Hannah Müller-Sommerfeld

Muslims and Jews in the Black Sea Region

Translated by John Heath

Writing about identities generally means wading into troubled waters, since the topic is something of a semantic minefield. Identities, be they individual or collective, are comprised of different and interdependent building blocks such as gender, age, space, and time, never finite, but always in motion and changing. Identities are and will remain socially, politically, and emotionally controversial; even within a collective, they are never uniform and valid for all. This also applies to spaces such as the Black Sea, which for inhabitants of the coastline constitutes a key local agent in the fabric of their identities, while for the inland populations it primarily means holidaying, leisure, and the beach.

The historical Black Sea region is a diverse political and economic contact zone between Europe and Asia, and as a historical meso-region[1] it has ensured that the populations of the riparian states have always been densely multiethnic and multireligious. The general question of identity took on a new intensity after the end of the Ottoman and Russian Empires; from the 1920s on, a series of new states emerged on the shores of the Black Sea with fundamentally new political and national constellations. They also had an impact on the heterogeneous and fragmented religious communities, whose religious identities are almost uniform in comparison to their ethnolinguistic identities. The overwhelming majority of Muslims are Sunnis; few are Shiites and even fewer Alevis. They constitute religious minorities in all the riparian states, with the exception of Turkey. In the case of Jews, too, we encounter a historical religious plurality and fragmentation. The dominant religious and cultural group among Jews in the region is the Sephardim, who found a new home in the Ottoman Empire after their expulsion from Spain, Portugal, and Italy. Over the centuries, many Ashkenazim also arrived. Specific to Jewish history in the Black Sea region is the historical presence of the Karaites, who reject the religious-normative significance of the Talmud and Rabbinic doctrines.

The Muslim and Jewish past and present have been shaped by several different factors, and the Black Sea region is no exception. Besides official religious policy, civil legal status, and relations between the majority society and minorities, since the nineteenth century such factors have included a high degree of mobility, migration, refugeeism, in some cases deportations, demographic stagnation or decline, secularization, internal stabilization via self-administration, and displays of transnational solidarity. Despite high internal ethnoreligious plurality, diversity, and heterogeneity, Muslims and Jews have closely entwined histories, not least because both groups found

1 Stefan Troebst, "The Black Sea as Historical Meso-Region: Concepts in Cultural Studies and the Social Sciences," *Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies* 2, no. 2 (2019): 11–29.

 https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110723175-017

themselves belonging politically to the Ottoman Empire, on the southern Black Sea coast, and to the Russian Empire or, later, the USSR, on the northern shore.

The supranational power- and religiopolitical constellations have been reconfigured once more since the 1990s. On the southern Black Sea coast, the Turkish government has repositioned itself and changed religiopolitical course despite a secular state doctrine. Ankara began to expand by tracing historical Ottoman footsteps in the Balkans and the Black Sea region and strengthened its local presence, be it by funding religious infrastructure (mosques, madrasas, schools, etc.), or through religious institutions and charity organizations. With this neo-Ottoman trend, the Turkish government has promoted and exported a conservative Sunni form of Islam, gradually establishing itself as a new transnational Islamic actor in the region, principally in opposition to the fundamentalist missionaries from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, which had increasingly exported "true Islam" to these countries since the 1990s.

On the northern Black Sea coast, the Russian government has expanded with its older concept of the "Russian world." The neo-imperial annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in the spring of 2014 and the war of aggression against Ukraine (since February 2022) serve these pretensions to geopolitical dominance and emphasis on the status of the Russian Federation as a global power. Quantitatively, these pretensions are evident in the fact that almost half the 5,800-kilometer (3,600-miles) Black Sea coastline currently finds itself under Russian rule or influence.

My chapter provides insights into the historical religious diversity and plural identities of Muslims and Jews in the Black Sea region since the nineteenth century. Where relevant, consideration will also be given to earlier times. However, the unbalanced state of research on the subject prevents uniform treatment of the different countries. Jewish communities in Romania, Turkey, and Odesa are relatively well researched, as are Muslims in Turkey and the Crimean Peninsula. Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania are examined as entire countries, while for Ukraine and Russia mention is made only of the city of Odesa and Crimea. Well-rounded demographic surveys can be found for all religious communities, mostly from official statistical sources that, like demographic figures, must be read critically. They serve primarily as orientation.

In terms of theory and methodology, my chapter is largely informed by a post-Orientalist conception and ethical scholarly criteria that do not necessarily reflect the emic perspectives and self-understandings of the respective religious communities and states.

1 Georgia

The small Caucasian country lies on the southeastern edge of the Black Sea. The port city of Batumi forms the urban center for Georgia's approximately 310 kilometers of Black Sea coast. Batumi is the capital of the Autonomous Republic of Ajaria, the country's second-largest city, one of the most important supraregional industrial centers in the Caucasus, and one of the largest ports on the Black Sea.

According to the 2014 census, Georgia had a total population of approximately 3.7 million, around 83 percent of whom were Georgian Orthodox Christians (3,097,600) and 10 percent Muslims (398,700). After the end of tsarist rule, the Muslim population stood at around 20 percent. Today, Georgians constitute the ethnic titular nationality, forming around 86 percent of the total population, followed by the Turkic-speaking Azeris as the second-largest ethnicity (ca. 6.3 percent—i. e., ca. 233,000).[2]

Georgia officially recognizes its ethnic and religious pluralities, and since the Rose Revolution of 2003 the general situation of minority groups has improved. The government has launched interreligious dialogue initiatives and training courses for religious personnel in questions of freedom of religion and human rights. Nevertheless, an obstacle to the prosperous coexistence of Christians and Muslims is revitalized nationalist tendencies and discourses such as historical foreign rule and aggressions, Georgia's unique position within Christianity, and a "return to the West."

1.1 Muslims

Muslims represent Georgia's largest religious minority. The law recognizes Islam as one of the country's "traditional" religions, which for the Muslims themselves means both official state tolerance and interventionist religious policy. "Non-traditional" religions, on the other hand, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses or Bahá'í, are generally rejected. Yet despite this legal recognition, Muslims have remained socially marginalized, and not only since the 1990s, when the Pankisi Gorge on the border with Chechnya became an international training camp for Islamic terrorists and a retreat for radicalized fighters. The negative image of Islam in Georgia is rooted in the country's historiography and national ideology; the official national metanarrative stresses almost catechismically that it is the world's second-most Christian state after Armenia. And the role Georgian Orthodox Christianity plays in constituting the nation has also been enshrined in the constitution since 1995 (Article 8). Since 2004, it has been virtually impossible to overlook Georgia's confessing an exclusively Christian national identity: The new national flag displays a large St. George's Cross with four small red crosses against a white background.

Besides their religious heterogeneity, Georgia's Muslims are characterized by even greater ethnic-linguistic plurality and fragmentation. It is not easy to provide a detailed overview of their manifold divisions, which are due to the turbulent political history of the Caucasus region and Georgia's geopolitical location between expanding great empires, be it from the north, east, south, or west, for which the territory of today's Georgian state remained a designated military contact zone for centuries. Additionally, pil-

2 "2014 General Population Census: Demographic and Social Characteristics," National Statistics Office of Georgia, accessed May 18, 2023, https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/739/demographic-and-social-characteristics.

laging and plundering by various nomadic tribes often left economic and political ruin in its wake. From the sixteenth century on, most of Georgia belonged to the Safavid Empire, while a smaller territory on the Black Sea coast was part of the Ottoman Empire. The Safavid and Ottoman governments, political and religious archrivals, launched campaigns to convert their largely Christian subjects to Shiite or Sunni Islam, respectively.[3]

Within a hundred years from the late eighteenth century onwards, Georgia fell under Russian tsarist rule. St. Petersburg pursued an ambiguous religious policy towards the Muslim population, oscillating between support and neglect. In the Soviet era (1922–91), Muslims were also subject to the state's militant mass atheism policy. The religious factor survived these seven Soviet decades and saw a veritable boom from the early 1990s on, as it did in many other post-communist countries.[4] Among Muslims, this revitalization of religion took place both internally (via the opening and restoration of many mosques, the import of religious literature, and the introduction of Quran lessons) and externally (Turkey, Iran, the Middle East).

Although Muslims in Georgia in the 2020s will soon be able to look back on 150 years of common history, they have not developed a unified collective identity. Their different local-rural and ethnic identities continue to predominate. Five historical traditions can be distinguished here, displaying neither religious nor ethnic homogeneity: the oldest and only urban tradition in the capital, Tbilisi, another further south among the Azeris, earlier among the Meskhetian Turks too, the province of Ajaria on the border with Turkey, and the Kists in the Pankisi Gorge in northern Georgia.

1. In Tbilisi, the beginnings of Muslim history date back to the seventh or eighth century. It was here that the expanding early Islamic empires from the Middle East founded the Emirate of Tiflis, which for Damascus and Bagdad remained more of an outpost. The city of Tbilisi nevertheless developed into a flourishing Islamic center, thanks in part to its location on the international trade route between the Middle East and Europe. From the twelfth century onwards, Tbilisi and other Georgian principalities came under Christian rule (the "Golden Age"). The Sunni Juma (Friday) Mosque in Tbilisi, one of Georgia's historical congregational mosques, is a singular building in two respects. It survived the Soviet government's anti-religious campaigns, unlike the historical mosque of the Shiites, which was destroyed in 1951. Thereafter, Shiites were taken in by the Sunni; since then, they have held Friday prayers together, which is certainly not to say, however, that historical tensions between the two have been resolved. According to the 2014 census, Tbilisi had around 16,200 Muslims. Since 2011, Georgia's Muslims have had their own central administrative body: The Georgian Muslim Department (GMD) with its headquarters in Tbilisi stands for their

3 For an introduction, cf. George Sanikidze and Edwards Walker, "Islam and Islamic Practices in Georgia," *BPS Working Paper*, University of California, Berkeley, Fall 2004, https://iseees.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/2004_04-sani.pdf.

4 Bayram Balci and Raoul Motika, "Islam in Post-Soviet Georgia," *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 3 (2007): 335–53, https://doi.org/10.1080/02634930701702399.

transregional emancipation from the Caucasus Muslim Department in Baku (Azerbaijan), which has existed since the late-nineteenth-century tsarist era. As an umbrella organization for Sunnis and Shiites, the GMD offers stabilizing potential for the heterogeneous Muslim community, but it also creates institutional competition for the office of mufti. Together with a project to translate the Quran into Georgian initiated in 2006, this development heralded a new tendency for the nationalizing of Islam in Georgia.

2. On the border with Azerbaijan and Armenia, the Shiites dominate, which explains the long rule of the Shiite Safavid dynasty and its Islamization campaigns. Currently, the largest group are the abovementioned Turkic-speaking Azeris, who live in their compact settlement area in Kvemo Kartli (population ca. 182,000). In Georgia, Azeris have had the fastest demographic growth since the mid-twentieth century; according to the 2014 census, they represent the country's second-largest ethnicity. Many Azeris share markers of Azerbaijani identity, although most of them see their history and future in Georgia. Due to their linguistic-cultural autonomy, the Azeris are integrated into Georgia's economy more than into its culture.

3. The Turkic-speaking Meskhetians, some of whom are Catholic, constituted Georgia's largest Muslim community until the mid-twentieth century. In 1944, Stalin ordered their forced deportation.[5] Unlike other forced deportees in the Soviet era, the Meskhetians were not granted the right to an official return to their homeland. Internationally dispersed, they are still fighting for this right in the early twenty-first century.

4. In the Autonomous Republic of Ajaria on the border with Turkey, the dominant Islamic tradition is Sunni. For several centuries, Ajars found themselves under Ottoman rule, which came to an end with the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877/78. Istanbul's political retreat from Ajaria—and the province of Abkhazia, which remains disputed today—triggered a Muslim exodus for the Ottoman Empire. Under tsarist Russian rule, Ajaria was Christianized in the course of rapid industrialization. A prime example is the abovementioned port city of Batumi; of its total of approximately 4,970 inhabitants around 1870, some 4,500 were Muslims, whereas at the end of the nineteenth century Batumi, now a free port, counted around 15,000 Christians and about 3,000 Muslims.[6] Ajaria's Muslims considered themselves ethnic Georgians, which conflicts somewhat with the construct of an exclusively Christian nation. The 2014 census recorded around 132,000 Muslims living in Ajaria (a third of the population).[7] In the late 1990s, the autonomous republic had the largest number of mosques in Georgia: around 110 out of an approximate total of 150.[8] Plans to build a new mosque in Batumi, where the country's second historical congregational mosque is located, had to be

5 Ca. 200,000 were deported. Rainer Münz, "Das Jahrhundert der Vertreibungen," *Transit. Europäische Revue* 23 (2022): 138.

