have overcome their troubles, misunderstandings, and accepted each other, also finding the power to move forward.

Today, we can speak about music festivals (The National Minority Festival – The Danube Festival; The International Folklore Festival for Children and Young People – The Gold Fish) and films festivals (The Interethnic Film Week) where the different ethnic groups have the possibility to present with great pride, songs and dances, the language they speak and the national costumes that they wear on different occasions.

The majority of the ethnic groups in Tulcea (Bulgarians, Russian-lipovans, Greeks, Ukrainians, Turks and Tartars) have their own centres, where films in their native languages are presented, where meetings of the members of the community take place, where professors teach the children of the community the native language they have inherited from their parents, but also the language of the country in which they live. Community members take dance lessons, and the music and dance groups prepare to participate in different national music and dance festivals, but also in such abroad.

Looking back in the historic past of the town population, the organization of the harbour and the transport on land have contributed to the increase of the population and the widening of the inhabited perimeter, thus giving a new organizing perspective to the urban landscape of Tulcea.

At the beginning of the Middle Ages, the Romanian inhabitants of Dobrudzha carried out a blooming economy, the Dobrudzha fairs and the powerful commercial centres from the delta of the Danube are known from numerous certified documents.

The territory between the Danube and the Black Sea developed considerably in the time of the reign of Mircea cel Batran (1386–1418) who entitled himself *Ruler of both sides, all over the Danube and all the way to the Black Sea* (Postelnicu 2000: 3). Under the name of Tulcea, the town is certified for the first time in the year 1595, in writings of the Italian Paolo Giorgici (Coteț 1975: 43).

In the following century the town is mentioned under the same name, in 1650, by the Turkish traveller Evlia Celebi, and in 1674, in the writings of the Italian Matteo Gondola (Boranda: 125).

For the reconstruction of medieval Tulcea, of great interest are the testimonies that remained from the foreign travellers Mihail Bey and Gaspar Papai, the messengers of Rakoczy II at the Tartar Khan in Crimea, who, passing by Tulcea in 1705, saw in the town a small fortress built on a cliff on the bank of the Danube, that guarded a branch of the Danube, so that ships could not pass without knowledge of them, from the Danube to the Black Sea, and from the Black Sea to the Danube (Foreign travellers: 514).

Some years later, in 1711, the scholar ruler of Moldavia, Dimitrie Cantemir, talking about Dobrudzha and Isaccea, mentioned the old Roman fortress, like the one in Tulcea.

Other travellers that stopped for a while in Tulcea were Paul Alep (1658), La Montraye (1711) and John Bell (1737). La Montraye saw Tulcea in the year 1714 as a village situated on a high ground, that had a small fort with seven towers, right on one of the branches of the Danube (Foreign travellers: 514).

In the year 1860 Tulcea became a sanjak centre. It began to develop as a town and also economically. Some buildings and homes dating from this period have kept to this day the mark of the undefined architecture of the age. They stand, single, in nowadays Tulcea.

The development of trade made necessary the extension of the commercial harbour and the disappearance of the old fisherman harbour. Trading increased and, as a result, close to the harbour the first shops of an oriental bazaar type began to appear (Munteanu 1975: 15).

The Turkish establishment was situated in the commercial centre of the town, at that time, located in the Fisherman's Harbour. Near the Romanian cemetery there could be found the oldest Turkish cemetery, that overlapped the old Roman necropolis, and where, near Dorobanti Street, the Turks would later build the first mosque.

In the first half of the 18th century, with the establishment of new ethnic groups – Russian-lipovans, next to Greeks, Romanians, Armenians, Jews and Italians, the town found itself in a great economic development and had a cosmopolitan look.

Between 1860 and 1877 it was a sanjak centre (an Ottoman province lead by a governor – mutesarif). Between the years 1864 and 1867 the governor of the province was Rezim Pasa, whose mother was a Greek woman from Athens, the place where he spent his childhood. Rezim Pasa was one of the most important figures of the last years of the Ottoman age that contributed to the modern construction of the town of Tulcea. He also supported the Christian population of the town. His line of politics was continued by the next governor, Ismail Bey, a Romanian Macedonian from Albania, who between 1868 and 1871 had a positive attitude, favouring the construction of Romanian schools.

