

## **STEP ACROSS THE BORDER: TRANSNATIONAL ENCOUNTERS AND NATION-MAKING**

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A Soviet national of Gagauz ethnic origin from the Moldavian SSR might have crossed borders to visit Gagauz villages in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. In each location the aspect(s) of "brotherhood" to be celebrated would have varied: a common language, religion, historical territory, shared genealogical ties, similar forenames or family names, amongst others. Today, a Moldovan national of Gagauz ethnic origin can do the same but with an altogether different positioning. The redrawing of borders and the creation of new entities after the break-up of the Soviet Union has had profound implications for the formation of Gagauz national identity, especially now that the minority status of the Gagauz has been transformed with the establishment of the Gagauz Autonomous Territory. The Gagauz population engages in cross-border travel and temporary migration to neighbouring countries alongside other Moldovan citizens, but they also travel abroad as representatives of Gagauzia/Gagauz Yeri. By looking specifically at Gagauz-Turkish encounters, I illustrate the symbolic and instrumental significance of borders and the way in which they shape the definition of Gagauz national identity (cf. Donnan and Wilson 1999).

### **Turkic and not Turkish, Turkic and not Muslim**

The Gagauz are a Turkic-speaking Christian minority in Moldova. They make up approximately 3.5 percent of the total Moldovan population which exceeds four million. Since 1995 there has been a legal autonomous territory within the borders of the Republic of Moldova which is called Gagauzia/Gagauz Yeri. Here I provide a brief overview of the conditions of the Gagauz minority status in Moldova so as to fill in the background for my exploration of Turkish and Gagauz cross-border movements and the corresponding maintenance of ethnic boundaries. The mutual intelligibility of the Turkish and Gagauz languages and notions that the two peoples share a common Turkic origin and geographical proximity are key to the special relations between Turks and the Gagauz.

Yet it is not so long ago that the Gagauz were one of many double minorities within the Soviet Union without any political autonomy. The story of the "open" Gagauz struggle for autonomy, and even for an independent republic, goes back to 1990. In August 1991 Moldova proclaimed its independence

(declaring the Soviet annexation of 1940 to be illegal) and the Communist Party was banned. The Moldovan language law (enacted in August 1989), which became a turning-point for the region, led to an increased polarization of ethnic relations. Under this law the Cyrillic Moldovan alphabet was replaced with a Latin alphabet and Moldovan was defined as the "state language". The rise in Moldovan nationalism was also accompanied by increasing ethnic clustering and by political divisions along ethnic lines. This ethnic polarization seems to have driven many non-Moldovans in the region to support the Soviet system, and, to some extent, drawn them into an "internationalist" solidarity movement directed against Moldovan pressures for reunification with Romania and against the new nationalist policies.

The Gagauz activists who had already begun to organize themselves in the late 1980s became more prominent political players in the following decade. They were initially engaged in a struggle with Moldovans against the repression of the Soviet regime, but the increasing strength of the nationalist voices in the Moldovan Popular Front resulted in them splitting away from this movement. This separation marked the start of a long process of political struggle that achieved stability with the granting of autonomous territorial status to Gagauz Yeri in 1995.

The origin of the Gagauz is still a contested issue. Considerable controversy surrounds the period before the beginning of the nineteenth century, but there is general agreement that the Gagauz lived in the Dobrudja region of Bulgaria and fled to Bessarabia at the turn of the nineteenth century. Those who seek to explore the earlier stages of Gagauz history connect them to other peoples (such as Uz, Oğuz, and Cuman) by proposing genealogical ties. Such details concerning a Turkic origin, the question of conversion to Christianity from Islam or directly to Christianity before acceptance of any other monotheistic religion, are issues which preoccupy historians as well as Gagauz and Turkish nationalists. Yet in daily life Gagauz national identity is reformulated around much less lofty concerns.

### **Downsizing of Soviet identity**

Indeed, it is mundane forms of interaction—reinforced by the activity of border crossings—that

have become a major source for the construction of Gagauz national identity. While making a somewhat different point in his discussion of banal nationalism, Billig highlights the significance of ideological habits through which nations are reproduced.<sup>73</sup> He further argues that these habits are not removed from everyday life, asserting that they possess a reassuring normality.<sup>74</sup> For me, then, Billig brings out the need to analyze mundane/banal forms even when there are perhaps more eye-catching instances of "the flag-waving nationalism" (Billig 1995).