6 Sanikidze and Walker, "Islam," 493–94.

7 National Statistics Office of Georgia, "2014 General Population Census."

8 Bayram Balci and Raoul Motika, "Der Islam im post-sowjetischen Georgien: Ein vorläufiger Überblick," in *Georgien: Gesellschaft und Religion an der Schwelle Europas*, ed. Bernd Schröder (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2005), 106.

shelved due to considerable resistance from the Christian population. In Abkhazia, on the other hand, the population is rather indifferent to religions.

5. The Pankisi Gorge in northeastern Georgia is home to around 5,700 Kists, according to the 2014 census.[9] Historically speaking, they constitute the youngest Islamic tradition in Georgia. Kists are descended from the Chechen and Ingush tribes who emigrated to this small, isolated valley with its thousand-meter-high rock walls in the nineteenth century. The bilingual Kists consider themselves ethnic Chechens and maintain their family ties with their old homeland. Their religious practice is also influenced by Sufi traditions (*dhikr*) and Christian customs.

1.2 Jews

Georgia's official national narrative is explicitly positive in its portrayal of close ties with Judaism, usually emphasized as religious tolerance. However, this religiopolitically instrumentalized view is more about Christian religious appropriation than about genuine tolerance, let alone recognition; historiographical sources, for instance, mostly depict Jews as quasi-Christians.

The Jewish community in Georgia has been in steady decline since the mid-twentieth century. While in 1951 around 51,000 Jews lived in the country, at the end of the Soviet era there were approximately 14,000 (1989 census),[10] and around 1,400 according to the census of 2014, most of them living in Tbilisi.[11]

Georgia's Jewish population is characterized by a complex historical religious heterogeneity and fragmentation.[12] Besides the autochthonous Georgian Jewish majority, there are Mountain Jews (Caucasus), Jews from Central Asia, and Jews from Crimea (Krymchaks). Ashkenazim from Europe and Russia increasingly fled or migrated to Georgia from the nineteenth century onwards.

The autochthonous Georgian Jews trace their genesis and local history back to biblical times. The Jewish presence in Georgia is also intertwined with famous Georgian national topoi such as Saint Nino. Into the seventeenth century, however, historiographical sources hardly make any mention of Jews in Georgia. Nevertheless, they claim a 2,600-year Jewish history, a construct which is also upheld by the Georgian state.

Unlike other Jewish communities, Georgian Jews have not developed a dialect of their own like Yiddish, Ladino, or Judeo-Arabic. They adopted the local dialects of their mostly rural settlement areas and added Hebrewisms to them. In the Soviet

9 National Statistics Office of Georgia, "2014 General Population Census."

10 Mark Tolts, "The Jews in Georgia in the Late Soviet Period: A Demographic Profile," in *Studies in Caucasian, Georgian, and Bukharan Jewry: Historical, Sociological, and Cultural Aspects*, ed. Goldah Akhiezer (Ariel: Ariel University, 2014), 103.

11 National Statistics Office of Georgia, "2014 General Population Census."

12 Eldar Mamistvalishvili, ed., *The History of Georgian Jews* (Tbilisi: Georgian Academic Book, 2014).

era, the official repressive religious policy from the 1920s on, including the closure of synagogues or their transformation into cinemas or sports venues, also threatened the existence and organization of the Jewish community. Georgian Jews nevertheless largely escaped the National Socialist regime's so-called "Final Solution" to the "Jewish question."

Following the Second World War, their history and identities were transformed by sustained migration both within Georgia and abroad. Most Georgian Jews migrated to urban centers, primarily to Tbilisi, where they received access to radio, television, and newspapers, as a result of which their spoken Jewish Georgian became unified. In the 1970s and 1990s, many Georgian Jews emigrated to Israel, Europe, and the USA. For those who remained, this meant a significant decline, not only in demographic terms. Nevertheless, the Georgian government pursues a decidedly proactive Jewish religious policy. For instance, in 1998 the synagogue in Batumi was declared a national monument, the Jewish Museum in Tbilisi opened in 2014, having originally been founded in 1933, and closed only a few years later, and in 2018 the government requested UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage status for twenty-six (!) centuries of Georgian-Jewish coexistence.

2 Turkey

The Black Sea coastline in Turkey is around 1,329 kilometers (826 miles) in length, bordering the country to the north. The northeastern part of the coastal region is low on industry and cut off from the interior by the Pontic Mountains, and is thus an isolated and relatively thinly settled part of the country. Unlike the beaches of the Aegean and the Mediterranean, the Black Sea waterfront has seen little construction and is not one of Turkey's hotspots for international tourism.

Since the Republic of Turkey was founded (in 1923), the spheres of religion and ethnicity have been highly politicized and vehemently contested in politics and society. Since the census of 1965, the Turkish Statistical Institute has not published any official religiodemographic data, pointing to the equality of all citizens before the law. It doesn't provide figures on ethnicity either. According to official statistics, some 99.8 percent of the entire population of Turkey are Sunni Muslims and 0.2 percent Christians and Jews. Here one can easily recognize the nation-state's doctrine of a religiously and ethnically homogeneous Turkish nation. According to the 2021 census, Turkey has a total population of 84.6 million.[13] They represent a colorful mosaic of Sunnis, Alevis, Shiites, and various Jewish and Christian communities, in addition to many secular people for whom religion is of more general cultural significance.

13 "Population and Housing Census 2021," Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, accessed May 18, 2023, https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Population-and-Housing-Census-2021-45866.

2.1 Muslims

Unlike in the other states of the Black Sea region, in Turkey Islam is the majority religion. The country's Muslims are mostly Sunni and homogeneous in their religious identities. There is a clear division between Sunnis and Alevis, who since the twentieth century have grown into the country's second-largest religious community. Ethnically, most Muslims consider themselves Turks. There are also several million Kurds, who constitute Turkey's largest ethnic minority. The Laz, primarily settled in the Black Sea region, are one of Turkey's numerically smallest minorities.

The territory of the present-day Turkish state gradually came under Islamic political rule from the eleventh century on. Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, was not conquered by the Ottoman dynasty until 1453. Thanks to sustained military and political victories, the Ottoman Empire was able to secure its status as a regional power, which it then began to lose in stages from the late eighteenth century onwards as it found itself between the fronts of the expanding great powers of Britain and France on one side and the Russian Empire on the other, whose rivalry increasingly played out in the Black Sea region.

Turkey was one of the last territories in the history of the Islamic conquests to be Islamized; it took several centuries (from the twelfth to the thirteenth) for adoption by the majority of the population. In this region too, Islam took on new forms and influences. In the east of the country, in the territories bordering Iran, the influence of Shiite Islam gave rise to the heterogeneous religious community of the Alevis, for instance, who combine local religious elements with Islamic principles (discussed in greater detail below). The centralist Sunni administrative institutions such as the caliphate and the *şeyhülislam* (the highest authority on religious law) were all located in Istanbul, which was a long way from many areas, not only from rural regions like Anatolia. Islam in the Ottoman Empire (1453–1923) was characterized by a moderate conservative interpretation of religious principles and close ties to dervish (Sufi) communities within the populace and in the political arena.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's government (1922–38) rejected the Ottoman Islamic legacy, with the exception of the minorities policy, as backward, and introduced a radical nationalist modernizing and cultural revolution based on the Western model. The intention was to transform the country's ethnically and religiously heterogeneous and plural society into a modern uniform Turkish nation. This long-term radical secularization process took aim at the centuries-old Islamic institutions and religious elites (abolition of the sultanate, the caliphate, the *şeyhülislam*). Many graves of saints and dervish convents were closed or turned into museums, and religious personnel were released *en masse*. Protests by established religious scholars hardly had any effect. Many Sufis, sheikhs, and religious scholars fled abroad or went underground. This authoritarian secularization broke the country's popular Islamic institutional religious infrastructure, and in 1928 the article establishing Islam as the state religion was removed from the constitution. Ankara also introduced Western European norms. Besides a dress code (the fez and the headscarf were abolished; it became mandatory

to wear a hat), this also held for Ottoman Arabic script, which was replaced with its Latin counterpart, and the Islamic calendar was rejected in favor of the Christian Western system. Arabic was abolished as the language of religion and worship, as was the public call to prayer; instead Ankara commissioned the translation of the Quran into Turkish, which proved unsuccessful, however. From the 1930s on, all Turkish citizens had to adopt a surname. This concerted modernization program secured for the government the administrative and discursive role of a paternalistic actor that watched over Islam and other religions with an authoritarian and jealous eye.[14]

The Turkification of Islam or the state-sanctioned attitude of being "happy to be Turkish" proved much more successful in the early years of the Republic than secularization, which was mostly observed only by urban elites.[15] For the rural population, religion/Islam remained their identity markers. The brief political thaw from 1946 on, during which Ankara permitted public Islamic institutions again (including the call to prayer and religious training), was brought to a violent end by the military coup of 1960, when the military positioned itself as a counterweight to religious policy and another strict guardian of the constitution and guarantor of the secular order. A total of five further military coups would take place up to 2016 (1971, 1980, 1997, 2007, and 2016).

Given these multipolar constellations, multireligious and multiethnic society, Turkey constantly finds itself subject to the tensions between nationalism, secularism, and Islam, which drove the country to the edge of political ruin in the 1970s. It was in these years that the rise of political Islam began, characterized by dense networks in all spheres of society and close ties to Sufi communities. One of its influential (early) figures was the politician Necmettin Erbakan. A tough crackdown by the army during and after the military coup of 1980 publicly restored the secular order. Despite the dual authoritarian control, Islamic religious landscapes reconfigured themselves underground, including the clandestine Islamic revival movement, which gained a considerable following among young Muslims in the cities. One of its central figures is the preacher Fethullah Gülen (born 1941).

In the 1990s, in many countries Islam experienced a government-supported conservative revival in the public sphere. In Turkey, the Islam/religion factor took on a public political role for the first time. As part of this trend, Ankara pivoted towards a neo-Ottoman foreign policy, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter; the Turkish government secured for itself the status of a new Islamic conservative actor in the Balkan countries and the Black Sea riparian states. In the field of domestic policy, political Islam proved increasingly successful at the ballot box, something the "soft" military putsch of 1997 was only able to halt temporarily. Ankara continued to promote the public revival of a conservative Sunni Islam and its institutions (the Diyanet/Presidency of

14 Kim Shively, *Islam in Modern Turkey* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

15 Soner Cagaptay, *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is a Turk?* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Religious Affairs), re-intensifying the old intrasocietal conflicts between nationalist, secular, moderate, and radical Islamic circles. In 2016, the military failed in its attempted coup, having lost its former political power as the guarantor of secularity in the age of the "new Turkey" (from 2014 on).

In July 2020, constitutional secularism reached a historical low when the Grand Hagia Sophia in Istanbul became a mosque once again. An old maximum demand of political Islam in Turkey was thus fulfilled. The splendid Byzantine building was once the central church of Byzantine Orthodoxy (until 1453) and had been a museum since 1934. This act symbolizes the transformation in Ankara's understanding of religious policy: The Turkish government regards itself as the patron of a conservative Sunni Islam. What hasn't changed, however, is its role as an authoritarian, paternalist actor that almost jealously guards its power; Ankara fights critics and opponents, eliminating some of them (for instance, the Gülen movement). Parallel to these developments, there have been state-controlled reforms of Islam in Turkey that have received less public attention. The office of imam was opened up to women, even if they were not awarded equal standing to their male colleagues, their remit being limited to women's matters. In connection with the abovementioned neo-Ottoman trend, on the whole Ankara is attempting to actively restore Turkey's position in the international community (*ummah*) of Muslims that was relinquished in 1923.

