

## THE GERMAN COLONISTS IN DOBROGEA

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### **Abstract**

*In Dobrogea, starting with the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until before the WWII, there lived German colonists from Russia, along with other ethnical groups. Rural communities, mainly agricultural, and the shepherds played a major role in refreshing Dobrogea, upturning the lands and capitalizing on its essential agricultural potential, building and structuring the villages, organizing the rural life and village households. The built patrimony, barely standing today, is the witness of their presence in this area and the importance of their presence during the time window mentioned above. Remembrance of a historic past still touching the present may be a perfect measure in approaching Dobrogea's territorial development, in terms of a durable, harmonious evolution as far as a durable tourism (ecotourism, biotourism, religious or ethnical tourism) may step in to increase attractiveness of an already famous touristic destination, such as the Danube Delta or Black Sea seashore.*

**Key Words:** *Dobrogea Germans, rural civilization, ethnical and religious communities, social evolution, territory setting and built patrimony, durable development.*

### **Historical circumstances, Dobrogea context**

In 1828, after the Russian-Turkish war,<sup>1</sup> Hector de Bean made a trip to Dobrogea and drew 20 maps; the 19<sup>th</sup> of them is a view of Constanța citadel, with crenellated walls, a pont-levis and a Turkish quote above the gate, while the 20<sup>th</sup> map is a view of Constanța citadel, from the sea.<sup>2</sup>

The Frenchman Xavier Hommaire de Hell reminds us, in his notes from his trip through Dobrogea, about the impression that Constanța made upon him, with that ruined fortress and 50 dwellings spread among the ruins.<sup>3</sup>

Ion Ionescu de la Brad, while travelling in Dobrogea in 1850, provides important data about the ethnies in the area, registering a total number of 15,764 families, in districts like Tulcea, Isaccea, Măcin, Hârșova, Baba (Silistra County), Küstendje, Mangalia, Balçic, Bazargic.<sup>4</sup>

In his well-documented work *Informațiuni etnografice și mișcări de populație în Basarabia sudică și Dobrogea*,<sup>5</sup> Al. P. Arbore points out at the strong movements of populations and the reconfiguration of their territorial distribution during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, triggered by political will, wars and territorial redistribution: colonizations and withdrawals. Turks are in the position to leave their territories, Germans are colonized in, along with Gagauz, Tatars, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Ashkenaz – after 1878, a great number of Romanians will come to Dobrogea, mainly shepherds...

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Thus, "in 1856, Constanța is presented to us having a population of less than three thousand people, where there were 500 Greeks doing business, Mangalia with 1,000 inhabitants as Bulgarian Muslims..... In 1857, Constanța has 4,000 inhabitants",<sup>6</sup> while Tulcea, in 1863, had 22,000 inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> Back then, the entire Dobrogea had 179, 000 inhabitants, where 19, 750 were living in the Constanța-Medgidia area and the neighboring villages, plus other 35, 000 Tatar and Circassian colonists.

In accordance with the data provided by the Constanta City Hall for 1880, out of the total of 5,203 inhabitants, there were 1,804 Tatars, 1,543 Greeks, 410 Turks, 348 Bulgarians, 279 Romanians, 234 Jews, 175 Armenians, 37 Austrians, 32 English, 29 Germans, 12 Hungarians, 8 Russians, 3 Serbs, 248 other nationalities.

After the census in December 1894, Constanța had 10,419 people, with Romanians – 2,519, Greeks – 2,460, Turks and Tatars – 2,202, Bulgarians – 1,060, Armenians - 559, Germans - 332, Hungarians – 1 81, Italians – 109, French – 51, English – 45, Russians – 33, Dutch – 5, Serbians – 4, Montenegro – 4.

In 1905, the number had risen to 15,777, with 9,165 Romanians, 2,327 Greeks, 1,315 Muslims, 831 Bulgarians, 812 Jews, 610 Armenias, 309 Germans, 217 Italians, 95 French, 105 English and other nationalities. In 1916, as a direct result of the development of the most important port to the Black Sea, the number of people in Constanța rose from 33,918, where 21,971 Romanians, 2,815 Muslims, 2,326 Greeks, 1.728 Bulgarians, 1,092 Jews, 1,002 Armenians, 642 Germans, 518 Italians, 175 French, 649 English and others.<sup>8</sup>

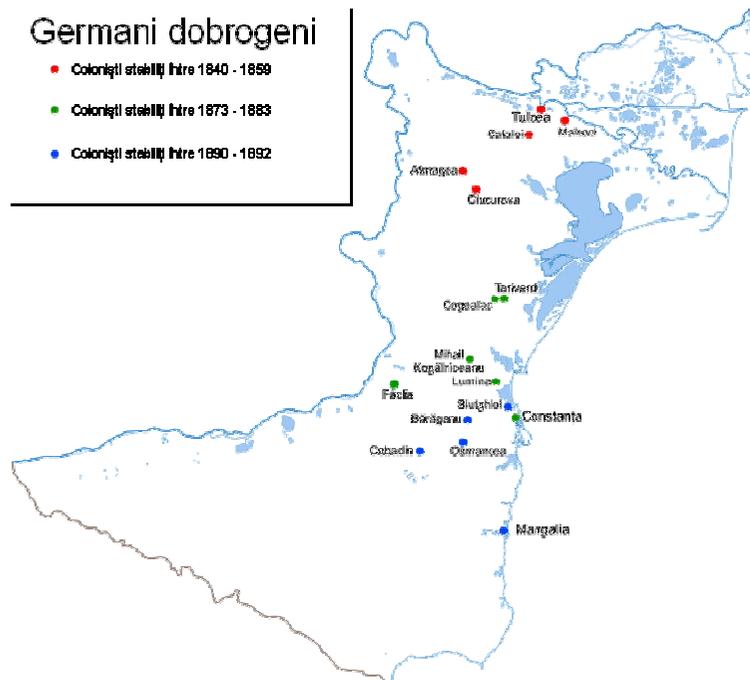


Image 1: The three stages of German colonization in Dobrogea and their distribution in the area

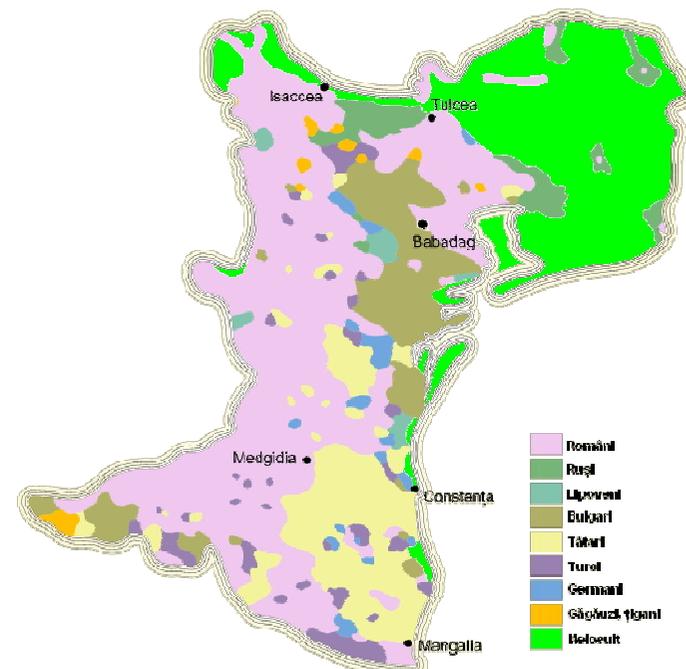


Image 2: The German colonies in Dobrogea and their distribution compared to other ethnies

## **The German colonists. Risks and premises. Economic, social and cultural evolution**

The epic of the *Dobrogea Germans* spreads along two centuries and across the territory of two empires and a kingdom, Romania.