In the time of these two governors, Tulcea experienced an intensive building activity. An important role in the modernization of the town was the disappearance of the central lagoon, after the strengthening and impoundment of the Danubian shore by the European Commission of the Danube (founded in 1859, with its headquarters in Sulina). The town square, where the grain section and the cattle fair functioned, was formed in the centre of the Ceair, surrounded by the suburbs of the Bulgarians and Armenians to the east, of the Jews and Greeks to the west and the Russians to the south (Baumann 2003: 34–35).

In 1868, the construction of a local higher Turkish school started in front of the present Spiru Haret College. When the construction finished in 1876, the building was transformed into police barracks and later, in 1878, into the Town Hall building.

In 1873, the construction of the mosque with a minaret – Azizie – was started in the south end of the Sacagii ford. Between 1863 and 1865 the pashalik mansion

was built which after 1878 became the Prefecture building. Rezim Pasa brought builders from the West and constructed the first building in neo-classic style on the territory of Dobrudzha (Baumann 2003: 34–35).

In 1857, the Bessarabian Bulgarians, settled in Tulcea after 1806, built a church with the patron Saint George. In the inscription on the top of the entrance door it was written: This church, which has for a patron Saint Martyr George, was built by the Bulgarian community.

In 1858, at the initiative of the Bulgarian philanthropist Hadzhi Veliu and Professor Isvolsky, in the churchyard a building (nowadays demolished) was constructed with the purpose of transforming it into a primary and gymnasium school for Bulgarian children. From the inscription on the frontispiece of the building we can find out that the corner stone of the National Bulgarian School for Girls was placed on 11th of May 1881, and that it was finished and inaugurated on 11th of May 1882, with the care of the Society for Women Hope and of the Bulgarian Literary Society. Today, the building houses the headquarters of some commercial companies.

After the reconstruction work of the first building was completed in 1885, it was transformed into a school – School no.1 for boys, and later into Princess Helen High School, founded in 1897, and between 1919 and 1925 – into “Dr. Angelescu” School for Teachers (Postelnicu 2000: 160).

Between 1857 and 1867, the old style lipovans (without a priest) who had settled in the south end of Colnicului Hora, constructed the Holy Trinity Church (Saint Paraskeva) at the intersection of Glory Street with Sisters Street.

From 1864 until 1868, the lipovans who had settled at the foot of Comorofca Hill, built a church with a patron saint John the Theologian, at the west end of Mihai Eminescu Street. In the western part of the city, on the Comorofca Hill, the Romanians and the Greeks built an Orthodox cemetery, and after 1919, in its eastern part the Heroes’ Cemetery was constructed. In 1875, the Russians began constructing the Holy Transfiguration grand stone church. It was finished in 1883, and in the same period, the Jewish committee of Tulcea built the Craftsmen’s Temple in the south end of Marasesti Street (Baumann 2003: 36).

The Germans, who had settled to the west of the Greek community, at the foot of Babadag Hill, built between 1844 and 1856 a Catholic church in the today’s Traian Street, with the patron Saint Michael in 1872.

In 1864, the Austrian Karl Peters mentioned a series of new buildings. For example the building of the Swiss Wilhelmen Bergman, where, at that time, was the Austrian Consulate (nowadays 3, The 9th of May Street) (Baumann 2003: 36).

A part of the pier was constructed in the area of the new harbour, where in the Captain Centre the Customs functioned on the bank of the Danube, right next to Comorovca Hill.

At the foot of Mahmudia Hill, an area populated by Tartars, Romanians, Bulgarians and Armenians, on both sides of a segment of a street, constructed in the

eastern part of the old lagoon (after 1879 Stefan cel Mare Street), the Turkish Bazaar or the oriental architectonic ensemble was built of bricks and mortar with cement, also called Under the Columns, comprising of 41 shops (6 with top floor and residences), with a portico at the front, consisting of 72 oriental columns (Baumann 2003: 36).

Till the year 1880, the town was divided in slums or suburbs, and included in two territorial constituencies, the yellow colour and the red colour. For the identification of the suburbs presented we mention the main streets which they included (Postelnicu 2000: 6).

