

## **Toponymic Strata on the Dobrogea Bank of the Danube Seen from a Historic and Multicultural Perspective**

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to catalogue and introduce toponymic names from the Danube area of Dobrogea in the context of a troubled historic evolution of this area. A toponymic stratification was done, where the oldest and the most important stratum belongs to the native population, on which other strata overlapped, strata we have tried to deal with in this paper. What we meant to point out as a result of our research of the territorial distribution of the place names was not only the concentration of the Romanian inhabitants in the area situated in the vicinity of the Danube, an area standing as a permanent connection with the Romanians living on the left bank of the Danube, but also the idea of identifying a variety of toponymic names stemming from other languages, as a result of the settling down, in Dobrogea of many peoples throughout history. The results of our research are based on the presentation of some aspects of the Romanians 'symbiosis with other ethnic groups, as well as the presentation of the conditions and duration of the process of their assimilation by the Romanians. What we bring, in addition to other studies, is a thorough analysis of the ethnic diversity of the area that was realized by analyzing a great number of toponymic names and their classification according to the language of origin and the period of time they were used, thus constituting a rich and valuable source of information.

**Keywords:** historic evolution; ethnic diversity; toponymic strata; Romanian ethnographic area

**Abbreviations and symbols:** bg. - the Bulgarian language; com. - commune; CT – Constanța (that is district); jd - district; lat. - the Latin language; mgr. - the Hungarian language; p. - page; rus. - the Russian language; sec. - century; sl. - Slavic languages; suf. - suffix; tc. - the Turkish language; TL - Tulcea (that is district) ; \**gar*- non-certified Indo-European root; < derived from.

Even though the Danube is the second European river according to its length, flow and surface of its hydrographic basin (after the Volga) and from an economic importance (after the Rhine), it is first and foremost the most important river in the world from a political point of view. Throughout centuries it was the border of some great empires (The Roman Empire, The Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the Tsarist Empire) and as a result a strongly fortified line, lined with many defensive constructions a line of delimitation between peoples, languages and cultures (Latin, Slavic, Germanic and Ottoman), a crossing of successive waves of many migratory people, a bond between the human settlements situated on both banks of the river, an object of the international economic interests of the great powers, and at present an important navigation area and a connection point of the united nations of Europe.

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The analysis of the names of places situated along the lower course of the river, especially those situated on the Dobrogea bank of the river, within the deltaic space and the one at its border, emphasize the above mentioned things. The toponymic study is a great challenge because the place names are a major characteristic of human existence, seen either in its individual aspect or in the socio-linguistic group, in general. This is the main reason for dealing with this topic, organized on two fundamental existence coordinates: the geographic space and its immanent time.

The troubled history of Dobrogea materialized from a toponymic perspective in a wide variety of terms as well as etymologic diversity. The occupancy of an area by many peoples, simultaneously or in turn, for a long time, is very important, and it is typical of the Dobrogea area, where there were successive waves of Greeks, Celts, Romans, Byzantines, Petchenegs, Cumans, Venetians, Tartars, Turks, Circassians, Cossacks, Lipovenese Russians, Ucrainians, Bulgarians, but also Jews, Armenians, and Germans, all this due to the existent community of native Romanians, to which the Romanian population coming from Transylvania via the migration of the Transylvanian shepherds was added, not to mention, Muntenia and Moldavia. As a result, the Dobrogea area keeps in its toponymy the “ethnic diversity” the presence of each ethnic group being obvious by the names attributed to different regions in the area under discussion.

However, the most prolific toponymic strata regarding the ratio of denominations are: the Romanian one, The Turkish one and the Slaves one. The Turkish stratum can be easily explained by the political status it had in the region that was under the Ottoman occupation for about four centuries (from the middle of the XVth century till 1878). As regards the central area of Dobrogea, studies of medieval and modern historic toponymy (Giurescu, 1965; Ghiață, 1978, pp. 71-106) point out a reduced number of Romanian toponymic names and a great number of Ottoman ones, since the native population withdrew along the main Turkish road, from Odessa and Akkerman (Cetatea Alba) to Istanbul, a road that was crossing the region, just in the remote areas, from the West and North. As a result, The Romanian population settled down especially along the Danube bank, on the border with Țara Românească, then in the northern part of the province, in the Danube Delta and in the area between Delta and the Razim-Sinoe lagoon, in protected areas, areas covered with forests and difficult to reach, as a natural reflex to defend their lives and belongings. Thus, we can speak about a “Romanian ethnographic area” (Ghiață, 1978, p. 81) defined as a Danube area, thanks to the river that played an important role in the economic and politic life of the region, where the Romanians could find favourable conditions to carry out their traditional trades, so they could also get in touch with the inhabitants of the other Romanian provinces situated on the left bank of the Danube.