The *ground zero* moment of this periplus was the 22 of July 1763, when Ecaterina the Second of Russia signed a manifesto, inviting the German citizens to emigrate, colonize and work the Russian lands, and offering a good guarantee in terms of preserving traditions, language, and culture of this ethnies. Starting with 1764, this offer was taken by rural populations in Wurttemberg and Elsass, who settled up and started strong colonies in the Volga area.

Between 1803 and 1804, until 1812, colonists from south Germany and Rhenish joined the others.

By the Bucharest Treaty in 1812, which ended the Russian-Turkish war between 1806 and 1812, Moldova eastern part was surrendered by the Ottoman Empire to the Russian Empire, under the name of Basarabia.

Between 1814 and 1824, Tzar Alexander I of Russia encouraged the Germans coming from Pomerania, Mecklenburg and Warsaw Duchy to settle in Basarabia, while guaranteeing for freedom of organization, religious freedom, exemption from military service and fiscal taxes for ten years. Later, all these advantages vanished one at time; and when the arable lands proved not sufficient, many of them opted to go to Dobrogea.

Thus, the first large movement of the Germans within the Russian Empire ended and started the second one in the Ottoman Empire. It is good to mention that it was the only German population under the direct Ottoman hold (until 1878, Dobrogea was part of the Ottoman Empire).

Since 1841, there will be German colonies from Berezin in Dobrogea (the districts around Warsaw), driven away by outbreaks of epidemic diseases, bad harvests or industry and trade stagnation in those parts of Russia. They settled down in Măcin and then in Acpunar village (Mircea-Vodă). This window, expanding until 1856 may be considered as the first wave of emigration of Germans to Dobrogea. The German communities in Tulcea start in 1842; the catholic one in Malcoci, in 1843; the evangelical one in Atmagea in 1848; in 1849, the catholic one in Sulina; in 1857, the baptist community in Cataloi and evangelical in Ciucurova.

The second wave was registered during 1873 and 1883, followed by a third wave between 1890 and 1891, as a result of the repressions in Russia. At that time, the communities in Cogealac and Tariverde are started (1873), Caramurat, Anadalchioi, Constanța and Cogealia (1874 – 1883), Cobadin, Mangalia, Osmancea and Viile Noi in 1891.

The German colonists settled in the already there poor-populated villages in the centre and north of Dobrogea, inheriting the Turkish names and adjusting them to their language.

Much later, as a consequence of certain administrative measures, some of them received Romanian names.

We need to notice that the Dobrogea Germans were the only ethnical German group in Romania who did not settle here coming straight from Germany, but from a territory colonized by them, i.e Basarabia and south Russia, after a period stretching across a few generations in the Russian Empire.

In 1878, the Russian governor Bielosercovici<sup>9</sup> mentions that there was a number of 416 German families out of 15,719 for Tulcea area, excluding the districts of Mangalia, Cernavodă and Silistra. This already involved a strong German community around Tulcea, whose building was facilitated

by the advantages provided by the Ottoman administration, the intense trade circulation and the increase in the number of colonists.<sup>10</sup> In 1882, there were 2,310 people in Tulcea County and 116 in Constanța County, divided into Catholics and Protestants. In 1883, their number reached 3,000, in 1887 there were already 3,024, and between 1904 and 1905 in Atmagea, Ciucurova, Cogealac, Cataloi, Malcoci, Sarinasuf there were over 500 German families.<sup>11</sup>

After WWI the German population witnessed a surging interest in the idea of emigration or going back to Germany. The mayor of Malcoci commune explains this trend as follows: “*nobody would tell them to emigrate, they were very poor, had no land and could not find work during winter time.*”<sup>12</sup> Nicolae Iorga points out at the nostalgia for the mother land and uprooting of Germans in Cogealac village, going back and forth between America and Romania looking for something that only they know.

In 1913, the Dobrogea Germans will start the *Verband der Deutschen in der Dobrudscha* (Union of Germans in Dobrogea), and in 1924, a series of land owners, priests and intellectuals registered with the Court in Constanța a new organization called *Verband rumänischer Bürger deutscher Abstammung in der Dobrogea* (League of Romanian citizens of German background in Dobrogea).<sup>13</sup> The League meant to preserve the national identity by promoting the German language, creation of associations and cooperative societies of a national nature and of a bank.

Germans were looked at as a discrete population, less interested in the ethnical mixture with their neighbors from whom they are separated by religious beliefs and language.

I. Georgescu thinks that their communities may be an example for the Romanian population, since they “*have a flourishing material welfare, have a good number of children, they are robust and healthy, even better than the Romanian chiefs in the provinces.*”<sup>14</sup>

To support the above, we have the following statistics concerning the property per nationalities, which indicates a certain distribution in Constanța County, before and after WWI:<sup>15</sup>



Image 3: Dobrogea ethnographic map in 1918

NATIONALITY	1916		1922	
	nr. inhabitants	hectars	nr. inhabitants	hectars
Romanians	17,729	344,713	16,490	254,743
Bulgarians	3,987	59,287	3,943	50,713
Turks	2,691	29,756	2,527	32,289
Germans	1,013	18,207	910	13,091
Others	289	8,656	206	2,333

Under the leadership of Michael Emanuel Leyer, a great landlord in Sofular, there will be held the first National Conference of Germans in Dobrogea, at Cogealac (15 – 16 May 1926), where there will be 300 delegates from 23 communes who declare their belonging to the German ethnics and the desire to help the Averescu government for the elections.

During the inter-war times, the Germans will run for political positions, become counselors and mayors in the communes and villages with mixed population, as a result of peaceful living, or as members in the Conservative Party, Peasants' Party, Popular Party and National Liberal Party, with different political and economic interests<sup>16</sup> (in 1928, 393 Romanians are voted, 82 Bulgarians, 75 lipovean Russians and 14 Germans for commune counselors).