The *yellow colour* marks: the *Prislaveni* suburb, with the streets Prislav, Ciurarilor (today called Ciurel), Pescarilor, Armoniei, Monumentului (right side); the *Mocanilor* suburb, with the streets Holy Emperors, Renasterii (both of them forming today Nicolae Balcescu Street), Horei, Prudentei; the *Turkish* suburb, with the streets The 14th of November, Independentei, Suvenir; the *Lipovan* suburb, with the streets Buciumului, Umbrei, Soarelui; the *Tartar* suburb, with the streets Mahmudiei, Potcovarilor, Dragos Voda; the *Armenian* suburb, with the streets Fabricii (today Banatului) Gura Pietei (today Concordiei), Armeneasca (today Aleea Ciucurencu); the *Ciairului* suburb, with the streets Graur (the old street behind Egreta Hotel), Stefan cel Mare (today the street behind Tineretului Cinema, named The 7th of November Street in 1948), Regina Elisabeta (today Corneliu Gavrilov Street); the *Russians* suburb, with the right side of Plugarilor Street, and the left side of Regina Elisabeta Street, after the Russian church.

The *red colour* marks: the *Romanian* suburb, with the streets Sfantul Nicolae, Principele Ferdinand (today Victoriei), Smardan, Cimitirului; the *Bestepenilor* suburb, with the streets Bestepeni (today Eroilor), Palestinei (today the end of Lupeni Street), Nicopol; the *Greek* suburb, with the streets Belvedere (today Mihai Eminescu), Buna Vestire (today Trandafirilor) and Gheorghe Doja; the *Israeliian* suburb, with the streets Babadag, Cuza Voda, Orientului, General Angelescu (today Toamnei); the *German* suburb, with the streets Mircea Voda and Traian; the *Molocan* suburb with Mircea Voda corner to General Angelescu Street; the *Ceamurlia* suburb, with the streets Isaccieia and Carol (today Garii) (Postelnicu 2000: 6).

Regarding the population of Tulcea in the year 1878, it's been estimated that there were 17 518 inhabitants, of which 6 244 Bulgarians, 5 304 Romanians, 1 875 Russians, 1 736 lipovans, 324 Greeks, 304 Jews, 224 Tartars, 370 Turks, 160 Armenians, and 976 of other ethnic groups.

This ethnic diversity could be explained by the attraction of the trade conducted by the Greeks, Armenians and Jews in the harbour, by the massive immigration of Bulgarians from Russia and the south of Bessarabia, and by the long presence of Romanians in the town area during the Ottoman domination (Limona 2009: 130).

Edifying for the ethnic diversity of the town is the description of a journey from the beginning of the 20th century made by Nicolae Iorga, in which he reveals,

among others, that he saw in Tulcea a lot of Bulgarian, Greek, and Jewish shops and that in the coffee shops there were rows of chairs, with Bulgarian, mocanesti, village-like and town-like hats, Turkish caps, Tartar turbans and the corresponding clothes, arranged in colourful ethnographic exhibitions (Iorga 1971: 136–137).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the number of inhabitants increased to 19 365 in 1907, and to 21 764 in 1912, and they had been attracted by the presence of the European Commission of the Danube and by the efforts of the local authorities to develop the harbour and the navigation on the river.

In terms of the number of the inhabitants from the ethnic groups, in 1907 Tulcea county was inhabited by: 59 816 Romanians, 33 087 Bulgarians, 16 152 Russians, 10 849 lipovans (with priests), 3 777 lipovans (without priests), 4 788 Greeks, 4 123 Germans, 3 131 Jews, 3 916 Turks, 1909 Gagauz, 1 498 Christian gypsies, 576 Turk gypsies, 1 071 Armenians, 1 071 Italians, 1 231 of other nationalities.

Of all those, in the town of Tulcea lived: 4 754 Romanians, 4 045 Bulgarians, 13 Gagauz, 325 Turks, 175 Tartars, 1 305 Greeks, 3 517 Russians, 274 Turk gypsies, 126 Christian gypsies, 623 lipovans (with priests), 1 548 lipovan (without priests), 262 Armenians, 1 773 Jews, 280 Germans, 27 Italians, 318 of other nationalities.

We should mark the numerical balance between Romanians and Bulgarians in comparison with the year 1878, the substantial increase of the ethnic groups of the Russians and lipovans and the preference of the Jews for the current capital (Limona 2009: 132).

From the sociological analyse based on the archive documents from the year 1920 we learn that in Tulcea there were 16 merchants (4 Greeks, 3 Russians, 1 Romanian, 1 Jew, 1 Armenian, and 5 were working for the state) and 81 landowners (53 Romanians, 13 Bulgarians, 10 Russians, 3 Jews, 1 Greek, 1 Turk) (Fund Administrative: file 133/1920, f. 1-4).

