

War and Migration in 19th–Century Eurasia: The Case of the Crimean Tatars

Catalina Hunt (Franklin & Marshall College)

Relying on primary sources from Ottoman, Romanian, British and French archives, this paper discusses the Crimean Tatars' experience of war and migration in the 19th century. Two different yet related events determined the fate of the Crimean Tatars during this century: the four wars for regional supremacy fought between the Ottoman and Russian Empires and the Treaty of Berlin. These events triggered unprecedented migration among the Tatars, who attempted to escape to Ottoman territories from lands entering Russian control. The Crimean Tatars left their homeland due to Russian pressure and settled in the region of Dobruca (present-day Romania) at this time. But in 1878, when the Treaty of Berlin granted Dobruca to Romania, the Tatars had to decide whether to live in this region under Romanian administration or migrate to the Ottoman Empire. This paper focuses on how the wars of the 19th century impacted Tatar migration in this part of Eurasia as well as how both Ottoman and Romanian regimes dealt with this population.

The history of Eurasia includes remarkable stories of migration originating in modern-era conflicts and geopolitical changes. During such consequential events people often abandon homes and move to new places, sometimes across vast swaths of land, in search for safe heavens and better living conditions. These migrations usually result in fundamental and irreversible changes within migrant communities that transition from one society to another.

More than two hundred years ago, this was the case of the Crimean Tatars, who left the Crimean Peninsula and the steppes of the Black Sea and moved to Ottoman Dobruca, in present-day Romania, in the century following the 1783 Russian annexation of the Crimean Khanate. This century marked the bitter rivalry that pitted the Russian and Ottoman Empires against each other in no less than four major wars. The Treaty of Berlin, which concluded this bellicose age in 1878, sanctioned a severely reduced Ottoman Empire in Europe, granting Ottoman Dobruca to Romania. In this way the Great Powers of Europe placed the Crimean Tatars under Romanian rule for centuries to come. This paper examines the development of the Crimean Tatar

community in both Ottoman (imperial) and Romanian (national) contexts according to Ottoman Turkish, Romanian, French, and British archival material. The paper looks at the historical context for this migration, attempting to show how war and migration shaped the evolution of the Crimean Tatars in the 19th century. As migrants settled in new locations, I argue, their engagement with national governments led to challenges that affected their lives, often in dramatic ways, in the years to come.

This paper contributes to the literature dedicated to the study of the modern-age migration of Crimean Tatars and their story of adaptation in the Dobruca region. Historians of Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Romania have studied the migration of the Crimean Tatars in the context of developments that shaped both these states and the Russo-Ottoman frontier in the 19th century. Focusing on how Russia dealt with the Crimean Tatars, historians produced either surveys of the Russian Empire, which included information on the Crimean Tatars, or studies dedicated to the examination of their historical evolution alone or, more broadly, to the study of Muslim Russians.¹ More recently, in his 2014 monograph on Akçura, Gasprinskii, and Ağaoğlu, James H. Meyer has placed the migration of the Tatars of Crimea in the trans-imperial context from which these intellectuals emerged.² Ottoman historians instead framed Crimean Tatar migration in the much larger context of population movements occurring in the empire

¹ Some of the most important studies include: Alan Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978); Valerii Vozgrin, *Istoricheskie Sud'by Krymskikh Tatar* (Moscow: Mysl', 1992); Edward J. Lazzerini, "Local Accommodation and Resistance to Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century Crimea," in Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (eds.), *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 169-87; Edward A. Allworth (ed.), *The Tatars of the Crimea: Return to the Homeland. Studies and Documents* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998); Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (London: Pearson Limited Education, 2001); Brian Glyn Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora Experience and the Forging of a Nation* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001).

² James H. Meyer, *Turks across Empires: Marketing Muslim Identity in the Russian-Ottoman Borderlands, 1856-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

throughout the modern period.³ In their turn, Romanian historians addressed the degree to which the Crimean Tatars adapted to Romania, assimilating into its multiethnic fabric as one of its minority groups.⁴ None of these studies, however, provided a compelling picture of how war and migration affected the development of the Crimean Tatar community, in part due to the lack of historiographical training in and access to sources in Ottoman Turkish, Romanian, and Western languages. Previous examinations of the topic relied heavily on the use of secondary sources, which contained certain elements of bias. In this paper, I draw on the rich collection of primary sources mentioned above, in an effort to write a study that reflects the trans-regional and trans-imperial experience of the Crimean Tatars and the societies in which they lived at this time.