The census of population in 1930 proves a very useful source of information, providing details regarding the situation of the Dobrogea Germans. Thus, we find out that in 1930, there were registered 12,010 ethnic Germans in the counties of Constanța (9,618) and Tulcea (2,392), from a total of 815,475 inhabitants.<sup>17</sup>

In 1931, the League is officially accepted into the Germans Union in Romania, lead by a General Meeting, made up of 71 delegates elected from Ardeal and Banat. They proved though a complete disinterest in approaching and solving the issues specific to the Dobrogean communities. As a consequence, the Germans in Dobrogea find themselves in the position to solve their problems; therefore, on October 30, 1933, they will organize in Constanța the Congress of German minority in Dobrogea. Negative opinions are voiced here about the administration involvement in the local issues, as it is shown in the Bulletin on February 1933 issued by the General Staff – it says that these opinion have no solid ground "*there are protests in the newspapers from the old German colonists about the fact that the conditions of the population in that area has improved since Dobrudjea was annexed back to Romania.*"<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, the Nazi efforts to influence the German leaders in Romanians are increasing. As they see that these measures are far away from their opinions and interests, R. Brandsch, Hans Otto Roth or bishop Viktor Glondys will leave the pro-Nazi wing; on July 7, 1934, the Board of Ministers decided to dissolve the group called *Nazionale Erneuerungsbewegung der Deutschen in Rumänien* (The National Movement of Renewal of Germans in Romania), a national-socialist orientation, under the accusation of assault against the conscience freedom in the Constitution. In response to that, the radical wing in the German Ethnic Group, led by W. Gust and A. Bonfert, uses the law of the mandatory military duties, ratified in Germany, in order to recruit young people from Transilvania, Basarabia, Bucovina and Dobrogea. The Ministry of Internal Affairs will require from the prefects to stop such actions.

In accordance with the estimations of Theo Steinbrucker in the "*Report about my trip through the German communes and random sites in Dobrogea and Northern Bulgaria, from July 7, 1934 until August 18, 1935*",<sup>19</sup> the total number of Germans in Dobrogea is 13,000. The same source confirms the following distribution of the ethnic Germans in the Dobrogean villages during 1934 and 1935.<sup>20</sup>

Malcoci, Caliacra County, 940 ethnic Germans; Tulcea 215 ethnic Germans; Hazarlâc 27 ethnic Germans; Cataloi 338 ethnic Germans; Durasi 9 ethnic Germans; Atmagea 490 ethnic Germans; Bogdali 22 ethnic Germans; Ortachioi 57 ethnic Germans; Musubei 22 ethnic Germans; Ciucurova 440 ethnic Germans; Poreaz 2 ethnic Germans; Babadag 15 ethnic Germans; Ciobancuius 97 ethnic Germans; Sulina 55 ethnic Germans; Ali Anife 142 ethnic Germans; Constanța County, Carabalor 24 ethnic Germans; Tariverde 950 ethnic Germans; Bazargic 35 ethnic Germans; Cogealac 1050 ethnic Germans; Duingi, Durostor County, 6 ethnic Germans; Scheremet<sup>21</sup> 1016 ethnic Germans; Culelia<sup>22</sup> 339 ethnic Germans; Caramurat<sup>23</sup> 1253 ethnic Germans; Pazarli 21 ethnic Germans; Căciula 20 ethnic Germans; Cogealia<sup>24</sup> 506 ethnic Germans; Mamaia 18 ethnic Germans; Horuslar 231 ethnic Germans; Palas Mare 487 ethnic Germans; Anadalchioi 190 ethnic Germans; Constanța 420 ethnic Germans; Viile Noi 440 ethnic Germans; Omurcea 40 ethnic Germans; Murfatlar 39 ethnic Germans; Alacap<sup>25</sup> 219 ethnic Germans; Caratai<sup>26</sup> 259 ethnic Germans; Făclia(Fachreia)<sup>27</sup> 503 ethnic Germans; Ivrinez 18 ethnic Germans; Semedria 10 ethnic Germans; Saidia 48 ethnic Germans; Cobadin 820 ethnic Germans; Ebichioi 66 ethnic Germans; Eugemahela<sup>28</sup> 8 ethnic Germans; Topraisar 12 ethnic Germans; Osmancea 6 ethnic Germans; Techirghiol 346 ethnic Germans; Carmen Sylva 7 ethnic Germans; Costinești 410 ethnic Germans; Schitul 91 ethnic Germans; Mangalia 243 ethnic Germans; Sarighiol 298 ethnic Germans; Chiragi 5 ethnic Germans; Valali 2 ethnic Germans; Scărișoreanu 1 ethnic Germans; Caramer 2 ethnic Germans; Calafichioi 4 ethnic Germans; Kerimcuius 5 ethnic Germans; Mamuzli 333 ethnic Germans; Docuzaci 3 ethnic Germans; Cerchezu 15 ethnic Germans; Sofular 136 ethnic Germans; Agemler 73 ethnic Germans; Casimcea 4<sup>29</sup> ethnic Germans.<sup>30</sup>

As a result of his concern about rising in the German power on the continent and decrease of the influence of his own administration among the German community, Carol the second ordered a careful research of illegal emigration. The Ministry of Internal Affairs will issue the Order nr. 72.628 on October 12, 1938, concerning the compulsoriness in checking the reasons of the ethnic Germans travelling abroad.

The applicants had to prove their Arian origin, certified by the local bodies; this is why the Police Department included in the Note nr. 02385 on January 11, 1940, released to all the state institutions, "*The German minority in Romania uses certain notebooks called Ahnenpass... we would kindly ask from you to request for some measures that such documents be not invested with any legal validity, visa or official certification.*"<sup>31</sup>

A number of approximately 1,700 Germans leave Dobrogea in the summer of 1939 and beginning of 1940, during an operation organized by the Third Reich under the name of *Vorumsiedlung* (precursors movement).

The occupation of Caliacra and Durostor Counties by the Bulgarian state will accelerate the emigration, officially organized by the two governments, with the help of Johann Klukas, the representative of all Germans in Dobrogea after 1935.

On October 22, 1940, the Romanian-German convention will be concluded regarding their emigration from Basarabia and Dobrogea.

Between 1940 and 1943, 214,630 people left the country, coming from Bucovina (95,770), Basarabia (93,329), Dobrogea (15,440) and Old Kingdom (10,091). On November 28, 1940, the movement of Germans in northern Dobrogea was over. A number of 13,979 people had been taken through Cernavodă port.<sup>32</sup>

Most of those 16,000 Dobrogea Germans, mainly those land-less, moved to Germany, under the slogan *Heim ins Reich* (Home at the Reich), around Heilbronn and Stuttgart. The entire movement was carefully organized, first of all by registering all the people and then making an inventory and taxing the goods. Upon registration, they stopped being Romanian citizens and were going under the protection of the Reich. At a later date, through individual procedures, they were given the German citizenship. By inventory and taxing, their goods were confiscated and assessed. According to the agreement, all their goods, i.e. lands, buildings, food were going to the Romanian state. And the Romanian state would bind itself to reimburse the German state with the value of those goods, mainly by delivering grains and oil. During war time, Romania paid most of these financial debts, by direct deliveries and discount for expenses due to stay of the German troops in Romania.<sup>33</sup>

Following these emigrations, there were only 2,058 Germans in Basarabia, 7,180 in Bucovina, 1,693 in Dobrogea and 46,250 in the Old Kingdom. They include the members of almost one century old communities, such as the ethnics in villages of Malcoci, Atmagea, Cobadin and Cogeașca.<sup>34</sup>

After the war, some Germans were deported, some were politically sentenced; they had been called well-off people and their lands were transferred to the collective agricultural cooperative. Thus, in 1956, there were only 735 Germans, spread throughout the villages in Dobrogea.

