

Diachronic considerations – Dobrogean historical landmarks

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Abstract

Due to its maritime position, Dobrogea is the first Romanian province to enter the stage of history. Archaeological excavations conducted by Romanian scientists have shown that Dobrogea is the first Romanian territory which signals the presence of the Romans: a century before the conquest of the ancient Dacia by the emperor Trajan, the Romans had already installed their administration here.

Between the 15th and the 17th centuries, the political regime of "pachalâc" imposed in Dobrogea by the Ottoman power caused the appearance of certain positions in the Romanian society of this province.

Toponyms have a very special documentary significance when it comes to filling gaps from other sources. The existing historical sources and our own investigations on the ground allow us to appreciate in a peremptory manner that the Romanian habitat in Dobrogea between the 15th and the 19th centuries saw a great continuity and stability.

Keywords

Dobrogea, Ottoman, toponymy, historical sources, continuity.

1. Introduction

The territory between the Danube and the Black Sea is called Dobrogea. The name is not old. In ancient times the land was named *Scythia Minor*, name which comes from those Scythes who, infiltrating among the native Gets and Thracians in general, managed to found several small villages around Mangalia and Cavarna; it is about these settlements that numismatic discoveries stand as witnesses.

In the 9th century Byzantine chronicles sometimes mention, under the name of *Paristrion*, of a land which could correspond to present Dobrogea. According to Nicolae Iorga, the name of *Paristrion*, given to this Danubian region, is a term which designates rather a geographic indication; it is "an administrative and military term". (Iorga. 1924: 107)

In the 12th century the territory nearby the Black Sea, South of the Danube's mouths, is called by the well-known Arabic geographer Edrisi (about 1110 – 1164) *Bergean*; later, around 1253, the minorit monk Wilhem de Rubruquis, retelling his journey to the Tartars settled down in the Pontic plains recently, wrote that the country South of the Danube's mouths is called "*Valachia lui Asan*" (Asan's Walachia) (Brătescu. 1922: 17 and Itinerary... 1922: 509).

In the 14th century we find as leader of the province a Byzantine despot, namely Dobrotici. This despot became tributary to the Turks, while his little country was named Dobrugi-illi, province of Dobrugi, meaning *Dobrogea* (Iorga.

1923: 25). Later on Mircea cel Batran, conquering this territory, added to his titles that “*Terrarum Dobroticii Despotus et Tristri Dominus*”.

Dacia Pontica, named like that by the great geographer Simion Mehedinți, represents an eloquent synthesis of the Romanian life. Conquering Dobrogea, the Romans, the Gets, and the Dacians, all the others were transformed into Romans, and so, the Romanian nation was born. That is why Dobrogea is said to be one of the cradles of the Romanian people.

Dobrogea’s great importance for the Romanian people comes from its setting at the mouths of the Danube and on the Black Sea coast. Placed at the crossroad of two great roads, one of which unites the North Sea with the Black Sea and cuts Europe diagonally from the mouths of the Rhine up to those of the Danube, while the other road unites, on the one hand, the ports of the oriental Mediterranean with those of the left Pontus, and on the other hand the Pontic plains with the great city from the Bosphorus shore. Dobrogea had at all times a different fate in comparison with the other Romanian provinces. Without this setting at the crossroad, neither the ethnographic aspect of the province can be explained – a real mosaic of nations in all the historical periods, nor its fate as road of invasions and later of armies that the history meant to it over the centuries (Brătescu. 2003: 5).

2. Diachronic considerations on Dobrogea’s history

Due to its setting on the sea coast, Dobrogea is the first Romanian province that enters into the light of history. Beginning with the 7th century BC, the Greek colonists arrived from Millet and founded the *Histria* fortress (657 BC) at the end of a small peninsula from this region. At the same time, the relationships between the native population (the Dobrogean Gets) and the Greek colonists begin, these colonists being the carriers of a superior civilization who founded the city fortresses of *Tomis* and *Callatis*, on the place of some older native settlements. The native population between the Danube and the Sea will build numerous fortified fortresses, called *dave*, having the same constructive and technical characteristics with those from Moldavia, Muntenia, and Transylvania – like those from *Beidaud*, *Dinogetia*, *Troesmis*, *Aegyssus*, *Capidava*, *Sucidava*, *Beroe*, *Satu Nou* and so on.

