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## **TOPONYMY AND ITS ROLE IN EMPHASYSING LANDSCAPE DYNAMICS**

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### **ТОПОНИМИТЕ И ТЯХНАТА РОЛЯ В ОЧЕРТАВАНЕТО НА ДИМАНИКАТА НА ПЕЙЗАЖА**

The present work contains an analysis of the Southern Dobruja’s toponyms, proving the permanent existence in this region of an autochthonous population, dating from the times of Getae and the Romans and to this day, irrespective of the domination oppressing them. The elements of the natural environment were reflected in the toponymy, some of the localities borrowing their names from the characteristics of the relief or of the geological features of the land. Most of the toponyms in Southern Dobruja are of Turkish origin, bearing diversified meanings, sometimes being the names of the settlers, of the prevailing economic activities or human specificity.

**Keywords:** toponimy, Turkish language, Ottoman domination, Southern Dobruja.

#### **Introduction**

Due to its favourable geographical position, opening on the Black Sea coast, Dobruja represents the first Romanian province to enter into the light of history, and that is the reason why, on this area have been found the oldest traces of habitation in the country and the first cities rose. With favourable natural conditions, it has always come to the attention of foreign nations who wanted to conquer it. Although several people have passed through Dobruja and left their mark on the Romanian culture and traditions, the latter have always lived on these lands, without abandoning them.

The influence of the foreign nations on the territory of Dobruja is reflected in the toponymy, which includes various Tatar-Turkish, Slavic names or of other origin. Constancy of Romanian toponymy of the fifteenth and nineteenth century, associated with all the other information and sources, leads to the conclusion that the Romanian society from Dobruja has known high stability during the Ottoman ruling (Boarcăș 2009). The villages inhabited by Romanians, situated along the Danube, preserved their population in comparison with those in the east and southeast, where much of the Muslim inhabitants have left the province without coming back.

#### **Study Area**

The first half of the nineteenth century is characterized by a numeric stability of the Romanian population, situation, which is also maintained after the Crimean

war, recording a growth between the years 1870 and 1878. Each Romanian village from south Dobruja consisted of old Romanians, called Dacians and Romanians arrived from villages around Sibiu and Brasov area, called shepherds. The only clean shepherd village from Constantza county is Urluia, near Adamclisi locality (Brătescu 1928).

In the nineteenth century the Muslim population increased due to colonization with other ethnic groups such as the Tatars and Circassians. They founded new villages or they established in the already existing ones. During the War of Independence, the Circassians have almost completely disappeared, leaving behind them many legends and the village name – Cerchezu.

The conquest of Dobruja by the Turks, in the thirteenth century triggered the most significant changes in toponymy. Names of several localities, but also those of natural elements have been changed to facilitate the activities of the Ottoman administration, with Turkish-Tatar names, so that after the middle of the sixteenth century, Dobruja was dominated names of Turkish origin. However, Romanians manage, even during this difficult period, to preserve some names, even in the localities with foreign names or mostly inhabited by foreign population.

Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Dobruja settlements have undergone many changes, especially during the Russian-Turkish wars. Many of them appear and disappear, they are re-established on old precincts or they get new ones. The names of most missing localities belong to the Turkish toponymy: Alibeichioi, Burlac, Caradurac, Carlchioi, Cumarova, Ester, etc.

During the Ottoman occupation, Dobruja toponymy contained mostly proper Turkish names. The basis of most toponymy names are common words, which send information related to geographical and historical reality. Part of toponymy resulted from the translation of names from the old Romanian topic fund of Dobruja or translations of certain name from origin places of the colonized population.

The analysis of the Romanian toponymy structures present on the past and present territory of south Dobruja, highlighted the fact that, for the most part, the names of places and villages appear as motivated. (Jordan 1999).

Simple primary toponymy names are characterized by the fact that this kind of toponymy name cannot segment the toponymic component element.

**Simple foreign toponymy names** – *Latin*: Oltina ( from the Latin word “Altinum”); *Slavic*: Vârtop “ravine”, “pit”.

**Compound toponymic names** are formed by stacking simple toponymy names to another term, an appellative, an antroponym or toponym: Cotu Văii (Albești commune).