The practice of some traditional trades in the area can be proved by the high frequency of toponymic words referring to sheep pens, mills, fisheries stations, planted trees, different domestic species of animals, beekeeping and fish breeding. Here are some examples, bearing either Romanian or Turkish names: *Almalia* (hill) and *Almalău* (village) <tc. Alma “apple”, *Baciului* (pond, hill, stream), *Balgiu* (village) < tc. Balgi “beekeeper”, *Câșla* (village, hill, mound), *Choiu-Punar* (village, < tc. Choiu “sheep”+ *pinar* “well”, today *Fântâna Oilor* village), *Coticerului* (ridge, brook and privet, deriving from the appellative *coticer* or fisherman whose wicker weir “enclosures made of twigs or reed having a narrow opening” were placed in the surroundings), *Crapina* (lake), *Ghizdărești* (village, today *Ghindărești*), *Mârleanu* (village, lake, hill, valley renamed as *Dunăreni* during the communist regime) from the appellative *mârlan* “ram good for reproduction” (with unknown etymology), *Mocanul(ui)/Mocanii* (pond, ridge, brook, railway station), *Morun* (lake), *Oaiei* (ridge), *Porcu* (lake), *Purcăreți* (islet, lake), *Stupinei* (valley), *Văcăreni* (village, deriving from the word cowherding “a tax required by authorities in the Ottoman Empire for each animal that was sold”), *Viilor* (valley, many villages), *Vițelaru* (hill situated north of Măcin town).

The people living on both banks of the river were connected by means of some crossings, bearing symbolic names, which point out the fact that Dobrogea area was used for sheep grazing by the people coming from the other bank of the river in the process of moving the flocks to or from an Alpine pasture: *Vadul Oilor*, (today *Vadul Oii*, a locality belonging to *Hârsova* town), which was situated opposite the Ialomitean locality *Târgul de Floci* (name derived from the appellative *floci* “tuft of hair, wool or silk” < lat. *floccus*), respectively *Vadul Cailor*, situated not far from Călărași, and *Vadul Vacilor*, situated in Satu Nou, com. Oltina. There are other appellatives meaning “crossing, place of crossing a river, path” having a Turkish, Slavonic or unknown etymology, which gave birth to numerous toponymes: *Chiciu* (today the place where the ferry crosses the Danube at Călărași), *Dervent* < tc. *derbent* - hill, religious settlement and pond nearby the Constanța village Galița), *Ghecet* (tc. < *gecit* - ridge and village, today known as Smârdan, belonging to the town of Măcin), *Perevalovca* (< rus. *перевал* + compound suf. *-ovca*) an important canal in the Danube Delta, *Periprava* (from rus. *непеншава*) - ridge and village in the Danube Delta, *Grindul Trecătorii* which existed until 1900, when the bends of the Sulina canal were cut, this being the only place one could reach Tulcea in the neighbourhood of Sfântu Gheorghe (Constantinescu, 1930, p. 161).

Moreover, the fact that many Romanians were there in the areas nearby the Danube confirms the connection established for centuries between the inhabitants on the left and right bank of the Danube; in addition some toponymic names prove the double sense of the migratory peoples trends. More often than not we can notice the passage of people from Moldavia and Țara Românească, across the Danube, in Dobrogea; thus to the native Romanians (called “dicieni”, “turcuieni” or “turcani”,

that “is under the Turkish rule” (Giurescu, 1965, pp. 6-7)) to whom new waves of Romanians coming from the other territories on the left bank of the Danube added. Thanks to their arrival in the TL district there are some toponymic names which prove the area or locality of origin: *Dăeni*, was first mentioned in a document in 1603 as a prosperous borough (Brătescu, 1928, p. 228) and was inhabited by Romanians coming from Daia situated north-east of Giurgiu (Giurescu, 1965, p. 9), *Beștepe Moldovenească* (according to the maps published in 1828-1829 by Russians and Austrians) which later became Mahmudia, as opposed to *Beștepe Turcească*. The double name of *Sarichioi* (*Siriteny*) reveals the name Siriteni (Giurescu, 1965, p. 14), that is people coming from the area close to the Siret river; *Manjina* (*Mangina*, *Mengina*) is almost identical with *Mânjina* (Bratescu, 1928, p. 208) Costachi Conachi’s estate from the Covurlui district, nowadays Galați district; another example is the double villages *Frecăței* and *Telița* (that can be found in Basarabia too).

In the district of CT the number of toponymic names of the same origin is even bigger. The village *Stelniceni* (today Seimenii Mari) was set up by people from the Wallahian villages *Stelnica*, *Cegari*, *Maltezi*, *Pârțani*, *Bordușani* (names like *Mahalaua Maltezenilor*, *Mahalaua Bordușanilor*, *Mahalaua Ceganilor* are still in use to remind us of the old names), while the village *Mârleanu* (today Dunăreni) reminds us of people coming from *Mârlani*, an old village situated on the Borcea. In the same way, many inhabitants from Topalu have their origin in the Wallahian villages from the bank of the Borcea. They initially settled down in the Balaban islet and during summertime they went to Dobrogea to sow the land; later they settled down on the right bank of the Danube, in *Hăsănești*, *Scrofeni*, *Alvănești* and *Atârnați*. Topalu village appeared as a result of joining these villages (Morfei, 1924-1925, p. 84). A series of oiconyms are identical on both banks (although some of the villages are part of the other villages, having the same name, on the opposite bank, such as *Oltina*, *Beilic* (today Viile village in CT, *Cocargeaua* (today Pietreni village), *Buliga* (no longer exists).

