

Yaroslav KICHUK*
Tetyana SHEVCHUK**

**PUBLIC MOVEMENT OF THE NATIONAL MINORITIES IN BUDZHAK
POLIETHNIC SOCIETY AS A FACTOR OF INTERCULTURAL
INTERACTION (PERIOD OF INDEPENDENT UKRAINE)**

- Abstract -

The article deals with the revival of civil society institutions, cultural activities of national minorities and people-to-people diplomacy of national and cultural public organizations in Budzhak – the Ukrainian region, located between the Dniester and the Danube deltas, bordering on Romania and Moldova. A significant increase in ethnic consciousness, as well as a sharp focus of regional communities on the preservation and development of their national languages and cultural traditions has been observed in the territory of the Budzhak frontier since the late 1980s. The imperative for the development of the Ukrainian post-imperial transformational society in Budzhak has been the synergy of activities of the Albanian, Bulgarian, Gagauze, German, Greek, Jew, Polish, Romanian (Moldovan), Russian, Ukrainian etc. national minorities with the purpose of developing their language and culture (traditions, rituals and beliefs, art and song, folk crafts) and preserving the cultural identity of their ethnic groups. To gain mutual understanding in interethnic relations, the representatives of national diasporas, together with the local educational establishments, take great pains to create optimal conditions for the development of all national minorities, pay enormous attention to educational activities aimed at raising the historical memory of the peoples of Budzhak, promote intercultural dialogue and tolerance as necessary prerequisites for living in multicultural society.

Keywords: national minorities; development of local communities; civil society institutions; national and cultural public organizations; non-

* Izmil State University of Humanities, Ukraine (izmayil@ukr.net), ORCID: 0000-0003-0931-1211.

** Izmil State University of Humanities, Ukraine (shevchukat2@gmail.com), ORCID: 0000-0001-7486-8521, Scopus ID: 57203762706.

governmental organizations (NGOs); people-to-people diplomacy; polyethnic region; intercultural dialogue.

Introduction

Since ancient times, humanity has appreciated understanding of one's own involvement in the "historical code of the nation". The philosophical and anthropological groundwork of modern scholars gives reason to claim that what they have designated is largely understood in the context of the phenomenology of identity. In particular, it is considered to be those existential factors that unite the national society. One of these factors is the active work of "people-to-people diplomacy" of national and cultural public associations in the system of progressive development of civil society institutions. Taking into account the purely regional vector of what has been outlined, it is the peculiarity of a polyethnic region that draws attention, one of which is the southwestern area of Odesa region, better known among historians as Budzhak. An analysis of the research conducted in this respect confirms the validity of such a generalization: it is in such a multi-ethnic region that interaction, in particular, of ethnic, aesthetic and national identities, is quite evident.

The Problem Statement

Currently, the vector outlined above is of great interest in terms of developing a national strategy for cross-border cooperation between the residents of the region.

It should be noted that in contrast to the processes of globalization of the postmodern era in the political, social and economic life in the pan-European space, the public movement for the particularization of ethnic consciousness has been formed and is rapidly developing in order to preserve the foundations of national identity. The problems of the interaction of the universal and regional, local and state, between integration and fragmentation, universalisation and particularization, mass and original culture, have determined the specifics of the contemporary cultural and political framework.

After the revival of Ukraine's independence in 1991, one of the manifestations of public activity in development of local communities, was the creation of civil society institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), national and cultural public organizations, their number is steadily increasing. The collapse of the USSR gave a powerful impetus to the building of democracy and civil society as a strategic course for the country's development. Ethnic factor played a significant role in this

process, as Ukraine has historically emerged as a multinational state with a distinct confessional liberalism. It is quite natural that the greatest activity is taking place in the border territories, one of which is Budzhak, a Ukrainian region located between the Dniester and Danube delta at the borders with Romania and Moldova. Alternative names for the region are the Ukrainian Danube region, Southern Bessarabia, the Danube-Prut-Dnistrovskiyi inter-river region, Southern Odesa region. They coexist in scientific and popular usage.

Since the late 1980s, on the territory of the Budzhak Frontier there has been a marked increase in ethnic consciousness with a sharp focus on regional communities for the preservation and development of their national languages and cultural traditions. Therefore, the imperative for the development of the Ukrainian post-imperial transformation society was the synergy of activities of national and cultural societies – public associations formed with the purpose of developing their language and culture (traditions, ceremonies and beliefs, song and dance art, ethnic clothing and folk crafts) in order to preserve the cultural identity of their ethnic groups, the formation of cultural dialogue and tolerance.