2.2 Alevis

Today, the Alevis constitute Turkey's second-largest religious community after the Sunnis. Some Alevis consider themselves Muslims; others see themselves as a non-Muslim religious community. Due to Turkish state doctrine—one nationality (Turkish), one religion (Sunni Islam)—they are officially classified as Muslims or as a branch of Turkish Islam.

The religiohistorical emergence of the Alevis, formerly mostly known pejoratively as *Kızılbaş* ("redhead"), is heterogeneous and dates back to the sixteenth century.[16] For centuries, they lived in isolated communities in the rural regions of southern and eastern Anatolia. Alevis did not develop a unified religious doctrine, although Shiite Islam had clear influences. Their religious knowledge was passed down over the centuries orally by specialists. The common religious basis shared by all Alevis is the triad of Allah (*hak*, divine truth), the Prophet Mohammed, and Allah's chosen one, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (ca. 600–61), Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law. Other religious foundations are the belief in the sacred power of Allah within each person, in the inner path to perfection, and in the soul's immortality. Alevi religion centers primarily on religioethical aspects and goals, and less on norms pertaining to rituals and worship. Corre-

16 Benjamin Weineck, *Zwischen Verfolgung und Eingliederung: Kızılbaş-Aleviten im osmanischen Staat (16.–18. Jahrhundert)* (Baden-Baden: Ergon, 2020).

spondingly, they reject the five pillars of the Islamic faith, which they interpret in heterodox fashion. Nor do they have mosques, a religious duty to undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca, or gender-based segregation in their religious meetings, which mostly take place in private households. The Sunni world around them has mostly considered Alevis heretics. This remains the case to this day.

The large waves of migration within Turkey and to Western Europe since the mid-twentieth century have profoundly transformed the Alevis.[17] Their new urbanized lifeworld, but also their transnational distribution, have confronted their oral, local religious organization, infrastructure, and identity as a (self-)isolated and hidden religious community with massive challenges, precipitating surges of historical emancipation for which the Sivas arson attack in July 1993, in which almost forty people lost their lives, served as a regenerating catalyst. For Alevis, there began a process of religious-collective "outing." The process of their transformation into a transnational minority was driven by significant religious impulses from abroad that in turn had an impact on the Alevis in Turkey, who have been fighting for official recognition in Ankara since the 2000s.

2.3 Jews

Up until their large internal migration and emigration from the mid-twentieth century onwards, Turkey's Jewish population mostly lived in the urban centers in the west of the country: Istanbul, Izmir, Edirne, and Bursa. There were also smaller communities in Anatolia, in the southeastern provinces of Urfa and Diyarbakır. Following the almost complete dissolution of these communities, the country's Jewish population has primarily been concentrated in the city of Istanbul and its wider region. Istanbul also represents their religiohistorical center.

In the late nineteenth century, around 184,000 Jews lived in the Ottoman provinces from which the Turkish state emerged. In the 1920s, the figure stood at ca. 82,000. In the 2020s, unofficial estimates record around 15,000. Thus within a century, a demographic decline of around 70 percent took place.[18]

On the territory of today's Turkish state, the history of its heterogeneous Jewish population spans over two thousand years. There existed and flourished various autochthonous and allochthonous Jewish traditions that did not develop into a uniform community over time. Instead, they maintained their respective linguistic and religious identities, which lent Jewry in Turkey a pronounced historical internal plurality.

The oldest Jewish tradition is the Romaniotic culture of the Hellenic-Roman era, from which the remains of synagogues have been found in Sardis, Smyrna (today:

17 Markus Dreßler, *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

18 Hannelore Müller, *Religionen im Nahen Osten: Türkei, Ägypten, Saudi-Arabien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015), 120.

Izmir), Miletus, and Priene (third century BCE). Jews also settled in the Black Sea region and the Aegean. The Christian mission from Palestine primarily reached the Jewish communities on the territory of today's western Turkey. The Jewish convert to Christianity Paul, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, was an exponent of this autochthonous tradition of the Romaniots, which continued in the Byzantine Empire.

The Ottoman victory over the Byzantine Empire (1453) represented a historical caesura for the Jewish communities too. Many were forcibly resettled to the new capital of Istanbul, together with Christian families. The Ottoman government's official call for immigration was headed by many Jews from Europe, particularly Spain and Portugal, when they were banished in the course of the *Reconquista* (in 1492 and 1497 respectively). They took the Sephardic tradition with them to the Ottoman Empire, which gradually absorbed the other two autochthonous groups (Romaniot-Byzantine and Italian after immigration from Venice and Genoa). The Sephardim took over leadership of the community, experiencing a cultural boom from the mid-eighteenth century on, with centers in Istanbul, Saloniki (today: Thessaloniki), and Izmir.[19]

Parallel to this development, the cultural-religious spectrum was expanded with the arrival of the Ashkenazi tradition due to Jewish migration from Austria, Hungary, Russia, Germany, Poland, and Romania. Some of these Christian states had officially banished Jews. In the Ottoman Empire, however, they received more freedoms and found it comparatively easier to pursue their livelihood. New waves of Jewish migration were triggered by the pogroms in the Russian Empire from the late nineteenth century onwards.

This historically developed religiocultural Jewish diversity explains the strikingly large number of synagogues, houses of prayer, and cemeteries in Istanbul. The Jewish community identified with different cultures, languages, and worship rituals (Sephardic, Ashkenazi), which also influenced their sacral architecture.

A further specific aspect of Jewish tradition in Turkey is the historical presence of the Karaites, who along with rabbinic Jewry represent a further religious tradition. Their historical beginnings date back to eighth- or ninth-century Bagdad (or perhaps Iran). Karaites reject the normative significance of the Talmud, recognizing solely the Hebrew Bible as normative and authoritative. Due to this central doctrine, their relationship with rabbinic Jewry has often been marked by tensions, shifting between hostility, tolerance, and cooperation. The Karaite communities spread from the Middle East to Eastern and Southeastern Europe. They probably arrived in the Byzantine Empire in the tenth century, reaching their cultural and religious zenith there during and shortly after the Ottoman invasion of Constantinople. Eliah Bashyatchi (ca. 1420 – 90), one of the most important Karaite scholars, developed a codification of Karaite dogmatics that remains to this day the standard work of Karaite theology and law. In Istanbul,

19 Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991). (To be used critically, since Shaw remains committed to the official narrative of the Ottoman Empire or Turkey as the "savior of the Jews").

as elsewhere, Karaites also have their own synagogues and their own cemetery, located next to the rabbinic institutions.

The era of the official reforms in the Ottoman Empire (1839 – 76) also transformed the Jewish religious community considerably. As a state-recognized non-Muslim minority (*millet*), they were granted *de jure* equal rights in civil law by the much-cited reform edict of February 1856 (*hatt-i hümayun*). Their self-administration was also secularized; leadership of the Jewish communities was no longer the sole preserve of the rabbis, but was now also in the hands of civil councils. These developments and other social issues of the day triggered vehement debates and conflicts between Jews, to be joined later by disputes over Ottomanism and political Zionism. For Ottoman Jews too, the question of nationality and religion again raised its head, although for most of them loyalty to the Ottoman state was a matter of course.[20]

After the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, Ankara's secularist and authoritarian-paternalist religious policy impacted on the Jewish communities too. Together with the representatives of Armenian and Greek Orthodoxy, their leadership forwent the international minority rights granted to them as state-recognized religious minorities by the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923. All three communities thus lost their corporative legal status, their autonomous self-administration, and their internal religious jurisdiction. State-imposed secularization had a direct impact on Jewish schools; since most Jewish civil schools were run by foreign organizations and foreign teachers, they were forced to close when Ankara prohibited all activities by foreign organizations. Religious schooling was abolished entirely, and Hebrew was replaced with Turkish in Jewish textbooks.

The transition from a multiethnic and multireligious organism to ethnically monolithic Turkishness was also a drawn-out process for the heterogeneous Jewish community; it took the Sephardim several decades to give up Ladino as their mother tongue and adopt Turkish. Jewish adaptation to the new Turkish nation was further hindered by intrasocietal conflicts; thus Jewish history in the Republic of Turkey is characterized by marginalization, anti-Jewish (media) campaigns, and attacks from nationalist extremist circles, state and economic discrimination (dismissals or non-employment, special taxes), and not least by migration.[21]

Ever since international Islamic extremist terrorism arrived in Turkey in the 1990s, the country's Jewish public institutions have been under police protection. Ankara changed its official stance towards Jewish communities; its narrative is that Turkish or Ottoman policy towards Jews has always been one of protection and tolerance. The Jewish leadership also officially endorses this one-sided interpretation, faced as it is with no safe way to extricate itself from this religiopolitical instrumentalization.

20 Julia Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

21 Rifat Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2013); Süleyman Şanlı, *The Jews of Turkey: Migration, Culture and Memory* (London: Routledge, 2019).

3 Bulgaria

Bulgaria's Black Sea coast enjoys a national and international reputation as a bastion of tourism. Its urban centers are the two historical port and trade cities of Burgas and Varna.

According to the census of 2021, Bulgaria has a total population of 6.5 million. The religious majority consisted of Orthodox Christians (some 4.2 million, or ca. 84 percent of the total population). The number of Muslims stood at ca. 638,000, while around 1,700 Jews were recorded. Around 5 percent of respondents stated that they had no religion (ca. 305,000) and around 8 percent exercised their right under EU law not to provide any information on their faith. [22]

To this day, the history and identities of Muslims and Jews in Bulgaria and their position in society and the state have influenced Bulgarian national discourses. The dominance of Orthodox Christianity had been established as the state religion since the constitution of 1879, and it was readopted by the constitution of 1991, which enshrines its status as Bulgaria's "traditional religion" while also granting general freedom of religion and stipulating the separation of Church and state (Article 13). In Bulgaria too, the letter of the law and reality are two different things; Orthodox majority society shows little readiness to integrate the country's citizens of different ethnicity and religions in such a way that they enjoy equal rights.

3.1 Muslims

Around 676,000 Muslims lived in the Principality of Bulgaria from its foundation onwards (1887 census). Around 130 years later, there were ca. 638,000 (2021 census). It is only at first glance that these figures suggest little has changed, since if one considers the percentage of Muslims among the entire population, one notes a significant decline from ca. 21 percent (1887) to ca. 10 percent (2021). The majority of the ca. 638,000 Muslims in Bulgaria (2021 census) are Sunnis, while Shiites constitute a small minority. Ethnically and linguistically, however, there is much greater diversity and fragmentation. Most of the country's Muslims considers themselves Turks (ca. 514,000), while a few identify as Pomaks—that is, Bulgarian-speaking Muslims (ca. 107,000)—or as Romani (ca.45,000). The traditional settlement areas with Muslim majority populations were primarily rural regions in the south and northeast of Bulgaria. As a result of various

22 "Ethno-Cultural Characteristics of the Population as of September 7, 2021," National Statistical Institute Bulgaria, accessed May 18, 2023, https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/19874/прессъобщение/ethno-cultural-characteristics-population-september-7-2021.

waves of migration and economic crises from the mid-twentieth century on, the majority of Muslims live in the country's larger cities.[23]

For nearly half a millennium, the territory of the present-day Bulgarian state formed part of the Ottoman Empire (1396–1878). Sunni Islam was the religion of the political rulers and a small portion of the local population, whose selective Islamization was, as elsewhere, a long and complex socioeconomic process. In particular, the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) were marginalized, becoming a distinct group in the course of modern nation-building from the 1870s on.[24] In the official national discourse, they were constructed as forced converts from the Ottoman era, errant Bulgarians who needed to be led back to Christianity. In the interests of the "rebirth" of Bulgaria's Muslims, the government and society undertook several repressive assimilation attempts, since here too the presence of members of a different faith disrupted the myth of a homogenous unified nation. Hence Bulgarian nation- and state-building framed the Ottoman Islamic past and its legacy as something negative, as did the official anti-Ottoman historiography.[25] Given these debates, it is hardly surprising that the political term "Turkish yoke," which came into international circulation, emanated from Bulgaria in the late nineteenth century.