Migration from the Dobrogean bank of the Danube to the Ialomitean one is demonstrated by the presence of some oiconyms with the suffix *-eni* (Conea, 1960, p. 90-91, where the original names of the former-village can be found on the right bank of the river: *Coșlugea*, *Satu-Nou* (in CT region), while the names of some villages derived from these are found on the other bank: *Coșlugeni*, *Satnoeni*. In CT region one can find the morphonyms *Măgura Drăgaica* (north of Topalu) and *Movila Drăgaica* (north of Dunăreni), which remind us of the annual fair (Drăgaica) organized on the Rusalii day on the outskirts of Buzău.

The presence of some meaningless Turkish toponymic names in the Ottoman documents from the XVI-XVII demonstrates the persistence of the place names kept by the native population (the majority – Romanians) who were still living there after the Ottoman conquest: in fact, these toponymic names demonstrate the names

of some human settlements (either Romanian or Slavonic) in a period preceding the beginning of the Turkish rule and which continued to be used (to a great extent) till present day: *Cochirleni, Galița, Gârlița, Lipnița, Mârleanu, Oltina, Rasova* (in CT region), respectively *Cerna, Chilia, Dăeni, Garvăn, Frecăței, Iglia, Luncavița, Măcin, Parcheș, Peceneaga, Văcăreni* (in TL region).

Some toponyms translate into the Turkish language names which without any doubt prove the Romanian ethnicity, such as: *Ulah* (that is *ulah* “Romanian”) or *Vlah-chioi* for the present day locality *Vlahii* (CT region), and on the territory of TL region *Eflâk* near Beștepe was certificated (*Eflâk* “Țara Românească”). Another obvious example is that of some Turkish toponymic names followed by the tc. word *giberan*, “Christian from the straits”, standing for a Christian population in Dobrogea during the period of the consolidation of the Ottoman domination (Ghiață, 1978, p. 83): *Boğaz-kesen-giberan* (“the Christian village from the straits”, today Cernavodă), *Kanlı-giberan* (“Christian Canlia”, today Canlia).

Examples of toponymic names, in the XVIII-XIX centuries, are more than before due to the greater number of known documents; unfortunately many of them do not exist nowadays since the human settlements disappeared physically as a result of the Russian-Turkish wars. There are some names that stand proof for an uninterrupted continuity in hard times: *Călugara* (ex fisheries), *Chilia Veche, Isaccea* (from Biblical name *Isac* + suf tc. *-ça*, “place, part”), *Niculițel, Pârlita* (today village Izvoarele) in TL region, *Gârliciu, Ghizdărești, Ostrov, Pârjoaia* (today Izvoarele), *Satu Nou, Siliștea* (in CT region), respectively two settlements having the same name *Tichilești* (one village in each region).

Apart from the names of some settlements, a minute study of the cartographic sources and Turkish documents leads to the conclusion that many Romanian names, we find in the close vicinity of the Danube, were given to rivers, waterside, ponds, back water, islets, ridges, hills, valleys and forests (for an exhaustive study of the Romanian toponymic names in Dobrogea.<sup>1</sup> There are hundreds of them, but we’ll mention only a few: *Piatra Fetei, Pisica, Lacul Crapina, Gârla Lățimea, Gâlmele Înșirate, Valea Stupinei, Apa Calistrei, Gârla Băroiu, Iglia, Măcin, Dealul Piatra Roșie, Valea Morilor, Parcheș, Cocoșu, Viile Bădila, Capul Bisericiuța, Chilia, Insula Popina* (in TL region), respectively: *Păcuiul lui Soare, Gârlița, Oltina, Mârleanu, Cochirleni, Ostrovul Chiciu, Gârla Veriga, Șesu Porumbiștii* and *Valea Siliștea* (in CT region).

Another source of increasing the Romanian population in Dobrogea, except for the natural increase of the population and the migration of some Wallahians and Moldavians, was the so-called phenomenon of moving of flocks to or from an Alpine pasture of the shepherds (țuțuieni) from Ardeal, attracted by the mild climate of the area, the good quality of pastures, and the permissive Turkish tax

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<sup>1</sup> See (Ghiață, 1978, pp. 71-106; Giurescu, 1965).

system. The first cartographic information is found on an Austrian map of the Danube Delta, which according to George Vâlsan was made up between 1769-1774. It mentions the toponymic name “Le Kaouneviste” situated north of the “Karaurman” ridge (Caraorman), accompanied by the explanation “the place where the Chilia flock of sheep passes by”, which means “the extreme edge of the Moldavian road that reached Chilia and used the pastures from the Delta” (Vâlsan, 1971, pp. 532-540). One of the oldest settlements mentioned in cartographic documents of the XIXth century, in the Delta region, is *Colibele ȚuȚuienilor*, the oiconymic word standing proof for the Transylvanians moving of flocks (the appellative *țuțuian* was given to the Transylvanian shepherds to the Moldavian and Wallahian ones).