A large number of public organizations of regional national associations were formed in Odesa region, where representatives of many nationalities historically settle. Thus, according to the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine¹ in the south of Odesa region, representatives of the largest national communities are localized: Albanians, Bulgarians, Gagauzes, Germans, Greeks, Jews, Poles, Romanians (Moldovans), Russians, Ukrainians, etc. This circumstance led to the fact that most non-governmental public organizations (NGOs) of Budzhak ethnic groups operate in regional centers of Odesa region (Artsyz, Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiyi, Bolhrad, Izmail, Kiliia, Reni etc.) and the regional center – Odesa.

Statement of the basic material in the context of Research Analyses

In this article we detail the peculiarity of the activities, in particular, of the most powerful national and cultural organizations of Budzhak.

Experts have found that before the collapse of the USSR, the processes of creating national and cultural organizations of Bessarabian Romanians were intensified. The activists P. Grozavu, T. Iordakesku, G. Kapsamun, V. Kozhokaru, A. Kokosh, D. Hashdeu, and others sought to mobilize Romanian communities, inspired by the progressive ideas of reviving national culture in communication with

¹State Committee of Statistics of Ukraine: The number and composition of the population of Odessa region according to the results of the All-Ukrainian Population Census in 2001:<http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/rus/results/general/nationality/odesa/>

the Danube and Sea Cultural Society, which was created in 1990 for Romanians from Budzhak. Together with the representatives of the all-Ukrainian public organization “Christian Democratic Alliance of Ukrainian Romanians”, in 1991 they initiated the opening of a Branch of the Christian Democratic Alliance of Bessarabian Romanians under the head of D. Hashdeu. He facilitated the opening of a Romanian Branch at Izmail State Pedagogical Institute, the establishment of a Romanian language and literature office there, the replenishment of library funds, the organization of internships for teachers and students in Romania.

The most emotional were the first meetings of the Romanian community of Budzak with like-minded people and the first trips to Romania after the fall of the Iron Curtain. At that time, partnerships were established with the universities “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, “Danubius”, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, a public organization “M. Kogelnichanu” of the Association of “Astra”, Romanian Institute of Culture, “Karol I” Museum of Brăila, the General Association of Teachers of Romania (AGIRo), the General Association of Teachers of the Republic of Moldova (AGIRoMd), who continue to cooperate with public organizations of Budzhak and Izmail State University of Humanities where pro-Ukrainian projects are being implemented.

The activities of the historical and ethnographic club of students and youth “Istros” have significant cultural achievements. This club was founded by the famous local historian, a public figure V. Kozhokaru, director of the Local History Museum in Reni. An archeologist, historian, writer and educator, he has been able to rally around young people who volunteered to take part in archeological excavations on the banks of Lakes Kagul and Yalpus that are rich in amazing finds from the past. The most significant of them are devoted to the study of the ancient crossing over the Danube to the village of Novosil'ske, Roman epigraphy associated with this site and the ancient ramparts of the Danube-Dnistrovskyi inter-rivers. As the researchers, V. Kozhokaru, in collaboration with professor P. Karyshkovskyi, point out, there was published a unique epigraphic memoir dedicated to Jupiter from the centurion Aurelius of the first Italian Legion, found on Satu Nou Peninsula near the remains of a Roman road. It is interesting to note that thanks to this inscription we were able to find out that on the northeast coast of Lake Kartal in the first centuries BC there was a Roman fortified point that served as protection for the crossing of the Danube and was part of the Lower Danube limes². Under the direction of V. Kozhokaru, the Istros club searchers

²Agulnikov, S. (2010). Memory of a friend. *Revista Archeologica*. Vol. VI. No. 1. P. 209-211.

founded the Ethnographic Museum “Danubius” at the Lyceum School of the village of Novoselskoie, which included a collection of archeological finds and ethnographic materials of Reni district.

In the above mentioned context, the attention is drawn to the activity of the national and cultural Romanian association “Bessarabia”, which was registered in 2006 in the village of Utkonosivka (Izmail district). Its first activists were the representatives of the creative team of the folk ensemble “Dor Basarabean” of Utkonosivka House of Culture (O. Babaian, S. Buluchevskiy, A. Popesku, V. Popesku, M. Popesku, O. Toncha and others). In connection with the above mentioned, the attention is paid to the scientific exploration of professor L. Tsyganenko *Odessa Regional Association “Bessarabia”: features of Formation and Activity* (2012), where the author specified that the purpose of the organization was to promote the preservation, revival, development and popularization of the national culture of Bessarabian Romanians and the Romanian language, protection of national and cultural interests of the members of the association. During the following years, the association “Bessarabia” initiated and organized numerous social and cultural events, such as grand concerts and festivals, annual participation of students in the international school Olympiad in the Romanian language, conferences of the Romanian community of Odesa and others³.

