

CONTINUITY AND IDENTITY IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY: A LONG TERM PERSPECTIVE

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This paper is dedicated to the complexity of ethnic phenomena and focuses on the double interrelationship between ethnic identity and national policy in the Russian Empire and the USSR. It will present some results from the study of Korten and Tvarditsa⁷⁸, two Bulgarian peasant communities in the Taraklia region of Moldova, studied during the period 1994-2001. It will include some of my observations and interviews with the local people as well as documents found in the Odessa regional archive, Ukraine, and in some local and regional studies on the subject. According to the last population census in the Soviet Union, carried out in 1989, 233,800 Bulgarians live in Ukraine and 88,418 in Moldova (Naulko 1999:146). The Bulgarian ethnic identity was registered in Soviet passports⁷⁹.

Both villages studied here are situated in southern Moldova, where one can find other Bulgarian, Moldovan and Gagauz villages. The villages were settled between 1830-1831 and took the names of the villages from which the migrants came in a forceful emigration after the Russian-Turkish war in 1828-1829 (Novakov 1966:13-14, Poglubko & Zabunov, 1980:5-10). The ethnic identity of the two villages in the 1989 census was similar: in Korten 94.4% of the 3567 inhabitants and in Tvarditsa 94.3% of the 6382 inhabitants declared themselves to be Bulgarians, and Bulgarian as their mother tongue (Novakov 1992). Exploring the ethnic stability of the villages during their 160 year history in Bessarabia in the context of changing social and political conditions was the main focus of my ethnological fieldwork in these villages.

The interrelationship between power and identity is a problem discussed in different studies of ethnicity with respect to policy and the nation. (e.g. Weber 1947; Anderson 1983; Anderson 1991; Barth, 1969; Gellner 1983:17-18; Smith 1986; Smith 1991; Gossiaux 2002; Gossiaux 2004). Ernest Gellner underlines the differentiation between classes through ideology in literate agrarian societies, where cultural differentiation is presented in the smaller communities (Gellner 1983:17). Max Weber stresses the close relationship between kinship (descent) and ethnicity, and he defines the ethnic community as a group which believes in its common descent, real or imagined. (Weber 1947:306). Barth considers ethnicity in terms of the existence of recognized social boundaries (symbolic zones of contrast among

members of different groups), marked by stable or changing cultural features of the community⁸⁰. Anderson studied the imagined character of nations. Gossiaux described ethnicity as a complex objective reality that sometimes can be expressed in individual strategies, but is always a part of the social and symbolic order of the world. Unlike Barth, who focuses upon the analyses of individual ascription to a certain culture and ethnic identity as a personal choice, Gossiaux underlines the determinism of identity. He considers marriage norms a condition for the existence of ethnic structure (Gossiaux 2004:25-28, 32).

Different markers of ethnic identity will be analysed in order to explore the continuity of ethnic identity in the local communities. I will focus on a number of identity markers: endonyms⁸¹ (or autonyms, as opposed to exonyms, Gossiaux 2004:34-36), language, personal and family names (a universal ethnic marker), historical memory, marriage and descent, religion, cultural tradition and modernity.

Bulgarian migrants settled in the territory of the Russian Empire between the rivers Prut and Dnieper in a long process of forced migration out of the Ottoman Empire between 1801-1863⁸² in the aftermath of political and economic crises and several Russian-Turkish wars⁸³. Most migrants were peasants.⁸⁴ Bulgarians were accorded a status as colonists alongside Germans, Greeks, Jews, Swedes and other emigrants. The Russian authorities carried out a thorough registration of their ethnic or religious identity.⁸⁵ Many of the colonies were organised primarily on an ethnic basis, along with many cases of ethnic complexity⁸⁶. Settlers' memories and documents provide evidence for local or regional names, which reveal the migrants' place of origin⁸⁷. Some of the local communities such as Tvarditsa, Glavani, Golitsa, Vaisal and so on preserved the names of the villages from which migrants originally came.