In time, the term *shepherd (mocan)* gets to be known all over Dobrogea, from the Danube Delta to Mangalia and along the whole right bank of the Danube, where the Varos district on the outskirts of Hârșova means by the name it has (< mgr. *varos* “town”), the Transylvanian origin of the one setting it up. Several omonymic names demonstrate the sheep raising, starting from the appellatives *shepherd in charge of a sheepfold, sheep pen and shepherd: Balta Baciui, Baciului* (hill, valley), *Dealul Ciobanului, Groapa Ciobanului* (today *Ciobanu*, commune and village), *Cadi-Câșla* (today Miorita village), *Câșla* (villages, today *Strunga* and *Mineri*, hill, mound), *Dealul de deasupra Câșlei, Grindul Câșla Vădanei, Valea Câșla Punar, Dealul Oilor* (east of Saraiu); *Mârleanu* (village, valley, lake, hill, today Dunăreni); *Miorița* (a village belonging to Ciobanu commune); *Mocanul(ui)* – ridge (in delta) and pool (Zaclău village), water (dried today, Grindu commune); *Mocanii* - the name of the railway station from Ceamurlia de Jos; *Strunga* (village); *Țihaiu Mare and Țihaiu Mic* (lakes around *Padina*, dried today); names having their origin in the common noun *țigaie* “a species of sheep with fine wool” etc.

From another perspective of the toponymic analysis, we can emphasize the diversity of the toponymic content encountered along the Danube, (mainly Romanian, as we have previously shown), due to the presence of several toponymic names of different etymologies, derived from Indo-European roots, which have not been certified, either from the passage or establishment of some peoples through this area, whose passage across Dobrogea occurred in successive waves, thus dealing with only a series of well known examples.

Some topical names such as *Dunăre, Dranov, Dunavăț, Garvăn, Gorgova, Jijila, Letea, Razim (Razelm), Sfântu Gheorghe, Șontea, Zmeica, Uzlina*, may belong to the Indo-European fund, although lots of suppositions were expressed regarding their etymology. The Indo-European roots mentioned by the author as being the basis of these toponymic names are as follows:

- \**dā*, \**dhen* “flowing”, “to flow”, perhaps the origin of *Dāna-*, *Dōna-*, *Duna-*, *Danu-* or *dōn* meaning “water, river, to flow”, which gave birth to the hydronim *Danube*, *Danuvius/Donavius* (in Latin), *Dunai/Dunav* (in Slavonic). Combined

with the Latin word *vicus, vici*, “village”, it gave birth to the name *Donavici*, from which the present day toponymic name *Dunavăț(u)* (peninsula, two villages, canal, fisheries);

- \**ser, \*der (dra, dre), \*ter (tra, tre)*, “to flow, river, water”, *dran*, the root from the compound noun *Dranov* (lake, canal, deltaic division);

- \**gar*, “water, in general” where the Latin name *Garbanus* attributed to a river derives from, later having the toponymic name *Garvan* (village, hill, stream);

- \**gur, \*gor, \*gar*, “water, in general,” and/or \**ger, \*ser*, “to flow” and \**uer*, “wet, soaked, moistened”, the origin of topical name *Gorgova* (deltaic division, lake, canal) and its derivatives for smaller lakes (*Gorgoștel, Gorgoșel, Gorgovăț*). Although apparently it is a Slavonic name (from *zop, zopz(aH)* “mountain, mould” and suf. *-ova*), this explanation is not appropriate for the denomination of some rivers;

- \**guel*, “to flow”, the name of the *Jijila* stream, according to which other places from the same geographic area were named (commune, village, islet, lake);

- \**lit, \*lett*, meaning mountain, hill ( from the lat. *litus*, “coast, sea shore”); the toponymic name *Letea* stems from it (islet, village, forest, ridge): the content is strictly physico-geographic, meaning a dry plot of land , higher than others, in the Delta, therefore a ridge;

- \**ras*, “rain, moisture, water”- the name *Razim* (or *Raselm*, lagoon) derives from it. Another explanation comes from the Dobrogean Turkish-Tartars who derive it from *Rasim*, the name of a legendary pasha (Rasim-Pasha), who might have owned vast areas of land in its vicinity, or from the Turkish expression *rasi iim* “I’m pleased with, content with”, regarding the fish production of the lake (Ștefănescu, 1969, p. 204).

- \**g<sup>u</sup>er*, “to adore, to worship, to glorify” or \**gher* “to love”, according to the pre-Christian tradition to consider waters as saint (thus the Danube was sacred water for the Dacians); it is considered that the hagianym/toponymic name *Sfântu Gheorghe* (ridge, islet, commune, main canal of the Danube);

- \**g<sup>h</sup>ent* “abundant, swollen, to rise” or \**snau (\*sneu)* “to flow”+ \**teu*, “swollen, grown, enlarged”, the toponymic name *Șontea* (ridge, canal) derived, referring to the great quantity of water that that flows through the pond supplied with sewage system;

- the Thracian *zeuma* “water, spring” derived from \**gheu* “to flow into, to moisten”, or from *dhen* “to flow, water”, from which the hidronym *Zmeica* (lagoon) is derived;

- \**ueis*, “humidity, to moisten, to flow” or \**ued* “water, wet, moisten” which through its Medieval form *Uzolimne* or *Ozolimne* , got to be used now as the

toponymic name *Uzlina* (canal, the lakes *Uzlina Mare/Mică* a village belonging to the Murighiol commune, which disappeared as a result of depopulation in the 1990's, XXth century). The same Ștefanescu (1981, p. 58) attributes a Greek origin to it, meaning "Lacul Uzilor", which confirms what Anna Comnena stated in *Alexiada* about the place of a battle between the Uzi and the Petchenegs.