The population of the Dobrogea Veche between 1956 and 2002<sup>35</sup> is as below:

<b>Ethnies</b>	<b>1956</b>	<b>1966</b>	<b>1977</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>2002</b>
Total	593,659	702,461	863,348	1,019,766	971,643
Romanians	514,331 (86.6 %)	622,996 (88.7 %)	784,934 (90.9 %)	926,608 (90.8 %)	883,62 (90.94 %)
Bulgarians	749 (0.13 %)	524 (0.07 %)	415 (0.05 %)	311 (0.03 %)	135 (0.01 %)
Turks	11,994 (2 %)	16,209 (2.3 %)	21,666 (2.5 %)	27,685 (2.7 %)	27,850 (2.84 %)
Tatars	20,239 (3.4 %)	21,939 (3.1 %)	22,875 (2.65 %)	24,185 (2.4 %)	23,409 (2.41 %)
Lipovean Russians	29,944 (5 %)	30,509 (4.35 %)	24,098 (2.8 %)	26,154 (2.6 %)	21,623 (2.23 %)
Germans	735 (0.12 %)	599 (0.09 %)	648 (0.08 %)	677 (0.07 %)	398 (0.04 %)
Greeks	1,399 (0.24 %)	908 (0.13 %)	635 (0.07 %)	1,230 (0.12 %)	2,27 (0.23 %)
Gypsies	1,176 (0.2 %)	378 (0.05 %)	2,565 (0.3 %)	5,983 (0.59 %)	8,295 (0.85 %)

According to the census in 2002, there were 83 Germans in Tulcea County and only 315 in Constanța County.

### **Religion and church**

Germans brought and implemented the Catholic Church in Dobrogea (later, we had Italian Catholics settling here) and Protestant, during one century, non – interrupted living here.

Before 1850, there was mentioned a catholic school in Tulcea, under the coordination of the Catholic Episcopate in Nicopole until 1883, after which it will be the Archiepiscopate in Bucharest.

Between 1900 and 1938, the denomination had nine parishes in Caramurat, Constanța, Tulcea, Cataloi, Malcoci, Sulina, Colilia and Ali Anifa and a changing number of members – 2,943 in 1904 (Dobrogea Veche) and 4,807, in 1928.<sup>36</sup>

In 1904, there were 790 Catholics in Constanța and 2,153 in Tulcea; in 1928, there will be 3,273 Catholics in Constanța, while in Tulcea the number lowers to 1,376 and Ali Anifa has 156 people.<sup>37</sup>

The Protestant Church came into being thanks to the emigration of Germans from Russia, Poland and Prussia and to building evangelic-lutheran parishes in Atmagea and Constanța, with 6,600 people in 1900. In 1858, the Evangelical community in Armagea will join the Prussian parish so that *“by joining the Evangelical Church, led by Supreme Evangelical Consistorium in Berlin, the church has established a steady connection with a superior authority and with the regulations that were so necessary for it.”*<sup>38</sup>

The administration of the communities was the responsibility of a board made up of two representatives for each locality, initially subordinated to a Superior Church Board in Berlin and, after WWI, to the Evangelico-Lutheran Deanship in Sibiu.

For the other inhabitants, their image remained almost the same during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – they were characterized as severe, serious, rigid, fighting against the world pleasures (mainly the Lutherans). The lack of a priest for most villages has made the lay people get involved in leading the Sunday prayers and in building groups that were meeting and talking about the Bible, thus maintaining alive their religious tradition.

The Protestant German communities, a part of those inter-war five parishes, were affected by the larceny and damages of the WWI – in spite of that, they kept their religious traditions, based on a strong connection between church and inhabitants and faith in the pastor’s essential role in the community. To prove this, we have the request of the church-goers in Ciucurova to the Romanian authorities to let free Reinhard Müller, a pastor in the interment camp in 1919, as they did not have a priest to preach their religion.

Besides the official religion, we see in Dobrogea a series of German religious associations, linked to Protestantism.

Thus, we will see the Baptism emerge, as an effect of emigration of German colonists from Russia, dissatisfied by the discontinuation in the Bible study and the persecutions at the hand of co-religionists and authorities. The refugees from Ukraine will found the church in Cataloi in 1864.

In conformity with a letter issued by the State Administration Board, *“baptism is not a denomination, but a religious association, as the legislation does not include it among the historical denominations.”*; thus, *“in the personal records of the marital status, the baptist people and their children be registered under the name of confessionalists.”*<sup>39</sup> In 1928, there were 629 members in all ethnies, out of which 228 in Constanța County and 401 in Tulcea County. The religious structure of the baptist denomination in Dobrogea (1928):<sup>40</sup>

Sanctuary	Address	People	Pastor
Tulcea County			
House of Prayer	Tulcea, 53 Traian Street	88	Avram Sezonov
No House of Prayer	Ciucurova	104	Fridirik Paul
No House of Prayer	Cataloi	189	Without a priest

Constanța County			
No House of Prayer	Basarabi	-	Petre Pană
No House of Prayer	Bărăganul	-	-
House of Prayer	Palazu Mare	-	-
House of Prayer	Valea Neagră	-	-
House of Prayer	Valul lui Traian	-	-
House of Prayer	Nisipari	69	Gustav Litchin

It is only in February 1940 when, following the decision taken by the Ministry of Cults, Baptists are no longer considered a religious association, but they are now entitled to open branches, prayer houses and appoint / annoint pastors along with their interests.

Another religious association is the Adventist one. It emerged from the spiritual crisis of neo-protestantism in USA, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1891, a group of German Adventists settles in Dobrogea, building a nucleus in village Sarighiol; in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were two communities, in Analdachioi and Viile Noi, the seat of the first Church of Seventh-Day Adventists in Romania. In 1928, the group had 382 members in 32 localities in the counties of Caliacra, Constanța and Durostor, with important hubs in Cerna, Măcin, Bărăganul and Carol I.

### **Territory and territoriality**

The one century edification performed by the Germans in Dobrogea had the anthropological features of this population, as well as the socio-economic ones.

The first thing to notice is that these communities had and preserved the strongly agrarian nature. The groups of agricultural workers settled here were busy with working their lands, with a relevant effect:

- they colonized the rural territories, i.e. the little sites destructured once owned by the Turks and Tatars;
- it is worthwhile mentioning their efforts to break up the soil and turn them into agricultural lands; in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, few households of agricultors in Dobrogea were doing a sustenance agriculture, and the cultivated lands were the ones in the immediate vicinity of their houses;
- hard working people; they laid the foundation of an intensive agriculture for that time, and many of them worked on larger area than the ones owned (rentals). This action has led to the organization and streamlining of the agricultural activities and of the built-on spaces or cultivated lands;
- the localities where Germans lived enjoyed a visible economic growth in comparison to the rest, a development based on a rigorous organization of space and territory;
- the largest and the oldest German colonies were in the north, with a high human potential, while the colonies on the Bulgarian territory, small in numbers and limited economic potential, did not have a decisive impact upon the territory development or structuring the rural community in which they were included;
- their intention to reinvest the profit deriving from new agricultural lands, thus increasing the production base;
- unfortunately, most part of the profit coming from harvest selling was going to the grains wholesalers, as Germans would not directly involve in the trade activities;

- the other activities of this population were strictly connected to the rural economy where they were living: cooper, blacksmith, carpenter, tailor;
- the language and religion barriers have contributed to preserving traditions. Mixed families were not a current practice, and the only cases happened with families of shepherds. These shepherds, settled in Dobrogea at quite the same time, had a lot in common with Germans, as the former had lived close and for a long time with the Saxons of Ardeal. On the other hand, Romanians were Christians, unlike Turks, Tatars;
- the one century that these Germans spent in Russia has had an impact upon their behavior and daily practices; Germans in Dobrogea were also influenced by living under the Ottoman Empire and the Romanian kingdom and their involvement into the great events was undoubtful. We are talking here about their participation, along with Romanians, into the WWI.