Behind the flag-waving, for example, I have pointed to examples of bricolage in areas such as language and history that take place in "an arena of social interaction through which the extent of aggregates of collectivities are defined as one unit in relation to others" (Demirdirek 2001). National brokerage, as I describe it, covers various arenas of display and interaction, some of which I shall illustrate here, and it is here that symbols of collectivity are activated and utilitarian concerns are articulated in the discourse of particular identities. Sometimes nation-builders take on the role of "brokers," and sometimes others who are involved in activities related to self-representation assume this role. It is also in this field that responses to changing social and political circumstances can be observed. Ordinary people take part in the field of national brokerage with concerns that do not necessarily overlap with those of the active producers of nationhood, but in the last instance they still contribute to the discursive construction of a nation. Nevertheless, the success and the speed of this process vary in different settings, and one important factor here is a process to which I refer to as a "downsizing of imagination" (Demirdirek 2000). What I mean by a downsizing of imagination is the process of deconstituting the already existing imagined community. In this case, the unit that is to be downsized by the nationalist movements is, of course, former Soviet society. The Gagauz population, which shared the Soviet miniature global system with its common references, is introduced to a much smaller entity to which they have to relate. Yet, in their case, the struggle to downsize the imagination is more complicated. This is because Gagauz nation-building takes place in the context of the Moldovan downsizing process, in which Moldovans try to reinforce Moldovan language use and recreate a Moldovan national imagery. In this context, both the nation-builders and ordinary people, while trying to create a Gagauz supranational unit and a Gagauz imagination, have to highlight Gagauz imagery mainly through language and its products. Yet, they have to accomplish such a task through the medium of the Russian language and against the backdrop of

Moldovan language dominance. When they proclaimed the Gagauz Republic, the nation-builders first declared the official language of the republic to be Russian. In this way, their struggle is a double one, in that they resist Moldovan downsizing by embracing the Russian language and Soviet heritage on the one hand, while on the other hand they have to create their own elaborated discourse in Gagauz so as to establish a Gagauz national imagery. This starts with the language, and the Gagauz—already literate in Russian—are now invited to acquire literacy in Gagauz. There are thus many areas of daily life within bureaucracy, education, and the mass media where language becomes both a source and object of collective struggle in the nation-building process. Hence, national brokerage is generated with a number of different actors; Turkey, for example, is a good partner for reinforcing the Gagauz imagination, and non-Moldovans who similarly use Russian as a lingua franca are also viable partners in resistance to Moldovan nationalization in public space.

Transnational encounters between Turks from Turkey and Gagauz from Moldova can be seen as another arena of national brokerage in which mundane forms are more effective than flag-waving nationalism in the (re)creation of ethnic or other boundaries. This is clearly reflected in the complex system of alliances created for various ends such as establishing businesses, obtaining grants for certain projects, sending "delegations" across borders for sporting/artistic purposes and so on. A more in-depth exploration of the dynamics of this particular arena of national brokerage reveals the existence of a certain ambivalence, which nevertheless contributes to the creation of a flexible system of significance in relation to the construction of ethnic and national units. In my assessment, this is where the complexity of the Turkish/Gagauz case rests.

### **Turkey as the ambivalent other**

Turkey plays a unique role in Gagauz social and political life in Moldova. It is, of course, important to note that Turkey cannot be treated as a single consistent entity, nor can one forget the arbitrariness of some of the Turkey-related symbols that enter into the life of other Turkic peoples. The influence of Turks on the Gagauz and on other Turkic nations or ethnic groups within the former Soviet Union varies. Furthermore, Turkey as "the West" (or Westernized Turkic space) should be seen as an emic category among these groups inasmuch as it is not an objective unit. Yet, although it manifests itself in different ways, there is a certain idea of Turkey in circulation that represents a higher form of Turkicness as a transnational identity.

Similar to many former Soviet republics, Moldova is an attractive destination for Turkish tourists and entrepreneurs and an interesting potential political and economic partner for the Turkish state. The latter, represented by its officials, as well as people from Turkey with their various interests are sources of ideas, objects, jobs, money, education possibilities and new sets of relationships for the Gagauz. Both private and more official meetings between Turks and Gagauz mark their similarities and differences in various ways. By illustrating two cases (a public event and a journey), I argue that meetings with Turks – despite varying motivations – lead to the reproduction of a common discourse of Turkicness as well as of Gagauz collectivity. The efficacy of this discourse can be questioned on various levels, yet it is significant in fashioning a widely accessible metanarrative in the public domain.