Throughout centuries, a series of toponymic names from the Roman rule were preserved, that is (44-620 AD) when Dobrogea was a border region, enjoying the presence of an impressive army. This was the time when fortified Roman camps and fortresses were built along the limes, but also the time when several cultural influences were felt (Greek, Roman, North-Pontic and from the left bank of the Danube). From this period on the Danube axis we also have (in the remote areas of the Danube Delta) a series of oiconyms (which nowadays denominate archaeological sites), such as *Aegyssus* (from lat. *aegys* "shield", today the town Tulcea), *Argamum* (at Dolojman Cape), *Arrubium* (Măcin), *Beroe* (Piatra Frecăței), *Dinogetia* (Garvăn), *Halmyris* (settlement and golf), *Noviodunum* (Isaccea), *Salsovia* (Mahmudia), *Troesmis* (near the old village Iglîța, on the area of Turcoaia commune) – all of them in the TL region, respectively *Sucidava* (Izvoarele), *Sacidava* (Muzait-Rasova), *Axiopolis* (Cernavodă), *Capidava*, *Carsium* (Hârșova), *Cius* (Gârliciu) in CT region. Specialist agree that the name of the river *Garvăn* (*Gabranus*) belongs to the same period of time (Oancea, 1982, pp. 38-39), which later gave the omonymic name to the locality, as well as the old name *Beroe* - known throughout centuries as the Gârla Băroiu hydronym (Brătescu, 1928, p. 210). The present day name, *Hârșova*, (town, plateau, peak) is, according to V. Bogrea (Analele Dobrogei, 1921, pp. 36-37), the follower of the old *Carsium* which by derivation from the Indo-European root *\*k'er* "stone, steep cliff", adequate for the physico geographic reality of the area (a stony rocky area) stemming from the Serbian *krš*. There is no doubt that some toponymic names are of Celtic origin, such as *Arrubium* and *Noviodunum* and for the toponymic name Tulcea (region, town, hills, Danube canal) scientists say that it may derive from the old Celtic word *tul* "hill" (related to the lat. *tellus* "ground") corresponding to the geographic aspect of the area (Ștefanescu, 1969, p. 202). Another possibility is the variant derived from the Turkish language *tuğla* "brick" + suf. *-ca* meaning "place, part" a name given according to the inhabitants' trades, who built a lot of brick yards which were necessary to build the town (Tarhon, 1972, p. 22). The old name *Capidava* which during the Ottoman rule became *Calachioi* (< tc. *kale* "fortress" + *koy* "village", that is the village near the fortress), which was used again in the Dobrogea toponymy on an administrative basis in 1926.

During the X-XI centuries Dobrogea again becomes part of the Byzantine Empire, being known as *Paristrion* or *Paradunavon* < preposition gr. *para* "near, at the end of" and *Istros* "Danube", meaning "at the mouth of the Danube, near the Danube, Danubian". Unfortunately, for three centuries this area faced fierce invasions of the first real Turkish people, the Petchenegs, the Uzi, the Cumanians and the Tartars.



This is why, the Byzantine emperors decided to strengthen the Danube border, reconstructing the old fortresses on the limes, and building new ones, such as *Păciul lui Soare* (in the omonym Danube islet) and the one in *Vicina* (which wasn't located). There are some toponymic names closely connected to the presence of the Petchenegs, the Uzi and the Cumanians in Dobrogea: *Dealul Bugeac* (the north-west extension of the Măcin Mountains to Galați), *Cotul Bugeacului* (east of Tulcea, a dry area between Sfântu Gheorge canal and the Razim Lake) also known as *Peninsula Dunavăț*, then a number of *Bugeac* names in the south-west of Dobrogea (village, hill, valley and lake) as well as an assembly of *Peceneaga* names (commune, Danube islet, opposite the omonymous settlement, two *Peceneaga Veche* and *Peceneaga Nouă* rivers), reminding of this ethnic relation from the early Middle Ages.

Gradually, during the next period of time (XII-XIV centuries) the Byzantine authority at the mouth of the Danube decreases, while the role of the Genovese and Venetian merchants increases and the Turkish influences become obvious. Apart from official commercial and notarized documents that prove these traders' presence, some toponymic names such as *Venedicul*, canal of the Danube (Vâlsan, 1927, p. 585) and "*Vinitic*, islet of the Danube" (Giurescu, 1965, p. 6 and p. 22), were mentioned on the Medieval maps, situated west of Chilia Veche, meaning "Veneticul or Venețianul". These names, which have been preserved, near Chilia (under the Genovese rule in the XIV century), stand proof for the commercial relations between the Italians and the native population. Moreover, the Byzantines and the Genovese built (XII-XIV centuries) the Heraclea fortress, later known as *Enisala*, in order to strengthen their military and commercial position in the area of the Razim-Sinoe lakes. The etymology of the toponymic name Enisala is extremely interesting, demonstrating an original way to associate two appellatives coming from different languages, respectively tc. *yeni* "new" + rus. *ceio* "village"; another possibility being the toponymic name origin from tc. *yeni* "new" + *kale* "fortress", that is "Cetatea Nouă" (Stan, 2000, p. 38).