The Romanian archaeological researches, starting with Tocilescu and ending with Vasile Pârvan, proved that Dobrogea is the oldest Roman province. A long time before the Dacians from the Carpathian Dacia became Romans, the Gets-Dacians from Dobrogea had spoken Latin. Over a hundred years before the conquest of Dacia there were Romans in Dobrogea. When Dacia was conquered, after the second war 105-106 BC, Dobrogea was half turned into a Roman province. The traces of Dacian-Roman settlements can be found even today at *Cius* (between Dăeni and Hârșova), at *Carsium* (Hârșova), at *Axiopolis* (Cernavodă), at *Ulmetum* (Pantelimon), and especially at *Trophaeum Traiani* (Adamclisi).

Thanks to its position between the Danube and the Black Sea, and also to its forms of relief specific of plateau or fortress that dominate the large depressions – Dobrogea played an important role in the political history of Dacia, and in that of the wars, as well. This truth was understood by Traian when he started his war of conquest against the Dacians, but also by the Turks, who later, after the conquest of

Constantinople, penetrated massively into Dobrogea, colonising it intensely with Muslims; then they crossed over the river, founding *rayale* near the water and representing permanently a threat for the Romanian political structures at the foot of the Carpathians.

Starting with the 3rd – 4th centuries, *pax romana* was more and more irreversibly troubled by the invasions of the Goths and of other migratory peoples, while during the 5th – 7th centuries the cavalcade hard to conquer of the Huns, of the Avars, of the Slaves, and of the Proto-Bulgarians took place. At the beginning of the 7th century, the Byzantines leave the line of the Danube, trying to put a stop to the invasions on the strengthened line of the Balkans Mountains; then, during the 9th – 10th centuries they came back to the Lower Danube, building fortresses and defensive walls.

After the death of Mircea cel Batran, in a political context more and more unfavourable, the Ottoman dominance was installed in Dobrogea, in the years 1419 – 1420. Until the Ottoman conquest, the Trans-Danubian land was called Podunavia or Terrarium Dobrodicti; the toponym Dobrogea starts to be used after 1420 – as it was attested by the narrative sources, since on the maps of the 15th century this toponym has not appeared yet.

As soon as the region had been conquered by the Turks after the campaigns of 1419-1420 and 1484, it was introduced into the state and administrative borders of the Ottoman Empire. The difference between the autonomous regime of the vassal principalities Moldavia and Țara Românească, in its relationships with the Ottoman Gate and the politico-economic regime of “pașalâc” imposed on Dobrogea by the Turkish ruling, as a consequence of the conquest of this Romanian territory. Due to this different political regime, that in Dobrogea continued from the 15th century to the War for Independence of 1877-1878, the Romanian society from the right of the Danube has known certain characteristics of economic, social, politic, and cultural development.

At the same time, the natural evolution of this Romanian region was much slowed down by the foreign dominance compared to that of the Romanians from the left of the river. These conditions were the cause of the appearance of certain characteristics in the life of the Romanian society from Dobrogea in the 15th - 17th centuries (Ghiață. 1978: 71).

All those who came, even only passing through this region, gave us information regarding the Dobrogean realities and they meant to write down the local Romanians' occupations. The Romanian peasant has continued to practice his ancient occupations: agriculture, the raising of animals, but also fishing or apiculture. The Romanian population lived both in villages and in small towns: *Babadag, Hârșova, Isaccea, Măcin, Tulcea, Medgidia*, as it is revealed in the sources of the time; here they worked in the fields in parallel with gardening around their homes, but they also did different trades and businesses (they kept coffee shops, pubs, inns, corner shops, etc).

In the beginning of the Ottoman domination, the economic-political control was entrusted to the border Ottoman leaders “beys”; they ruled the land by exploiting and robbing the native population. As a result, it has been arguing, that right from the middle of the 15th century, the Romanian population is focusing on

the safer places in the forested area of the North and Southwest of the country and towards the Danube. While the density of the Romanian population in the eastern and central part of Dobrogea has decreased, at the same time it has also increased towards the Danube and in the North. The phenomenon is surprised in most of the sources of the second half of the 15th century up to the 19th century. For the eyewitnesses, Andrea di Pallazzio (1444) and Giovanni Maria Angiolello (1476), this South-Danube and parallel to the seaside region appears as a "desert", a waterless and less inhabited steppe. (*Foreign travelers ...*1968. II: 134 et seq.)