A powerful impetus for the consolidation of the Romanian community of Budzak was the initiation of Izmail State University of Humanities administration to open the Romanian Information Center at the university in 2016, which is currently coordinated by N. Ursu. The Center was established with the support of the Romanian Consulate General in Odesa (E. Rapcha) with the aim of strengthening Ukrainian and Romanian friendly relations, informing about major events in the social, economic, cultural, educational and public spheres of Romania as a member state of the European Union, conducting cultural events, promoting the Romanian language, culture and European civilization, coordinating good-neighbourhood policy and cross-border cooperation between Ukraine and Romania.

As part of the development of educational activities, the Center's specialists facilitated the organization of training in the framework of a joint agreement between Izmail State University of Humanities and the “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați on a double diploma programmes, holding events to celebrate national holidays, annual Young Talent Festivals, etc. Free Romanian language courses are open to everyone at the Izmail State University of Humanities.

³Tsyganenko, L. (2013). *Odessa Regional Association “Bessarabia”: features of formation and activity*: <http://oldconf.neasmo.org.ua/node/1751>

Another important area of the activity of the Center is the organization and holding of annual scientific conferences (in particular, the conference “Limba, cultura și identitatea românească în sudul Basarabiei istorice”). A separate direction of the cultural and educational activity of the Romanian Information Center was to hold an annual festival of the Romanian-language poetry in order to progressively develop the creative personalities of poets, to discover and support young talents, to present new editions of the Ukrainian Romanian-language fiction. The successful result of the work on uniting the poets of Budzhak was the registration of the poets’ organization “Echo of Budzhak” (2019) and participation of specialists of the Center in the project of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine “Regional Literature and Painting of Ethnic Groups of the Ukrainian Danube Region as a Means of the Formation of Collective Identity of the Local Socium” (the head – professor T. Shevchuk).

The Bessarabian Romanians, graduates of Izmail State University of Humanities, with the support of the Center of National Cultures of the Ukrainian Danube Region, have set up such public organizations as G. Muzychesku Association of Romanians in Izmail, “Gaudeamus”, “Romanian Information Center”.

The study and analysis of the cultural and educational activities of the Bulgarians of Budzhak show that the first unofficial organizations of Bessarabian Bulgarians were formed in Sofia in 1944 from among the Bulgarian repatriates who fled the same year to their historical homeland⁴.

Cyril and Methodius Society became one of the first official non-governmental organizations of Bessarabian Bulgarians. It was represented by A. Dymytrova, P. Marharyt, M. Todorov, V. Stoianov and others. On May 24, 1987, the first Cyril and Methodius Conference for Bulgarian public figures was held in Izmail. The best ideas were presented in the printed editions “The Bulgarian Voice”, “The Bell”, “999”. The latter bore a symbolic digital name through the law on the circulation of unlicensed publications, which should not exceed 1000 copies.

After the collapse of the USSR, strong support for the Bulgarian diaspora in Budzhak was provided by the authorities of the Republic of Bulgaria, represented by Consul General R. Dzhamdzhiev, the head of the Agency for Bulgarians Abroad, G. Danailov, as well as Bulgarian patriots (M. Karaivanov, M. Stoiev, etc.), who encouraged Ukrainian-Bulgarian educational projects.

⁴See more details: Tetyana Shevchuk & Alexander Kara (2019). NGOs of Bessarabian Bulgarians and their Activities in Cultural Sphere. *Journal of Danubian Studies and Research*: Vol. 9. Issue No 2. Galați. P. 238-248.

In 1990 the “Rodoliubets” (Patriot) Public Association (Sofia) was registered in Bulgaria. Its activity was focused on establishing cultural ties with compatriots of Budzhak, Moldova, Tavriia, Kazakhstan and Siberia, as well as informing the general community about the life of the Bulgarian diaspora in the USSR. Today, at the initiative of this association, annual conferences and round-table discussions, creative workshops are held, the almanac “Rodoliubets” (“Patriot”) has been published. In the early 1990s, the first cultural events were held in Bolhrad, where the progressive ideas of independence of the Ukrainian statehood, the revival of the Bulgarian culture in Ukraine, and the successful intergration of Ukrainian citizens of Bulgarian origin were discussed.

In parallel with the development of the regional public movement, the Odesa Regional Bulgarian Society (1989) was founded, which in the same year established the newspaper “RodenKrai” (“Native Land”) and since 1990 it has initiated a cycle of Bulgarian-language radio and television broadcasts. In the independent Ukraine, the Bulgarian national movement became more active. Collections of poetry and prose of Bessarabian and Tavriian Bulgarians P. Burlak-Volkanov, I. Volkov, M. Khadzhyiskyi, T. Stoianov and others have been published. In 1993 the Association of the Bulgarians of Ukraine was established. Centers of Bulgarian culture opened in Bolhrad (1997), Odesa (1999). In September 1998 the first assembly of the Bulgarians of Ukraine was held in Odesa, which became a permanent and vibrant ethno-festival in the cultural life of Odesa region. Since 2002, the Association of the Bulgarians of Ukraine has established the Person of the Year award. Those who become the laureates of this award are annually nominated by various public organizations and have made significant contributions to the development of the Bulgarian culture: teachers, artists, musicians, sportsmen, cultural workers, entrepreneurs-patrons, including the citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria who support the cultural movement of the Bulgarians of Ukraine⁵.