Since the Byzantine influence at the mouth of the Danube started to diminish, the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Paleologul allowed a group of Selgiucise Turks, between 1262-1264, led by Sari Saltuk Dede (worshipped as saint by the Muslims) to settle down in the Babadag area (< tc. *dag* "mountain" and *baba* "father"- name attributed to the old people and to those who due to their religious behaviour and moral conduct, enjoyed a special appreciation, therefore the "Mountain of Sari Saltuk Dede") considered as being the oldest Turkish toponymic name in Dobrogea. This Turkish population settling down, meant the beginning of the Osmali Turks in Dobrogea. The entire Dobrogea area was conquered by the Turks till 1484, so the Danubian-Ponte area becomes integral part of the Ottoman Empire for more than four centuries, until 1878, when the peace treaty of Berlin, certified its union with Romania.

Simultaneously with the action of Muslim colonization (Turks, Tartars, Circassian), the Ottoman authorities began to massively change the old toponymic names, imposing the transformation of some settlements names to facilitate the accounts at the Turkish court. Only a small part of the old Romanian toponymic name basis was kept, especially along the Danube, but even this more than often became Turkish. In most cases the Turkish toponymic names were attributed starting from the local conditions of historic geography, so the new toponymic names showed the transformations that intervened in the demographic and socio-economic structure of the Dobrogea area.

Out of the great number of toponymic names of Turkish-Tartar origin found along the Danube and in the Danube Delta, we will mention only the best known ones: *Agighiol* (lake, hill, village, valley) < *acı* “bitter” + *göl* “lake”; *Beştepe* (hill, stream, village) < *beş* “five” + *tepe* “hill”; *Ceamurlia* (canal, hill, ridge, golf, stream, two villages) < *çamur* “mud” + suf. *-lu*, that is *ceamurlu* “muddy”; *Canlia* (village, hill, stream) < *kan* “blood”+ suf. *-li*, that is “bloody”, a name given to commemorate the atrocious battle that took place here; *Caraorman* (ridge, canal, village) < *kara* “black” + *orman* “forest”; *Carasu* (pond, hill, mound, plateau, stream, drainage system, locality) < *kara* “black” + *su* “water”, which translated into Russian gave birth to *Cernavodă* < *чёрный* “black”+ *вода* “water”; *Ceatalchioi* (village, commune) < *çatal* “fork, bifurcation” that is the bifurcation of the Danube river + *köy* “village”; *Hasarlâc* (lake, hill) < *hasar* “damage, loss” + suf. *-lik*, remembered for the damage caused by the rising of the water level; *Mahmudia* (commune, village) - name given by sultan Abdul Medjid I (1839-1861) who erected a mosque here in 1854 and proclaimed the locality borough, after the name of the previous sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839); *Malcoci* (pond, ridge, village and *Malcoci Ghiol*) < tc. *malkoç* “soldier belonging to the irregular cavalry (Stoica, 2000, p. 38); *Murighiol* (commune, lake, hill, village) < *moru* “violet, bluish-grey”+ *göl* “lake”; *Sarichioi* (commune, village) < *sarı* “yellow” + *köy* “village”; *Seimenii Mari/ Mici* (villages, lakes, islets), *Seimeni* (hill, commune, pond) < tc. *seimen* “soldier belonging to a special group of janisarry”; *Topalu* (commune, village, *Topalu Mare/ Mic* - islets) < *topal* “lame”.

Other toponymic names directly connected to the Muslim elements present in the analyzed geographic area, as regards ethnonyms and hagnonyms, are: *Meslin(ul)* (old name of Babina Islet, and of a pond in the delta which is drained nowadays) < tc. *müslim* “Muslim, Mahommedan”, referring to their religion and to this ethnic group; *Tatanir* (a village belonging to Chilia Veche commune, established in the inter-war period, which disappeared as a result of depopulation in the '90s, XXth century; *Cherhanaua Tatanir* is the only thing that can still be seen, today a drained area, a secondary canal of Chilia); *Tătaru* (division of the Danube Delta), *Ostrovul Tătaru Mare* as opposed to *Ostrovul Tătaru Mic* known as *Tătârui*, from Ukrain, village *Ostrovu Tătaru* (in Chilia Veche commune, which disappeared as a result of depopulation in '90s, XXth century), several lakes in the Delta, a

secondary canal of Chilia, canal, *Tătăreni* (small islet, north of Malcoci), *Colinele Tătărești* (west of the Sinoe lake, and an ornithological reservation), *Movila Tătărască* (south-east of Hârșova), *Turcoaia* (village, commune, islet, lake, pond), *Gârla Turcească* (secondary south canal formed at the river mouth of Sfântu Gheorghe), *Turcului* (islet in the north-east of TL region, hill and small valley in the area of Cernavodă town).