– *Historical resonance names* for this region form *Romanian compound toponymy names*, most of them from antroponyms: General Scărișoreanu (Amzacea commune).

– *Romanian compound toponymy names* – common noun and adjective: Movila Verde (Independena commune), Vama Veche (Limanu commune); common noun and genitive: Valea Dacilor (Medgidia), Valu lui Traian; noun and preposition and simple, compound noun, adjective or group of words: Ciocârlia de Sus (Ciocârlia commune), Dobromiru din Deal (Dobromir commune).

– *Foreign compound names*: foreign, analytical structure toponyms (Turkish): noun and noun: entopic “koy” = village – Esehioi (Ostrov commune) = “village of Esen”; “mahalle”, “slam” – Lazu (Agigea commune) = “Lazu neighbourhood”; hisar “fortress” – Topraisar = “fortress of clay”; pinar “spring” – Şipotele (Deleni commune) = “spring lake”; lake “lake” – Techirghiol = “Tekir’s alke”; adjective and noun: ak “white, greyish” – Albeşti = Akbaş “greyish head”; ala “spotted” – Poarta Albă = “spotted gate”; adjective that expresses traits, qualities or defects: Cobadin- kop “boastful” and aydin “educated, enlighten”.

– *Romanian derived toponymy names* – formation of village names with the suffix “eşti” – Albeşti; suffix “ar(i)” – Nisipari (Castelu commune); suffix “ov” (means possession, ownership) – Ostrov; village names formed with the diminutive suffix “iţa” – Ciobăniţa (Mereni commune), Movilia (Topraisar commune).

*Foreign derived toponymy names* – Turkish: Amzacea – “Amzaci” – “seal bearing”; Almalău (Ostrov commune) – “Almahi” – “cranberry”; Agigea – “Acica” – “bitter”; Tuzla – “salting, salt”; village names formed with the plural brand “ler” – Credinţa (Chirnogeni commune) – Sofular = “pious”; primary Turkish toponymy names with zero formation element, which derive from anthroponyms – Faclia (Saligny commune)– “Fakrie”; Turkish toponymy names formed by affixation– suffix “gea” or “cea” – Amzacea, Agigea, Osmancea, Nazarcea – derived from the anthroponyms “Agi”, “Amza”, “Osman”; – Latins: the appellation “dava” – “fortress, settlement” – Capidava; Bulgarian – Lipniţa, “Linden trees valley”.

After the disappearance of the Ottoman regime, the village names from South Dobruja began to be changed, either to be replaced, or translated, most of toponyms being of Turkish- Tatar origin. In 1925, the first proposals to change local toponyms have been made, in order to correspond to ethnic realities on the ground. One can remember: Mamuslia → Căscioarele, Docuzaci → Măgura, Valalî → Vâlcele, Ilanlâc → Vama Veche, Caraciula → Limanu, Hagilar → Cheia, Mustafaci → Comana, Chiragi → Întorsura, Amzacea → Gemenea, Cherimcinks → Vârtoapele (Brătescu 1928).

After 1926, toponymy changed again: Delioruci → Vârtop, Eribler → Orzari, Dauluchioi → Darabani, Canlicicur → Grănicerul, Enghez → General Scărişoreanu, Casicci → Maior P. Chiriacescu, Acbaş → Albeşti, Cadichioi → Coroana, Perverli → Moşneni, Mangeapunar → Schitu, Cerchezchioi → Cerchezu.

Some toponyms, like Amzacea, have been preserved because of the large Turkish-Tatar inhabitants present in these settlements when renaming. Other communes suffered a change in territory. Caraomer (Negru Vodă) was organized as a commune with a single locality. Darabani and Grăniceru were detached from the Caraomer locality and they formed a commune residing at Darabani. Valalî village (Vâlcele) detached itself from Chiragi to form a commune with a single village. The villages Cerchezchioi (Cerchezu), Calfachioi (Viroaga), Docuzaci (Măgura), Mamuslia (Căscioarele) passed into Baeramdede net (Independena).