The authorities established a coherent system of governance and control in the newly colonized region. The system of land tenure was based on communal (*mir*) property. The colonists were granted state owned land for their eternal and incontestable hereditary possession, not for their personal ownership, but for communal use. The land

belonged to each colony. Every colonist with a family was allotted a share (*nadel*) of approximately 50–60 *dessetina*⁸⁸. Such land could not be sold, assigned, pledged or otherwise disposed of in order to prevent its passing into alien hands. These shares of state land (*nadel*) were inherited by the youngest son in the family, but the father could appoint another heir among his children and relatives if he so chose. The colonists were entitled to buy private property outside the state-owned plots that they were accorded upon their settlement. The system of land tenure practiced was common tenure and redistribution was restricted to the commune (Derzavin 1914:59–60). Each colony was governed by an assembly (*mirskii shod* or communal convent) which included one land-holder from each estate (*dvor*). The assembly elected a standing executive body called a village (colonial) order (*prikaz*) and a mayor (*starosta*) who was elected by the share holders (*hoziaini*). Individual farmers depended on the commune. Agricultural life and consecutive stages of seasonal agricultural activities were regulated by decisions of the colonial assembly (*shod* or convent). The extensive three-field system of crop rotation was applied. (Derzavin 1914:63)⁸⁹

Social life was regulated by the collective decision-making of the colonial assembly, which included only family share holders (*hoziaini*). At the time of settlement the assembly reflected relative social equality. The economic framework imposed by the state did not stimulate personal economic activities, but it confined economic and social life to the local communities. This social order promoted social conservatism and cultural stability for a long time. Economic modernization started with the regulations of 1871 when the colonists were endowed with the rights of state peasants, but these were not put into practice until 1906–1910 when peasants were granted the right to personal land titles and to resettlement on free land (Chervenkov & Grek 1993:41). This long lasting institutional conservatism did not promote individualism in the local communities. A family unit economic strategy was based on demographic reproduction, mutual aid and seasonally hired labor. The ownership of a farm and house were the major life goals for the Bulgarian peasants. Social life was confined mainly to the villages and restricted the reproduction of social norms, world views, nominative systems, language, customs, songs and myths of the past all to the patterns established in the time before emigration. This was to a certain degree stimulated by the policy of stability, promoted by the Russian administration. For a long time the Empire authorities respected the local laws and institutions, traditions, religion and education in the mother tongue of the foreigners.

Everyday life and festivities in the villages were regulated by the ethnic and religious traditions of the settlers (Mironov 1999:29–32).

Bulgarians in Korten and Tvarditsa settled in Bessarabia at the time when the territory was part of the Russian Empire. Today this region is divided between Moldova and Ukraine, with Korten and Tvarditsa remaining on the Moldovan side. Their ethnic identity was expressed in the designation of their villages which used the names of the old places they had left behind. In the official documents Korten was registered Kiriutnia and for a long time it preserved the same administrative name. These names reflect the use of two names: a Turkish (Kiriutnia) one in the official sources and a Bulgarian (Korten) one used locally at the time of emigration. In 1995 under the authority of the Moldovan government, the village restored its Bulgarian name of Korten. In the Imperial authorities' official documents, and at the central and local administrative levels, the villages of Kiriutnia and Tvarditsa are registered as being inhabited by Bulgarians and are Bulgarian colonies.

Historical memories concerning old villages back home imprints ideal images of the Bulgarian landscape onto the new settlement: green mountains; fruitful plains and rivers⁹⁰; a pleasant climate; cold, sweet spring water; cultivated fields and gardens; vineyards on the slopes. This idealistic picture of Bulgarian life is a contrast to other stories and songs describing religious and political repression by the Ottomans. Such memories also exist in contrast to the reality of their new land, the Budjak: flat steppe, salt water, cold winters and hot summers. (Novakov 1966:9; Novakov & Gurgurov 1995:14; Poglubko & Zabunov 1980:13,15). My field interviews and local studies record both the difficult decision to emigrate and the symbolic rituals carried out following this decision: people went to the cemetery where a service for the souls of the dead grandparents was performed. It was a forceful emigration that is reminiscent of the Exodus of Hebrews from Egypt (Novakov & Gurgurov 1995:13). Part of the traumatic memory is recorded in a group of melancholic songs concerning the forced marriage of Bulgarian maidens to the Turks (Muslims), the difficult times of political crises when uncontrollable military bands (*kurdzalii*) ransacked the villages. The main reason for the decision to migrate was religious discrimination. Bulgarians left a Turkish (Muslim) state to settle in an Orthodox Slav state.⁹¹ Of great importance to the peasants was the emigration of their priests. The new villages are situated in places designed to remind them of the old villages they had to leave behind, no matter how tenuous such parallels

were in reality. Indeed it is impressive to see that the villages are surrounded by hills and small rivers—the markers of the habitat migrants left behind.