During medieval and modern times, a lot of other peoples inhabited the Dobrogea region, except for the native people and the Muslim colonists. Lured by commerce - Armenians, Greeks and Jews, who were used by the Ottomans to supply the garrisons and the Ottoman capital, either by new movements caused by economic, religious or national problems - as happened with the Cossacks, Russians, Lippovans and Ruthenians, a new wave of Bulgarians, Germans, either from economic reasons (as happened with the Italians in Greci commune, who were brought by king Carol I as stone masons), the settlement of some of them had either a fortuitous and episodic character or was marked by an oscillating attitude between the new lands which sheltered them and their places of origin. Eventually, a part of the new ethnics settled down in Dobrogea and established settlements, thus realizing a historic community and an original way of living together, impressive by its complexity, diversity and harmony.

Among the toponymic names created by these inhabitants, the ones of Slavonic (Ukrainian, Russian, Bulgarian) origin are more numerous, and they are frequently found in the Danube Delta, or in its proximity, often standing for aquatic elements (lakes, canals, gulfs, Danube canals, ponds) but also forms of relief. We mention in alphabetical order a few lake names: *Belâi* (rus. *белый* “white”), *Bogdaproste* (bg. *Bog da prosti* “May god forgive your sins”; the Lippovans used to thank God this way for the fish they could catch there); *Cruhlic Mare/ Mic* (rus. *круглый* “round”), *Corciovata* (rus. *корчевать* “to clear” meaning a place with a lot of stumps, a place where the stumps were uprooted), *Durnoi* and *Dunăleapca* (rus. *дурной* “bad, low quality, spoilt”, to extrapolate “mad”), *Golovița* (rus. *голова* “head”), *Matița* (the appellative *matiță*, from bg. *матуса* “a net that makes the bottom of the trawl”, according to *MDA*, III, p. 473), *Obretin* and *Obretenciuc* (rus. *обретаться* “to be in a certain place” or the noun *обретеник* “finding, discovery”), *Periteasca* (not only lake, vut also canal, fisheries, islet, from *peritașcure* “stakes for fishing starlet” < rus. *перетяжка* “gathering, meeting” or *periteag* “fishing tool made up of three perimeters” < rus. *перетяга*, according to Gr. Antipa, 1916, p. 309), *Pojarnic* and *Pojareț*, (rus. *пожар* “fire, arson”, demonstrating a long period of practice in the delta, when the reed is set on fire in winter in order to thinner the thicket of plants, to create areas where the birds could make their nests to expand the fishing spots and to fertilize the water with the resulted ashes; *Saon* (pond and monastery, < rus. *саван* “veil, fine linen” which in Romanian resulted in *sovon* “bride veil or winding sheet”, with the derivative *saon* in *MDA*, IV, p. 1350; first the name was given to the monastery), *Zăton* (rus. *затон*

“long and narrow lake on the seacoast separated from it by a narrow neck of land” in *MDA*, IV, p. 1350). Other examples to be added are: *Maliuc* (village, < rus. *малый* “small”), *Musura* (gulf and the most southwards canal of the secondary delta of of Chilia, < rus. *мусор* “dirt, garbage, debris, rubble”: name that can be explained through the fact that the waves bring and put down on the shore sand made up from the broken shells and remains of marine plants), *Prislava* (village, today Nufaru, derived from the prep. rus. *при* “next to, near” + noun *slav(a)*, therefore “near Slavons”), *Somova* (commune, village, islet, lake, stream, pond, from rus. *сом* “the same name being given to a species of fish named sheat fish” + suf. *-ova*), *Sulina* (town, Danube canal, from *солина* < rus. *соль* “salt”, meaning that this is the place where the fish is seasoned with salt, that is the place where fisheries are found). On the Constanța bank of the Danube the number of toponymic names with Slavonic etymon is smaller, the best known one being Cernavodă (see above), to which *Galița* can be added (village near the border with Bulgaria, hill, valley < sl. *галика* “fowl”) and *Lipnița* (commune, village, hill, valley) < sl. *лина* “lime tree”.

The presence of the Cossacks in the north of TL region, as a result of an impressive European context, can be demonstrated by means of a series of ethnonyms, such as: *Cetatea Zaprojenilor* (the name attributed to some ruins near Dunavățu de Jos, village, standing for the area of origin), *Movila Cazacilor* (hill in Peceneaga village), *Grindul lui Cazacu* and *Lacul Cazacu* (in the Danube Delta), *Gârla Cazacului* (west of Isaccea town). The presence of the Lipovvan Russians stems from the hydronym *Canalul Lipovenilor* (between Sf. Gheorghe canal and Lake Razim).

