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**CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE BULGARIANS
FROM THE UKRAINIAN DANUBIAN REGION, AT THE BEGINNING OF
THE XXI-th CENTURY (BASED ON MATERIALS FROM THE
PERIODICALS)**

- Abstract -

The main forms of culturally-educational activities of the Bulgarians in the Ukrainian Danube region are investigated in this article, which is based on the materials provided by the periodicals. The Bulgarian ethnic communities work in extensive spreading education and printing publications in national language is paid particular attention to.

A significant activity of the Bulgarians of the Ukrainian Danube region was noted in various national organizations (cultural societies, gymnasiums, schools, folk museums). The role of the Bolgrad Grammar School in preserving and reviving of Bulgarian folk traditions, especially in the process of teaching in their native language, is analyzed. In the article cultural and educational activities of different local Bulgarian national groups, rural ethnographic museums, the role of sponsors for national development are examined. These activities were realized within the framework of state program of Ukrainian Danube region development and Odessa regional program "Regional initiative (2002-2006)". Materials of the regional periodicals testify a sufficiently high level of the Bulgarian national identity.

Keywords: the Ukrainian Danube region, the Bulgarian, ethnic community, periodicals, national revival.

The Ukrainian Danube region is the territory of residence and activities of several dozen peoples, including Bulgarians. While moving in a few waves to this territory at the end of the XVIII – the first half of the XIX century Bulgarians created here a large and rather well-organized diaspora.

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The gaining of Ukraine's independence in 1991 and the exit of the economic crisis in the very beginning of the XXI-st century created favorable conditions for the comprehensive development of national cultures. Their study, like the study of any other issue of the modern period, encounters certain difficulties with the source base. A huge array of documents which was not transferred to the archives is the property of various state and public structures, the access to which is sometimes difficult for historians. That is why the role of periodicals as open and accessible historical sources increases.

In addition, periodicals are also a subject of socio-cultural and socio-political process. Periodicals play an important role in the process of shaping and influencing on the consciousness of people. Periodicals are also a part of the national culture, so the cultural and historical development of national minorities is impossible without press research.

In modern Ukrainian historiography there is a stable interest of researchers to the problems of the regional periodicals functioning, peculiarities of periodicals as a historical source and the specifics of the material presentation. That is why the works of I. Grebtsova¹, V. Drozdov², M. Romanyuk³, V. Tserkovna⁴, L. Tsyganenko⁵ etc. are of a special interest.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the cultural and educational activities of Bulgarians in this period on the basis of regional periodic publications in the south of the Odessa region. The objects of study are various Bulgarian cultural societies, as well as the Bolgrad High School as one of the powerful centers for the formation of Bulgarian identity.

According to the results of the All-Ukrainian Population Census of 2001, the Bulgarians were the majority of the inhabitants of the Bolgrad district (46.6 thousand), in Izmail and Artsyz districts they were 14.1 thousand and 20.2 thousand respectively, in the Tarutinsky district – 17 thousand⁶.

¹ И. Гребцова, *Периодическая печать в общественном развитии Южного степного региона Российской империи (Вторая треть XIX в.)*, Одесса, 2002.

² V. Drozdov, *The Question of the Danube Principalities in European Diplomacy of the Second Half of 50's – 60's of the XIX-th Century (Based on Materials of the Russian Periodical Press)*, "Journal of Danubian Studies and Research", Vol. 3, №2, 2013, pp. 232 – 242.

³ М. Романюк, *Українська преса Північної Буковини (1870-1918 рр.)*, Львів, 1998.

⁴ В. Церковна, *Історія села Райлянка за матеріалами «Кишинівських спархіяльних відомостей»*, Красзнавство, № 1-2, 2015, pp.111-115.

⁵ Л. Цыганенко, *Болгарское население крепости и города Измаил (1810-1820 гг.)*, Південь України: етноісторичний, мовний, культурний та релігійний виміри: Збірка наукових праць, Одеса, Вип. 6, 2017, pp.402-407.

⁶ *Болгари в Україні*, Available at: <http://www.turkaramamotoru.com/uk/Болгари-в-Україні-53373.html>.

State national policy was aimed primarily at preserving interethnic harmony and the consistent development of peoples. For this purpose, the State Program for the Development of the Ukrainian Podunava and the Odessa Regional Program “Regional Initiative (2002-2006)”⁷ were developed. With the regional state administration’s provision of the conditions for the implementation by representatives of national groups of their economic, social rights and freedoms, the program puts forward the demand that the ethno-cultural identity should be preserved in every way, and that cultural and educational needs of the national communities are to be ensured.

In the years 2000-2005, In the Odessa region there was an intensification of national development, including the Bulgarian one. The existing forms and organizations continued to work, and new centers of education and culture of the Bulgarians of the Ukrainian Danube region were created.