Bulgarians have orthodox and popular personal and family names in Bulgarian forms. At the time of migration and in the first years of settlement, the Russian administration registered the emigrants' families. In a description of the population in the Kiriutnia (Korten) colony from April 1835, family names remain unchanged because Bulgarian and Russian families are formed by the same rules with the ending -ov, -ev. However, the list reflects the imprint of the Russian nominative forms on some personal names and prenomes: Georgii (Georgi) Ianiev-ich Kalchishkov, Ivan Russev-ich (Russev) Kishkilev, Zlati Kurtov-ich Petkov, Deniu Konstantinov-ich (Konstantinov) Tanurkov, Dmitrii (Dimitar) Zlatiev-ich (Zlatev) Chumertov, Petr (Petar) Dimitriev-ich (Dimitrov) Gurgurov and so on (Novakov, S. N. Chervenkov 1980:74-81). The giving of Russian forms to personal names was gradually imposed by the church according to its nominative practice. At the time of baptism, girls and boys received a Russian name: Mara became Maria, Todora – Feodora, Russa – Alexandra, Pena – Praskovia, Todor – Feodor, Sava – Savelii and so on. Parents did not accept these names and so people adopted two personal names. The official names were used in formal contexts and remained in the church registers, while the Bulgarian names were used within the families and in the local communities when communicating with other Bulgarians. Importantly, every personal name was given according to the strict norms of traditional Bulgarian nominative practice (Blagoeva 1999): the baby received the name of his/her grandfather/grandmother, of the god-parents or a symbolic name believed to maintain his/her health. The same personal and family names were preserved in families through the generations. This constituted a very strong link with the grandparents, kin and the past.

A cardinal change in the nominative system of Bulgarians and many other ethnic communities was promoted only after 1956 when peasants in the USSR received their Soviet passports. From that time onwards the official name in its Russian form became a representative one in all official contacts between the individuals in local communities and even more importantly, outside them. To the present day, Bulgarian family names remain an official marker of ethnic identity. Thus family names in the populations of Korten and Tvarditsa reflect the situation in Bulgaria at the time of migration. Most of them are formed by the Bulgarian nominative rules with the

end -ov (for males) and -ova (for females), but there are also family names formed by the Turkish nominative rules Karra, Taukchi, Arabadzi, etc. (Poglubko, K. I. Zabunov 1980:59-60, 88-95).

The long term continuity of Bulgarian names in both Korten and Tvarditsa was closely connected with the practice of local marriage, endogamy, which was observed until the 1960s. It was explained by informants from Tvarditsa in terms of references from the Books (Holy Scriptures): “One should not marry a Russian or Moldovan, because one is Bulgarian and from Tvarditsa. We are one nation and one blood must be maintained”. It is written in the Books: “The evil will begin when people mix their blood... the people have made a sin”. Another influential idea in Tvarditsa was that of the ‘guest’. Emigrants always saw their move as temporary, believing that in the future they would return to their native land and village: “Bulgaria is our fatherland...sooner or later we will return there. We are guests here. We are born here, but we are Bulgarians. The blood must not be mixed... We must live according to our laws. We are born Bulgarian and baptized in our village church”⁹².

Ethnic endogamy facilitated the stability of agricultural and pastoral activities; the Bulgarians combined corn, vineyard and wine production with husbandry, all well developed pursuits before emigration to Bessarabia. They were developed in the new lands alongside the establishment of vegetables and fruits market production (Novakov & Gurgurov 1995:22-29). The most honorable social category in both villages was that of the middle class. Hard working, the master (*stopanin*, *hoziain*) was expected to create wealth by his own and his families' hands. The social and ethnic identity of Bulgarians in the local communities and outside them was that of experienced workers. On the whole, the rural culture of the Bulgarians preserved its ethnic features until the period of radical economic reforms which followed the inclusion of Bessarabia in the USSR in 1944.