In the Bulgarian state, the heterogeneous Muslim population were faced with an ambivalent state religion policy that oscillated between occasional benevolence and frequent repression. As a religious community, they received a relatively good legal status within the new state structure following the founding of the Principality in 1878. A legal statute of 1880 guaranteed them (and the Jewish community) autonomous self-administration, equal rights as citizens, autonomous schools, and many other freedoms.[26] Parallel to this development, however, the Christian majority became gripped by an almost collective fear of "Islam" that was repeatedly fanned by the discourses of national revival movements and the Orthodox Church. There followed repressive forced assimilation campaigns by the state, which recur as something of a leitmotif throughout the history of Bulgaria in the twentieth century: 1912/13, 1937–44 (supported by Pomaks themselves), 1962–64, 1971–74, and 1984–89. During the last large "rebaptizing campaign" too, the Bulgarian Christian majority feared cultural infiltration by Muslims and Islam. Sofia ordered a new brutal homogenization campaign accompanied by many repressive measures, including a ban on Turkish literature and holidays and

23 "Struktura na naselenieto po veroizpovedanie," Republika Balgaria: Natsionalen statisticheski institut, accessed March 21, 2023, https://www.nsi.bg/Census/StrReligion.htm.

24 Evangelos Karagiannis, *Flexibilität und Definitionsvielfalt pomakischer Marginalität* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005).

25 Mary Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

26 On their relatively ambivalent status with respect to state citizenship, cf. Milena B. Methodieva, *Between Empire and Nation: Muslim Reform in the Balkans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021).

compulsory adoption of Bulgarian names. This "process of rebirth" too triggered a large "excursion" from the country; over 300,000 fled to Turkey in the 1990s.[27]

Although their numbers were thus drastically weakened, for remaining Muslims in post-communist Bulgaria there was then a phase of revitalization, institutional consolidation, and transformation. Freedom of religion, enshrined in the constitution since 1991, provided a change of course. The earlier forced nationalization efforts by the state were overturned legally—and condemned by the parliament in 2012—and those affected could use their actual names again. Around half of the "excursionists" returned from Turkey. Muslims began to found their own faith schools, followed by a university institute in Sofia. Old mosques were renovated and over 300 new ones were built (with foreign financing). Sufi groups played a considerable part in this endogenous re-Islamization, being officially permitted again after their activities had been banned in the 1980s.[28]

Islam in Bulgaria also took on new faces due to exogenous impulses, primarily from Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Additionally, many young Muslims went to the Middle East for religious schooling, returning with Salafist-Wahabi traditions, the practice of which triggered considerable internal conflicts and great controversies over "true Islam" versus traditional Islam in Bulgaria too. This diversification of the domestic and foreign religious actors since the 1990s has reinforced the overlaps between local, regional, and translocal Islam in Bulgaria while undermining, as it were, the already weak intra-Muslim group cohesion. The leading representatives, the grand mufti in Sofia and the ten historical regional mufti's offices, are faced with significant challenges in integrating the diverse religious and ethnic identities.

Islamic religious history in post-communist Bulgaria is further characterized by de-Islamization, political organization, and participation. Under the leadership of Bulgarian Turkish Muslims, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS) was founded in 1990. As a liberal centrist party, the organization was able to establish itself as the representative of the interests primarily of Turkish Muslims, despite various internal conflicts, political competition, and several scandals (including corruption and tax fraud). It rose to be the third-largest political (oppositional) force in the Bulgarian parliament.

The historically strong presence of the government remains characteristic, even if there is supposed to be separation of state and religions according to the constitution. After many protests and heated debates, in 2019 a revised version of the 2002 Religions Act was finally passed, resolving the disputed question of state subsidies in favor of the Muslim communities. At the same time, however, it increased the scope of Sofia's interventionist religious policy.

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27 Ali Eminov, *Turkish and Other Minorities in Bulgaria* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997).

28 Nadege Ragaru, "Islam in Post-Communist Bulgaria: An Aborted 'Clash of Civilizations'?," *Nationalities Papers* 29, no. 2 (2001): 293–24.

3.2 Jews

In Bulgaria too, the historical Jewish presence dates back to Antiquity. Later, Jews arrived from European states (Byzantium, Bavaria, Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and others), sometimes following official expulsion, sometimes via voluntary migration. Among the various ethnic and religious communities, the Sephardim gained the upper hand from the seventeenth century onwards, and their religiocultural tradition remained dominant. Under Ottoman rule (1396–1878), the communities were led by wealthy families and notables who were members of the Jewish *millet* (the recognized non-Muslim religious community) and answered to the grand rabbi in Istanbul. But there were also translocal connections with the international Sephardic community.[29]

After the foundation of the Principality of Bulgaria, a statute granted the Jewish (and Muslim) population autonomous self-administration (in 1880). For the hitherto loosely connected Jewish communities, a process of administrative centralization and unification began. The Sephardic chief rabbi in Sofia was designated the official Jewish representative, receiving a state salary, while the other communities had to cover the costs of religious personnel, the upkeep and construction of their own buildings, and other communal matters from their own funds.

For Bulgaria's Jews too, embarking on the path to modernity meant emancipation/equality, local and national political participation, and, not least, the introduction of a secular Jewish school system by Western European Jewish aid organizations, first and foremost the French *Alliance Israélite Universelle.* However, it was Zionism and Jewish religious schooling that resonated most with Bulgarian Jews, which distinguished them significantly from other Sephardic communities, whose response to Zionism generally ranged from skepticism to flat-out rejection. Parallel to these developments, anti-Semitism was on the rise in Bulgarian politics and society, leading to attacks and escalating into nationwide hysteria (1898).

From the 1880s on, the number of Jewish citizens in the Kingdom of Bulgaria tripled from 14,000 (1887 census) to around 48,000 (census 1943).[30] During this half a century, Sofia became the geographical center of Jewish settlement. There were also small urban Jewish communities in Plovdiv, Ruse, Burgas, Varna, Vidin, etc.

Two new synagogues were symbolic of the communities' boom from the late nineteenth century onwards. In Vidin, a town in the northwest of the country, what was then the largest Sephardic synagogue in the Balkans was consecrated in the 1890s. In 1910, this title was taken by the Grand Synagogue in Sofia. The same year, a reformed statute entered into force democratizing the Jewish community's institutional self-administration. The chief rabbi was joined by a Central Consistory, a second leadership body responsible for all secular matters. In the following decades, differences and con-

29 Dimana Trankova and Antoni Georgiev, *A Guide to Jewish Bulgaria* (Sofia: America for Bulgaria Foundation, 2021).

30 "Struktura na naselenieto po veroizpovedanie."

flicts often arose between the grand rabbi, the notables, and the Central Consistory, which was soon dominated by Zionists. After 1920, the Consistory also took over the role of the school authority, putting an end to the secular curriculum and introducing Jewish religious instruction; those who went through this school system thus grew up with Hebrew. Parallel to this, the young generation became assimilated to Bulgarian, and hence Ladino increasingly declined as a language of internal communication. Jewish identity in the Kingdom of Bulgaria remained characterized by multilingualism and interculturality.

From the 1920s on, Bulgaria too saw an increase in political and societal anti-Semitism due to the rise of nationalist-chauvinist ideologies. The problem reached its peak after the outbreak of the Second World War; Sofia formed an alliance with Nazi Germany and passed anti-Jewish laws after 1940. Berlin demanded that the Bulgarian government too should commit to the "Final Solution" to the "Jewish question." The absolutist tsar, Boris III (1918–43), complied with the German government and allowed the deportation of ca. 10,000 Jews from the newly annexed territories of (southern) Thrace and Dobruja. When it became public knowledge that Bulgaria was also deporting its "own" Jews, there followed protests and interventions by politicians, intellectuals, Church representatives, and, not least, Jews. In March 1943, a complex interplay of various factors such as ideology, politics, the course of the war, self-interest, and personal sacrifice finally forced Tsar Boris III to stop the deportation of domestic Jews—but not those from the Bulgarian-occupied territories. Hence the Bulgarian Jews could write their own chapter in the transnational history of the Holocaust; they were one of the few Jewish communities to escape extermination. These multilayered events gave rise to the official narrative of "the savior of the Jews," which, serving a doctrine of ethnic tolerance, became the centerpiece of the Bulgarian national myth. Decades later, it is still considered an attack on the Bulgarian nation to question or criticize this version of history.[31]

In the 1940s, however, Bulgaria was only able to "save" its Jewish population for a few years. After the installation of the Communist regime, over 30,000 Jews (ca. 90 percent) migrated to Israel, where Jaffa became the new center for their community. Bulgarian Jews are one of the few Jewish communities to have almost entirely left their historical homeland for Israel. Their generally Zionist outlook was one of many factors triggering this mass emigration.[32]

With the massive weakening of the community in Bulgaria, but also due to the anti-religious and atheistic regime, the religiocultural life of Bulgarian Jews came to a standstill. They no longer had any rabbis and couldn't run their own schools. In 1959, the state's efforts to bring the Central Consistory into line were sealed when the latter officially announced it would actively participate in the development of so-

31 Jacky Comforty, *The Stolen Narrative of the Bulgarian Jews and the Holocaust* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 145 ff.

32 Nasrin Arnold, *Zwischen kollektivem Gedächtnis und Neuorientierung: Identitätsmuster der bulgarischen Juden nach dem Holocaust* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2018), 135–90.

cialism and no longer sought to cultivate the particularist Jewish religion and culture. The Consistory was succeeded by a new organization.

After the end of the Communist regime, over 3,000 Jews emigrated from Israel to Bulgaria. This migration too weakened the remaining mini-community. Since the 1990s, it has nevertheless been revitalized, mainly thanks to the (financial) support of international Jewish aid organizations. The secular leadership and official representation was taken over by the newly formed organization *Shalom*, which seeks to offer a diverse religiocultural program.[33] In Sofia, a historical museum was opened, a Jewish school set up, and a publishing house founded. Synagogues are operational only in Sofia and Plovdiv, while in other towns they lie in ruins. For the young generation, Jewish religion is a key identity marker, although they maintain rather informal relations with the Jewish community.

4 Romania

Of all six Black Sea riparian states, Romania has the shortest coast. The ca. 225 kilometers (140 miles) largely run along the historical landscape of Dobruja. The center of the Romanian Black Sea coast region is the historical port city of Constanţa.

The Romanian census of 2011 recorded a total population of around twenty million, eighteen million of whom were Christians, ca. 64,000 Muslims, mostly in the Constanţa district (43,000), and around 3,500 Jews, largely in the capital, Bucharest.[34] According to the census of 1930, ca. 756,000 Jews and around 185,000 Muslims lived in (Greater) Romania, constituting ca. 4 percent and 1 percent of the total population, respectively.[35] Within a century, then, both religious communities, particularly the Jewish, contracted into ever smaller groups.

From the nineteenth century on, Jews and Muslims occupied the position of villains in Romania's official historiography due to historical and political myths, persistent monolithic national ideologies (Romanianization), and political ideals of uniformity and sovereignty. Given the idea of a homogenous Romanian nation, increasing calls for historical reappraisal and demythologization since the 1990s (for instance by Lucian Boia)[36] have given rise to heated public controversies and resistance.

The state of Romania emerged in 1918 out of the unification of the Kingdom of Romania with the Grand Duchy of Transylvania as part of the Kingdom of Hungary or the Habsburg Empire. The Kingdom of Romania had come into existence from 1859–61, when the two Romanian vassal states Moldavia (with Bessarabia) and Wallachia, for-

33 "Shalom: Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria," accessed March 21, 2023, www.shalom.bg/.

34 "Recensământul populaţiei şi locuinţelor 2021," Institutul Naţional de Statistică, accessed May 20, 2023, https://www.recensamantromania.ro/rpl-2011/rezultate-2011/.

35 Institutul Central de statistică, *Recensământul general al populaţiei României din 29 decemvrie 1930*, vol. 2, *Neam, limbă maternă, religie* (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial. Imprimăria Naţională, 1938), XXIV.