Currently, close to hundreds of public organizations, non-governmental organizations of Bulgarians operate in Odesa, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kropyvnytskyi, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv regions and in the Crimea. In Odesa region the most active are the following public organizations: “Bulgarian National Assembly” (Odesa), “Congress of the Bulgarians of Ukraine” (Odesa), “Cyril and Methodius Society” (Bolhrad), “Khan Asparuh” (Bolhrad), “Hristo Botev” (Izmail), “Rodnini” (Izmail), “Saint Sophia” (Izmail) and others.

⁵See more details: *Cultural Space of Bessarabian Bulgarians*. (2018). Bolhrad: Irbis. P. 189-195.

Their activity is focused on the issues of the development and preservation of the culture, language and traditions of the Bulgarian diaspora in Ukraine: opening of Sunday national schools; preservation and multiplication of historical monuments; holding congresses, festivals, exhibitions; honoring the memory of national heroes; celebration of state holidays and memorable dates, revival of unique national traditions; development of social and cultural ties with the Republic of Bulgaria.

A memorial plaque and a monument to General I. Kolev in the parents' home of the hero of Bulgaria, born in the village of Beniassa (Banivka village, Bolhrad district), a monument to the Bulgarian militias killed in the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878 (Bolhrad, 2012), a memorial stone with a memorial plaque to O. Malinov in the village of Pandaklia (Orikhivka village, Bolhrad district, 2017) on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of this prominent Bulgarian politician have been opened at official cultural events of recent years. Another resonant event of 2017 was the opening of the monument to the Chief Trustee and Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Colonists, General I. Inzov, in Bolhrad.

Experts claim that it is legitimate to believe that a specialized boarding school "Bolhrad G. Rakovskiyi Gymnasium" has become one of the main educational centers of the Bulgarians of Ukraine. Here study not only children from Bolhrad and Bolhrad district, but also children from other areas where Bulgarian-speaking families live compactly. It is known that the gymnasium was founded in 1858 at the expense of the Moldovan statesman of Bulgarian origin N. Vogoride. This educational institution is under the patronage of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria, since its inception it has been training base for the national liberation and state building of Bulgaria: future Prime Ministers (D. Hrekov, O. Malinov), ministers (D. Ahura, H. Zghurov, I. Titorov, I. Salabashev, etc.), an academician and the first rector of Sofia University O. Teodorov-Balan, generals (D. Nikolaiev, G. Todorov, etc.) and other prominent figures of science, culture and politics (D. Kazakov, I. Wulpe, etc.).

Scientific and publishing activities are of great importance for the public organizations of the Bulgarians of Ukraine. With the assistance of the Odesa Regional State Administration and within the framework of the ethno festival "All-Ukrainian Convocation of Bulgarians", the international scientific conference "Bulgarians of the Northern Black Sea Region" is annually held, with the relevant materials being issued. The publication of the collective monograph "Budzhak: Historical and Ethnographic Sketches of the Peoples of the South-Western Districts

of Odessa Region”⁶ proved to become a striking event. In this monograph a significant place is given to the history and culture of Bulgarian resettlers. Scientific events are an integral part of the work of specialized departments at Izmail State University of Humanities and “I. Mechnikov” National University from Odessa. To honour the 140th anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria, the scientists of these universities prepared the collective monograph “Cultural Space of Bessarabian Bulgarians” (2018) with the financial support of M. Ivanov, the head of the Izmail St. Sophia organization of Bulgarians, and V. Kurtiev, the famous Bessarabian philanthropist⁷.

On May 24, 2019, Izmail State University of Humanities presented the book *Documents and Materials on the History of the Bulgarians of Southern Bessarabia*, created by the team of their historians (associate professor V. Drozdov, S. Maidanevych, N. Moroshan) and published in the town of Izmail shortly before Slavic Writing and Culture Day. A free Sunday Bulgarian school for Budzhak children has also been functioning at this university for two years.