### Community spaces

The circumstances and conditionings above have triggered the same specific edification for all the villages of German colonists. The community constructions, i.e. church and school, result of collective effort, were using favorable locations, in the centre of the villaje; in their proximity, the living area was flourishing, often known under the name of Strada Nemțească (The German Street). And very often, it is located very close to the Romanian one.

After WWII, as a result of Germans' withdrawal from Dobrogea, they were abandoned and many of them lost. We can remind here about the following:

- The Church in Atmagea village (German name *Atmadscha*) where the first German Church in Dobrogea was built in 1861, still standing up to this day (see images 4-5).



Image 4: In Atmagea, 1861, the first German church was built in Dobrogea



Image 5: The German church in Atmagea, today



*Image 6: The Catholic church in Malcoci built in 1880*



*Image 7: After 1940, the community was abandoned and the church is in ruins*



*Image 8: The Catholic church in Malcoci. Interior*



*Image 9: The Catholic church in Malcoci. Between 1843 and 1859, the locality was populated with German colonists*



*Image 10: The Catholic church in Malcoci*



*Image 11: The Catholic church in Malcoci. Entrance detail*



*Image 12: The Catholic church in Malcoci. Aerial view*

- The Catholic Church in Malcoci (see images 6-12) – one of the remarkable monuments of the German religious architecture. The village was founded in 1843 by a group made up of 25 German families coming from Tsar’s Russia. They were originally from Alsace, Rhine Valley, Baden, as their names suggest: Weideman, Klein, Kress, Frank. Malcoci was the first Catholic German village in Dobrogea.

The Church was built in 1880 by the Catholic German community and was operational until 1940, until most ethnics Germans left the country. Later, as unattended, it deteriorated greatly and no protection measures have been taken, even though its architecture is impressive. The Catholic Church in Malcoci requires urgent works of restoration, reconstruction and re-functionalization, but is has not even been included in the List of Historical Monuments. Quite surprisingly!

- The Baptist Church in Mangalia was built in 1930-1931. Even though the materials used were among the poorest and, from an artistic and architectural perspective, is of no interest, the use of the space and permanent maintenance have ensured its survival and perfect functioning until present (see images 13-14).

- The Evangelical Church in Mihail Kogălniceanu (Caramurat; Karamurat; Mihail Kogălniceanu; Ferdinand I), functional and in good condition, still operating, was built by the German community at around 1876 (see image 15).

In the study *Die deutschen Dorfer* from “Bilder aus der Dobrudcha”, Dr. Paul Traeger, the author, mentions about the colonization of Germans in Caramurat: “*In the spring of 1876, there came to Caramurat, 25 kilometers towards north-west of Constanța, the first German colonists. At the beginning, there were ten families. They all were coming from Crasna, a catholic colony in Akkerman diocese. Some of them had come from Poland, which is obvious in their family names. Some others are from German areas, such as Landau or the Black Forest. All ten families were part of a larger group settled in Crasna.*” The Church was built between May 1897 and October 1898, gothic style and bears the mark of “Ferdinand Stuflesser” School in south Tyrol, then an Austrian land, now Italian. The works were done with a team of Italians, supervised by Luigi de Benedetto. The altar is made of sycamore maple wood and the rest of furniture is made of cherry tree Wood. There are 14 works on the lateral walls, sculptures in wood that show fragments from Jesus’ Cross Road. The Church, under its patron saint called Anton of Padua, celebrated on June 13, was rebuilt in 2004.



Image 13: The Baptist Church in Mangalia under construction, 1930-1931



Image 14: The Baptist Church in Mangalia, today



*Image 15: The Evangelical Church in Mihail Kogălniceanu*



*Image 16: The German Church in Cogealac*



*Image 17: Colelia. The church and village in 1955*



*Image 18: The Church in Colelia was built in 1934*



*Image 19: The Roman Catholic Church in Colelia, after locality has been abandoned*



*Image 20: Later, the village was destroyed and only the church ruins are standing today*



*Image 21: The Roman-catholic Church in Colelia*



*Image 22: Recently, the reconstruction works have turned the ruins into an orthodox monastery: Coleila Monastery*



*Image 23: The German Church in Tariverde*



*Image 24: The Baptist Church in Nisipari  
built in 1924*

- The German Church in Cogealac (Cogealac, Kogealac, Kotschalak, Kodschalak, Koschelak, Cogealac, Domnești). In 1875, German colonists of evangelical religion settled here (see image 16). Their church, with a characteristic architecture, is still operational up to this date.

- Culelia (Colelie, Kolelie, Kulelie, Colelia) was colonized in 1880 by catholic Germans. Today, the villaje belonging to Cogealac, was dissolved and the beautiful Roman Catholic Church built in 1934 was turned into an Orthodox monastery, after a long time of abandonment (see images 17-22).

It is a sad thing to make mistakes that prove simplicity in thinking and lack of professionalism when it comes to the material efforts to revive such a building – the Roman Catholic Church in Colelia, turned into a nunnery by the Orthodox Church (images 17-21). It is just unforgivable to place a porch that is totally unfit (from the shape and volume perspective – with a cover of pasteboard) to be in front of the entrance portal of a stone construction (image 22). In the same register, we have the plastic cover for the facades or PVC carpentry work.

- Tariverde (Tariwerde) – the german community in Constanța County was founded by the evangelical colonists settled here in 1878 (see image 23).

- The Baptist Church in Nisipari was opened for the public on June 15, 1924. At present, an Orthodox Church is available here (see image 24).

- The first german school in Constanța was built upon the initiative of Sofia Luther, the widow of Luther beer factory owner<sup>41</sup> in Bucharest. For this purpose, in 1894, she initiated the Erhardt Luther Foundation, which helped her with the works for the Evangelical German School in Constanța. The construction was finished in 1901, with the help of a donation from Germany. The 1-4 grade school, functioned until 1940.

Also known as the German House, the building on 8 Sarmizegetusa Street, hosts today the German Evangelical Association and the Democratic Forum of Germans in Constanța.

- Since the German communities in Dobrogea were not very large or strong to have their own schools, the education in the German language was initially done in church, priest house and, later, at the village schools in parallel with the studies in the Romanian language.

### **Tradition of living**

The type of living adopted by the Germans in Dobrogea has evolved during the entire century and it has two stages:

- for the former stage of colonization, the houses were made in timber, wattled straws or clay mixed with straws, two rooms, characteristic for the old colonies, in the north. That stage ended with the Independence, in 1878;

- after 1878, the house had a different percentage in the economy of the rural household, three rooms or more are frequent.

After the time when Dobrogea went under Romanian administration, the efforts made for development and modernization overlapped with the German traditions of living.