36 E. g., Lucian Boia, *Istorie şi mit în conştiinţa românească* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011).

merly obliged to pay tribute to the Ottoman Empire, were politically united. Romania received full sovereignty in 1878. Its borders shifted several times up to 1948 due to territorial losses and gains (including Dobruja, Bessarabia, Transylvania, the Maramureş, and Bukovina). After 1918, Romania's state territory increased threefold, its total population growing from around 7.2 to seventeen million.

For centuries, the three large historical provinces of Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania were destinations for various waves of immigration from abroad: Hungarians, Transylvanian Saxons, Ruthenes, Romani, Serbs, Jews, Swabians, Tatats, Turks, and others. In comparison to Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia remained relatively ethnically homogenous (that is, Romanian). A decidedly state-cultural homogenization policy after 1878 and 1918 heralded the decline of this historical ethnic and religious plurality. Flight, expulsions, deportations, emigration, population exchanges, and assimilation by the various minorities meant that the Romanian population grew from ca. 77 percent in 1930 to ca. 89 percent in 1992.[37]

4.1 Jews

The complex history of Jews in Romania dates back to the Roman era (from the first to the third century CE). Thin sources mention the presence of (individual) Jews on the Black Sea coast and elsewhere, while in later centuries there are various records of Jewish merchants with international networks. Organized Jewish community life in Transylvania is documented from the thirteen/fourteenth century onwards, and from the fifteenth/sixteenth century in Moldavia and Wallachia. Until the political unification of these three large historical provinces in 1859 and 1918, Jewish history was fragmented within different political, legal, and social systems. Accordingly, the legal, economic, and social status of Jews varied, also remaining subject to change due to various annexations or losses of (peripheral) territories (such as Bessarabia, Bukovina, Dobruja, and Transylvania).

The different Jewish histories in Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania are a microcosm of the transnational Jewish history of Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Common to them all are diverse forms of historical immigration from abroad, be it following the official expulsion of Jews from other Christian European states (Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Germany, and elsewhere) or in the course of the excessive murder and looting campaigns during the Khmelnytskyi Uprising in the mid-seventeenth century. The temporary official invitation for Jews to go to Moldavia and Wallachia is unlikely to have caused comparable immigration, unlike the pogroms in Russia in the late nineteenth century. New streams of Jewish mass migration reached the three provinces, in each of which only a few thousand Jews lived in the early nineteenth cen-

37 Peter Jordan and Thede Kahl, "Ethnische Struktur," in *Rumänien: Raum und Bevölkerung. Geschichte und Geschichtsbilder*, ed. Thede Kahl (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2008), 63.

tury. According to the census of 1899, the Kingdom of Romania had a total of 266,000 Jews, around 197,000 of whom lived in Moldavia and around 69,000 in Wallachia and Dobruja.[38] Transylvania had a total of ca. 106,000 Jews in 1870. From the 1880s on, mass Jewish emigration to Western industrial states began, particularly to the USA. By 1914, a total of ca. 75,000 Jews had left the Kingdom of Romania and Transylvania.[39]

The historical migration waves from abroad had a sustained impact not only on Jewish demography but also on the local ethnolinguistic and cultural diversity that had grown in the region. From the eighteenth century on, the Ashkenazi tradition dominated, with Hebrew as the language of worship in most communities. Previously, the local majority had been Sephardim, who used Ladino both in their daily lives and their worship. Following the end of Ottoman rule over Transylvania (Hungary), many Jews emigrated to the Ottoman Empire. In Romania's three large provinces, the Jewish population underwent various processes of acculturation; in Habsburg-Hungarian Transylvania, they largely became Magyarized, while in Moldavia and Wallachia they mostly became acculturated to the Romanian majority. The ethnic situation fundamentally shifted when thousands of Polish-, Russian-, and Yiddish-speaking Jews emigrated from Bukovina, Galicia, Poland, Bohemia, and Russia. Many brought with them the religious conservative reform movement of the Hasidim ("the pious"), which had a broad reception in Moldavia. In Wallachia (and Dobruja), community life received new impetus following the arrival of Sephardic Jews from Bulgaria; earlier Sephardic centers in Bucharest, Craiova, Turnu Severin, and Timişoara were revitalized, and there were also signs of revival in other towns such as Iaşi, Brăila, and Constanţa.

Along with this considerable ethnic diversity, Jewry in Romania is also characterized by a variety of histories. Of the three large provinces, the principality of Moldavia, an Ottoman tributary, led in terms of demography and self-administration. In its capital, Iaşi, the Great Synagogue opened in 1670; it is one of Romania's oldest remaining synagogues. It was also the residence of the chief rabbi, who was subordinate to the chief rabbi of Istanbul. In Moldavia (and Wallachia), settlement, employment, and property rights remained highly restrictive for Jews for centuries. There was also a firm religiously motivated anti-Semitism after the Orthodox Church officially declared Jews heretics and forbade all Christians from having contact with them in 1640. Over the centuries, this discourse further fueled the blood libel, accusations, attacks, and pogroms.

Under Russian rule (1819–56), the situation for Jews worsened. A new state civil law drastically limited their civil options; only (Orthodox) Christian enjoyed political and citizens' rights. Jews (and Muslims) were practically declared "foreigners". The

38 Leonida Colescu, ed., *Recensământul General al Populaţiei României: Rezultate definitive* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice "Eminescu", 1905), 72.

39 Ladislau Gyémánt, "Transylvania," YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, October 28, 2010, accessed May 29, 2023, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Transylvania; Leon Volovici, "Romania", YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, November 19, 2010, accessed May 29, 2023, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Romania.

law also introduced the category of "vagabond" for Jews without profession, property, or fixed abode; they could now be officially expulsed. After the political union of Moldavia and Wallachia (1859/61), anti-Semitism in society and politics intensified. The nation-building program made the civil emancipation of Jews (and Muslims) virtually impossible; they could only be "naturalized" on an individual basis, and by the parliament. The costs of this legal process, which also took many years, meant that only a few thousand Jews had been "naturalized" by 1918. There is hardly any other country in which their political and civil emancipation remained as dependent on international politics and diplomacy.[40] The enlightened Jewish population nevertheless wrote a significant chapter in the country's cultural history. Along with Iaşi, the capital, Bucharest, developed into a center where not only a diverse press flourished: In 1876, the Jewish State Theater was founded there—a unique institution worldwide whose interrupted history has extended into the twenty-first century.[41]

In Transylvania, the Jewish community lived in better social and economic circumstances than in Moldavia and Wallachia thanks to a more favorable legal situation. Jews had received official privileges under Ottoman sovereignty (in 1623). Under Habsburg sovereignty, (after 1687) they enjoyed freedom of movement and settlement, trading rights and rights of worship, some of which were later withdrawn. Following the foundation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1867, Transylvania's ca. 23,000 Jews were granted equality before the law. After further immigration, in the late nineteenth century Jewish settlement was densest in the northwestern region of Crişana-Maramureş (Hungarian: Máramoros, Körösvidék, German: Marmarosch-Kreisch), where more than half of all Transylvanian Jews lived (around 62,000 out of a total of ca. 102,000). Characteristic of Jewish history in Transylvania is a broader acceptance of the European Jewish Enlightenment (Haskala) than in the Romanian principalities; in many urban centers, Jewish communities adopted the modernized religious and ritual reforms. Here too, acceptance or rejection of this reform Judaism divided the communities into Orthodox (conservative) and liberal (neolog) factions. It was in Transylvania that most liberal synagogues were built (Braşov, Arad, Oradea, and elsewhere).[42]

After the Kingdom of Romania merged with Transylvania in 1918, the historically different ethnic and religious Jewish traditions and histories were confronted with one another. They did not form a common cultural identity in the nation state of Greater Romania; there was not enough time before the Shoah in the early 1940s, their historical differences were too great, and their opportunities for national integration too few

40 Carol Iancu, *Jews in Romania 1866–1919: From Exclusion to Emancipation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

41 Liviu Rotman, *The Romanian Kehilla: The Pulse, Character, and History of the Jewish Community in Romania* (Tel Aviv: The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, 2015).

42 Ladislau Gyémánt, *Evreii din Transilvania: Destin istoric* (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul Cultural Roman, 2004); Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, *Istoria evreilor din Transilvania (1623–1944)* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1994).

given the ideology of a monolithic Romanian nation and the hostility towards the "country's misfortune."

Before the Shoah, Romania already had the third-largest Jewish community in Europe, after Poland and Russia: around 756,000 (1930 census). For them too, the Holocaust meant flight, mass deportations, and murder, even if Romania's government, similarly to Bulgaria's, was able to negotiate with Nazi Germany on the "Final Solution to the Jewish question" and initially limited its extent. Nevertheless, a total of over 260,000 Jews were deported from Romania and murdered, under Romanian sovereignty, in what was known as the Transnistria Governorate on occupied Soviet territory. At the same time, thousands of Jews left Romania.[43]

The ca. 295,000 survivors constituted what was then the second-largest Jewish community in Europe. They continued to write Jewish history in Romania, albeit with interruptions and constant demographic decline. After the war had ended, Romania fell under Communist rule. Following a decade of Stalinism, a political "thaw" began in 1956, in the era of national communism (until 1989). Despite political instrumentalization and repressive official religious policy, Jews began to reorganize. New Jewish community life became possible not least thanks to Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen (1912–94). The Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania (FEDROM) was also established, becoming the country's most influential Jewish organization. In Bucharest, the Jewish State Theater remained functional, under state censorship, and a censored Jewish press could publish. Up to 1989, a total of ca. 280,000 Jews left Romania for Israel and the USA.[44] The emigration trend continued in the post-communist era; the census of 2011 recorded ca. 3,500 Jews. Only twenty-one of FEDROM's total of eighty-seven synagogues are still used for worship. In the late 2000s, Jewish youth in Romania was considered more religious than Jewish youth in other Eastern European countries.[45]

4.2 Muslims

In Romania, Muslims have always settled largely in the coastal region of Dobruja. The capital, Bucharest, has an Islamic community with several thousand members. Ethnically, they consider themselves Tatars, Turks, or Turco-Tatars. In terms of religion, Romania's Muslims are a relatively homogenous group; most of them are Sunnis and follow the moderate tradition of Hanafi law.

Dobruja gained notoriety in Antiquity. In the early first century CE, the Roman princely poet Ovid, in exile in Tomis, today's Constanţa, warned of this desolate

43 On this well-researched period, cf. the chapter by Mariana Hausleitner in this volume.

44 Carol Bines, *Din istoria emigrărilor în Israel* (Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 1998), 94.

45 Erik H. Cohen, *Jewish Youth Around the World, 1990–2010: Social Identity and Values in a Comparative Approach* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 95.

place.[46] In later periods, its isolation was due to political and spatial factors. As part of the Ottoman Empire (1417/84–1878), for Istanbul it lay on the political periphery. It was separated from the bordering western and northern territories by the Danube and its Black Sea delta. Dobruja's luminal status changed from the nineteenth century onwards. After the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828/29 and the Crimean War (1853–56), many Tatars in particular sought and found refuge there. The different migration waves expanded the local internal Tatar spectrum; the Crimean Tatars quickly became the majority, and their subsequent generations attained cultural and intellectual dominance among the Muslims in the region. During the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78, Dobruja became the center of the political and military conflicts between Istanbul and St. Petersburg, and was split in two after the Ottoman defeat: Northern Dobruja with ca. 71,000 Tatars and 48,000 Turks[47] went to the young Kingdom of Romania (Moldavia and Wallachia) in exchange for southern Bessarabia, which went to Russia. The smaller Southern Dobruja went to Bulgaria.

In this region too, the Ottoman withdrawal also triggered considerable Muslim emigration to the Ottoman Empire, a pattern that lasted well into the twentieth century. These migration waves with various motivations weakened the remaining mini-society in particular and transformed the ethnoreligious structure of Dobruja's population in general. Christians gradually became the majority, forming an even larger ethnic and religious mosaic than the Muslims (Romanians, Bulgarians, Russians, Gagauz—an Orthodox Turkish people—Greeks, and Germans).