The language of the local communities still remains an archaic regional dialect of the region of Sliven in Bulgaria, mixed with Russian and Moldovan words and phrases. For me (a native Bulgarian speaker) it was not difficult to understand this old dialect form of the Bulgarian language. Today in official communications Russian is usually used; even after the separation of Moldova from USSR in 1991, Russian remained the formal language of administration and is still a means of communication in interethnic relationships. It is a *lingua franca* of the region. The generations educated after 1950 are bilingual. In the 1990s Russian was

still the language taught in the schools in both villages. The local population has decided to keep Russian in the schools for the following ten years.

Education in the villages passed through different periods from early settlement onwards. Local private and parochial schools in the Bulgarian villages were opened in the 1840s; they were maintained by the colonists and the classes were conducted in Russian. In 1842 and 1844 1st and 2nd class parochial and ministerial schools, organized by the Ministry of Education, were opened and in 1858 schools in Tvarditsa and Korten were established, supported by the local communes. A very small portion of village children enrolled in these schools (Novakov & Chervenkov, 1980:10,19; Poglubko & Zabunov, 1980: 20). Modern education was the path to integration in the wider society. The Central School in the Bulgarian town of Bolgrad in Bessarabia was opened in 1859 and spread modern education among Bulgarians (at that time this part of Bessarabia, which had been returned in 1856 to Moldova, belonged to the newly unified Romanian state). The school syllabus included Bulgarian, Russian, Greek, Moldovan, Latin, French and German languages as well as history, natural studies and mathematics. Two libraries and a publishing house were also established (Radkova 1978:101-135). In 1869 in Komrat a Bessarabian-Bulgarian Central School was opened and it boasted 200 students. Bulgarian was included in the syllabus. Bulgarian language education was introduced in the Bulgarian villages mostly through the alumni of these two schools. At that time Bulgarian books and newspapers were published in Bolgrad and Odessa. In 1865 books and school textbooks were delivered in Korten in Bulgarian, published in Komrat by a Bulgarian teacher (Novakov & Chervenkov 1980:11, Poglubko & Zabunov 1980:27).

Until the 1860s the Russian authorities showed tolerance towards the schools, newspapers, magazines and all forms of education and public activities of the foreign population in the Empire. After the 3rd Polish uprising in 1863, however, the official national policy changed. By the end of the 1860s the first acts of educational Russification were evident through the closure of minority schools, newspapers and magazine presses (Mironov 1999:30-32)⁹³. After 1878, when Bessarabia became a part of the Russian Empire, the Bolgrad school was transformed and in 1886 Bulgarian language and history were dropped from the curriculum, marking a policy of large-scale Russification. This happened in accordance with the new national policy of integration that was applied across the Empire⁹⁴. A desire for integration in modern science and culture

was evident amongst Bulgarians in 1865 when the New Russian University opened its doors in Odessa. The Bulgarian community (from different villages) donated money for the creation of a Slavic library⁹⁵. Local schools were attended only by a small part of the population in both villages. For instance, in 1897 in Korten only 147 boys and 3 girls were enrolled while 330 children remained illiterate; in 1905 in the 3 schools in the same village 235 studied, but 131 remained illiterate; in 1915 in the 4th class there were 264 pupils but another 260 did not attend the school (Novakov & Chervenkov 1980:19). The situation was similar in Tvarditsa, where between 1880-1890 the two 4th class schools contained 172 pupils, but 500 children did not receive an education (Poglubko & Zabunov 1980:27).

After the First World War, when Bessarabia was included in the Romanian national state, Bulgarians passed through a difficult period of intensive political pressure dedicated to changing their ethnic identity, through education in Romanian schools and prohibition of the Bulgarian language, customs and songs in public places. Bulgarians resisted this policy. Most of the children did not attend the Romanian schools, especially girls. At that time only a small part of the male population and even a smaller number of females learned Romanian and became bilingual⁹⁶.