The Turkic-speaking and Islamic Crimean Tatars ruled over their own Khanate, which stretched across the steppes of the north and the east of the Black Sea, including the Crimean Peninsula, from the mid-15th century to 1783, when imperial Russia annexed it. Forcible eviction of Crimean Tatars became state policy in imperial Russia only after 1856.⁵ Prior to that year, the pragmatic Russian policy towards them, which the enlightened tsarina Catherine II had embraced and instituted during her reign, enjoyed significant success. Catherine II hoped to earn the loyalty of Crimean Tatar leadership through granting them hefty salaries, exemption from taxes, and confirmation of landed property. Although such incentives motivated regional leaders to work hard within their community on behalf of the tsarina, the reversal of many of her measures in the

³ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995).

⁴ Virgil Coman (ed.), *Dobrogea – Model de conviețuire multiethnică și multiculturală* (Constanța: Muntenia, 2008); Tasin Gemil, Gabriel Custurea, Delia Roxana Cornea (eds.), *Moștenirea culturală turcă în Dobrogea* (Constanța: Editura Top Form, 2013); Adrian Ilie, *Comunitățile turcă și tătară din Medgidia* (Constanța: Ex Ponto, 2015). Although not a historian, Müstecib Ülküsal deserves to be mentioned here for synthesizing the secondary literature on the Crimean Tatars in his *Kırım Türk-Tatarları (Dünü-Bugünü-Yarım)* (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1980).

⁵ Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 66.

19th century discouraged the Crimean Tatar community from remaining under Russian rule.⁶ The “heavy-handed policies of Russification” carried out in the Crimea, which minimized Tatar participation in society, as well as the growing Slavic colonization of Tatar lands and the governmental encouragement of Tatar migration following the conclusion of the Crimean War of 1853-56, led to massive migration out of this area.⁷ Historians estimate that more than half of the Crimean Tatar community, or over 100,000 individuals, left their homes and settled in the Ottoman Empire from 1783 to 1860.⁸ Most of these migrants, or about two thirds of the entire Crimean Tatar population, departed the peninsula once the Crimean War ended in 1856.

The majority of Crimean Tatar migrants established new homes in Ottoman Dobruca.⁹ Being on the path of migrants going back and forth between Europe and Asia, this territory from the Russo-Ottoman frontier in southeastern Europe was home to ethnically, religiously, and culturally mixed populations due to its history of wars, migrations, and colonization policies. In 1850, an Ottoman survey estimated that the population of Dobruca, stretching across roughly 9,000 square miles, contained about 100,000 individuals, twelve ethnicities, and eight faiths.¹⁰ The Crimean Tatar migrants, who amounted to about 100,000 people by the 1860s, doubled the region’s population, consolidating its Muslim majority and increasing its Tatar element. This last feature made it famous across the Eurasian space as *Küçük Tatarstan* or Little Tatar.¹¹

⁶ Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, 70-80.

⁷ Lazzerini, “Local Accommodations,” 170.

⁸ In 1860, the Crimean population amounted to 194,000 individuals (Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, 89); Edward Lazzerini, “The Crimea under Russian Rule. 1783 to the Great Reforms,” in Michael Rywkin (ed.), *Russian Colonial Expansion to 1917* (London and New York: Mansell, 1988), 123-38.

⁹ Halil Inacik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, trans. Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), 613); Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 66; Hakan Kırımlı, “Emigrations from the Crimea to the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 5 (2008): 751-73.

¹⁰ Ion Ionescu de la Brad, *Excursion agricole dans la plaine de la Dobrodja* (Constantinople: Imprimerie du Journal de Constantinople, 1850), 14-15.

¹¹ Brian Glyn Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, 205.

Ottoman reformers of the Tanzimat (1839-76) made considerable efforts to settle Crimean Tatars, who were seen as a solution to some of the problems the empire was facing then, especially regional underpopulation and agricultural underdevelopment. By the mid-19th century, Dobruca was also nearly ruined by the wars the Ottomans had fought against the Russians (1806-12; 1828-29; 1853-56). Because imperial armies used the region as a battleground, many villages had been destroyed or left only with ghostly-looking buildings. Struggling to avoid conflict zones, the local population was in flux. Countless families left everything behind, taking immense risks in their pursuit of safe havens so they could carry on with their lives peacefully somewhere else.¹²