One of the most important elements of national development is the preservation and full development of the native language. In December 1999, Ukraine ratified the European Charter for Regional Languages. Since the following year, the program for the development and use of state and native languages in educational institutions was put into effect. In villages inhabited mainly by Bulgarians, the Bulgarian language began to be studied from the second class⁸. Students of the G. Rakovski’s Bolgrad High School which resumed its work in 1993, began to study history, geography and culture of Bulgaria in their native language⁹. Also in the gymnasium, teachers from Bulgaria created an ensemble of Bulgarian folk dance and an orchestra of Bulgarian folk instruments.

Back in the 90’s of the XX century the Bolgrad Education Department began to work under long-term agreements with Bulgaria in the field of organizing summer holidays for children and teachers, the exchange of student and teacher delegations, and the professional retraining of district teachers in the universities of Varna, Gabrovo, and Sofia¹⁰. Students from the Bolgrad region took part in international folklore festivals and poetry competitions. In 2002, agreements were signed with the educational institutions of Dobrich, which allowed the students of the Bolgrad High School in May 2003 to visit not only Dobrich, but also Velikotirnovo, Sofia, the Bulgarian Black Sea resorts. An important stage of cooperation with Bulgaria was

⁷ Народный блок Литвина. Областная программа «Народная инициатива»: от инициативы региональной к инициативе народной, Одеські вісті, 2006, 11 бер. Available at: <http://izvestiya.odessa.ua/ru/2006/03/11/na-pravah-politicheskoy-reklamy-my-iz-naroda-s-narodom-i-dlya-naroda>.

⁸ С. Дмитриева, *Болгарское многоцветье*, Одесские известия, 2003, 15 июня.

⁹ Н. Ожогова, *Гимназия: болгарская или болгарская*, Одесские известия, 2000, 16 июня.

¹⁰ С. Дмитриева, *Болгарское многоцветье*, Одесские известия, 2003, 15 июня.

the work of the joint admissions committee, which carried out entrance examinations to Bulgarian universities. In 2003, one third of students from the Odessa region who received higher education in Bulgaria (123 people) were from the Bolgrad region.

Also, on the basis of the Bolgrad High School, a district association of teachers and students was created, “S`budjanie” (“Awakening”), whose goal was to actively promote the revival of national traditions. The problem of providing schools with educational, methodological and fiction literature in the Bulgarian language was solved up by the “Agency for Bulgarians on Foreigners”. About 20% of this literature was prepared by Odessa authors and published in Ukraine. In March 2002, a presentation of the Ukrainian-Bulgarian dictionary of the Kiev citizen of Bessarabian origin K. Potapenko, printed with the assistance of I. Plachkov, an immigrant from the village of Krinichnoye, was held in the gymnasium¹¹.

Considerable attention was paid by the Odessa Regional State Administration to the informational needs in the native language. The Bulgarian edition operated on the regional radio and television. The following periodics in the Bulgarian language were published in the region: “Roden Krai” as an addition to the newspaper “Golos Ukrainy”, “Bulgar Review”, “Rodolyubiye” (Artsyz)¹².

In the radio broadcast “Tsvetove” and the television program “Soglasie” the events of the ethno-cultural life of the region were covered¹³. A significant step in the development of interethnic relations in the Danube region was the creation of the Center of National Cultural Societies of the region on the basis of the Odessa Palace of students¹⁴.

National-cultural revival of national minorities and their identification was facilitated by museums. During this period, in almost all cities and villages of Danube region, national museums were created and operated. For example, in the village of Kamenka, the Izmail district there was opened a museum, where the exhibits and materials on the history of settlement and everyday life of Danube Bulgarians were collected. In general, in the Odessa region, there were more than 60 museums that reflected the history and culture of the Bulgarians and Gagauzians¹⁵.

One of the most important forms of participation of national minorities in public and cultural life was the activity of national-cultural societies, main task of which was to develop their native language, historical traditions and memory.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² І. Супруновський, *Міжетнічні відносини та міграційна ситуація в Одеській області*, Міграція, 2004, лютий, р.3.

¹³ *П'ять років разом*, Міграція, 2004, червень, р.3.

¹⁴ С. Лузанов, *Ради співробітництва в регіоне*, Собеседник Измаил, 2001, 30 мая, р.1.

¹⁵ А. Бондарева, *Много друзей не бывает*, Одесские известия, 2006, 23 августа, р.12.

Various national societies have developed basic organizational documents (program objectives, statutes) and formed leadership. They received permanent custody and support from the Ministry of Ukraine for Nationalities and Migrations. The desire for the creation and active activity of such societies symbolized a high level of national self-awareness and national self-identification.