Academic specialists in history have proved that, together with Bulgarians, Greeks resettled to the lands of Budzhak, compactly living within the territory of the Bulgarian lands of that time. In the modern era, in 2002, the Izmail Hromada “Ellada” (Hellas Society) public organization was registered under the permanent chairmanship of the Ukrainian Greek T. Mitaki, a public figure, activist and talented artist. The Izmail Hellas Society is a member of the Federation of Greek Societies of Ukraine, which at the present stage of its existence solves the following main tasks: the development of Greek societies through the study of the language, the popularization of the Greek culture, traditions, the formation of Ukrainian Greeks’ national identity and high spirituality, the deepening of Ukrainian and Greek relationships.

Despite the very large-scale Greek resettlement of the era of the ancient colonization of the Northern Black Sea Region, Budzhak is an almost sacred place in the context of the ancient Greek culture. On Zmiinyi island (Serpent Island), which is located in a 35-kilometer zone from the Danube Delta in the territorial waters of the Black Sea of Ukraine, there was one of the oldest ancient temples with the cult of Achilles Pontarches (Lord of the Sea) with an oracle, which indicated its extremely high status. With the spread of Christianity, the temple of Achilles was abandoned and forgotten. The names of the island changed as well: Levka island

⁶*Budzhak: Historical and Ethnographic Sketches of the Peoples of the South-Western Districts of Odessa Region* (2014). Odessa-Izmail: SMIL.

⁷*Cultural Space of Bessarabian Bulgarians* (2018). Bolhrad: Irbis.

(White, Λευκός), Filoksiia (Hospitable, Φιλόξια), Blessed island (Μακάρων), Fidonisi (Serpent, Φίδονισι). In the era of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish name of Zmiinyi island was Ilan-Ada (Yılan Adası), and its Romanian name was Sherpilor (Șerpilor). Romanian folk songs, recorded in the communities of Brăila, Banat, Constanța, RâmnicuSărat, Ciubanca and other counties⁸, saved interesting testimonies of the masses about the mysterious temple on the sacred island, which was named in the songs as “a big Church of nine altars” (“Biserica cea mare cu 9 altare”), or “the monastery of Gods” (“Mănăstirea Domnilor”)⁹. The scientific study of Zmiinyi island mysteries of the Greek colonization era is still waiting for its researchers on the part of archaeologists, historians, and folklorists.

Scientists have proved that Budzhak and the town of Izmail played an important role in the national revival of Greece in the course of its new history. In 1814, the secret revolutionary Filiki Eteria (Friendly Society) Greek organization was founded in Odesa. In 1820, it was in Izmail where O. Ipsilanti and D. Ipsilanti, its leaders and ideological inspirers, developed a plan for the national-liberation uprising in Greece. Therefore, the Izmail Hromada Ellada public organization is an important mediator in the implementation of the plans of the Consulate General of Greece in Odesa to name the central alley of Hretskyi (Greek) Square in Izmail in honor of Prince O. Ipsilanti and to establish a bust of the hero of Greece in 2020 already, i.e. on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the historic sitting of the secret meeting of the members of the national-liberation Filiki Eteria Greek Society.

On March 15, 2019, Izmail State University of Humanities hosted the All-Ukrainian scientific and practical conference with the international participation “Ukraine – Greece: Historical Reflections”. The conference was organized by Izmail State University of Humanities and the Izmail Branch of the Union of Area Studies Specialists of Ukraine. The conference was attended by more than 60 participants, including the representatives of higher education institutions from different regions of Ukraine, state archives, museums, Consul General of Greece in Odesa, Director of the Greek Cultural Foundation of Odesa and members of the Greek Hellas Society of Izmail. At the plenary session, the presentation of the book *Documents and Materials on the History of the Bulgarians of Southern Bessarabia* was held, the

⁸Teodorescu, D. (1885). *Poesii populare române*. București. Editura “Tipografia modernă” G. Luis.; Densușianu, N. (1913). *Dacia Preistorică*. București. Editura Arhetip. 2002-reprint.

⁹See more details: Shevchuk, T. (2015). The Legends of the Serpent Island in the Danube Delta. *Journal of Danubian Studies and Research*. Vol. 5. Issue No 2. Galați. P. 139-153.

compilers of which are such university scientists as professor L. Tsyganenko, associate professor V. Drozdov and associate professor L. Chorna.

The Greek Society of Izmail actively participates in the cultural life of the city, unites and inspires the Greek community of the region, contributes to the restoration of its historical memory and national traditions.

Early 2004 evidenced the intensification of the activities of the Polish community and national-cultural societies. In particular, the “Polish House – Kuiava Society”, was registered in Izmail under the permanent chairmanship of the public activist M. Lukashova. The goal of this public organization is to maintain Polish traditions among the local population with ethnic Polish roots, to teach the younger generation the Polish language and culture. In the town of Izmail there is the Polish Roman Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, founded in the middle of the 19th century. In the Soviet period, it was used as a gym, but in 1996 it was given back to the small Roman Catholic religious community. Educational events for the Polish community of Budzhak are held on the basis of this church.