A radical change in education occurred only after the Second World War when Moldova became part of the USSR. One of the first goals of Soviet policy was to liquidate illiteracy. Free primary education was established in Moldova in 1944. In accordance with the proclaimed right of nations to self-determination, Moldovans and Russians in Moldova studied in their national schools, but Bulgarians did not have a national school. They studied in Russian schools and did not learn Bulgarian as a subject. In Korten and Tvarditsa after 1944 all the children entered primary school and gained seven years of schooling, and in 1966 a secondary school was opened. The teachers were Russians, Ukrainians and Bulgarians (Novakov 1966:40-41). Education in Russian schools integrated Bulgarians in Soviet society. But the Bulgarian language continued to be spoken within the local communities. It was the everyday means of communication, but it did not undergo processes of modernization and preserved its archaic dialect and diversity, incorporating Russian, Moldovan and Ukrainian words and phrases. Free university education enabled youth to enter different universities and to change their social status and profession. A great part of the educated people left the villages and settled in towns and cities. They did

not follow the rules of endogamy and married Russian, Moldovan, and other women from different ethnic groups. The relative ethnic homogeneity of the villages remained, but a part of the younger population left the villages.

Peasant traditions and economic activity are an important part of the ethnic culture of Bulgarians. Traditional seasonal and life cycle rites and customs, local feasts and communications were organized and influenced by the Orthodox Christian church and closely connected to the economic life and social values of the peasants. Bulgarian weddings, baptisms and funeral rites, as well as some rituals related to life cycle celebrations, were an ethnic marker in the villages. They contain specific elements in both villages—a sign of the long lasting local development of the culture in both the communities. They were organized by the rules of Christian tradition, but most of them were a complex combination of official and popular beliefs and norms.

Religion was a very important part of Bulgarians' ethnic identity, indeed religious identity was one of the factors of migration in the first place. But it was strongly contested in Soviet times. Waging war on religion was a central aspect of communist ideology. In the 1950s many churches were closed and destroyed. Closure was the fate of the church in Korten. But in Tvarditsa the church did not close and still remains a centre of religious life. But for the believers the times were very difficult. The Communist Party and Komsomol organized atheist propaganda against attending church services, prayer, lent and Christian rites such as marriage, baptisms and funeral rites. Home icons were discouraged. Bulgarians did not stop practicing, most of them kept their icons at home and baptised their children in the churches and monasteries far away from the villages. Even members of the Communist Party and Komsomol activists followed this practice. The marriage ceremony is central in the Christian marriage; it is a part of a big complex of rites that complete the marriage contract (*svatba*). The impossibility of organizing a marriage ceremony gave the traditional wedding greater importance; it took over some of the functions of a marriage contract. The official civil registration of the marriage was not important. It could take place years after the actual consummation of the marriage and even after the birth of a child. Similarly a specific form of crypto-Christianity emerged in the celebration of Christian holy days (Christmas, Easter, patron days of St Georgi (St George), St. Ivan (St. John), etc.), which was strictly confined to the family circle. All the holy days became a specific

manifestation and mix between official and popular Christianity.

The socialist transformation began with economic reforms in the villages that changed the main productive organization from family farms into *kolkhoz* collective forms of production. Soviet propaganda and local authorities used the social category of *kulak* ("rich peasants who exploited the labour of the poor") to describe the enemy in socialist villages. In July 1949, 60 "*kulak*" families (most of them middle class masters) were expropriated and moved from Korten. Only some of them returned to the village in 1956, after an amnesty was given by the XX congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union (Novakov & Chervenkov 1980:39-40). It is important that the old communal form of property combined collective and individual activities. The independent peasant, free in his economic activity, emerged only after the Stolipin reforms and developed during the first three decades of the 20th century. The *Kolkhoz* was a new form of collective organization of the land in which the *kolkhozy* were granted land in "eternal and gratuity property"⁹⁷ through official acts of the Soviet State. In place of the middle class peasant, new social identities (*kolkhoznik*) emerged and in turn resulted in the emergence of some more prestigious groups: "*udarnik truda*"⁹⁸, "*geroi truda*"⁹⁹, and "*stahanovets (Stakhanovite)*"¹⁰⁰ that were the ideal types of *kolkhosnitsi*. In the Soviet State, the social and ideological identity was more important than ethnic origin.