### Public events

Like many other concepts, "ritual," "ceremony," and "public event" are all terms that are subject to debate in anthropology. Anthropologists question which types of events can be classified as rituals and whether the phrase "secular ritual" is a contradiction in terms; not least, they ask what these events "do" (i.e., whether they reflect social relationships or help to create them, etc.; e.g., Handelman 1998; Moore and Myerhoff 1977). I do not intend here to engage in a discussion of these larger issues. I find it appropriate, however, to refer to all these events as "public events" because for me such a classification only presupposes the public character of the events without attributing a general function and meaning to particular kinds of events.

I concur with Sally Falk Moore's assertion that "ceremony [or public event] is a declaration against indeterminacy" (Moore and Myerhoff 1977:16). Yet, whether their mandate is to engage in the ordering of ideas and people (Handelman 1998:16) or "to work against indeterminacy" (Moore and Myerhoff 1977), I would argue that any evaluation of the success of public events should not be limited to their "operational efficacy" (social/psychological effectiveness) (Moore and Myerhoff 1977).<sup>75</sup> The types of public events that are directly related to Gagauz identity politics are syncretic gatherings—events that are inspired by what Handelman calls events-that-model and events-that-present. They are occasions for performance that introduce connections between units of identification and concomitantly generate a discourse of national collectivity. As I shall illustrate below, their success lies in their capacity to open up a space for continuity

(i.e. the reproduction of elements of such public events elsewhere outside of the ritual).

### Event-that-reformulates—The Olympiad

A language olympiad was held in Chişinău with the participation of many pupils from different parts of Gagauzia. The pupils were supposed to read poems and write essays in Gagauz. The main sponsor of the olympiad was a Turkish high school (T: *lise*) run by Fetih Company. An Azeri businessman also contributed by providing some of the presents for the children who took part in the competition. The audience included reporters from Komrat TV, representatives of the Gagauz-language service of Chişinău Radio and TV, the head of the Turkish Agency for Cooperation and Development, organizers from the Moldovan Ministry of Education and several teachers.

At the end of the competition, some teachers and students were invited to speak. Sveta, who chaired the event, is a Russian native speaker with a fairly good command of Gagauz; she can also speak Turkish and makes translations for various Turkish businessmen. Having also worked as a civil servant, she has had regular contact with Turks. Trying to make her Gagauz more easily comprehensible to the Turks who were present, Sveta used words like *bey* (sir), *kadın* (woman), *okul* (school) and Turkish suffixes like "-yorum." She refrained from using the Gagauz word for woman (*kari*) because, like other Gagauz who are in close contact with Turks, she knew that Turkish speakers prefer not to use the term because of its vulgar connotations in Turkey. She consciously tried to use Turkish words and to avoid Russian loan words in Gagauz. Not being fully competent in Gagauz, however, she mistakenly used some Turkish words that were incomprehensible to the Gagauz audience (e.g., *bayram*, meaning "holiday," where the Gagauz term *praznik* is loaned from Russian). The children, in particular, did not understand what this meant.

Later, one of the teachers said "if Turks do not like each other, who will like us? Nobody should laugh at the fact that we Turks found each other." A pupil commented in Russian that this was the first time she had participated, and one of the teachers told her to say it in Gagauz. Then the girl began to speak in Gagauz, saying that she liked her mother tongue (*ben pek beeniyrim ana dilimi*). The girl said: "We are drawing on our native land and talented people are appearing among us too." She used the word *talantlı* for "talented," which is a rendering of a Russian word in Gagauz. The teachers sighed again. Later, a poet (Tudor Zanet) took the microphone and

said, "I would like to see storytellers among us, our language is also beautiful and rich."

After the speeches, all the participants were given plastic bags full of clothes apparently donated by a Turkish clothing firm related to Fetih Company. The children seemed very happy. We, the adults, went to the teachers' room to celebrate the occasion by eating and drinking. The sponsors had ordered kebabs from a Turkish restaurant, and there were Fanta and Coke bottles on the table along with fruit. While we were sitting and eating, one of the Gagauz men whispered in my ear "you see that this is not exactly how the Gagauz celebrate something, can you imagine a celebration without wine, you live in the village, you know [how things are], anyway we are showing respect to these Turks."