For most of the villages, Romanian names have been adopted, or the Romanization of the Turkish-Tatar names started. This occurred only there where the

Turkish-Tatar and Gagauz population continued to be dominant. The Romanian names imposed in most of the cases. Albești village, commune residence, was incorporated into one village, with three human settlements: a Tatar one, a Turkish one, and one composed of Germans and Romanians. In time, old Turkish-Tatar toponyms have only remained in the memory of the local inhabitants and oral tradition. Among new toponyms, there are the following: Ascilar → Vânători, Acinci → Vîltoarea, Duranculac → Răcari, Gherengic → Pecineaga, Carachioi → Pelinu, Cavaclar → Plopeni, Beșalu → Conacu, Bașpunar → Fântâna Mare, Schender → Furnica, Baeramdede → Independena, Cazil Murat → Movila Verde, Demircea → Olteni, Cara Acii → Tufani, Sofular → Credința, Osman Faca → Bărăganu, Hasiduluc → Cumpăna, Tatlageacul Mic → Dulcești, Ebichioi → Lanurile, Laz Mahale → Lazu, Edilchioi → Miriștea, Abdulah → Potârnichea, Mahometcea → Straja, etc.

Some of the localities preserved their Romanian names throughout the Ottoman domination: Oltina, Urluia, Rasova, Cochirleni, Satu Nou, Mârleanu (Dunăreni), etc.

The majority of the localities bore two names, a Turkish name and, after 1878, a Romanian name. A special situation was that of the Murfatlar locality, who oscilated between this name and that of Basarabi. The initial name Murfatlar was changed for the first time in 1920, by the Liberals. Pursuant to the political conflicts between the Liberal and the Labour Parties, the locality resumed the name of Basarabi, a name supported by the latter political group. Since 2008, the locality resumed the name of Murfatlar.

There have been localities that bore more denominations, throughout history. It is the case of the locality Eforie Sud, initially name Carmen Sylva, a name that was changed by the communists into Vasile Roaita, and later on the locality's name changed to Eforie Sud.

After the departure of the communist regime, there was a proposition to modify the name of the locality 23 August, but the inhabitants strongly opposed.

Although Dobruja's specificity included a mosaic of ethnicities and cultures, the stability of the habitations can be noticed, a fact also confirmed by the toponymy. The stable and rich Romanian toponymy in the Danube area and the Romanian toponymy of the areas highly colonized by Tartars and Turks can be distinguished.

### **Features of the Natural Framework, Reflected by the Toponymy**

The Southern Dobruja's villages names are related to the characteristics of the natural environment, based on the predominant element of that space. These offer rich data regarding the habitat, relief or waters.

The relief or geological characteristics are present in some of the toponyms. Thus, the name of the village Topraisar, coming from the Turkish language, Toprakhisar, is translated as "the clay fort", related to the petrographic features of the place. The toponim "canara" also comes from the Turkish language, (a type of calcareous valley, with a wide bottom and abrupt walls, easily observed in Southern Dobruja), meaning "rock block".

The toponyms coming from the Slavonian language are linked to the features of the natural environment. It is the case of the village of Vârtop, meaning "gully,

hole”, connected to the settlement of this habitation in an area of low altitudes, between the hills.

The meteorological phenomena have also represented a source of inspiration for the Southern Dobruja’s toponymics. An example in this respect might be the village of Pelinu, which, during the Ottoman domination was called Carachioi / the Black village, due to the dire dryness of the sad period.

There is a series of toponymics in Southern Dobruja related to the features of the waters, as it is the case of the town of Cernavodă, which means “Black water” in the Slavonian language. The town’s name used to be Bogazkioi in the Ottoman domination period, or “the village at the river’s mouth”, connected to the settlement of the locality in the area where the Carasu valley is discharged into the Danube. Other toponymics are related to the characteristics of the waters: the ancient name of the village of Tătaru, Azaplar, or “deep water”; Adachioi, the name of the Ostrov locality during the Ottoman period, meaning “the village amongs waters”, Techirghiol / Tekir’s Lake, Şipotele / Ghiolpunar, meaning “Lake’s spring”, Ba’punar / The Great spring, Siutghiol / The Milky Lake, Ceamurlia / mud, sludge.