In 1925, from nationality, job and income statistics we learn that in Tulcea 9 200 Romanians were farmers, craftsmen and merchants with a good income, 4 578 Russians were farmers and fishermen with a good income, 4 982 Bulgarians were farmers and merchants, 728 Greeks were merchants, all with a good incomes, 968 Turks were farmers and workers with a medium income, 128 Yugoslavians were industry workers, 1485 Germans were farmers, 1700 Jews were merchants and workers, 320 Armenians were merchants, 6 Hungarians were workers, 30 worked as craftsmen, all with a good income (Fund Administrative: file 271/1925, f. 6-11, 37).

From a census done in 1937 we find out that Tulcea had 21 815 inhabitants, of which: 7 936 Romanians, 4 242 Russians, 3 590 Bulgarians, 2 474 lipovans, 680 Turks, 1 021 Jews, 111 Italians, 392 Germans, 23 Hungarians, 239 Serbians, 848 Greeks, 259 of other nationalities (Fund Administrative: file 774/1937, f. 61-206).

According to the last census done before the Second World War, in 1939 Tulcea had 22 853 inhabitants, as follows: 8 377 Romanians, 2 574 Russians, 3 790

Bulgarians, 4 235 lipovans, 425 Germans, 950 Greeks, 765 Turks, 121 Italians, 1 215 Jews, 53 Hungarians, 239 Serbians, 17 Czechoslovaks and 59 others.

The loss of the south of the province in 1940 and the change in the structure of the population decreased the number of the Bulgarian inhabitants in the province and in the town. After the transfer of the Bulgarian citizens and the emigration of Germans and Italians under the impulse of the Berlin and Rome governments, the town of Tulcea partially changed its ethnic structure in 1942.

The census made by the communist authorities in 1948 indicates the number of 20 769 inhabitants, divided as follows: 13 321 Romanians, 2 867 Russians, 613 Turks, 2 695 lipovans, 595 Jews, 72 Germans, 378 Greeks, 159 Bulgarians, 4 Hungarians, 21 Armenians, 96 of other nationalities.

The census from 1956 identifies 24 639 inhabitants in Tulcea and 223 719 in the County. The town's population includes: 17 213 Romanians, 5 259 Russians, 647 Turks, 431 Ukrainians, 302 Jews, 57 Germans, 177 Bulgarians, 84 Tartars, 51 gypsies, 215 Greeks, 42 Armenians, 28 Hungarians, 21 Serbians, 118 of other nationalities (Limona 2009: 144–145).

The last census done in Romania was in 2002 and offers some interesting information regarding the ethnic structure of the population. The town of Tulcea had 91 875 inhabitants, divided as follows: 84 773 Romanians, 2 560 lipovans, 1 274 Turks, 1 260 Roms, 615 Ukrainians, 569 Russians, 412 Greeks, 149 Tartars, 69 Hungarians, 56 Germans, 32 Bulgarians, 20 Jews, 10 Croatians, 9 Slovaks, 7 Poles, 7 Armenians, 25 Italians, 28 of other nationalities (Limona 2009: 144–146).

As we can see from the last census done in Romania, the numbers of the ethnic groups in Tulcea have decreased significantly. Nevertheless, the members of the existing ethnic communities in Tulcea make great efforts to keep their language, customs and traditional way of clothing alive.

Today like in the past, people are still talking about the Russian-lipovan, Greek, Turkish or Tartar neighbourhoods.

At the County School Inspectorate of Tulcea there is an inspector for the minorities and an inspector for the Roms that authorize the activities of the town's ethnic groups. Thus, since 2004 **the Greek Community** has organized Greek language lessons, the dance ensemble *Elpis* participates in many events organized in Tulcea. They take part in the Interethnic Film Week organized every year with the support of Tulcea Town Hall. Every year, on 25th of March they celebrate the National Day of the Hellenic Republic (<http://www.comunitateaelenatulcea.ro/contact.htm>).

The Russian-Lipovan Community organizes classes like Sunday school, conversation courses in Russian, classic dance lessons, and once a week they present a Russian movie. The Lotca, Molodïoi, Male Necrasovioi ensembles are very famous and highly esteemed in the town and in the country for their songs and traditional dances. Every year they celebrate Russia's National Day (<http://www.crltulcea.blogspot.com>).