While I was talking to people at the table in a mixture of Gagauz and Russian, one of the teachers who did not know me asked which city I came from; one of the Turkish men answered her by saying condescendingly "she is Turkish but she speaks in a local manner." The same man had told me earlier that he found it strange that the Gagauz said that they were Gagauz (i.e. not Turkish) and that they spoke incorrect Turkish. By making such comments, he was both denying and confirming the independent Gagauz identity.

The occasion drew to a close; we, the women, had a chance to gossip while clearing up while the religious men from the Turkish high school carried away the tables. According to the female teachers, the Muslim sponsors were very kind and had very good manners, unlike some of the Turkish businessmen who sometimes treated the Gagauz women who went out with them as prostitutes. One of the teachers said that she was surprised to see religious men respecting women more than others. Another commented that it seemed there were different types of Turkish men, but that these who did not drink were boring: she wondered how one could have fun without drinking. Then we talked a bit about different types of Turkish men.

In the event described above, the indeterminacy that was being "fixed" was Gagauz identity in general, and the diffuse Gagauz language experience in particular (with its Turkic connection). I approach this occasion as an event-that-reformulates because it redefines Gagauzness in relation to Turkishness and Turkic units in a postsocialist context. Language was both a symbol and a communicative tool in this event, which repositioned the Gagauz language in relation to Turkish in particular and Turkic languages in general (as evidenced by the presence of the Azeri sponsor).

Through the use of Gagauz alongside Turkish during the event, the former was enacted as a sister language to the latter. This enactment served both communicative and purposive ends. The "message" that was given to the children was that as Gagauz persons they were part of a Turkic unity. Russian was absent from the event in general, but its absence was "present" in that it had to be avoided. In their efforts to maintain linguistic purity, Gagauz speakers were aware of the presence of Russian in their language practice (and they would have been aware of it even if one of the girls had not spoken Russian). As in many other public events with national dimensions, the sense of belonging has to be achieved through membership of smaller units such as villages, schools and families. The event also reformulated the meaning of "how the Gagauz celebrate" in the sense that it could not be modeled on conventional Gagauz celebrations that typically involve heavy alcohol consumption.

I would assert, albeit tentatively, that this event did not bring about a significant emotional-perceptual transformation among the participants, especially for the children. The children embraced the event as an exciting part of their school experience, all the more so because of the trip to the capital city and the presents they received. A comparison may be drawn with the celebration of Norwegian Constitution Day (17 May), which many children enjoy as a day for eating lots of ice-cream and hot dogs without necessarily being transformed emotionally. Still, an ontological connection with the everyday has been established (cf. Blehr 1999:39). In this sense, although the event might be considered to have been designed for the purposes of flag-waving nationalism, its effect is felt through the channels of banal nationalism.

The language olympiad can be regarded as a successful event because it went on to be repeated in the future and it achieved its goals; namely the perpetuation of the Gagauz language and Gagauz national identity. Although it may seem that I am claiming the existence of this collective abstraction without showing that there is any emotional attachment to it, this language-based event shows how a discourse or arena can be created for the cultivation of such an identity through the inclusion of participants with differing motivations. The comments made during the less formalized parts of the event served a complementary function in that – while participating in the creation of a common discourse of Turkicness and taking the role of national brokers – the Gagauz participants were also asserting their Gagauzness by pointing out the differences between Turks and Gagauz in relation to

gender relations and drinking habits. This event was a temporary conjunction of persons who represented larger identities. The constellation at subsequent Gagauz language olympiads would undoubtedly change: the most stable group represented would be the Gagauz pupils, perhaps together with the same people from the Ministry of Education, whereas the sponsors and other important guests would be different. It is the "others" through which Gagauz identity is expressed that change, and the temporality of the conjunction does not diminish the power of each event in perpetuating Gagauz collectivity.

There was a double ambiguity at the olympiad inasmuch as, first, the Gagauz language was promoted by welcoming Turkish loanwords and suppressing Russian elements, and, second, alcohol was omitted from subsequent celebrations because of the presence of religious Turks. The Gagauz were "being themselves" by not being themselves. This can be seen as an example of what Herzfeld refers to as "cultural intimacy" (1997) in that the Gagauz habit of speaking Russian constitutes a source of external embarrassment for the Gagauz when meeting Turks, yet it forms part of their sense of Gagauzness. This, however, shows how a public event can accommodate a multiplicity of alternatives that can be situationally adjusted. This is exactly what happens at many public events, where, depending on the audience, aspects of the ideology of nationness are expressed differently. Here, through the depiction and enactment of language as common ground, Turkic brotherhood was cultivated. The discourse of Turkicness can be seen as a container that is filled with whatever is available at the particular moment, depending on the temporal conjunction of participants. On another occasion, the force behind an event's operation could be religion or a common Soviet experience.

