

# Ethnic identity of the gagauz (at the turn of 20th-21st centuries)

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



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## **Introduction**

Despite that the Gagauz settled in Bessarabia at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century under the general name of Bulgarian settlers, they settled separately from these and formed communities according to the ethnic criteria.

## **The Features of Gagauz Identity**

The main feature of the Gagauz identity is its complex structure of formation and the constant struggle for conservation, undergoing different modifications untill present.

The basic component of Gagauz identity is the language that is currently used in the media and everyday life (shops, printed products) etc., however the Gagauz language is in danger of extinction due to the long rusification process and the assimilation of the Gagauz during the Soviet period, another factor is the massive migration of the Gagauz youths across the country in search of work and a better living.

The autonomous political status as expressed in the form of state symbols on public buildings and the veneration of the ' Gagauz movement' is also a strong feature of Gagauz identity.

## **Russian and Turcic Components**

In addition to the basic components of the Gagauzian identity, Russian language plays an important role today, because in Gagauz Yeri all documents are made in Russian, less in Romanian or Gagauz language. During 20th century, was build a national Gagauz bilingual identity. In the church the situation is the same, all the divine services in the Orthodox churches of Gagauzia are conducted in Russian, and the Gagauz religion plays an important role in national consciousness (ideological function and ceremonial observance) [1].

Turkic component, associated with Gagauz belonging to the Turkic peoples' group, is expressed in the search for its history and roots. Since at the begining of the Gagauz movement, Turkey has supported Gagauz morally and financially both.

Therefore, the Gagauz identity is a complex one, where a combination of different elements, such as Gagauz and Russian, is observed. The gulf-inhabited territory is quite heterogeneous. These are the consequences of the past colonization policy of the tsarist Empire in Bessarabia, which were lead after the maximum ' Devide Et Impera'.

## Dualist Identity

Gagauz in the present day identified themselves especially with the Russian world, considering their own, while the Moldovan or Bulgarian neighbors with whom they settled together could consider them 'others'. The dualist identity is the characterization of the Gagauz people from the past, when they identified themselves with the Greeks or the Bulgarians, even nowadays Gagauz migrant workers in Russia or in other countries, when they are asked who they are and where they come from? They say that from Moldova, unwilling mentioning that they are Gagauz [2].

The model of the Gagauz identity is inherently constructive and presupposes the maintenance of an atmosphere of multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism in the Moldovan republic. Its discourse has never been discriminatory in relation to any ethnic group in the territory of modern Moldova [3].

## References

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