To normalize the situation in Dobruca, the Crimean Tatars were settled there under favorable terms, receiving from the government tax exemptions, lands, and permission to enroll in the army. The first modern cavalry unit of the empire, created in 1826, included Crimean Tatars, who also fought in the Russo-Ottoman war of 1828-29¹³ and served the sultan in the Arabian Peninsula in the 1830s and 1840s, when the Ottomans tried to stop the advancing army of Ibrahim Paşa, the son of the autonomous governor of Egypt, Mehmed Ali.¹⁴ The sultan preserved these Tatars' local autonomy, allowing them to become officers in the army, and conferring on their leader, Khan Mirza, the honorary title of *miralay* (colonel).¹⁵

¹² There is plenty of evidence for the destruction the Ottoman-Russo wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries caused to this region. For the most illustrative examples of this literature, see Helmuth Moltke, *Campagne des Russes dans la Turquie d'Europe en 1828 et 1829* (Paris: J. Dumaine, Ch. Renwald, 1854); Camille Allard, *La Dobroutcha* (Paris: Charles Douniol, 1859) and *Souvenirs d'Orient: La Bulgarie Orientale* (Paris: Imprimerie Adrien Le Cler, 1861).

¹³ Kemal Karpat, "The Crimean Emigration of 1856-1862 and the Settlement and Urban Development of Dobruca," in *Passé Turco-Tatar Présent Soviétique. Études Offertes à Alexandre Bennigsen*, Ch. Lemerrier-Quelquejay, G. Veinstein, S.E. Wimbush eds. (Paris: Éditions Peeters, 1986), 283.

¹⁴ *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Meclis-i Vükelâ Mazbataları* (Ottoman Prime Ministry's Archives, Reports of the Councils of Ministers) (BOA. MV.), No. 426 (29 Cemazülahır 1257 [18 August 1841]).

¹⁵ Karpat, "The Crimean Emigration of 1856-1862," 284.

In 1857, the first Ottoman Refugee Code (*Muhâcirin Kânûnnâmesi*) was put in place to manage the massive flow of migrants into imperial territories as a result of the Crimean War. The Code specified that migrants needed a minimum capital of sixty gold pieces (about 1,500 French francs) to settle in the empire in exchange for receiving land and exemption from taxes for a period of six years if relocating in the Balkans, in addition to being granted permission to practice their religion freely and being allotted money from the central treasury to build settlements. They were restricted, however, from selling or abandoning their land for a period of twenty years. In 1860 a Refugee Commission (*Muhâcirin Komisyonu*) was put in place to handle immigration and all related issues.¹⁶ The Commission, comprised of high officials in the Ottoman government, would come to oversee “not only refugee matters but also questions of citizenship and thus identity.”¹⁷

The Ottoman government exempted the Crimean Tatars from all taxes for up to ten years and from conscription into the army for up to twenty years. Furthermore, it offered them land grants, village autonomy under their traditional Crimean leaders, and large amounts of seed to help with crop production, since most Tatars were agriculturalists.¹⁸ The most militarily skilled served in the local police force (*zaptiye*) or as sentries and guards in the Ottoman army.¹⁹ The Porte favored the new migrants due to their role in the defense of the region (through volunteering) as well as their role in agricultural production. The city of Mecidiye, named after Sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839-61), was built in 1856 on the remnants of the medieval settlement of Karasu (Black

¹⁶ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. Volume II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 115; David Cameron Cuthell, “The Muhâcirin Komisyonu: An Agent in the Transformation of Ottoman Anatolia, 1860-1866,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2005.

¹⁷ Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants & Refugees* (Seattle and London: University of Seattle, 2009), 111.

¹⁸ *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Sadâret Mektûbi Kalemi Mühimme Evrakı* (Ottoman Prime Ministry’s Archives, Important Papers of the Prime Ministry’s Office) (BOA, A.MKT.MHM), No. 445/83 (19 Zilkâde 1289 [18 January 1873]).

¹⁹ Karpat, “The Crimean Emigration of 1856-1862,” 284.