The analysis of regional mass media publications shows that among the achievements of this public organization is establishing business contacts with Polish diplomatic institutions, exchanging cultural values with the twin city of Vlotslavec (Włocławek, Poland), holding annual festive Polish Culture Days in Izmail (since 2006), during which exhibitions of photographic and graphic art are traditionally arranged in the Izmail Art Gallery, poetry readings and other cultural events are held.

According to local researchers, public organizations of Bessarabian Germans have been particularly active lately. It was established that by 1940 more than 500 colonies had been founded within the territory of *present-day* Odesa region, about 150 – in Budzhak. According to the latest official census, 3,778 Germans lived in Odesa region.

In 2006, in the city of Studgard (Stuttgart, Germany), the Bessarabian Germans Association (Bessarabien deutsche Verein)¹⁰ was registered on the basis of the amalgamation of such public organizations as “Landsmannschaft”, “Hilfskomitee” and “Heimatmuseum”, founded immediately after the deportation of Bessarabian Germans on the threshold of World War II.

As of 2018, the number of the Bessarabian Germans Association members totaled 1900 people. The scope of their public interests includes documenting the history, culture and traditions of their ancestors, restoring historical monuments and

¹⁰The official website: <https://www.bessarabien.de/index.php>

the material heritage of Bessarabian Germans. The lifestyle, customs and beliefs, the literary heritage and the political background of the era of the German colonization of Budzhak are studied by German historians, ethnographers and area studies specialists, and the citizens interested can enjoy the excursions to the south of Odesa region.

It should be noted that German settlements were located mainly within *present-day* Tarutino, Sarata and Artsyz districts of Odesa region. A significant part of Germans lived in the regional center of Odesa. Ukraine having gained its independence, the process of the national revival of the descendants of the German colonists, who for one reason or another had remained in Odesa region, began. In 1989, the Odesa regional German national and cultural society, named "Vidrodzhennia (Revival)" (Wiedergeburt), was founded. At the stage of its formation, the first results of the activities of the "Vidrodzhennia" public organization manifested themselves in the opening of German Sunday School in Odesa, the official registration of the Evangelical Lutheran community (1990) and the lengthy process of restoring the architectural pearl of Odesa, namely St. Paul's Lutheran Church (1825), which lasted throughout the 1990-2010 period at the expense of charitable contributions from Lutheran communities. In the framework of the agreement on cultural cooperation between Ukraine and Germany (1993), the first German language teachers arrived in Odesa from Germany to work in Sunday and secondary schools, the "Bavarian House" Cultural Center was opened.

Another important vector of the "Vidrodzhennia" public organization activities is to carry out powerful social work to assist the descendants of the German colonists who suffered from repressions, to search for and provide information about the Germans who were repressed and deported to Kazakhstan and Siberia. In particular, they organize the activities to study the mother tongue lost by ethnic Germans, a volunteer movement to provide social assistance to elderly and single residents of German descent. The activists of this organization have prepared a series of television programmes about prominent figures of Odesa region of German origin, they deliver public lectures on the contribution of German colonists to the development of Odesa region, have developed excursion programmes, conduct fruitful cooperation with scientific and educational centres and charitable foundations of Germany, have launched the Internet resource "Portal of Ukrainian Germans"¹¹.

In the town of Tarutino, where in 1814 the first German colony was founded in Budzhak, in 2008 the social activist S. Kruk registered the "Bessarabian House

¹¹Portal of Ukrainian Germans: <http://deutsche.in.ua/>

German Cultural Center” public organization, which nowadays fruitfully implements charitable educational and social projects. In 2003, in the city of Izmail, the “German House” Cultural Society was organized, the activity of which is aimed at reviving and popularizing the history and culture of the ethnic Germans of Budzhak. The enormous scientific work has been done to study the history of the German colonists. The books by E. Plesskaia-Zebold, *Odesa Germans* (1990), *Black Sea Region Germans* (2008), O. Yungmaister, *Prisoners of War Interned in Ukraine and Odesa Region, 1944-1951* (2007), U. Shmidt, *Bessarabia. German Colonists in the Black Sea Region* (2012), etc. have already been published.

In recent years, the efforts of the Bessarabian Germans Association, higher educational institutions of Odesa Region (Izmail State University of Humanities and “I. Mechnikov” National University of Odessa) and Germany (HeorgHoldshtain-Shule Higher Commercial School in the town of Bad-Urakh (Georg Goldstein-Schule, Bad Urach) have been successful and a number of joint projects have been implemented. Among them, in particular, are: “Origin and Homeland. Historical Memory – the Future of Europe” (2016), “Budzhak” (2017), “Landscape and People” (2018), “Leaving Homeland – Finding Homeland” (2019). The results of project activities were discussed in the course of scientific events at Izmail State University of Humanities: the round-table discussion “Germans of Bessarabia: Language, History, Culture” (2018), the scientific and practical conference “Cross-Cultural Code of the Danube Region: Historical and Linguistic Research” (2019), etc.