In December 1997 in Bolgrad, the Odessa Regional Center of Bulgarian culture was opened, one of the main tasks of which was the revival of Bulgarian traditions, rituals and customs. The library of the Center at the beginning of the 2000 numbered more than 7 000 books in the Bulgarian language¹⁶. The library fund was formed with the active participation of numerous donators from Ukraine, Bulgaria, Moldova. A significant number of books were given by the Society of Bessarabian Bulgarians named after Saints Cyril and Methodius on the initiative of Bulgaria's Vice-President, Todor Kavaldjiev¹⁷. Note that such assistance from Bulgaria allowed to form libraries in the schools of the Bulgarian villages of Izmail, Bolgrad, Reni and Tatarbuniar districts. In addition, the Center also received books from the Association of Bulgarians of Ukraine (led by Anton Kissé) and from the General Consulate of Bulgaria in Odessa¹⁸.

The work of the Center was not limited by the creation of libraries. The Center initiated and conducted exhibitions of local artists and poets, arranged publication of its own books ("Bulgarian Bessarabia", "Hello, Bolgrad!"), Organized preparatory courses for those wishing to enter the universities of Ukraine and Bulgaria¹⁹. In the Center, historians of local lore I.Pushkov, S.Burlakov, V.Bovdev, L.Kara, L.Karacheban concentrated their activity in Odessa.

In the Bolgrad region, four more national-cultural public organizations operated during this period: the Society of Bessarabian Bulgarians named after Saints Cyril and Methodius (headed by N. Todorov), the publishing center "Academician Alexander Theodorov-Balan" (led by I. Pushkov)²⁰, cultural-educational society "Khan Asparukh" (head – V. Terzi) and the People's Library named after academician Alexander Teodorov-Balan²¹. Their activities were aimed at consolidating the Bulgarian population in order to preserve the national identity within the framework of the Constitution and the laws of Ukraine. A significant stage in the activities of Bulgarian societies was the publication of newspapers in Bulgarian, such as "999", "Svetlina", "Bulgaria", "Kambana".

¹⁶ А. Бондарева, *Много друзей не бывает*, Одесские известия, 2006, 23 августа, р.12.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Н. Ожогова, *Гимназия: болгарская или болгарская*, Одесские известия, 2000, 16 июня, р.3.

¹⁹ А. Бондарева, *Много друзей не бывает*, Одесские известия, 2006, 23 августа, р.12.

²⁰ А. Киссе, *Возрождение болгар Украины. Очерки*, Одесса, 2006, р.120.

According to the results of the 2001 census in Izmail, every tenth resident of the city called himself a representative of the Bulgarian ethnos, almost every fourth had Bulgarian roots²². There were two Bulgarian societies. The first – the name of Saints

Cyril and Methodius (leader – V. Petrov) – was founded in 1992. The majority of members of this society represented the “legal” and “economic” elite of the city, some worked in local government. They paid much attention to socio-economic, political, legal aspects of the life of national minorities in the region²³.

In May 2001, a Bulgarian society named after St. Sophia was established in Izmail. About 70 of its members were headed by D. Mirchev. The society almost immediately had two branches in the Izmail district: “Vzrazhdane” in the Kirnichki village and “Rodolyubets” in the Kamenka village²⁴.

The joint project of both companies was the opening in 2001 of the Sunday Bulgarian school. Here the main attention was paid to the study of the modern Bulgarian language and literature, the history and culture of the Bulgarian people.

The traditional form of the national and cultural life of any nation is vocal and choreographic art. In the period under study, the Bulgarian folk dance ensemble “Jasna e zorata” (head A. Genova) and the national vocal group “Vzrazhdane” (leader V. Karazhekov) from the Kirnichki village, folk dance ensemble “Raiduga” from the Kamenka village, the national vocal ensemble “Balgarka” (led by I. Shampol) and the trio “Otrada” from the Suvorovo village of the Izmail region, Folk song and dance ensemble “Izvor” (leader G. Selekov) from the Ogorodnoye village of Bolgradsky district worked fruitfully²⁵.

An analysis of the activities of the Bulgarian cultural societies of the early 21st century in the Ukrainian Danube region testifies that in a multinational state considerable attention was paid to national development and preservation of traditional ethnic culture. Integration processes, rapprochement and cooperation of representatives of different ethnic groups in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres had nothing to do with assimilation, as the peoples did not lose their identity, specific ethnic features, cultural heritage and spiritual values.

²¹ С. Дмитриева, *Болгарское многоцветье*, Одесские известия, 2003, 15 июня, р.3.

²² Н. Проданова, *Жизнь национальных громад*, Собеседник Измаила, 2003, 25 декабря, р.3.

²³ И. Таран, *Возрождение*, Придунайские вести, 2005, 3 сентября, р.4.

²⁴ Г. Богомолова, *Традиционный собор болгар*, Собеседник Измаила, 2003, 4 декабря, р.2.

²⁵ Я. Шатенов, *Соцветие «Бессарабского венка»*, Придунайские вести, 1997, 30 сентября, р.3.

Materials of the regional periodicals testify to a sufficiently high level of Bulgarian national identity, stable interest and active participation in the work of national cultural societies.

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