The branch of **the Ukrainian Union of Romania** in Tulcea organizes free Ukrainian language courses starting from the year 2010. The song and dance ensemble *Zadunaiska Sici* is very famous nationally and abroad (<http://www.uurtulcea.blogspot.com>).

The Tulcea branch of **the Democratic Turkish Union** organizes Turkish language lessons, and *Tuna* and *Kaynanalar* ensembles both participate regularly in the Interethnic Film Week.

The Armenians' Union of Romania, the Jewish Community, the Democratic Forum of the Germans, the Italian Community, the Rom Unity Alliance, also have one representative for Tulcea.

Regarding **the Bulgarian Community**, from the results of the census made in 2002, the number of Romanians with Bulgarian origin was 8 025, less than 9 851 registered in the census from 1992. Of them, most live in the western part of Romania, in Banat: 2/3 in Timis county; 1/10 in Arad county.

The rest of them live in the south of Romania: 1/10 in Dambovita, also in Bucharest, Constania and Tulcea. Today, this population is divided between two major communities distinct from cultural, historic and organizational point of view: that of the Banat Bulgarians, of Catholic religion, and that of the south Bulgarians, who live in Oltenia, Muntenia and Dobruja (in Caucagia, Pietrele, Babadag, Dunavat, Visina, Ciamurlia de Jos, Cerchezu, Enisala, Mila 23, Patlagianca, Ostrov, Cerna, Nalbant, Macin, Harsova, Casimcea, Frecatei, Zebil), of Orthodox religion. These groups of the Bulgarian diaspora have in common their ethnic origin, their language, some similarities in their traditional culture and especially, their agriculture. They differ by their geographical position, by their religion, cultural particularities and specific dialects, by their historical destiny and the degree of preserving their ethnic originality.

People of Bulgarian origin also live in the north part of Romania, in Sighetu Marmatiei, thus fitting in the 0,55% quota of minorities in the city, along with other ethnic groups (<http://bulgarii.ro/positionare.php>).

The **Bulgarian Union from Romania** has the main purpose of reuniting the ethnic Bulgarian citizens of Romania. The association's objective is to open a Bulgarian Centre in Bucharest and of one in Sofia. 33 Bulgarian associations were formed, plus other 20 branches that were attached to the association in Bucharest.

Beginning with the autumn of 1990 groups and classes in which Bulgarian language is taught were opened in 12 schools: in Bucharest – at the Pedagogical School, at School no. 112, School no. 87, and in other neighbouring localities. In 1999, the “Hristo Botev” Bulgarian High School was opened in Bucharest. Between 1996 and 1998 the Association contributed to the installation of commemorative plaques to Hristo Botev in Giurgiu and Alexandria, Vasil Levski in Bucharest and Turnu Magurele, and in placing a bust in Herestrau Park. In the autumn of 2004, following the outstanding results obtained at the general elections in Romania, members of the Association elected Mrs. Marie Mirela Dinu as president of the Association (<http://bulgarii.ro/positionare.php>).

The Tulcea branch of the Bulgarian Community is active in Lunca, Tulcea County. The community organized various activities with the participation of local and national members.

We note the concern of all ethnic groups, both locally and nationally, to preserve their language, customs and traditions. So, in Tulcea, there has been arranged a park of the minorities, where there could be found the busts of some important personalities of these ethnic groups. In 2008, for the Turkish community, the bust of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was raised, the first president of the modern Turkish state and the founder of modern Turkey.

In March this year, near Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's bust, the bust of the poet Serghei Esenin was raised, in honour of the Russian-lipovan community. In June, in honour of the Ukrainian community, the bust of the poet Taras Şevcenko was raised. This kind of events were supported, encouraged and respected by the local authorities.

Regarding the town of Tulcea, we observe that all these ethnic groups live in harmony, celebrating together holydays and festivals, especially on the days dedicated to the town of Tulcea that are celebrated every year on 12th–15th of August. On these days we can easily observe the diversity of the town's population that brings the town to live.

Thus, we conclude that the ethnic groups presented, especially the Bulgarian community, have perfectly integrated themselves in the town's society, being an active part of it.

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<http://bulgarii.ro/positionare.php>; mail: office@bulgarii.ro; Nadia Casian, Inspector for Minorities, phone number: 0751.368.904.