The ethnic mixture from the area next to the Danube (especially in TL region) can be seen in the toponymic names that refer to many other peoples, apart from those already mentioned, such as: Albanians, Armenian, Bulgarian, Jews, Greeks, Italians, Poles and Gypsies. In this respect we can mention the toponymic names: *Movila Arnăutului* (south-east of Rasova, < tc. *arnavud* “Albanian mercenary”, by extrapolation “Albanian”); *Dealul Armenilor* (in Mineri village), *Armanul* (pond, stream in Turcoaia commune and *Gura Armanului*, a hamlet belonging to the same commune), *arman* being the Moldavian derivative for Armenian (Jordan, 1963, p. 268), *Viile Armenești* (in the Babadag neighbourhood), *Valea de la Podul Bulgarului* (from Cășla village, today Mineri); *Canalul Jidanului* (the former name of Radacinoasele canal in the Danube Delta); *Greci* – the main summit of the Măcin Mountains, commune and village where we can find again the names *Dealul Grecilor* and *Valea Grecului*, respectively *Valea Grecilor* (affluent of Jijila stream); *Izvorul Italianilor* (a rich source of water, which was put straight by the Italians from Greci commune on Țuțuiatu saddle next to the highest peak of the Măcin mountains); *Poliacova* (lake and saddle) < rus. *поляк* “Pole” + suf. sl. *-ova*; *Țiganului* (lake and islet in the Danube Delta, also known as *Grindul Țigănușului*, a mould near Hârșova) and *Canaraua Țigănească* (in Hârșova). The Germans

settled down near the Danube later than other peoples, at the middle of the XIXth century, in areas which were already inhabited, this being the reason why their influence in the toponymy of the area could not be identified, although we can even find places of worship (for example, the church in Malcoci, a historic monument). The hydronym *Gârla Franțuzului* is also interesting, it cut the great meander of the Sfântu Gheorghe canal between Mahmudia and Murighiol, before the correction of this canal meanders after 1980, which reminds us of the French presence in the Danube European Commission.

The toponymic diversification took place again at the beginning of the XX century or during the inter-war period, when a series of dynastic names were given to some old or recently established settlements as a result of the measures undertaken by the authorities to colonize Dobrogea, but also due to some oronyms and hydronyms: *Carmen Silva* (today Crișan village and commune), *Domnița Maria* (in the past Prislava village, nowadays Nufăru village), *Muntele Carol I* (a village that appeared at the beginning of the XXth century, but from 1930 it became integral part of Turcoaia commune and a name given to the most impressive hill near the commune, today Iacobdeal), *Principele Carol* (today Partizani village from Maliuc commune), *Principele Ferdinand* (village included in 1926 in Carmen Silva commune, afterwards in Chilia Veche), *Principele Mircea* (Mila 23 village until 1912 and after 1948), *Principele Nicolae* (a village founded in 1912, and beginning with 1931 part of Isaceea town), *Principesa Ileana* (hamlet near Pătlăgeanca village in the inter-war period, which later depended on the administration of Ceatalchioi commune), *Regele Carol I* (an independent village from an administrative point of view in 1912, near Tulcea town, today the suburban Tudor Vladimirescu locality), *Canalul Regelui Carol I* (today Dunavăț canal), *Canalul Regele Ferdinand* (Dranov canal), *Canalul Regina Elisabeta* (Enisala canal).

Also, in the XX th century, in the toponymic catalogue of the area, some settlements appeared bearing names of historic personalities or bearing the name of some dates when historic events occurred which were considered relevant by the ruling authorities. These names were publicly recognized in three distinctive stages: at the beginning of the XXth century, during the inter-war period, and during the communist regime. The following toponyms of this type were identified: *Ada Marinescu* (Prislava village - Domnița Maria - Ada Marinescu - Nufăru, on the temporary axis), *C.A. Rosetti* (village, in the and commune in the Danube Delta, replacing the old name Satu-Nou, since there were more settlements having the same name, out of the desire to eliminate the administrative difficulties), *Crișan*, *I.C. Brătianu* (village and commune across the Danube, opposite Galați, with the following toponymic evolution: Azaclău or Zaclău - since 1907 I.C. Bratianu - 23 August after 1948; after 1996 the old name has been in use again), *I.G. Duca* (village and commune, Sarighiol de Vale till 1934, and Valea Nucanilor after 1954), *Lascăr Catargiu* (former Satu-Nou situated opposite to the Ukrainian town Ismail: după 1948 satul Plauru, com. Ceatalchioi), *Traian* (ex Satu Nou, Cerna

commune), *Tudor Vladimirescu* (suburban locality of Tulcea, name given after 1948 to replace the old name Regele Carol I) and *Vintilă Brătianu* (on a temporal basis Caraorman-Chioi village, between 1930-1948, Vintilă Brătianu, 6 Martie during the communist regime, and since 1996, Sălcioara village, belonging to Jurilovca commune).

All things considered we can conclude that the Dobrogea toponymy is extremely original and diverse, being achieved as a result of an intense mixture of peoples, which led to a varied and complex ethnic structure, never to be found in another area of the country. From the analysis of the frequency of toponymic names we can notice that during the Ottoman rule the Romanian population withdrew near the Danube, which favoured closely connected bonds with the Romanians from the left bank of the river and the practice of some traditional trades. Since the territory was confronted with several ruling leaderships throughout years and a lot of waves of migratory peoples settled down here, either temporary or for ever, each of them left their own mark, more or less, on the toponymy, but a Turkish stratum and a Slavonic one can be noticed, overlapping the native toponymic fund. To these strata several transformations as a result of administrative changes were added during the XXth century, as a result of royalty and communism.

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