If numerically the Romanian population decreased in the places where Muslim elements were forced to colonize, at the end of the 15th century and the 16th century, however, the Romanians have never completely left the settlements from near the seaside, and in the central and southern part of the country. At the end of the 16th century, traveler Paulo Georgio found that Christians and Turks lived in "Dobruccia per msrina", and in the few localities on the seaside and in the center of the region the number of Christians was very numerous; for example, in Mangalia (*Mongalia*), Constanța (*Costanza*), Vadu (*Charar Maluch*), Medgidia (*Carassui*). (*Foreign travelers ...*1971. III: 392). The nautical maps of the 15th century contain several seaside settlements beginning at the mouth of the Danube, some of which appear in the Ottoman sources in a form which, although it was turned into a Turkish one, proves that the toponyms were taken from a non-Turkish native population living there: *Constanza*, *Costanța*, *Costanza* Tk. *Köstence*, today Constanța; *Panguala*, *Pangualla*, *Pangala*, Tk. *Mangalyia*, today Mangalia; *Zanaurada*, today Vadu, etc. Given some news from the following centuries, it has been noticed that a Romanian population lived in the Eastern and Southeastern part of the country, where these settlements exist. In the middle of the 17th century, the famous traveler Evliya Celebi, passing through the parts of Mangalia, remarked here a population with a language different from the Turkish, Tatar and Romanian language, people whom he called "citaci"; we notice his appreciation that this population of citaci was the result of the mixture of the Tatar and Turkish soldiers from Anatolia with the Romanians, which is another argument that the Romanians had lived all through the sixteenth century in these parts of the county (*Foreign travelers ...* 1976. VI: 382). In the first half of the eighteenth century, the traveler La Motraye discovered in the locality of Mangalia inhabited by Greeks, Bulgarians, as well as by many Romanians (*Moldaves*) (Bratescu. 1928: 229). In the sources of the same century, Mangalia had three names: one given by Moldovians, another by Greeks and another by Turks. The Romanians remained to live in the neighborhoods of settlements from the Eastern land even in the nineteenth century.

The phenomenon of concentration of the Romanian population to the North, Southwest and West did not mean a decrease in the number of Romanians in this province, but a concentration and an increase of population in settlements already existing in these parts. Different travelers remember the Romanians here: Tommas Alberti (Iorga.1898: 58); Evliya Celebi mentioned the Romanians at Dăeni and besides other Christian and Muslim populations in small towns like Isaccea, Hârșova, Tulcea (*Foreign travelers ...* 1976. VI: 385); Filip Stanislav

showed the Romanians living in Babadag town and so on. (*Foreign travelers ...* 1973. V: 617). Korsak, investigating on the ground, in 53 localities, found that most of the investigated villages - 46 in number - were inhabited by Romanians, (*Moldaves*), most of them located in the Western, North and North-central area (Panaiteescu. 1928: 84). In 1850, Ion Ionescu de la Brad, passing through the region, observed that "from the Sea to the Danube and towards its bank to Silistra, where I stopped with my trip, there are 71 Romanian villages" (1928: 32).

Taking into consideration the documentary material for the 15th -19th centuries, we must state that the Dobrogean ethnographic area, compact and continuously inhabited by the Romanians, was very large, covering almost entirely the county of Tulcea, and most part of the west and the south-west of the county of Constanta as well, continuing from the Danube up to *Medgidia*, *Izvoru Mare*, *Peștera*, *Deleni*, *Pietreni*, *Văleni*. This arbitrary delimitation does not exclude though, the presence of the Romanians in other localities from the centre and the east, confirmed by the information of the time (Ghiață. 1978: 81).

3. Importance of toponymy

In order to follow up the continuity of the Romanian settlements in the Danube-Pontic region, the author of this study brings into discussion the toponymy that can be found in a great number of original Turkish (from the *deftere* of the 15th -18th centuries, and from the *tapiuri* fund of the 19th centuries – that is Turkish official documents) and cartographic (the 18th -19th centuries) sources.

Toponyms have an outstanding importance as historical documents when it comes to supply the gaps of other sources. But it is very important that, in the use of minor and major toponyms as argument in trying to establish the ethnic structure of the inhabitants settled in a certain region at one moment, to accompany it with the collaboration of other documentary news, and at the same time, the researcher needs to have a linguistic background, as well as a sharp critical spirit.