Water) to serve as home for the Crimean Tatars fleeing the Crimean front.²⁰ Mecidiye was “the first and the most important Ottoman settlement planned and built” in the empire in line with the new urban policy of the Tanzimat and with money from the imperial treasury.²¹

However, Ottoman financial support for the Crimean Tatars ended in the 1860s. Since more recent migrants were relatively wealthier and more educated, Ottoman officials felt no pressure to help them settle. Although enjoying full political support in Istanbul, the reforms lacked adequate and sustained financing throughout the Tanzimat period. Limited funds from the central treasury for reforms, and even less money designated to settle the migrants of the 1860s, increased pressure on the local population, which was being asked to shoulder the expense of Ottoman settlement efforts. For instance, the migrants sent to the village of Mahmudiye settled there with financial assistance from the Muslims and Christians of Babadağı, one of the region’s main cities.²² Notwithstanding these difficult circumstances, the Tatars appreciated relocating to Dobruca, which they fondly called a “beloved new home.”²³

The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 ushered in yet another crisis for the Ottomans, which affected their empire in myriad ways, including demographically. British consular reports bear testimony to the massive depletion of Dobruca that had been caused directly by this war. Reporting to his superior in Istanbul, for instance, the British vice-consul of the Black Sea town of Köstence, offered in July 1877 a bleak view of both the city and the region. Shops were closed; troops patrolled day and night; and Muslims awaited departure to Istanbul on steamers. Countless villages

²⁰ Allard credits the idea of the foundation of the city to Said Paşa (Camille Allard, *Souvenirs d'Orient: La Bulgarie Orientale* (Paris: Imprimerie Adrien Le Cler, 1861), 118-19).

²¹ Karpat, “The Crimean Emigration of 1856-1862,” 289.

²² *Ibid.*, 296. Allard showed bias in assessing this assistance as he feels that the Tatar emigrants have become a heavy burden for the Christian population of the region. I have found no evidence to support this claim. In addition, Allard never mentions the help of the Muslims in the settlement of these Tatars (Allard, *Souvenirs d'Orient*, 187).

²³ Brian Glyn Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, 206.

lost their inhabitants, while ripe crops in nearby fields were rotting away.²⁴ The Crimean Tatars were part of this exodus. In spite of some return migration after the war had ended, their movement out of the region continued, this time in direct connection with the nature of Romanian policies designed for and applied in the region after its annexation.

The formulation of these policies depended heavily on several factors that reflected Romanian efforts to convince the Great Powers of Romania's significant role in Europe and to reconstruct the country in the aftermath of war. Furthermore, Romanian officials regarded the integration of Dobruca into Romania as the second stage in the creation of a national and unitary Romanian state after the 1859 union of Wallachia and Moldavia. Situated in the southeastern corner of Romania, Dobruca constituted "a dynamic frontier zone for expanding the national economy and the country's ethnic boundaries."²⁵ As Kerem Oktem and Dimitar Bechev note, "the border (be it territorial, cultural, religious, linguistic, or even gendered) is essential to the concept of nationalism and to the workings of the modern nation-state. Therefore, in the eyes of nation-builder and nationalizing elites, the borders that delineate the perimeter of the state should coincide with the nation's supposed social and cultural borders."²⁶ To incorporate their eastern frontier, Romanian authorities designed policies to facilitate the implementation of ethnic Romanian colonization, cultural homogenization, and economic modernization rather than equality and multiculturalism. Until the Great War, Dobruca functioned under a "separate, extra-constitutional administrative" regime "characterized by administrative distinctiveness and excessive centralization supported by claims of cultural superiority by the core region, intense ethnic

²⁴ The National Archives, Kew, London, Foreign Office, 195/1144, 105-61.

²⁵ Constantin Iordachi, "Internal Colonialism: The Expansion of Romania's Frontier into Northern Dobrogea after 1878," in *National Borders and Economic Disintegration in Modern East Central Europe*, Uwe Müller and Helga Schultz (eds.) (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2002), 77.

²⁶ Kerem Oktem and Dimitar Bechev, "(Trans) Nationalism in Southeast Europe: Constructing, Transcending and Reinforcing Borders," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 4 (2006): 479.

colonization, and uneven regional economic development tailored to the needs of the metropolis.”²⁷ What was even more problematic for Dobruca’s inhabitants was their exclusion from participation in national politics until 1911. In addition, they were unable to acquire immovable property in Romania proper (also called the “Old Kingdom” or Regatul Vechi).