Thus, it can be ascertained that, even today, that the villages colonized by Germans have a regular street network, the houses are nicely aligned and comply with the neighboring relations in the Civil Code, adopted in 1864 – unlike the houses of Turks or Tatars!

The favored house has two storeys, with frontal, a two-gradient roof and characteristic decoration, no porch (as other nationalities in Dobrogea have).

Another feature for the German houses is that they were using bright colors (red, green) for the exterior (see images 25-26). This particularity, which set apart the German houses from the others' in their vicinity, is the result of the colonization in Russia.



*Image 25: Atmagea, Ciucurova commune,  
German house abandoned in 2011*



*Image 26: Nisipari (Karatai).  
German house*

The construction materials had a great durability, i.e. stone, bricks and tiles, whenever the owner could afford it.

Unlike the Saxon houses in Ardeal, the German houses in Dobrogea are not built as a continuous piece or annexed to the firewall, but they are independently located on the lot, mainly in an L shape, also known as wagon houses. The structure of the household proves a great rigor and a concern for efficiently using the space and time for daily tasks. The relation between the built spaces and open spaces of the yard is important; these spaces are meant for both the house chores and the specific agricultural activities.

It is worthwhile mentioning that the Germans came as a compact group and in a short period of time in each locality, their houses were clustered and were making what was called German Street, usually in the centre of the village, close to church.

Along with the Romanians' houses (mainly the shepherds who had settled at almost same time), the nucleus of the community was built; the other ethnies preserved their traditions of living, spread out, in separate lands, depending on the size of property.

The differences of living among ethnies have the tendency to flatten out – as it was in Ciucurova village, where the Turkish house imitates the shape of German's. In her great research work, *Antropologia habitatului în Dobrogea (Anthropology of habitat in Dobrogea)*, Paulina Pomponiu mentions a few things that she saw on her 1992 trip to Atmagea village (Atmatschea, Atmadscha, Atmagea), Ciucurova commune, Tulcea County, where an evangelical community was founded in 1848:

*"The village was still keeping the traces of prosperity from when the Germans were there: the houses had large cellars, with cylindrical roofs in stone and many spacious annexes – even though they had not been used for a long time – communism destroyed the occupations of people in the village and replaced them with a collective ownership where the first places had been taken by destruction and theft."*<sup>42</sup>

Going back there in 2011, a distressing and disheartening view is displayed in front of her eyes *"the roads are like huge cracks in a dry land, the stone fences fell down, here and there you can see a nicer house. Everything is down in the black time hole. (...) The last German house, of Mrs. Burcinski Elena, who was 85 in 1992, is a ruin now. It is a shame that no one thought to preserve the traces of so*



*Image 27: Atmagea, the old German house, in a very advanced damaged condition.*

*many ethnies that used to live in Dobrogea, who made that place more civilized, who turned a dry land into a prosperous village.*"<sup>43</sup>

## **Conclusions**

Even though most ethnic Germans left Dobrogea more than 70 years ago, which almost equals the time they lived there, traces of their efforts can be found throughout all Dobrogea, and their role of founders should not be overlooked.

The Dobrogea Germans played a crucial role in changing mentalities, in modernizing Dobrogea and, paradoxically, they supported the affirmation of the Romanian spirit in this province so much disputed by the almighty neighbors.

As far as the territorial development, a relatively uniform distribution in the entire territory plus the shepherds, they contributed to building that communication network (both ethnical and confessional) so necessary at that time.

They grafted here a rural viable civilization, in all its components. They provided the manpower and skills required to develop agriculture in Dobrogea, use the agricultural equipment, diversify cultures and implement knowledge to obtain richer harvests. Their villages (prior to their colonization, they used to be sites) were rigorously organized, with wide, straight roads, large lots, well-coded hierarchies of spaces, easily to be recognized from the Turks or Tatars.

The civil built patrimony, abandoned after 1940, most of which was lost during years, was taken over by rural populations who adjusted themselves to the lifestyle set by the structure of spaces. It is obvious that some adjustments of spaces occurred in dependence of necessities, and these adjustments even cancelled the specific features. Sometimes these spaces were taken by gypsies and were lost.

A few religious buildings survived – catholic and evangelical churches – that are now in a more or less advanced damaged condition. They should be taken care of greatly – if not for their historical value, but for the imagery and architectural quality of the building – an excellent potential for tourism that is wasted for good.

This measure that consisted in the selective remembrance of situations and events that spread throughout a century of Dobrogean history and, of course, the population in this area irrespective of their origin, has aimed to point out and explain some anthropological features of Dobrogeans and or their territory development, otherwise hard to clear up.

These features are the result of certain national policies, rigorously built and implemented at their time. Since our desire is not to slip into historicism, to go back to a historic past still present with its deeds can be an appropriate step in approaching the territorial development of Dobrogea, in terms of a durable, harmonious development that brings us closer to a durable tourism (ecotourism, biotourism, religious or ethnical tourism) that might come in hand to increase attractiveness of some touristic destinations already recognized as Danube Delta or the Black Sea seashore. On the other hand, all those localities that used to be German colonies, now semi-abandoned, with a natural charm, into which you don't very often run in Europe might get a second chance.