### **Travel as a marker of national identity**

A Gagauz children's dance group and an adult ensemble from Uzunköy (pseudonym) were invited to perform in Turkey. I was involved with the preparations, including providing letters in Turkish, formulating visiting cards for some of the adults in the delegation, answering their questions about potential presents, et cetera. I was also asked to give Turkish names to the children. One of the adults said that Turks preferred to call them by Turkish names. He explained that Turks found it difficult to learn and pronounce Gagauz names, while for their part the Gagauz were simply fond of changing them, for example, Sevgi for Lübov (both based on words for "love"). This was a very difficult moment for me, and I argued calmly that if they wanted to do this they

could do it themselves; but since I did not approve of it I was not willing to cooperate. I added that Turks did not change their names when they came to Gagauzia (although I realized that in fact people referred to me as Julia Stepanovna ([the daughter of Stepan, patronymic through reference to my "honorary father" in the village] and I liked this). The person who asked me to change the names told me that I was too strict with my principles and took life too seriously. I think, in an ambivalent way, he both respected my standpoint and, on the other hand, he did not approve of my "principles" in this particular case.

The group was led by some local officials. The bus in which they traveled was provided by someone outside the dance group who acted as a sponsor from the district's administrative centre and provided the transportation in return for a role as a delegate on the trip. A villager who owned a video camera also accompanied them with a friend—they were, so to speak, the "TV team". The composition of the delegation was the product of a combination of factors such as closeness to the organizers, professional status in the village as well as one's individual financial situation and ability to pay some of the expenses.

The members of the delegation took various steps to prepare themselves for the journey, including finding contact persons in Turkey so as to enhance their chances of establishing business links or connections for further cultural events. The leader of the dance group said that he had been warned that when he met a Turkish nationalist, whose address had been given to him by someone in the village, he should not make positive comments about communism or Russians. The delegation had plans to organize a subsequent similar festival in Gagauzia and wanted to establish further contacts for the future both with a view to cultural events and small business activities. The organizers wanted to get one of the Turkish villages in the area they were visiting to be their sister village, an idea which appealed to Turkish officials. On the other hand, these same organizers also wanted to twin with a Bulgarian village—a plan which they did not reveal to the Turks.

When the group was back, they said that they had enjoyed the company of "social democrat Turks" because they were rather jolly and drank wine, vodka and champagne with them. They had also made friends with nationalists, although the latter did not participate in drinking and merry-making. In fact, the members of the group all had good memories of Turks from different backgrounds. At the same time, one of them said to me that they felt closer to the members of the Polish dance group

delegation who had attended the same event because they shared the same drinking habits and sense of fun.<sup>76</sup>

Journeys are meaning-creating experiences (Turner 1967, 1974). The outer and inner borders of communities and places are established in an active way through travel. Even when traveling alone, a person is marked by his/her national identity most of the time. In the above-mentioned case where there is a delegation of people representing a country or a region, ethnic markers become much more relevant to the experience of travel. In particular, both on the individual and collective level, the crossing of borders is an occasion for reconsidering ideas about home and abroad. The notion of home was expressed more in terms of webs of relationships and associated activities. In the context of the dance group's visit to Turkey, eating and drinking were again used to represent "home". The sense of "kinship" with the Polish group in this respect underlines the situationality of what is inside and what is outside, what is "us" and what is "them".

The name-changing encounter during the preparations for the journey is interesting in that it shows the relaxed approach towards self-representation in relation to new interaction partners. I displayed a conservative and rigid attitude in my resistance to changing the children's names as opposed to those who did not see it as something troublesome. Their ease was due not least to the fact that in their eyes the children whose names were to be changed "belonged" to them (not all the village children had Gagauz parents, yet in this context they were all Gagauz children, they were "theirs").<sup>77</sup> They were representing themselves in a communicative and doubly inclusive manner. By making the names of the children more accessible to Turks, they were being accommodating towards the Turks while trying to encourage them to be more inclusive (towards Gagauz).