Nothing affected the Crimean Tatars more than the Romanian legislation concerning landed property. The French vice-consul from Köstence strongly believed that the Tatars were leaving because of land-related issues.²⁸ Through the property law, Romanian authorities aimed to convert the former *miri* (state) lands, which comprised the bulk of Dobruca’s land, into private property. Current or prospective landowners were required to pay the state one-third of the total price of the plot they wished to possess in one installment. The amount represented, in the Romanian view, the equivalent of the former Ottoman annual tithe (*öşür*).²⁹ Romanian officials tied land ownership with nationality by allowing only Romanian citizens to become landowners. Officials understood Romanian citizens to include Ottoman subjects and ethnic Romanians from the Old Kingdom or from the diaspora who settled in the province permanently after 1878. One way to provide land for the newcomers (the colonists) was to award plots that formerly belonged to Ottoman subjects who migrated to the Ottoman Empire during and after 1878. The law warned emigrant landowners who possessed *tapu* (title deed) lands to return within a period of one year if they still wished to be recognized as proprietors in the province. Former *miri* (state) lands were divided into lots of three to ten hectares and further allotted to individuals unable to prove land ownership in Dobruca or willing to increase their estate up to ten hectares. The fees

²⁷ Constantin Iordachi, “Internal Colonialism,” 77.

²⁸ Centre des Archives diplomatiques de la Courneuve, Correspondance commerciale Galatz (1885), vol. 7, Sept. 22, 1885, 212.

²⁹ M. Stanciu and V. Ciorbea, “Aspecte ale problemei agrare în Dobrogea de la sfârșitul sec. XIX și începutul sec. XX,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie “A.D. Xenopol,”* XVII (1980): 405-23.

were high and the poor people of the region, which included most Crimean Tatars, could not pay them on time or at all. The law hit hard the migrants whose properties ended up being confiscated in the years after the promulgation of the 1882 law.

The manner in which Romanian officials dealt with the agrarian problem in Dobruca raised serious concerns within official circles in Istanbul. Ottoman authorities protested against the unfavorable terms stipulated for the Muslims of Dobruca, especially for those who emigrated to the empire during the war of 1877-78. The drastic regime of land confiscation that Romanian officials initiated after 1882 was virulently condemned in Istanbul.³⁰ Indeed, despite the validation in 1882 of title deeds (*tapus*) belonging to former Ottoman subjects for a surface area of 195,738 hectares, Romanian officials launched an intensive program of land confiscation during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.³¹ In 1901, for example, the state confiscated an additional 89,403 hectares that belonged to a total of 8,340 emigrants, most of whom were Muslim.³² Between 1889 and 1912, the state confiscated 127,483 hectares, of which 82,127 were redistributed to ethnic Romanians to ensure the growth of this population at this frontier.³³

Due to this policy, more arable land came into the possession of ethnic Romanians. In 1882, Romanians owned only 40,638 hectares from Dobruca's cultivable surface of 175,075 hectares; the Turks and Tatars owned about 50 percent of it (87,753 ha). In 1900, however, from

³⁰ *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Hariciye Nezareti. Müşavirliği İstişâre Evrakı* (Ottoman Prime Ministry's Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of Legal Consultation) (BOA., HR.HMŞ.İŞO), 164/43 (8 Cemazülevvel 1299 [28 March 1882]); 218/23 (5 Rebiülahir 1304 [31 December 1886]); 112/25 (18 Ramazan 1326 [14 October 1908]).

³¹ In 1889, for example, a number of 6,265 proprietors of *tapu* lands lost properties due to failure to pay tithe to the state as specified in article 14 of the 1882 law (Toma Ionescu, "Asupra proprietății și colonizărilor din Dobrogea," in *Dobrogea. Cincizeci de ani de viață românească* (Constanța: Ex Ponto, 2003), 266-67).

³² *Dobrogea Nouă*, 28 January 1910, 1. In 1910, another 20,823 hectares were confiscated in Constanța County and 8,840 hectares in the Tulcea County, this time on the base of article 26 from the 1910 law. The article specified that Romanian officials were entitled to confiscate properties from landowners who did not yet settle in Dobruca, did not reside on their properties, or preferred to rent instead of laboring the estate personally (Ionescu, "Asupra proprietății și colonizărilor din Dobrogea," 269).