In order to implement the advanced training programme for teachers and to develop the professional education of students from August 19 to 23, 2019, the scientific workshop “Communicative Strategies of the German Language and Modern German Discourse” was held at Izmail State University of Humanities with the support of the “Georg Goldstein-Schule” Higher Commercial School (Bad Urach, Germany) and the Izmail “German House” Cultural Society, which in 2018 won the grant competition with an interregional project in the field of ethnoculture “Material Culture of the German Population of the South of Bessarabia”. The German language courses are available in the Continuing Education Center at Izmail State University of Humanities.

Also, the activization of the social movement of Albanians is of particular relevance in Budzhak. The Albanian public movement was started by the “Rilindiiia” (Revival) public organization which was founded in 1993 in order to preserve language and culture and to establish cultural relations with Albania. All members of the organization come from one settlement – the village of Karakurt, Bolhrad

district of Odesa region, founded in 1811 by ethnic Albanians. There are only four villages in Ukraine with ethnic Albanians living in them: the village of Karakurt of Odesa region and also such villages of Zaporizhzhia region, whose activists joined the Union of the Albanians of Ukraine (2016) with the aim of reviving, preserving and developing national and cultural traditions of the Albanian people, promoting the strengthening of cultural and economic ties between Ukraine and Albania, protecting political and cultural economic rights of the Albanians of Ukraine.

It should be noted that the Izmail “Obor Shiptar” (Albanian Court) Albanian Community is the youngest national and cultural public organization of Budzhak (2018). On the basis of Izmail State University of Humanities, the activists of this organization, together with the Union of the Albanians of Ukraine, have managed to implement a number of projects: on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Albania the scientific and practical conference “Albania and Albanians: History, Ethnography and Modernity” (2018) and the round-table discussion “On the Pages of the History of the Albanian Flag” (2018) were held, as well as the scientific and practical conference “Preservation and Development of the Historical and Cultural Heritage of Albanian Ukrainians: Problematic Issues and the Ways to Solve Them” (2019), dedicated to the birthday of the national hero of Albania H. Skanderbei. In the same 2019, the Izmail Art Gallery held the exhibition of Ukrainian and Albanian culture with a display of articles of decorative and applied arts and paintings by local Albanians. As evidenced in practice, the village of Karakurt hosts traditional ethnic festivals on St. George's Day with performances by folk groups and village vocal and choreographic groups “Koloryt” and “Rilindii”, and numerous delegations visit the village, with vivid excursion programmes being organized for them.

For the time being, in order to harmonize Ukrainian and Albanian relations and to popularize the Albanian culture in Budzhak, it is planned to create an Information Center of Albania on the basis of Izmail State University of Humanities in 2020. Under the auspices of the Information Center of Albania, officially opened at Izmail State University of Humanities, and together with the Albanian community, it is planned to implement the following projects:

- holding the international scientific and practical conference “Albanians of the Ukrainian Danube Region: Revival of Historical Memory as a Prerequisite for Preserving the Nation” with the organization of the corresponding thematic photo exhibition;

- publishing a multilingual thematic dictionary (Ukrainian, Albanian, Russian, Bulgarian, Gagauz and the Karakurt dialect of the Albanian language);

- publishing the textbook *Grammar of the Albanian Language for Primary School Pupils*, collections of works *Folklore, Customs and Traditions of the Albanians of the Village of Karakurt*;

- introducing courses for schoolchildren (“Albanian Literature”, “Learning the Albanian Language”, “History of My Ancestors”, “Cultural Traditions of the Albanian People”) and for students (“History of the Emergence and Formation of the Albanian Ethnic Community in Ukraine”, “Albanian Language and Culture”) into the educational process;

- publishing the pupils’ collections of creative works *Tales for Babies and Games of Our Ancestors* (in the Karakurt dialect of the Albanian language);

- carrying out the ethnographic expedition “Albanian Paths throughout the Territory of Modern Ukraine”;

- opening free courses of the Albanian language and Sunday school for children.

A priority role at the present stage of the development of national societies in the multicultural environment of Budzhak is played by the regional public organization “Bessarabia Development Center”. This organization, which promotes the revival of spiritual values and cultural heritage, attracting direct investment, supports social and economic projects aimed at innovative dynamic development of social capital and infrastructure of the south of Odessa region, has united the active efforts of progressive different nationality representatives – businessmen, community leaders, heads of the villages, educators, scientists, sportsmen, journalists, public figures, and more.