For Bulgarians in Korten and Tvarditsa, after the first difficult decade (the forceful *kolkhoz* organisation in 1946, the famine in 1946-47 and the first poor years of the *kolkhoz*), named "the time of Stalin", life took a more positive direction. It was the time of modernization of everyday life: electrification, better communications, medical care, free education in schools and universities, social mobility and social prosperity not only in the two villages discussed here, but across the Soviet Union. The quality of life changed with the construction of new modern houses, with financial assistance from the *kolkhozy* and mutual help from the villagers. New public buildings were constructed: the *Dom Kulaturi* (the house of culture) with a theatre, hall and a library, kindergardens, new schools and the *kolkhoz* administration, *Dom Bita* (The House of Communal services) and stores became a centre for social life. The image of Soviet man (*Sovetskii cheloviek*) and Soviet people (*Sovietskii narod*), central in the Soviet ideology and propaganda, closely reflected modernization trends in both villages and it gradually included positive connotations. Although village life

stories convey the difficulties in the towns and cities (the need for a document proving citizenship – *propiska*), the shortage of many goods and the social control of life by the Party and Komsomol nomenclatura, the time of Breznev was generally considered the height of socialist well being. “The time of Breznev” in the 2nd half of the period 1965 – 1982 was described as the best time in their lives. “We lived in the time of communism, but we did not recognize it at the time”, said many middle aged people. This kind of statement was heard often during the difficult political, economic and social reforms of post-Soviet times.

Today the official policy in Moldova recognizes the rights of ethnic minorities to study their mother tongue. In 1993—in both Tvarditsa and Korten—Bulgarian language kindergartens were opened, while in schools the language was introduced in the curriculum. A Bulgarian secondary School was opened in Chisinau. Bulgarians from Moldova and Ukraine receive their education in Bulgarian Universities. Bulgarians and their identity are in the process of change. Modern Bulgarian language education and free communications between the villages Korten and Tvarditsa in Bulgaria and Moldova will add new characteristics to their identity.

Historical memories, language, ethnic traditions, long term social stability and relative immobility were the main factors in giving relative stability to a Bulgarian ethnic identity in both villages discussed. The Russian Empire provided a conservative social and economic stability for the foreign colonies; this policy did not inspire economic and cultural integration. The policy of Russification was not realized through education because the cultural and economic integration of the foreign population in the Empire did not include the peasants who remained largely illiterate. It was only with the national policy of the Soviet Union at the time of Khrushchev and Breznev that progress was made in terms of the integration of the nations in the Soviet State. Bulgarians were Bulgarians, but also became Soviet citizens. This double identity was a sign of integration of the communities both on the local and multiethnic levels. The disintegration of the USSR radically changed the political and social situation. Today Moldova is an independent state. A future field study on the ethnic processes in the Bulgarian villages will add new insights to the relationship between continuity and ethnic identity.

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Notes

⁷⁸ I also visited the villages of Viktorovka, Valiaperza, and Kirsovo in Moldova and Suvorovo, Banovka and Ternovka in Ukraine.

⁷⁹ In the same statistics 81.7% of Bulgarians in the Odessa region identified Bulgarian as their native tongue, 16.6% Russian, and 1% Ukrainian (Naulko 1999:146).

⁸⁰ The cultural characteristics of the members may likewise be transformed... even the organizational form of the group and the cultural characteristics of the members may change—yet the continuing dichotomy between members and outsiders allows us to specify the nature of continuity and investigate the changing form and content. (Barth 1969:13)

⁸¹ The name used by the locals to define themselves is an endonym or an autonym.

⁸² Waves of migration peaked in 1801-1802, 1806-1812, 1829-1833, 1856-1858 and 1861-1863.

⁸³ The reception of foreign emigrants was part of a deliberate imperial policy to populate the lands reclaimed from the Ottoman Empire. In 1844, 87,000 Bulgarian colonists lived in the territory between the Prut and Dnieper rivers, along the coast of the Sea of Azov; by 1897 this figure had reached 170,000 (Derzavin 1914:18-27).

⁸⁴ Their social composition changed slowly until the middle of the 20th century. In Russian Statistics of 1897, 90.4% of Bulgarians lived in villages (Derzavin 1914:51). In 1926, 6.4% of all Bulgarians in Ukraine were town residents. (Atlas 1996:97); in 1959 the town population increased to 25.6% and in 1989, 42.6% (Naulko 1999:146). By way of comparison, in Moldova only 18% of Bulgarians lived in towns in 1989 (Novakov 1993:3).