The Romanian government placed annexed Dobruja under a special administration (1878–1913) that rather amounted to a combination of territorial exclusion and symbolic inclusion.[48] Bucharest introduced extensive Romanianization measures, and the mass expropriation, the destruction of mosques, and recruitment for military service triggered another significant wave of Muslim emigration. As non-Christians, Muslims did not receive Romanian citizenship or political and civil rights. Bucharest pursued an interventionist religious policy with regard to Muslims; their religious and community life, their self-administration (the establishment of four mufti's offices), and their educational infrastructure were under state supervision. In 1889, the prestigious Muslim Seminar in Babadag (Turkish: Babadağ), where future imams and Quran teachers received their foundational theological schooling with Turkish and Quranic Arabic language training, was reorganized under state auspices. The representative seminary was transferred to Medgidia, in today's Constanţa district, in 1901,

46 Publius Ovidius Naso, *Briefe aus der Verbannung. Lateinisch und deutsch*, trans. Wilhelm Willige (Mannheim: Artemis und Winkler, 2011), 155 (Lieder der Trauer III.10–11, 70–76).

47 Kemal Karpat, "Ottoman Urbanism: The Crimean Emigration to Dobruca and the Founding of Mecidiye, 1856–1878," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 5, no. 1 (1984–85): 226

48 Metin Omer, "Tătarii din Dobrogea (România) de la 1878 până la al Doilea Război Mondial," in *Un Destin la Marea Neagră: Tătarii din Dobrogea*, ed. Metin Omer (Cluj-Napoca: ISPMN, 2017), 16–99.

and remained operational until 1967.[49] The most important Muslim educational institution, it reopened in the mid-1990s, as did, in the early 2000s, the Colegiul Naţional "Kemal Atatürk" Medgidia (with the status of a faculty and funded by Ankara).[50]

Around thirty-three mosques,[51] many cemeteries, mausoleums, and graves of Muslim saints remain of Dobruja's Ottoman era. The largest mosque is from the Romanian era, in Constanţa; Carol I Mosque was consecrated in 1913 as a "gift to the Muslims."[52] The same year, Bucharest annexed Southern Dobruja, which belonged to Romania until 1940.

During the national communist era (1947–89) and state-prescribed atheism, the Romanian government continued to seek to eradicate the Islamic-Oriental influence in Dobruja and indeed throughout the country. Bucharest ordered new Romanianization measures, closing Turkish schools. The Turks and the Tatars, then around 40,000 in total, underwent social and societal assimilation, whether they liked it or not. In the post-communist era from the 1990s on, their mini-community too saw a religiocultural revival. Their historical ethnic fragmentation, and their intra-Islamic problems and rivalries, remained. There emerged a Tatar movement that took up and cultivated transnational ties with Turkey, the Crimean Peninsula, and Central Asia based on the idea of linguistic-cultural unity.[53] The muftiate, the official institutional representative of Muslims in Constanţa, under Murat Yusuf since 2005, rejects such orientations and emphasizes not only Muslims' fidelity and loyalty but also "unity in diversity" as their identity markers.[54]

Like all other minority parties, Muslims too have had a seat in both the Romanian Senate and the House of Representatives since 1990. Moreover, there are also Muslims who serve as representatives of the large popular parties in the parliament and the city and town councils. Many new associations have also been formed.

Since the end of the twentieth century, the fragility of Islamic identities in Romania has continued to weaken.[55] Muslim preachers from the Middle East imported fundamentalist Salafist ideas and rigid religious rules and rituals. They did not meet with much resonance and acceptance among local Muslims, since they not only reject exter-

49 The renowned historian of Turkey Kemal Karpat (1925–2019), who changed his name in a nod to the Romanian high mountains, attended this seminary. For Karpat's personal memories of the seminary, see Adriana Cupcea, Manuela Marin, and Metin Omer, eds., *Seminarul Musulman din Medgidia: Documente şi memorie* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura ISPMN, 2016), 21–30.

50 Colegiul Naţional "Kemal Atatatürk" Medgidia, accessed June 1, 2023, https://colegiulatatturk.ro/.

51 For a survey of Muslim institutions (up to 2015), see Thede Kahl, "Die muslimische Gemeinschaft Rumäniens: Der Weg einer Elite zur marginalisierten Minderheit," *Europa Regional* 13, no. 3 (2005): 98.

52 It is also said to have been a display of gratitude to Istanbul for recognizing the Romanian state. Jürgen Henkel, *Halbmond über der Dobrudscha: Der Islam in Rumänien* (Sibiu: Schiller Verlag, 2015), 92.

53 Adriana Cupcea, *Asserting Ethnicity: The Tatars from Dobruja* (Romania) (Cluj-Napoca: ISPMN, 2016).

54 Adina Bocai, "Muftiul Muurat Iusuf," *Interetnica*, March 9, 2015, http://interetnica.ro/muftiul-muurat-iusuf-exista-diferenta-de-interpretare-islamului-in-randul-sunitilor-din-romania/.

55 Alina Isac Alak. "Types of Religious Identities Within Romanian Muslim Communities," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 41 (2015): 148–73.

nal neoconservative controls (including those from Turkey), but have always preferred more liberal understandings of Islam. The Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs, the *Diyanet*, is raising its own voice and cultivating competition to the mufti.

Compared to other Turkish Muslim minorities in the Balkan countries, the Muslims in Dobruja have experienced less state oppression in the region's 150-year history as part of Romania. They are nevertheless certainly familiar with discrimination. To this day, there is a lack of public discourses on Islam, Muslims, and their place in Romanian society. They have, however, registered small successes with respect to public recognition. In 2006, a national Day of the Tatar Ethnicity (December 13) was introduced, and in 2008 a Day of the Tatar Language (May 5). The same year, the Romanian government passed a new statute recognizing all Muslims in Romania as an autonomous and centrally self-administered religious community.

5 Ukraine

Unlike those in the other countries in this chapter, the long and rich Jewish and Muslim histories in Russia and Ukraine are not examined for the entire state territories. A comprehensive survey would be far beyond the scope of the chapter. Hence I provide an exemplary regional focus on Odesa (Jews) and the Crimean Peninsula (Muslims, Jews, and Karaites) as important historical centers of these religious communities.

5.1 Jews in Odesa

In comparison to other historical urban centers on the Black Sea coast, Odesa's history begins late, towards the end of the eighteenth century, after the northern Black Sea region came under the rule of St. Petersburg. Tsarina Catherine II had Odesa built from scratch, as it were, in 1789, on the site of the Ottoman fortress Yeni-Dünya ("New World"), near the settlement of Kachybei. Due to flourishing grain exports, the planned, free trade city (from 1817 on) developed into a booming metropolis of international trade with a Western European cultural profile (theater, press, etc.). As an impressive neo-Classical city with wide boulevards, the planned city was also symbolic of St. Petersburg's imperial expansion to the southeast and economic boom in Southern Russia. Thanks to a more liberal official immigration policy, thousands of domestic and foreign migrants moved to Odesa, which for many became a more accessible "America." Odesa had a population of ca. 2,300 around 1795, ca. 110,000 around 1861, ca. 630,000 around 1914,[56] and about a million around 2001 (census). The many migrants gave the

56 Patricia Herlihy, *Odessa: A History, 1794–1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 234.

port city its own multicultural and cosmopolitan character,[57] a special myth that is perpetuated to this day.[58]

Ca. 246 Jews lived in Odesa around 1795.[59] In the course of the nineteenth century, Jews from Galicia (Ukraine, Poland) and Germany immigrated, mostly Ashkenazim, whose religiocultural tradition remained the dominant one. Odesa became a center of the Jewish Enlightenment movement (Haskala); in 1826, the first school for boys with a modernized curriculum opened, followed by a girls' school in 1835. After the abolition of Jewish self-administration/autonomy, Odesa's Jews too embarked on a process of bourgeois emancipation. Leadership of the heterogeneous and constantly growing Jewish community was adopted by its new ambitious economic elite.

Around 1897, Odesa had a population of ca. 400,000, around 139,000 of whom were Jews. It was the only city in the settlement raion in which Jews were permitted to live without interruption. Odesa developed into the most important metropolis in the Tsarist Empire's Jewish settlement raion after Warsaw, and was considered the most progressive Jewish center in comparison to Polish Lublin, the Jewish "Oxford," or Vilna, the historical rabbinic bastion and Eastern European center of the Jewish Enlightenment movement. Jewish folklore influenced various idioms characteristic of Odesa as a place of worldly-divine existence ("live like God in Odesa") and as a place around which the "flames of the fires of hell burned seven miles wide," since Odesa offered many of the freedoms and opportunities of frivolous city life (for instance, brothels). In juxtaposition to its reputation, the port city had eight large synagogues, the oldest being the Brody Synagogue of 1840, and around fifty prayer houses. However, pogroms, Zionism, and not least of all a well-developed Yiddish-Russian literature and press (until 1921) were also characteristic of Odesa. Under Tsar Alexander II (1855–81), the general situation for the Jewish population in the Russian Empire improved thanks to political and social reforms. Rights of settlement became less restrictive and Jews obtained access to free professions; there developed the first generation of Jewish journalists, censors, and doctors, the first Jewish Russian newspapers appeared (Odesa), and reformed synagogues were established. Most Jews adopted the Russian language and sought to integrate into Russian society, but discrimination remained.[60] After the death of Tsar Alexander II (in 1881), the socioreligious tensions escalated into violence. Around 259 pogroms were registered, mostly in rural areas (219). Jews were held responsible for the negative consequences of modernization and industrialization. Their economic, political, and social rights were restricted, with the exception of Jewish converts to Orthodox Christianity, but the deadly brutality culminated in a second wave

57 On the ethnic diversity around 1897, see Evrydiki Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa: Peoples, Spaces, Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 239 ff.

58 For the dominant Jewish perspective, cf. Jarrod Tanny, *City of Rogues and Schnorrers: Russia's Jews and the Myth of Old Odessa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

59 All Jewish demographic figures are taken from *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan), s.v. "Odessa."

60 Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa 1794–1881* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

of pogroms. A pogrom in Kishinev (Bessarabia; today: Chişinău) in 1903 was followed by a further 700 violent episodes or pogroms. A total of ca. 3,000 Jews had died by 1906, around 800 of them in Odesa. This put an end to Jewish hopes for civil and citizens' integration into Russian society, and ushered in mass emigration to Europe, the USA, and Palestine.[61]

Odesa also became a center of (organized) Zionism, which the Russian government initially tolerated and later banned. In the Jewish quarter, Moldavanka, the physician Leon Pinsker (1821–91), initially an advocate of Jewish Russian assimilation, founded the first Zionist organization in the Tsarist Empire. It was here that he wrote his famous work *Autoemancipation* (1882), which was published anonymously and included the demand that Jews have a territory of their own. Odesa is also associated with the name Vladimir Zhabotinskii/Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1880–1940), who founded the controversial nationalist revisionist Zionism.[62] In 1905, the Zionist Socialist Workers' Party was formed in Odesa, quickly becoming the second-largest Jewish party after the Bund.[63] It was active until 1917.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, Odesa primarily became a center of intellectuals, writers, revolutionaries, and the Jewish Russian press and literature. Since most Jewish authors wrote in Russian, Yiddish literature and the Russian language/culture are virtually inseparable. One of Odesa's most famous sons is the Jewish journalist and prose writer Isaak Babel (1894–1940). His world famous *Odessa Stories*, written in the 1920s, are a literary monument to pre-Revolutionary Odesa, which he presents with great humor and irony as an Eldorado for crooks and thieves whose inhabitants navigate the misery of their daily lives with much intrigue and piety. Other texts too exploit the literary topos of Odesa as a city of crooks and thieves, creating a disproportionate narrative of the "good old days" and perpetuating the myth of old Odesa.[64]

Around 1939, of Odesa's total population of over 600,000, ca. 200,000 were Jews, forming the second-largest Jewish community in Ukraine. After Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union (June 1941), catastrophic dark years began for Odesa too. Together with Transnistria, the city came under Romanian occupation. In October 1941, more than 25,000 Odesans were massacred and the Jewish population was ghettoized (ca. 35,000). There followed deportations to labor camps in Transnistria, from which few returned. This local manifestation of the Holocaust halved the population of Odesa. Around 108,000 Jews survived.