The Southern Dobruja toponymics are also based on plant, animal or bird names. Some of the Romanian toponymics inspired by this environment are given as example: Floriile (the Flowers’ Celebration), Pădureni (Woodsmen), Tufani (Bushmen), Goruni (Holm trees), etc. The toponym of Lipnia is of Bulgarian origin, form the radical “lipa”/ lime tree, which would mean “lime tree valley or oakery”. The village of Almalău, meaning the “apple trees village”, is located in a hilly area, which used to be covered with vineyards furnishing an excellent dark ruby wine. In some documents, it appears under the Turkish nme of “Elmali”, meaning “apple trees”. The ancient name of the locality of Lespezi, “Tekekoy”, comes from the Turkish language and means “the goat village”, İlanlıc (serpents).

### **The Social and Economic Aspects Reflected by the Toponymics**

The aspects of the social and economic framework represented an inspiration for the Suthern Dobruja’s toponyms. Some of these names are to be found in the Turkish toponymy.

There are names expressing human characteristics: Albeşti / Akbaş, “grey head”, Cobadin, coming from the Turkish word “kop” meaning “braggart” and “aydin” / wise man or enlightened, Credinţa / Sofular, meaning “respectable men”, Comana – Mustafaci (The Powerful Mustafa), Murfatlar – Murvet (generous man), Aliman – The good one, the saint, Celebichioi – the nobleman’s village, etc.

There are many toponyms with various meanings that can either represent the name of the founders, the appellative of a personality that the locality wished to honour by using his name, the work, the nationality and features of the inhabitants, etc. These are: Galiţa, Gârliţa, Mârleanu, Urluia, etc.

The following names are also of Turkish origin: Esehioi – Esen’s village, Lazu – Laz mahalle (the Lake’s slum), Băneasa – Parachioi (money village), Poarta

Albă – Alakap (the pied gate), Vlahi – Vlahchiori (the Romanian’s village), related to the fact that the habitation was inhabited by Romanians, Cerchezu – Cerchezchiori (the Circassians’ village), Adamclisi – the man’s church, Coroana – Cadichioi (the judge’s village), Viroaga – Kalfa (the apprentice’s village), Potârnichea – Abdullahkoy (the Allah’s servat’ village), Hagieni – Hagilar – the Hadjis’ village, Beilic – the beys’ jurisdiction.

Another source of inspiration for naming the habitation and the elements of the natural environment was represented by the prevailing economic activities and the existing natural resources. Example: Tuzla – salt, Casicea – Casikei (gipsy), Haeg – Arabaci (coachman), Demircea – ironmonger.

The historical events have also been used in the toponymy of Southern Dobruja: 23 August (ancient name – Unirea / Unification), Independența / Independence, Biruința / Victory, Valu lui Traian / Traian’s embankment (connected to the existence of the embankments, dating from the Roman period), Grăniceru/ Ranger (a village that used to be administratively linked to the town of Negru Vodă, at present dissolved).

The historical personalities also lent their names to many localities in Southern Dobruja: Mircea Vodă, Ștefan cel Mare, Negru Vodă (Kara Omer in Turkish, after the name of a Turkish commander), etc. (Penișoară 1978).

## Conclusions

Analysing the Southern Dobruja’s toponyms, it can be concluded that these have suffered many alterations, due to historical or social causes or to other events that took place on this territory. Although Southern Dobruja was under Ottoman domination for a long period, some names of the natural environment did not change after their retreat. Instead, a dynamics of the localities’ names is to be noticed.

The localities situated alongside the Danube have maintained only one name throughout time, even if they received adapted options of the said names. This fact is supported by the presence of the Romanian inhabitants as a majority in the said localities.

The greatest part of the Southern Dobruja’s localities have had two names, a Turkish denomination and a Romanian one. Nevertheless, some localities bore more than two names, after the personalities that have influenced the political, historical and economic life of Dobruja. The toponymic dynamics of these localities has been influenced by the historical events and political regimes alternating on this territory.

A noticeable fact is that the localities which only maintained one denomination are the oldest, appeared during the antiquity, and the ones appeared later, during the Medieval age, bore more than one name.

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