⁸⁵ This related to Bulgarians, Swedes, Greeks, Slavoserbs, as well as Lutherans and Menonites amongst others. Ethnic names were used to indicate personal or group identity. Bulgarians were described as Bolgari (Bulgar, Bulgari) and Turkish subjects, Bolgari Turkish subjects from Rumelia or migrants from Rumelia (Archive, f. 6).

⁸⁶ The administration received personal petitions for settlement where the applicants were, for example: Bulgarian Nikolai Hristoforov, a Turkish subject from Rumelia, or Bulgarian Petar Serbinov (Odessa city archive f. 6, a.u. 127, 1-6; f. 6, a.u. 194, 1-5). Many other documents note the ethnic origin of the colonists. In the towns, ethnic identity became

associated with having a Bulgarian family name: Todor Bolgar and Petr Bolgar in Bolgrad were registered in 1826-1827 (OA, f. 6, a.u. 1914, p.3), Malii Buialuk was a "Greco-Bulgarian colony" and it remained ethnically mixed in the 20th century, when N. Derzavin studied Bulgarian colonies. He stressed the mixture of family names: some Greeks used Bulgarian names and some Bulgarians, Greek families' names (Derzavin 1914:101).

⁸⁷ For example, in the document of 1st of April 1835 a colonist Ivan Ivanovich Shop in Kiruitnia (Korten) village was registered (Novakov & Chervenkov 1980:74). Shopi was and still is a famous regional group in west Bulgaria. Such regional and local names, reflecting the places of colonists' origin in Bulgaria are found in the ethnological study of Bulgarian colonies in Russia at the beginning of 20th century. In the village of Ternovka, near the town of Nikolaev, Bulgarians divided and described themselves regionally as Shopi, Ruptsi, and by their local descent: Turnovtsi, Liaskovtsi, Vaisaltsi and so on (Derzavin 1918:14), reflecting regional and local (village) names, preserved until today in Bulgaria.

⁸⁸ 1 desetina = 14.5 decare (decare = a quarter of an acre).

⁸⁹ The entire community land was divided into three fields, and a system of crop alternation was applied: in the first field autumn cereals were sown, in the second, spring cereals and the third remained uncultivated for a season.

⁹⁰ Korten in Bulgaria is a village situated under the slopes of the Sredna Gora mountain in the valley of the Tundza river. Tvarditsa is located on the flat slopes of the same mountain in the same region of Sliven.

⁹¹ It is significant to mention the memories of a migrant from the village of Iserlia in South-eastern Bulgaria: "In the Vilaet, i.e. in Turkey, we did not have churches. If somewhere a church was constructed, it was far from the village, like a hut. The priest delivered the service wearing a turban on his head, fearful of the Turks-Muslims, even the men attended the service wearing their hats, not daring to remove them (Chervenkov & Grek 1993:67-68).

⁹² This practice concerned the majority of Bulgarian communities in the 19th century. Its importance is underlined in the famous study of Bulgarian colonies in Russia at the beginning of 20th century: "In the Berdiansky, Bessarabsky, Pheodossiisky and Hersonsky *uyezds* mixed marriage is gravely repudiated by popular custom. Here a Bulgarian man never marries a Russian girl, and vice versa. The only exception is made for widowers" (Derzavin 1914:44).

⁹⁵ At the end of the century public libraries were opened in Shikirli kitai (Suvorovo) village and in Komrat (Grek & Chervenkov 1993:74-93).

⁹⁶ During the same time the official national policy in the neighbouring USSR was controversial. The idea of the precedence of social over national identity and the proclaimed rights of nations to self-determination were implemented in different ways. In order to fulfil the goal of eradicating illiteracy in the local communities courses in native languages were organised in 1923. The aim of this policy was the education of the Soviet people in communist ideology. Later, between 1925-1938, national regions and national schools were also put in place.

⁹⁷ In 1951 the Soviet state granted the *kholhoz* in Korten 5507 hectares of land (Novakov 1966:29).

⁹⁸ Shock worker.

⁹⁹ Labour hero.

¹⁰⁰ This symbolic identity bears the name of Stakhanov, a famous Russian miner, who in August 1935 over-fulfilled by 14 times the daily norm of work. A Stakhanov movement developed to stimulate labour productivity in different sectors of the economy.