In the Soviet era, despite their patriotic loyalties, Jews continued to be confronted with hostility. The Stalinist regime fought them as "rootless cosmopolitans" and "Zion-

61 John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, eds., *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Jewish History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

62 Many of Israel's right-wing conservative politicians are from Odesa or Ukraine. Cf. Colin Shindler, *The Rise of the Israeli Right: From Odessa to Hebron* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

63 General Jewish Labor Bund in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia (1897–1935).

64 For instance, *The Twelve Chairs* (1928) and *The Golden Calf* (1931) by Ilya Ilf and Evgenii Petrov or Jabotinski's less-known novel *The Five* (1936).

ists" and sought to liquidate them along with other ethnicities and religious communities, and indeed religiocultural identities in general. After Stalin's death, the general situation improved, but in the 1960s a new wave of Jewish migration to the USA, Europe, and Israel began, putting an end to Odesa's Jewish community life. Around 1989, the city had ca. 66,000 Jewish inhabitants.

After the end of the USSR, like many Eastern bloc cities, Odesa oscillated between tradition and a new start. The city has taken up its legendary cosmopolitanism, reflected not only in its historically diverse ethnic street names but also by the many new cafés and restaurants in the restored center, which offer a Ukrainian, Jewish, Armenian, and Greek culinary mélange. Beyond this new cosmopolitan Odesa of the rich, most Odesans live in precarious circumstances.[65] According to the census of 2001, Odesa had ca. 12,000 Jews.[66] Since 2019, Ukraine has had a president of Jewish origin elected by the majority of the population (Volodymyr Zelenskyi).

6 The Crimean Peninsula

The Crimean Peninsula has been inhabited since Antiquity. The Tauri (the indigenous population) and Cimmerians were followed by the Scythians in historical times. The Black Sea coast soon had a series of cities formed by Greek colonists under Roman rule and later, in some cases, under Byzantine influence. For centuries, the northern Black Sea steppes were the site of various waves of migration from Europe and Asia (Sarmatians, Huns, Goths, Turks, and Mongols), and political rule also changed hands (Khazars, Mongols/the Golden Horde or the Great Horde, Genoese, Venetians, and Lithuanians). From the fifteenth century on, the Tatar Muslim Giray dynasty was able to establish itself as the dominant political and religiocultural force in the region, forming the Crimean Khanate with the new capital of Bağçasaray. The Crimean Khanate stood under Ottoman sovereignty with privileged political status and autonomy.

In 1783, St. Petersburg annexed the Crimean Peninsula and launched a comprehensive process of religiocultural Russification, claiming that Crimea had always been a Russian land and the "cradle" of Russian Orthodoxy; as such, it had to be defended as a bulwark and outmost bastion of the Russian Empire in the battle against Christian and Muslim enemies. Crimea as the "pearl of Russia" became a longstanding myth that caused tensions and conflicts with the local largely Sunni Tatar population from the nineteenth century on. It remains virulent to this day; the discourse surrounding Rus-

65 Marina Sapritsky, "Negotiating Cosmopolitanism: Migration, Religious Education und Shifting Jewish Orientations in Post-Soviet Odessa," in *Post-Cosmopolitan Cities: Explorations of Urban Coexistence*, ed. Caroline Humphrey and Vera Skvirskaja (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 65–93.

66 "All-Ukrainian Population Census: Databank," State Statistics Service of Ukraine, accessed May 21, 2023, http://db.ukrcensus.gov.ua/MULT/Database/Census/databasetree_en.asp.

sia's annexation of Crimea in contravention of international law in 2014 belongs to this narrative of Crimea as part of the "Russian world."[67]

6.1 Muslims

Muslim traders and mystics (Sufis) from Asia Minor took Sunni Islam with them to the Crimean Peninsula between the ninth and eleventh centuries. The Crimean Khanate (1443–1783) with Sunni Islam as its state religion long remained a dominant Islamic center and buffer zone between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires. After Russia's annexation of the peninsula in 1783, St. Petersburg pursued a firm policy of settlement and urbanization. The first immigrants were German, Swiss, and Italian colonists, followed mostly by Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, and Greek settlers. The former were supposed to contribute to (Western) modernization, the latter to the reinforcement of minority Christianity. St. Petersburg granted the Muslim (Crimean) Tatars, ca. 80 percent of the local population, autonomous religious self-administration (a mufti). Nevertheless, their socioreligious transformation from a majority to minority had begun, and was complete by the end of the nineteenth century. This process was accelerated by migration waves, especially those in the course of the Crimean War (1853–56), from and after which around 200,000 Crimean Tatars fled to the Ottoman Empire. This significant departure meant not only local demographic decline, but also de-territorialization and the transformation of the Crimean Tatars from a compact to a transnational community.[68]

The decline of Islam in Crimea also facilitated the marked state Russification and promotion of Orthodox Christianity (the construction of Russian schools, the transformation of mosques into churches, and Russian immigration).[69] Around 1897, Crimean Tatars and Russians had become almost equal in number (ca. 194,000 and 180,000, or 35 percent and 33 percent of the population, respectively). However, the historical decline of Islam was also evident in the strong reduction in active mosques. Before 1914, only 700 out of around 1,600 mosques were still operational.[70]

In this period, the Crimean Peninsula not only transformed into a place of yearning for the Russian aristocracy, who had many palaces built on its riviera; during and after the revolutionary upheaval of 1905, it also became a center for the anti-revolutionary forces of the Tsarist Empire. Like many other (small) nationalities, the Crimean

67 Kerstin S. Jobst, *Die Perle des Imperiums: Der russische Krim-Diskurs im Zarenreich* (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2007); Kerstin S. Jobst, *Geschichte der Krim: Iphigenie und Putin auf Tauris* (Oldenburg: DeGruyter 2020), 313–24.

68 Filiz T. Aydin, *Émigré: Exile, Diaspora, and Transnational Movements of the Crimean Tatars. Preserving the Eternal Flame of Crimea* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021).

69 Mara Kozelsky, *Christianizing Crimea: Shaping Sacred Space in the Russian Empire and Beyond* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 62 ff.

70 Elmira Muratova, "Ukraine," *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* 5 (2013): 670.

Tatars responded to the issues of nationalism and political sovereignty with demands for cultural autonomy or political independence.

The Red Army's invasion in 1917, however, created new political realities. The year 1921 saw the proclamation of the Taurida Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The catastrophic famine of 1921/22 claimed countless thousands of lives and triggered a new wave of Crimean Tatar migration to Turkey and Romania. Nevertheless, for those who remained, relatively prosperous years remained ahead. Political participation was open to Crimean Tatars; they could cultivate their religion and culture with their own public institutions (including a theater, a press, and a mufti's office). In the late 1920s, however, hard times began due to the Soviet policy of collectivization and "rooting" (*korenizatsiia*); in Crimea too, this meant expropriation, the liquidation of the political elite, the intelligentsia, and the clergy, and the closure of religiocultural institutions. The use of the Arabic alphabet for the Crimean Tatar language was also abolished and replaced with its Latin counterpart, and later with Cyrillic. The new great famine and the "purges" under the Stalinist regime in the 1930s largely destroyed the local Crimean culture. Around 1940, not a single mosque remained open.[71]

Under Nazi German occupation (1942–44), some Crimean Tatars collaborated with the new powers, while others joined the resistance movement or remained apolitical. Immediately after retaking the peninsula, the Soviets embarked on a policy of forced deportation of the Crimean Tatars and other "foreign" immigrants in May 1944. Moscow accused them of "collective betrayal" and collaboration with Nazi Germany. Within a few days, ca. 180,000 people (the elderly, women, and children) were forcibly deported to Central Asian republics. The men followed in 1946. This brutal deportation represented the Crimean Tatars' historic nadir, which has become a transgenerational "chosen trauma" (Vamık Volkan) for them.[72]

For those who remained, as part of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic after 1954, there followed decades without clergy (imams, mullahs, or hodjas), without official institutions (mosques, prayer houses, etc.), and without traditional religious schooling (Quran schools). Militant state atheism also meant that the older generation lived and handed down Islam on an individual and private basis while many young Muslims assimilated to the secular majority. In rural areas, however, Crimean Tatars still celebrated their traditional religious festivals, to which many travelled from abroad (Central Asia, Turkey, and Romania). Crimea, the "green island," became a religious center and yearned-for destination for the transnational community of Crimean Tatars.

After their official rehabilitation by Moscow in 1967, only a few handpicked Crimean Tatars could officially return from exile. It was not until after 1988 that the Ukrainian authorities allowed their collective re-migration. For the local community of ca. 38,000 Crimean Tatars (1989 census), this demographic increase of ca. 200,000

71 Brian Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora Experience and the Forging of a Nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 334–73.

72 Greta Lynn Uehling, *Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Return* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

meant significant collective reinforcement, even if most of those who returned spoke Russian.

Post-Soviet Ukraine's nation-building saw the Crimean Tatars marginalized on the one hand, but on the other hand they were increasingly included in the concept of a political Ukrainian nation by Muslim and Christian actors.[73] They also enjoyed a historical endogenous ethnonational, religiocultural revival from the 1990s onwards. As the "autochthonous population" of Crimea, the two identities rejected their minority status and placed a focus on religion/Islam. Crimean Tatars gave themselves a national flag, formed autonomous political and religious institutions (the National Asssembly/Qurultay, National Council/Meclis, religious administration/mufti's office, or the Crimean Muslim Spiritual Board/SAMC).[74] They also gradually regained their mosques, land, and property. They were nevertheless prohibited from settling in their earlier home towns in southern Crimea.[75] The census of 2001 recorded ca. 243,000 Crimean Tatars living in Crimea, which had a total population of just over two million.[76]

The religious field of Islam was lent a new dynamic not only by local actors and discourses but also by foreign Islamic actors, some with strongly competing religious ideas, including the Turkish government with its neo-Ottoman trend, the government of Tatarstan, and Islamic missionaries/organizations from the Middle East. They became involved in all areas of the Crimean Tatar revival via considerable financial resources. In contrast to the foreign Islamic influences, Crimean Tatars emphasize their own peaceful and tolerant "Tatar Islam," in which they recognize historical ties with Turkey. They firmly distance themselves from Middle Eastern fundamentalist Islam with its anti-state tendencies.

The endogenous and exogenous revitalization of the Crimean Tatars and Islam activated old and new interethnic and interreligious lines of conflict within the population as a whole. Particularly the Russian and Ukrainian majority population remained suspicious and dismissive of the Crimean Tatars and their fight for official sociopolitical recognition and rights.

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, not recognized by many Crimean Tatars with Ukrainian loyalties, or by the international community, added another chapter to the Crimean Tatars' history of collective trauma. For the most part, they lost their local autonomy. Their media (TV, press) were dissolved, and in 2016 the National Coun-

73 Stefan Rohdewald, "Vom ukrainischen 'Antemurale Christianitatis' zur politischen Nation? Geschichtsbilder der Ukraine und muslimische Krimtataren," In *Religiöse Pluralität als Faktor des Politischen in der Ukraine*, ed. Katrin Boeckh and Oleh Turij (Munich: Biblion Media, 2015), 268–86.

74 Following internal differences, a second, competing spiritual representative body based in Ievpatoriia was formed in 2010 (the Spiritual Center of the Muslims of Crimea/DTsMK), an offshoot of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine.

75 Didem Buhari Gulmez, "Religion and Nation-Building in Crimea," in *Nation-Building and Identity in the Post-Soviet Space: New Tools and Approaches*, ed. Rico Isaacs and Abel Polese (London: Routledge, 2016), 65–82.

76 "All-Ukrainian Census 2001: The Distribution of Population by Nationality and mother tongue," State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, accessed May 21, 2023, http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/.

cil (*Meclis*) was banned as an "extremist" organization. Moscow established an overcentralized, patriarchal-authoritarian religious policy involving raids of mosques, the censorship of religious literature, and combating "terrorists" via a rigid practice of registering all religious organizations. Most foreign Islamic actors were extradited, with the exception of those from Turkey and Tatarstan. Only the Crimean Muslim Spiritual Board (SAMC) was able to strengthen its position as an institutional representative body, despite considerable internal tensions (accusations of collaboration with Russia). Overall, the Crimean Tatars, although very fragmented ethnically and politically, largely responded to the Russian occupation and political pressure with civil disobedience, peaceful strategies, and emigration to non-occupied areas of Ukraine. Mustafa Cemilev (also Dzhemilev), who has led the community the 1960s, was again re-elected to the Ukrainian parliament in 2019.[77]

Since the eighteenth century, characteristic aspects of the history of the Crimean Tatars remain their demographic and religiocultural decline, their transformation from a majority to a minority after several migration waves, and their forced deportation from 1944–46. Crimean Tatars became a flourishing transnational community for whom the "green island" of Crimea became a religious center and key *lieu de mémoire.* As for many other societies, for Crimean Tatars Islam is chiefly associated with cultural identity.