Only in the recent year in the field of intercultural interaction development, the “Bessarabia Development Center” activists in the south of Budzhak opened an innovative IT center and creative co-working, held 5 scientific and practical conferences at Izmail State University of Humanities, launched an archeological expedition in the village of Kartal (Orlivka village, Reni district), supported more than 800 talented students and organized the international festivals “The Danube Sich” in Izmail and “Bessarabia Folk” in the village of Chiysheya (Horodnie village, Bolhrad district), published three books on the history of Southern Bessarabia, filmed the documentary “The Place of Power”, began organizing the first in Budzhak modern ethnographic museum in the village of Chushmelii (Krynichne village, Bolhrad district), held the Bessarabian Sports Games event, developed a number of cross-border social and economic projects.

Conclusions

For the purpose of social consolidation, formation of civic culture, national identity, affirmation of interethnic harmony in the multicultural environment, strengthening of unity of different nationality representatives at Izmail State University of Humanities – the only state institution of higher education of Budzhak – the activities of the Center for Civic Education and the Center of National Cultures of the Ukrainian Danube Region were organized. Thus, in order to intensify the pro-Ukrainian initiatives of national and cultural institutes of civil society, to introduce an effective system of civic education of the population, to develop national and patriotic education, to form an active civic position of children and youth, the Center for Civic Education was established in 2016. In order to develop civic education and popularize Ukrainian culture, the University administration initiated the opening of Ukrainian university information centers and pro-Ukrainian Internet resources in Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania. This initiative contributes to the dissemination of objective information about current events in Ukraine among the university societies of these countries. For the purpose of harmonization and mutual understanding in interethnic relations of different nationality representatives living compactly in Budzhak, the Center of National Cultures of the Ukrainian Danube Region was established in 2016 on the basis of Izmail State University of Humanities. The University successfully operates relevant information centers of friendly to Ukraine foreign states, projects for national and cultural communities of the region (Albanian, Bulgarian, Gagauzian, German, Greek, Jewish, Polish, Romanian, etc.) are being implemented. In order to reduce the number of Budzhak youth who go to study and later emigrate to permanent residence in other countries, a free international university education program was launched at the Center for Continuing Education (established in 2015) and cross-border projects are currently being implemented, for example, the project “CBC-Practice Firms – An Innovative Methodology for Vocational Training and Educational Cooperation at the Bilateral Level Romania – Ukraine” (2020-2021). These centers are fully funded in accordance with the decision of the Academic Council from the university special fund. In fact, Izmail State University of Humanities plays the role of the ambassador of Ukraine in cross-border cooperation through active cultural people-to-people diplomacy, strategic research on international topics, academic exchanges and progressive projects.

Thus, the social and cultural activities of civil society institutions, public organizations of Budzhak play an important role in the multicultural education of local residents. Indeed, people-to-people diplomacy of representatives of national

diasporas in the south of Ukraine accumulates ideas aimed at creating optimal conditions for satisfying their needs and interests in the field of the development of culture, education, art, tourism etc.

The prospects for further research center around the development of scientific investigation of the activities of youth associations that deal with the problems of raising the historical memory of the peoples of Budzhak, enriching their folk traditions as an important factor of the “code of nations”.

Bibliography

Agulnikov, S. (2010). Memory of a friend. *Revista Archeologica*. Vol. VI. No. 1. P. 209-211.

Budzhak: Historical and Ethnographic Sketches of the Peoples of the South-Western Districts of Odessa Region. Odessa-Izmail: SMIL. 2014. 744 p.

Cultural Space of Bessarabian Bulgarians. Ed. by Tetyana Shevchuk. Bolhrad: Irbis, 2018.

Densușianu, N. (1913). *Dacia Preistorică*. București. Editura Arhetip. 2002-reprint. 1152 p.

Portal of Ukrainian Germans: <http://deutsche.in.ua/>

Shevchuk, T. (2015). The Legends of the Serpent Island in the Danube Delta. *Journal of Danubian Studies and Research*. Vol. 5. Issue No 2. Galați. P. 139-153.

Shevchuk, T. & Kara, A. (2019). NGOs of Bessarabian Bulgarians and their Activities in Cultural Sphere. *Journal of Danubian Studies and Research*. Vol. 9. Issue No 2. Galați. P. 238-248.

State Committee of Statistics of Ukraine: *The number and composition of the population of Odessa region according to the results of the All-Ukrainian Population Census in 2001*: <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/rus/results/general/nationality/odessa/>

Teodorescu, D. (1885). *Poesii populare române*. București. Editura “Tipografia moderna” G. Luis. 719 p.

The official website: <https://www.bessarabien.de/index.php>

Tsyganenko, L. (2013). *Odessa Regional Association “Bessarabia”*: features of formation and activity: <http://oldconf.neasmo.org.ua/node/1751>