³³ *Ibid.*, 274. For the breakdown of the land surface which was confiscated in this period, see Stanciu and Ciorbea, "Aspecte ale problemei agrare în Dobrogea," 416.

a total of 609,059 hectares of arable land in Dobruca, Turks and Tatars owned only 49,895 hectares, while Romanians possessed almost ten times more land (429,933 hectares).³⁴ These policies obstructed the natural development of the Muslim community in Dobruca, and this situation created further tensions between the Romanian and Ottoman governments.³⁵

Ottoman officials condemned the Romanian regime for eliminating from the 1882 property law the clause entitling Muslim emigrants to financial compensation for the loss of their properties. Moreover, the Ottoman government qualified the stipulation for land confiscation present in the law as “a punishment for a crime that emigrants did not commit by choosing to establish their residence outside of Dobruca” and further pledged to protect the rights of Muslims.³⁶ The latter commitment was kept. Ottoman officials had indeed conditioned the signing of treaties or conventions with Romania with the reiteration of the importance of fixing the property issue in Dobruca.³⁷ Ottoman diplomats requested that Romania should compensate Muslim landowners with an amount of 70 million lei (equivalent to 70 million francs). Even though Muslim landownership had been recognized in Romanian courts and legislation, representatives of the Romanian government deemed impractical the compensation of emigrants with such a large amount, or any amount, for that matter.

The emigration of the Muslims out of Dobruca increased over time, due not only to the property law but also to the many abuses they experienced at the hands of Romanian officials. In 1885, the French vice-consul in K ostence maintained that the population of three villages, amounting to 400 people, mostly Tatars, left the region due to abuses of local officials.³⁸ “The

³⁴ Ibid., 415; 418.

³⁵ Centre des Archives diplomatiques de la Courneuve, Correspondance commerciale Galatz (1885), vol. 7, Oct. 2, 1885.

³⁶ BOA., HR.HMŞ.IŞO 164/43 (8 Cemaz ulevvel 1299 [28 March 1882]), s. 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Centre des Archives diplomatiques de la Courneuve, Correspondance commerciale Constantza (1882-1889), vol. 1, Nov. 29, 1885, 48-50, 138-39.

bad administration of the province after its annexation to Romania” was the reason why the Tatars left in large numbers. The same French official was documenting in 1888 the departure of another 1,400 Turks and Tatars to the Ottoman Empire. Although Romanian officials claimed that the emigration happened because of the religious propaganda of Ottoman *softas* (theology students), the French vice-consul wrote, the reality was different. The Muslims left because of exposure to “the cruelest vexations” of the Bucharest officials sent to work in Dobruca. Due to this “oppressive administration,” he maintained, only 40,000 Muslims of the 54,000 who settled in the region in 1880 remained in their homes by 1888. “There can be assumed that in several years the Muslim element will completely disappear from Dobruca,” the French official reckoned.³⁹ This never happened, but the number of migrants was indeed growing, depleting the region of Muslims. French historian and honorary member of the Romanian Academy Jean Henri Abdolonyme Ubicini, who authored studies on the late Ottoman Empire, estimated that approximately 90,000 Turks and Tatars from Dobruca sought permanent refuge in the empire after 1878.⁴⁰ These emigrants accounted for two-fifths of the entire regional population (amounting to 225,692 individuals) and almost a half of the total Muslim population (amounting to 126,923 individuals, of whom 71,146 were Tatar ethnics) of this particular territory.⁴¹ Various French vice-consuls in the region discussed at length about the distribution of these migrants

³⁹ Centre des Archives diplomatiques de la Courneuve, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique des consuls, Roumanie (P 16332), 318-19.

⁴⁰ Jean Henri Abdolonyme Ubicini, "La Roumélie Orientale depuis le traité de Berlin," *Revue de Géographie*, tome VI (1880); Inalcik, "Dobrudja," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs eds, Brill Online, 2015 (state.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/dobrud-j-a-SIM_2137), last accessed March 1, 2015. This information appears also in Alexandre Toumarkine, *Les migrations des populations musulmanes balkaniques en Anatolie (1876-1913)* (Istanbul: Les Éditions Isis, 1995), 33, and Alexandre Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique: Les musulmans du sud-est Européen dans la période post-ottomane* (Istanbul: Les Éditions Isis, 2009), 197.