6.2 Jews and Karaites

The Jewish presence in Crimea also offers a multiethnic and multireligious spectrum that emerged and changed over centuries. The Jewish historical beginnings in southeastern and western Crimea (Kerch, Sevastopol) date back to the first century BCE. Whether or not the Romaniote communities in the Greek colonial cities along the Black Sea coast survived the many migrations of the peoples remains unclear; scholars have little firm historical and archaeological information on the legendary Khazar Empire (seventh to tenth century), whose ruling dynasty and upper strata are said to have converted to Judaism.[78] In this era, many Jews fled forced conversion or persecution in Byzantium for the Khazar Crimean Peninsula, where they enlarged the Crimean Jewish

77 Elmira Muratova, "The Transformations of the Crimean Tatars' Institutions and Discourses after 2014," *Journal of Nationalism, Memory, and Language Politics* 13, no. 1 (2019): 44–66, https://doi.org/10.2478/jnmlp-2019-0006.

78 There is some controversy surrounding the issue; most scholars think that they did, while some argue that they didn't (Shaul Stampfer, Moshe Gil). Peter B. Golden, "The Conversion of the Khazars to Judaism," in *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives. Selected Papers from the Jerusalem 1999 International Khazar Colloquium*, ed. Peter B. Golden, Haggai Ben-Shammai, and András Roná-Tas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 123–62; Saul Stampfer, "Did the Khazars Convert to Judaism?," *Jewish Social Studies* 19, no. 3 (2013): 1–72; Moshe Gil, "Did the Khazars Convert to Judaism," *Revue des Études Juives* 170, no. 3–4 (2011), 429–42.

population, which formed a peripheral community within the Graeco-Jewish world. Additionally, the prosperous maritime trade cities under Genoese rule (in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries) attracted many Sephardic Jews from Europe and the Middle East. Following the Ottoman conquest, in the early sixteenth century the Crimean Jews wrote their own prayer book (Caffa ritual), laying the foundation for a distinct Crimean Jewish identity that remained open to foreign Jewish migration into the eighteenth century, primarily from the Mediterranean countries and later from Poland, Ukraine, and Russia.[79]

Any discussion of Jewish diversity in Crimea must make mention of the Karaites, on which a new branch of scholarship has existed since the 1990s, while the general Jewish history of Crimea remains a research desideratum. The Karaites are one of the oldest remaining religious traditions of rabbinic Jewry, having emerged in the Near Orient in the eighth/ninth century. Karaite theology and worship recognize the Torah (Jewish biblical scripture) as the sole normative text. They reject the Talmud, a central pillar of rabbinic Jews' faith as the divinely inspired spoken word. With their fundamental rabbinic criticism, Karaite Jews are one of the oldest reform movements within Judaism. They spread from the Near Orient to North Africa and Western and Southeastern Europe; Istanbul became a bastion of Karaite scholarship and remained the center of their movement into the eighteenth century. Administratively, the Karaite communities mostly belonged to the rabbinic community, while they were/are usually separate in religiocultural terms. Karaites retain their own food laws and holidays, and their synagogues and cemeteries are usually located in the immediate vicinity of rabbinic infrastructure, with the exception of their branches in Crimea, Ukraine, and Lithuania.[80]

The documented historical presence of Karaites in the Crimean Peninsula dates back to the thirteenth century. Their core places of settlement, usually next to rabbinic Jews, include Caffa (Feodosiia), Solkhat, Çufut Qale, Mangup, and later Gözleve (Russian: Evpatoriia, Ukrainian: Ievpatoriia). Under the Crimean Khanate, Karaites wrote a number of religious works. From Crimea, they spread to neighboring regions; other flourishing Karaite centers emerged in Halicz (Ukraine) and Trakai (Lithuania). The fortress town of Çufut Qale, a few kilometers from Bağçasaray, the capital of the Crimean Khanate, developed into a prosperous Karaite center that supported many poorer Karaite communities. From the seventeenth century on, the Karaite Jews' Turkification carried on apace with the adoption of Turkic names and terms. In 1734, Crimea's first publishing house opened in Çufut Qale.[81]

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79 In general, cf. Mikhail Kizilov, *Krimskaia Iudeia: Ocherki istorii evreev, khazar, karaimov i krymchakov v Krymu s antichnykh vremen do nashikh dnei* (Simferopol: Izdatelstvo Dolia, 2011).

80 Nathan Schur, *History of the Karaites* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992); Daniel J. Lasker, *Karaism: An Introduction to the Oldest Surviving Alternative Judaism* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2022).

81 Golda Akhiezer, *The Crimean Karaite Communities: History, Culture, and Leadership Through the Early Twentieth Century* (Daly City, CA: The Karaite Press, 2021).

Russian rule after 1783 also significantly transformed the Jewish history of Crimea. The most affected were an estimated ca. 2,600 Karaites[82] and around eight-hundred Krymchaks. The latter were given this new ethnonym as part of the official nomenclature and later adopted it for self-designation. The Krymchaks included the ethnically and cultural Tatarized rabbinic Jews whose collective had absorbed the older Jewish diversity in Crimea. Their fore- and surnames reflect an impressive microcosm of European-Oriental Jewry. The Krymchak centers were Caffa (Feodosiia), Qarasuvbazar (Ukrainian: Bilohirsk, Russian: Belogorsk), and Simferopol. Their community had grown to around seven thousand around 1913.[83]

Concerning the Jewish population, St. Petersburg generally pursued a religious policy of segregation and promoted their Russification. Following their own efforts, Karaites increasingly received privileges: exemption from double taxation and from military service, official recognition as a distinct religious community (1837), and full citizens' rights (1863). This new civil status greatly strengthened the Karaite community, especially since St. Petersburg did not grant comparable rights to the other Jews in the Russian Empire.[84]

The Karaites' communal boom also furthered their "nationalist awakening," which led them to cultivate a new religious ethnogenesis and historiography. They rejected all influences and ties to rabbinic Jewry and stressed their autonomous, distinct development in Crimea. By disassociating themselves from the Krymchaks and rabbinic Jewry in general, the Karaites of Southeastern Europe went their own way, separate from all other Karaite communities, who continued to consider themselves Karaite Jews. This modern national theory of the Southeastern European Karaites was largely influenced by three figures: Simcha Babovich (1790–1855), the first chairman of the community under Russian rule; Abraham Firkovich (1786–1874), the community functionary (1840–60), a collector of manuscripts and an amateur historian who would stop at nothing, not even falsification, in his efforts to prove that the Crimean Karaites were the descendents of exiled Israelites and Khazar converts; and Seraya Shapshal (1873–1961), the last chairman of the Karaite community and a Turkologist, according to whom the Crimean Karaites had emerged from the assimilation of the Semitic Karaites and Turkic Khazars.

In the nineteenth century, the Karaites in the Russian Empire generated singular international scholarly interest that sometimes led to substantial controversies. In the meantime, urbanization, internal migration, and demographic growth had a sustained impact in transforming their community and history. Çufut Qale, formerly their bastion, was depopulated in the late nineteenth century. Karaites from other places too migrated to urban centers (Evpatoriia, Odesa, Kyiv, Moscow, Vienna, etc.). According

82 A total of ca. 3,800 Karaites lived in the Russian Empire.

83 Anatoly Khazanov, *The Krymchaks: A Vanishing Group in the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1989), 16.

84 Hannelore Müller, *Religionswissenschaftliche Minoritätenforschung: Zur religionshistorischen Dynamik der Karäer im östlichen Europa* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 125–30.

to the census of 1897, there were around 13,000 Karaites in the Russian Empire, ca. 6,100 of them in Taurida Province (ca. 1,500 in Evpatoriia, ca. 1,000 in Odesa and elsewhere).[85] Crimea's multireligious and multiethnic spectrum was further expanded by Ashkenazi Jews, who primarily immigrated from Poland; in the early twentieth century, they are estimated to have numbered around 40,000. Before the second wave of pogroms in 1905, Simferopol was their largest center, with nine synagogues and prayer houses, three Jewish schools, and a Jewish hospital.

Under the Soviet regime, the historic decline of the Karaites and Jews in Crimea set in. The famine of 1921/22 led to many deaths, and many left for abroad. In the mid-1920s, Moscow permitted an agricultural project of settling Jews in northern Crimea, with financial support from the Jewish American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). By the time the project officially ended in the mid-1930s, ca. 20,000 urbanized Jews from the former Jewish settlement raion lived there, raising the total Jewish population to ca. 60,000.[86] Most of them were murdered in the Holocaust by the Nazi German regime, which declared Crimea "cleansed of Jews" ("judenrein") in 1942. The victims included the Karaites, even though they had been recognized in Berlin as a non-Jewish religious community.[87]

After 1945, the historical decline of the few hundred remaining Krymchaks and Karaites in Crimea continued. Many emigrated, while those who stayed sought new identities. In the 1950s, some Krymchaks successfully pushed for their official recognition as a separate ethnicity; in their papers, the designation "Jew" was replaced with "Krymchak." Nevertheless, they proceeded to assimilate. Today, hardly any Krymchaks speak their Crimean Tatar ethnolect. The census of 1989 registered 604 Crimean Tatars and 882 Karaites (Krymska Oblast), the census of 2001 some 204 and 671.[88] The lavishly renovated Karaite center in Ievpatoriia (with a kenesa and a museum), the opening of the historical kenesa in Kharkiv in 2006, and diverse initiatives promoting cultural and religious revival cannot hide the fact that the Karaites in Crimea and the rest of Ukraine are fighting for their religiocultural survival. Even if they have been officially recognized as an indigenous population since 2021, together with the Crimean Tatars and Krymchaks, and are striving for political representation, they remain fundamentally vulnerable as a mini-community. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine since 2022 has considerably heightened this vulnerability; Jews and Karaites will

85 Mikhail Kizilov, *The Sons of the Scripture: The Karaites in Poland and Lithuania in the Twentieth Century* (Berlin: De Gruyter Open, 2015), 6.

86 Jonathan L. Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land: Jewish Agriculture Colonization and Local Soviet Power, 1924–1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

87 Müller, *Religionswissenschaftliche Minoritätenforschung*, 131–62; Kiril Feferman, *The Holocaust in the Crimea and the North Caucasus* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, The International Institute for Holocaust Research, 2016).

88 "All-Ukrainian Population Census: Databank," State Statistics Service of Ukraine, accessed May 21, 2023, http://db.ukrcensus.gov.ua/MULT/Database/Census/databasetree_en.asp.

once again draw on their minority experiences and survival strategies. This time, the support of the international community will be crucial.

7 Conclusion

The many Jewish and Muslim religious communities in the Black Sea riparian states can all look back on a turbulent history since the nineteenth century. Different waves of migration leading to the continual decline of the Jewish population, a plethora of political upheavals, but above all the officially atheist religious policy between the 1950s and the late 1980s brought profound transformations for their religious identities. Insufficient effort was made after 1990 to make up for this lack of societal debate on religion, religious identities, and their different forms during these four decades of state communism. For instance, the patriarchal organizational structures continue to exist in the 2020s. Ernst Bloch's famous principle of the "simultaneity of the non-simultaneous"[89] seems to have been put into practice in exemplary fashion. Here too, not everyone is present in the now. The regional Jewish and Islamic religious histories are also characterized by waves of proliferating anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Nevertheless, in most countries in the Black Sea region, Jews and Muslims are minorities who have stood the test of history and have developed sustainable strategies and techniques for their preservation as communities.

89 Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Original 1935), Werkausgabe vol. 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016), 104.