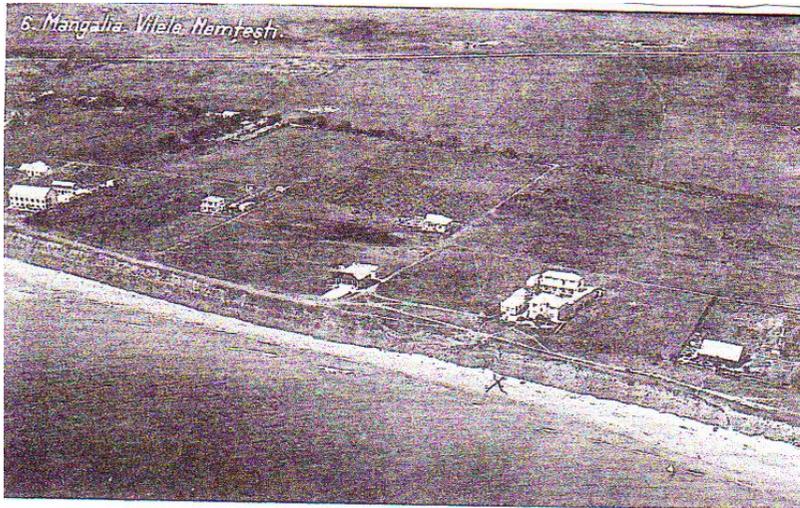


Image 28: The property of Albert Luck family in Mangalia<sup>44</sup>



Image 29: The house of Albert Luck family in Mangalia

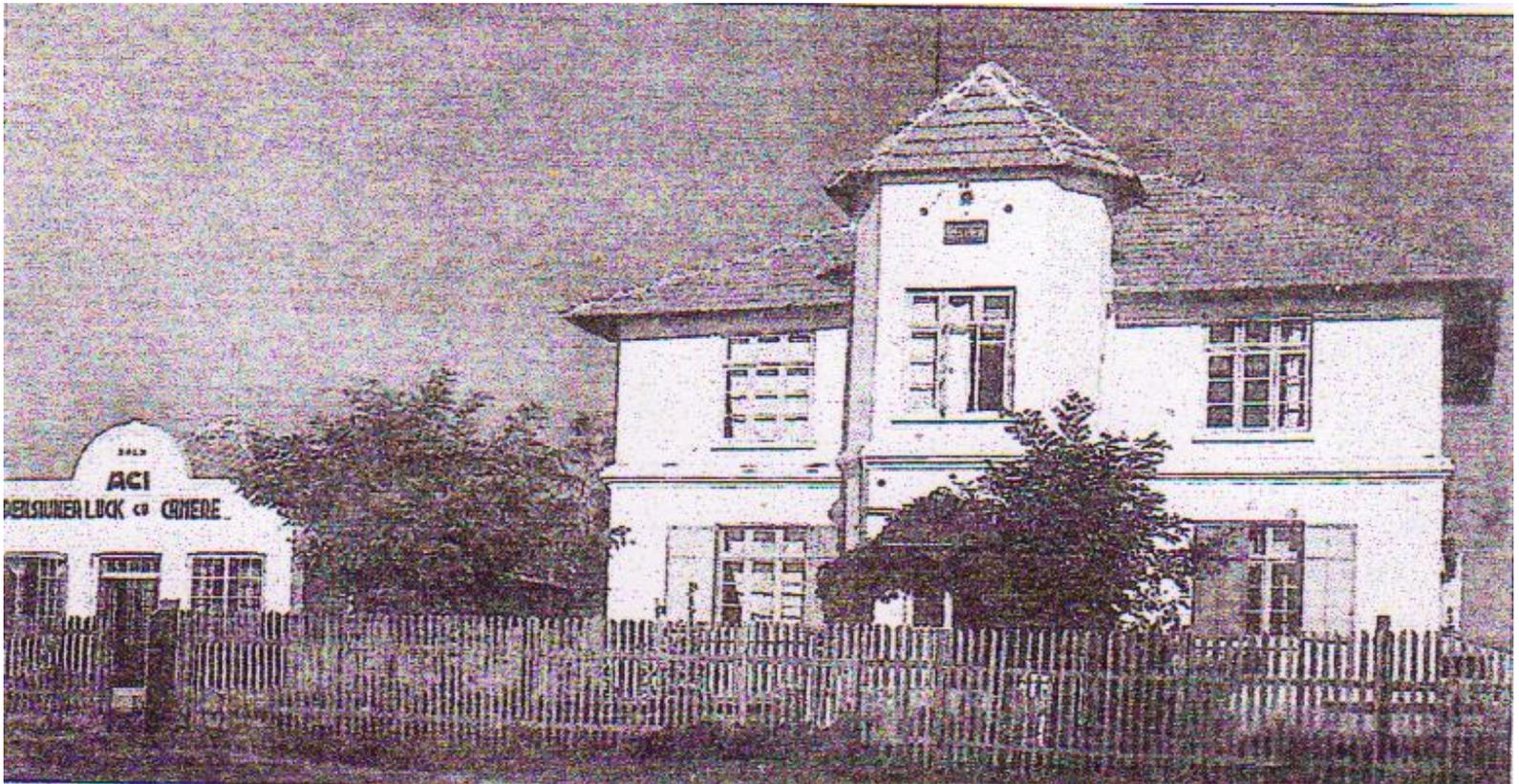


Image 30: The house of Albert Luck family in Mangalia



*Image 31: Tulcea – The Baptist Church*



*Image 32: Techirghiol (Tekirghiol). The German colony was founded in 1907 and the Church was finished in 1934, thanks to efforts made by priest Pieger. Today, it only has a tourism value.*



*Image 33: The Catholic Church in Cernavodă*

## **Illustration source**

- 3 O.Tafrafi, *La Roumanie Transdanubienne (La Dobroudja)*, Paris, Éditions Ernest Leroux, 1918  
5 <http://img.carpati.org/users/ba/balt/baltarel/editor/Atmag1/hpim8840-1a.jpg>  
13 <http://biseriacrestinabaptistaemanuelmangalia.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/32.jpg>  
14 <http://biseriacrestinabaptistaemanuelmangalia.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/tabara-2010-parte-a-2-004.jpg>  
16 <http://mw2.google.com/mw-panoramio/photos/medium/55544827.jpg>  
17 [http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history\\_culture/family/images/familytuchscherer/familytuchscherer3.jpg](http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history_culture/family/images/familytuchscherer/familytuchscherer3.jpg)  
18-21 <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/biserici-manastiri/manastirea-colilia-67846.html>  
23 <http://mw2.google.com/mw-panoramio/photos/medium/55544843.jpg>  
25 [http://www.jurnalul.ro/usr/thumbs//imagini/2011/11/11/thumb\\_640\\_x\\_480/194909-casa-01.jpg](http://www.jurnalul.ro/usr/thumbs//imagini/2011/11/11/thumb_640_x_480/194909-casa-01.jpg)  
26 <http://media1.webgarden.ro/images/media1:4a1652cf427fc.jpg/untitled%209.jpg>  
27 [http://www.jurnalul.ro/usr/thumbs//imagini/2011/11/11/thumb\\_640\\_x\\_480/194908-casa.jpg](http://www.jurnalul.ro/usr/thumbs//imagini/2011/11/11/thumb_640_x_480/194908-casa.jpg)  
28 <http://biseriacrestinabaptistaemanuelmangalia.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/30.png>  
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30 <http://biseriacrestinabaptistaemanuelmangalia.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/27.png>  
31 <http://bisericievanghelice.files.wordpress.com/2007/08/biserica-baptista-tulcea.jpg>  
33 [http://i798.photobucket.com/albums/yy263/CernavodaBlog/61\\_499\\_Biserica-Romano--Catolica.jpg](http://i798.photobucket.com/albums/yy263/CernavodaBlog/61_499_Biserica-Romano--Catolica.jpg)

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> After the campaigns in 1419 – 1420 and 1484, Dobrogea was conquered by Ottomans and included within the Empire borders. Since the beginning of Ottoman domination, Turks and Tatars were brought to populate the new territories; later on, tempted by the opportunities of those places, there came Armenians, Bulgarians, Jews, Greeks, gypsies, in various numbers. In the 18th century, Dobrogea became the stage of the military operations during the Russian-Austro-Turk conflict, known as the *oriental crisis*. Dobrogea was in the way of Russia imperialist expansionism to take over the Black Sea and Bosfor and Dardanele Straits. A first attempt of the Russians to enter Dobrogea was overcome by Turks in 1711 – Peter the Great army plus Moldova's army led by Dimitrie Cantemir were stopped on Prut river. Between 1735 and 1739, the Russian-Austro-Turkish war, an intense military and diplomatic activity is taking place; the Russians were trying to occupy not only Dobrogea but the other Romanian provinces too, which matched Austria's intention. In 1770, Ottomans will lose Chilia citadel; the following year, Russians will take over Tulcea, Isaccea, Măcin and Hârșova, mosques are burned down, fortifications destroyed, civilian sites looted, war ships sunk, thousand of prisoners taken to Russia. In 1772, Ottomans will beat Russians at Silistra. The war ends in 1774, with the peace treaty concluded at Kuciuk-Kainargi, and Russia will be given the right of free navigation on the Danube and Black Sea, which will allow it to play an important role in this geographical area. Following this war, from Isaccea to Bazargic, Dobrogea was completely destroyed. On November 1, 1790, the Russian troops will occupy it again, entering Tulcea and taking over Isaccea, where they capture a large quantity of war equipment. In 1791, Russians conquer Măcinul and put an end to the fourth Russian-Turkish war in the 18th century, ended by the peace treaty in Iași, which was giving Russia the territory of Crimeea, plus the Tatar sites to Nistru. The following century, the great western powers become more interested in the Ottoman Empire and for the eastern part of Europe. Between 1806 and 1812, a new Russian-Turkish war breaks up. In the summer of 1809, the Russian armies will cross the Danube and occupy many city-ports. The following year, 125,000 Russian soldiers cross the Danube and take over Hârșova, Ostrov and Silistra. The 1812 peace treaty in Bucharest grants the area between Nistru and Prut in Moldova to Russia, the Chilia Arm will be the frontier between Russia and Turkey. In 1817, Russia will claim the Sulina Arm, too. The Russian territorial expansionism will reach Dobrogea's borders and even beyond. At the end of 18th century and first half of 19th century, new waves of immigrants come, such as Tatars, Cossacks, Lipovans, Bulgarians, Germans, all from the Russian land.