⁴¹ Karpát, *Ottoman Population*, 199.

across different Ottoman provinces in Asia, in particular in the *vilâyet*s (provinces) of Hüdavenghiar, Konya, Angora, and Kastamonu.⁴²

Some of the Crimean Tatars who had migrated to the Ottoman Empire during the 1877-78 war had returned to Dobruca in the 1880s as a result of the Ottoman authorities' failure to place the entire immigrant population in favorable settings. Although a definitive count of Dobruca's repatriated Crimean Tatars is difficult to obtain, documents available in the Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs testify to the existence of several hundred Crimean Tatars requesting help from Romanian authorities in Istanbul to ensure their safe return to Dobruca.⁴³ Between 1880 and 1882 efforts were made to issue free passports and boat tickets to those applicants requesting return due to severe poverty in the empire.⁴⁴ The procedure followed by the Romanian consulate in Istanbul was to consult the papers submitted by each immigrant on behalf of his or her family in order to decide whether or not to release a unique passport for the whole family. The immigrant papers required by Romanians in Istanbul, which were issued by the Ottoman Refugee Commission, certified the place of origin for each immigrant and his or her current location in the empire. Burdened with the expenses involving the process of repatriation, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to put an end to Muslim repatriation in August 1882 by invoking the need to verify whether the immigrants were indeed from Dobruca.⁴⁵ In a letter addressed to the Romanian ambassador in Istanbul, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs explained that the reasoning behind this decision was "to avoid the

⁴² Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Constantinople (Série E), Emigration (166 PO.E. 86), 1-2.

⁴³ *Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, București* (Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest) (AMAE.), Fond Constantinopol, Vol. 434, passim.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

transformation of Dobruca into a colony inhabited by foreigners who wanted to exploit the region to their own advantage.”⁴⁶

Therefore, Romanian authorities in the Ottoman capital no longer had the right to issue passports unless immigrants possessed certificates of origin issued by Romanian authorities in Dobruca. The Romanian officials’ lack of faith in the Ottoman Refugee Commission’s authority made things harder for the immigrants, especially when the Romanian government reserved the right to decide who could return home. Romanian officials stated that the emigrants had plenty of time to return to the province at their own expense. In reality, such measures were meant to impede the immigrants’ negotiation of their status as both Romanian and Ottoman citizens. In a confidential note to the Romanian ambassador in Istanbul, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was hopeful that by investigating the background of the immigrants more closely, Romanian officials “would no longer have to deal with individuals who were Romanians in Dobruca and Ottomans in the Ottoman Empire according to their own convenience.” The term “convenience” applied to those individuals who “were showing one day the Romanian passport issued by the Romanian consulate in Istanbul, and another day the Ottoman passport issued by the Ottoman consular authorities in the Dobruca” in order to escape certain responsibilities related to tax payments or military service. Nevertheless, after a brief interruption, the repatriation of Crimean Tatars to Dobruca by the Romanian government continued until the end of the nineteenth century.

The examination of the situation of Crimean Tatars during the 19th century in both Ottoman and Romanian contexts leads to several conclusions. First, Ottoman policies aimed to favor the Crimean Tatars when the entire imperial framework was reconfigured during the Tanzimat. In an effort to increase the population of Dobruca (which had been badly affected by

⁴⁶ Ibid.

the Russo-Ottoman wars of the century) and ensure its agricultural development (which was lagging), Ottoman authorities settled the Crimean Tatars in the region under favorable terms. The Tatars received tax exemptions, land, seeds, autonomy, and military honors. It was only in the 1860s, when the central treasury was drained, that the Ottomans ceased to support Crimean Tatars' relocation to Dobruca. But even during those times, their settlement received support locally from both Muslim and non-Muslim communities living in the region.

Second, during the Romanian period, Crimean Tatars faced the challenge of nationalization, having lands confiscated or diminished in size, and citizenship rights limited. Many of them migrated to the Ottoman Empire and from there tried to recover lost properties or return to Dobruca whenever they failed to settle in the empire. Crimean Tatars needed to navigate both Ottoman and Romanian worlds to ensure their survival and they have done so successfully in the 19th century, if one considers their ability to build lives anew away from their ancestral home in these locations. Romanian nationalization policies did convince many of them to relocate to and never return from what was left of the Ottoman Empire after 1878. This explains their small numbers in Dobruca today. According to the 2002 Romanian census, the Crimean Tatar population of Dobruca amounted to 2.4 percent (or 23,409) of the region's total population of 971,643 individuals.⁴⁷ Because of its size, this community is fully assimilated into Romanian society. Much larger communities of Crimean Tatars can be found today in Turkey. About six million of them, who claim Dobruca origins, live in Turkey's Eskişehir province from western Anatolia.⁴⁸ These people have also been fully assimilated into Turkish society.

⁴⁷ <http://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/549>. Accessed on April 11, 2019.

⁴⁸ <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/turkey-population>. Accessed on April 11, 2019.