

# POLICY OF THE OTTOMAN AUTHORITY CONCERNING THE IMMIGRATION IN THE BULGARIAN LANDS OF THE NON-MUSLIM POPULATION FROM THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup>–19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES (UNTIL 1878)

Ventsislav Muchinov<sup>1</sup>

***Summary.** This article studies the problems related to the policy of the Ottoman authority concerning the immigration in the Bulgarian lands in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> century (until 1878) of non-Muslims (Christians and Jews) from the Habsburg (Austrian) Empire, the Russian Empire, the Danubian principalities of Walachia and Moldavia (Romania) and other European countries. The objectives pursued by the Sublime Porte with the reception and accommodation in the Bulgarian lands of European immigrants that are non-Muslims, the devices used by the Ottoman authority for implementing this policy and the achieved results are established.*

**Keywords:** historical-demographic development of Bulgarian lands during the Bulgarian Revival (18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries); immigration in the Bulgarian lands; migration policy of the Ottoman Empire

The Bulgarian historiography reports that in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman authority implemented policy for attracting and settling Muslim immigrants in the Bulgarian lands (most of all Tatars and Circassian) from the Northern Black Sea region, Crimea and Caucasus<sup>2</sup>. It is not widespread knowledge that during the same period the Sublime Porte undertook actions for attracting non-Muslim inhabitants to the Bulgarian lands (Christians and Jews) from the neighbouring Balkan and other European countries. Our historiography reviews this issue mainly in the individual regional research works among which we should distinguish the papers by V. Tonev about Dobrudzha and the Bulgarian Black Sea coast during the Bulgarian Revival (Тонев, 1973; Тонев, 1995). The problem is vaguely studied in the research works dedicated to some ethno-religious communities in the Bulgarian lands – Russian Old believers, Wallachians, Jews, etc. (Анастасова, 1998; Васева, 1998; Керен, 2009, etc.). Still numerous issues concerning the policy of the Ottoman authority for acceptance and accommodation in the Bulgarian lands of non-Muslim inhabitants from the European States are insufficiently researched. And most of all – the objectives pursued by the Sublime Porte with the implementation of this policy, the devices used for its implementation and the actual results that were achieved.

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<sup>1</sup> Ventsislav Muchinov – Assoc. Professor, PhD, in “Economic and Historical Demography” Research Unit of Demography Department of the Institute for Population and Human Studies at the BAS. Contact e-mail: [vencim\\_80@abv.bg](mailto:vencim_80@abv.bg)

<sup>2</sup> The opinions in the Bulgarian historiography on this issue are summarized in: Мучинов, 2013: 159–160.

The answer to these questions should be sought in this publication and to this end we have used versatile source material of Ottoman Turkish, Bulgarian and foreign origin – official documents as well as notifications from the periodicals back then, travel notes, memoirs, etc. (*Цариградски вестник*, 1848–1862; *Турция*, 1864–1873; *Дунав*, 1865–1877; МИБ, 1877; Теплоу, 1877; Никол, 1929; Селищев, 1930; Рефик, 1938; ДБИ, 1940; ДБИ, 1948; Недков, 1953; ДБИГА, 1963; Миятеу, 1964; Михол, 1968; Тонев, 1970; Иречек, 1974; Лежан, 1978; Цветкова, 1981; Писахмедасе знае, 1984; ЧПБ, 1987; Каниц, 1995; Арато, 2002; ИИД, 2003, etc.).

Nevertheless one should bear in mind that actions for attracting to the Bulgarian lands of European immigrants non-Muslims even though of limited scale, had been undertaken by the Ottoman Empire *during the previous centuries*. For example, in the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1699) in the North-Western Bulgarian lands **Hungarian immigrants** were accommodated, namely antagonists of the established Habsburg power over Hungary and Transylvania. The Ottoman authority provided them with lands for settlement in some of the Bulgarian settlements that went bankrupt during the continuous war with the Habsburgs of 1683–1699 and Chiprovtsi Uprising in 1688 in the regions of Vidin, Berkovitsa and Pirot. The Hungarian immigrants were released from paying taxes for a term of five years, they retained internal self-governance in the framework of their communities and were granted with the right to use for their religious rituals the churches available in the settlements where they were accommodated. In exchange of these privileges they had to provide certain number of soldiers to strengthen the Ottoman army during the war (Един турски ферман, 1938: 56–61; Рефик, 1938: 62; ДБИ, 1940: 32–33; Дамянов, 1967: 28–29).

This type of policy of the Ottoman authority is also observed concerning the immigration in the Bulgarian lands of **Cossacks and various Russian dissidents** (Old believers), fleeing in the lands of the Sultan away of the persecutions to which they were subjected by the official Russian secular and church authorities after the reforms, initiated by patriarch Nikon and emperor Peter the Great during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As soon as during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century some of the Don Cossacks or Nekrasov Cossacks immigrated in Dobrudzha, as they were called after the name of their leader Ignat Nekrasov, one of the organizers of the Bulavin Rebellion in Russia (1707–1708). After the cruel crushing of the rebellion by the army of Peter the Great, the Nekrasov Cossacks withdrew to the area of Kuban, from where consequently (from 1740 onwards) they started transferring to the Ottoman territory – in the Northern Dobrudzha and most of all in the delta of Danube river. In this region they mingled with the Lipovans and other Russian dissidents searching for rescue from the persecutions by the authorities in the Russian Empire.

After the liquidation of the Zaporizhian Sich in 1775 by the Russian empress Catherine II in the region of the Danubian delta some of the Zaporizhian Cossacks moved there. There they formed with the consent of the Ottoman authority their semi-autonomous “Danubian Sich” that existed until the Russo-Turkish War of 1828–1829. In the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Zaporizhian Cossacks undertook violent collisions with the Nekrasov Cossacks and the majority of the latter had to move to the interior of the Ottoman Empire – to the coastline of the Sea of Marmara and Asia Minor (Бахметьев, 1907: 294–295; Романски, 1918: 271–274; Никол, 1929: 141; Тонев, 1973: 20–21; Василева, 1974: 15; Анастасова, 1998: 272–275; ИИД, 2003: 89–91; Думиника, 2011: 19–23; Москетти-Соколова, 2012; Карпат, 1985: 63).