The adult members of the delegation were aware of the various discourses of Turkishness and they were able to adjust to different Turkish political positions. In each case they were able to establish collective abstractions of both Turks and themselves which were highly negotiable and broad enough to accommodate interactions with nationalist and social democrat Turks alike. The utilitarian aspects of the journey were clear before the group set off since everybody planned to buy things in Turkey for themselves and with the aim of selling at a profit back in Moldova; they were also hoping to establish business contacts. These utilitarian concerns do not diminish the symbolic dimension of interaction, yet the Gagauzness that is constructed is not necessarily

as romantic as the expression of it which comes out during interactions.

## **Conclusion**

Travel, like public events, is a medium which highlights concentrated images of personal and collective identities. Journeys are acts of performance in which the crossing of borders as a group adds to the sense of collectivity. This sense of collectivity does not necessarily imply cohesion, but it fosters the reproduction of self-identity in opposition to various "others". The members of the Gagauz delegation represented themselves formally and informally as Gagauz, and merely through this act they contributed to the perpetuation of the Gagauz people as a separate entity. At the same time they cultivated the Gagauz as part of a Turkic collectivity. In this case the members of the delegation were the national brokers: they "performed Gagauzness"—by being there and displaying their dances and music through a folklorized identity. Their representation of Gagauzness also served utilitarian purposes (business and cultural contacts, etc.), as was the case during the language olympiad. While it may have been situationally lucrative for them to emphasize the Turkic part of their Gagauz identity for various ends, I would not suggest that the reproduction of national categories and units can be explained only in terms of instrumentalist attitudes. Such motivations simply add to the already emerging symbolic common ground between Gagauz and Turks.

It is my contention that Turkey, in its representations, stands as a reflection of the ideology of a meta-Turkic identity, and that encounters such as those described above only invoke selected aspects of this ideology. Thus, it is possible to find a range of real-life situations in which the manifestation of this ideology can give rise to multiple and apparently contradictory meanings and understandings. In the context of interactions with other Turkic peoples, the presence of Turks contributes to the fostering of a collective "Turkic feeling" while at the same time underlining the differences between Turks and the various Turkic populations. These feelings of both similarity and difference coexist and are fundamental to the shaping of the resulting interactions and alliances. Being Gagauz through connectedness to and separation from a Turkish identity is just one dimension of Gagauz identity. Not unlike the repertoire of other ethnic groups, a Gagauz repertoire of identity can also access and play up links both to Moldovanness and Russianness.

## Notes

<sup>73</sup> Billig argues that nationalism is commonly located on the periphery, pointing out that it is those who are in, say, Quebec or Brittany who typically come to mind as nationalists rather than President Bush Senior who initiated the first Gulf War. He writes that banal nationalism covers “the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced” (1995:6).

<sup>74</sup> The concept of nationalism has thus often been restricted to exotic and passionate exemplars (1995:8). For Billig, there is a crucial distinction between flag-waving nationalism and banal nationalism. In this respect he argues that “the metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is consciously waved with a fervent passion: it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building” (1995:8).

<sup>75</sup> Moore and Meyerhoff correctly argue that when rituals fail to reach their ultimate goal in the sense that symbols do not fuse and give the sense of an undifferentiated whole, they may still be sufficiently viable to provide a sense of continuity and predictability (1977: 14). As they point out, rituals may have significant effects without inducing emotional-perceptual transformations. The authors add that although it is possible to capture the immediate effects of ritual through participants’ behaviour and statements, it is difficult to assess the long-term consequences (ibid.:14).

<sup>76</sup> After their return I had a chance to talk to a couple of the children from the group. Their narrative of the journey was mainly centred on the families who hosted them and the things they could buy or eat.

<sup>77</sup> On this occasion the adults did not change their names, yet in many other cases prominent figures of Gagauz cultural and political life were referred to and written about in right-wing Turkish newspapers (e.g. *Kültür ve Sanat* 1995, Yesevi 1994) with modified names (e.g. Dionis Tanasoglu as Deniz Tanasoğlu, Maria Maruneviç as Meryem Maruneviç, Dimitri Savastin as Mete Savaşan, Dimitri Novak as Dimitri Novak Dost or Mete Ayoğlu, Dimitri Kara Çoban as Mete Kara Çoban).

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