<sup>2</sup> Ion Conea, "Hector de Bean, un călător francez prin Dobrogea în 1828," 1-12. Constantin Băcilă, "Stampe și hărți privitoare la trecutul Dobrogei," 241-280.

<sup>3</sup> M. Rareș, "Xavier Hommaire de Hell, un călător francez în Dobrogea în 1846," 62-63.

<sup>4</sup> Ion Ionescu de la Brad, *Excursion agricole dans la plaine de Dobroudja*.

<sup>5</sup> See Alexandru .P Arbore, *Informațiuni etnografice și mișcări de populație în Basarabia sudică și Dobrogea, în veacurile XVIII și XIX, cu specială privire la coloniile bulgărești din această regiune*, 1-105.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>8</sup> Florin Stan, 2007, *Incursiuni în istoria comunităților etnice dobrogene*, 229-241.

<sup>9</sup> Constantin Brătescu, "Populația Dobrogei," 234.

<sup>10</sup> The immigrants were given lots of land and tax exemption, as shown in an Ottoman document in 1865 that stipulated 'the German families settled in Babadag village, Tulcea county, once the tax exemption interval is over... should pay 1500 kuruși... pro rata with the total tax for the village above and the amount of 1200 kuruși, representing the exemption from the military service to be added to the first amount.'" See Răzvan Limona, *Populația Dobrogei în perioada interbelică*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> DJTAN, fund of Tulcea county Prefect Office, Administrative Department, folder 905/1940, leaf 6.

<sup>13</sup> Valentin Ciorbea, *Germanii dobrogeni – istorie și civilizație*, 181 – 186.

<sup>14</sup> Ioan Georgescu, "Coloniile germane din Dobrogea," 56.

<sup>15</sup> Gheorghe Dumitrașcu, *Germanii din județul Constanța la începutul și sfârșitul primului război mondial. Studiu statistic și comparativ*, 148. Apud Răzvan Limona, *Populația Dobrogei în perioada interbelică*, 66.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 185 – 186. Horia Stinghe, Cornelia Toma, *Despre germanii din Dobrogea*, 207.

<sup>17</sup> See *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*.

<sup>18</sup> *Minorități naționale în România între 1931 – 1938*, 162.

<sup>19</sup> See Marian Zidaru, *Date despre germanii dobrogeni din călătoria lui Theo Steibrucker în Dobrogea (1934-1935)*.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>21</sup> Old name for Casian locality, Constanța County.

<sup>22</sup> Colelia, a village colonized in 1880 by catholic germans, belonging to Râmnic commune, self-abandoned in the 60's.

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- <sup>23</sup> Old name for Mihail Kogălniceanu locality.
- <sup>24</sup> Old name for Valea Neagră locality, Constanța County.
- <sup>25</sup> Alacap is the old name of Poarta Albă locality, Constanța County.
- <sup>26</sup> Caratai is the old name for Nisipari locality, Constanța County.
- <sup>27</sup> Facria is the old name of Făclia locality, Constanța County.
- <sup>28</sup> The old name of Mereni locality, Constanța County.
- <sup>29</sup> RSI Archive, fund d, folder 26, vol. 2, leaves 21-57.
- <sup>30</sup> Durasi, Bogdali, Musubei, Poreaz, Carabalor, Bazargic, Ciobancuius: localities on the Bulgarian territory at present. Tariverde, Semedria, Cobadin, Ebichioi, Casimcea: localities in Constanța County.
- <sup>31</sup> DJTAN, fund of Tulcea county Prefect Office, Administrative Department, folder 905/1940, leaf 8.
- <sup>32</sup> <http://www.z-g-v.de/doku/archiv/rumaenien/kapitel-4-1-1-0-3.htm>
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- <sup>34</sup> DJTAN, fund of Tulcea county Prefect Office, Administrative Department, file nr. 905/1940, f. 49 și 61; DJCAN, fund of Constanța county Prefect Office, Administrative Department, folder 44/1940, leaf 1 – 91.
- <sup>35</sup> "Population after ethnies, during the censi for 1930–2002, per counties", 5–6, 13–14 (<http://www.anr.gov.ro>); National Institute of Statistics, Census in 2002, Ethnical structure per counties (<http://www.insse.ro>).
- <sup>36</sup> Răzvan Limona, *Populația Dobrogei în perioada interbelică*, 93-94.
- <sup>37</sup> G. Ilinoiu, "Culte în Dobrogea," 633 – 634.
- <sup>38</sup> Jürgén Henkel, "Evangelici în Dobrogea. Observații privind trecutul și prezentul comunităților creștinilor luterani în localitățile dobrogene," *Germanii dobrogeni – istorie și civilizație*, 30. Archbishop office in Atmagea included the parishes of Atmagea, Ciucurova, Cataloi, Cogealac, Tariverde and the community of house of prayer in Ortachioi. The one in Constanța – Anadolchioi, founded in 1883, included the parishes of Cobadin, Cogealea, Fachria, Mamuzlu, Sarighiol and the communities of the houses of prayer in Alacap, Horoslar, Noi Vii and Sofular.
- <sup>39</sup> DJTAN, fund of Tulcea county Prefect Office, Administrative Department, folder 10/ 1940, leaves 23, 37.
- <sup>40</sup> DJTAN, fund of Tulcea county Prefect Office, Administrative Department, folder 443/1928, leaves 44-45; DJCAN, fund of Constanța County Prefect Office, Administrative Department, folder 16/1939, leaves 154,197, 220 și 269.
- <sup>41</sup> Erhardt Luther, protestant german, the founder and owner of the first beer factory, bearing its name, died in 1890. His wife took over the business.
- <sup>42</sup> See Paulina Poponiu, *Antropologia habitatului în Dobrogea*.
- <sup>43</sup> See Anghel, Carmen, *Șoimul fără aripi*.
- <sup>44</sup> The house of Albert Luck family in the area of Mangalia hospital today was very beautiful. It was located in a quiet neighborhood, away from the noisy downtown. Unfortunately, there survived only the back wall of the Luck house.