It is well-known the fact that the Ottoman dominance has imposed in the conquered territories from the South-East of Europe its own nomenclature foreign to the native population; the official changing of the names of settlements was done from the beginning of the Ottoman administrative organization. Thus, most of the toponyms from the pre-Ottoman period were either translated into the Osmanli-Turkish, or replaced with Turkish names, which makes very difficult, if not even impossible, not having other documents, the finding of the names they had before. It is found out that the Ottoman administration had taken over the names of some localities from the previous period, toponyms imposed by the presence of the native population inhabiting the territory at the time of the conquest. This phenomenon is met in Dobrogea, too.

Taking into account the news from the 15th century that indicate the Romanians living in Dobrogea, the existence in the Turkish registers of the 16th and 17th centuries of some toponyms without any meaning in Turkish, proves the persistence of the names of places saved by the Romanian native population inhabiting the county before and after the Ottoman conquest. The same study mentioned above, belonging to Anca Ghiață, offers some interesting examples of settlements, from two Turkish registers (*deftere*). For instance: COCHIRLENI:

Kokırlân, Kokırlen kaza Karasu; CONSTANȚA: *Köstence* kaza Tekfür- -gölü; DOBRAOMIR DIN VALE: *Baş-Dobromir* kaza Silistra; *Dobromir* nahia Dobrogea; ESTER (the village no longer exists): *Ester-giberan* kaza Hârşova; GALIȚA: *Garliça* kaza Silistra; GÂRLIȚA: *Gîrliçe* kaza Silistra; HÂRŞOVA: *Hırsova* kaza Hârşova – Babadag; LIPNIȚA: *Lipniça* kaza Silistra; MANGALIA: *Mankaliya, Mangaliya* kaza Tekfür-gölü; MÂRLEANU (today Dunăreni): *Mırlân* nahia Dobrogea; OLTIN:A: *Oltina* kaza Silistra; PEȘTERA: *Peștera* kaza Karasu; RASOVA: *Rasovat* kaza Karasu; RÂMNICU DE SUS: *Rimlik-I balâ* kaza Babadag; VALELI (today Vâlcele): *Valelei, Valelü* kaza Tekfür-gölü and so on.

Some toponyms found in *deftere* translate into Turkish names that indicate certainly the Romanian ethnic of the inhabitants placed in the villages mentioned in the 16th century, for instance: *Ulah* kaza Silistra (meaning *Ulah* = “Romanian”, the name of the present settlement Vlahii).

Other names of settlements that appear with a Turkish form – which makes difficult the finding of the name it had before – demonstrate very clearly the presence of a Christian population that was in Dobrogea at the time of the consolidation of the Ottoman conquest in the 16th -17th centuries, for example: *Adam-kilise* kaza Tekfür-gölü (the village “man’s church”, tc. *Kilise* = church, today Adamclisi); some toponyms names of settlements are accompanied by the Turkish word Tk. *giberan* = “Christian”, “non-Muslim”: *Boğaz-kesen-giberan* kaza Tekfür-gölü (meaning the Christian village “from the strait”, today Cernavodă); *Kanlı-giberan* kaza Silistra (“The Christian Canlia”, today Canlia), *Kara-Harman-giberan* kaza Babadag (today Vadu); different from *Kara-Harman-müslim* kaza Babadag.

It is worth mentioning the fact that, while the settlements having non-Turkish names from the local pre-Ottoman fund maintained under the same name from the beginning to the end of the Ottoman dominance, to some a Turkish double being added, as much as the Turkish toponymy of the Dobrogean settlements from the first centuries of the consolidation of the Ottoman dominance, the same persistence is not noticed. As the Turkish documents of the time reveal, it can be noticed that, being stranger to the places, the Turkish toponyms were naturalized gradually, changing several times, so that the same settlement appears in a short period of time under two or three names, fact mentioned in the time sources by the expression “under another name” (*name diğer*). Thus, for example: *Alveli-Musâ* (can be also read as *El-Veli_Musâ, Alvali-Musâ, Alulu-Musâ*) *name diğer Terzi - Fatih* (today Runcu); *Pelitli name diğer Bari* (today Săcele); *Nasuh-Dönüm* (or *Nasuh-Duica*) *name diğer Baş Kartal* (today Vulturu); *Kargalık-tahtani name diğer Isaça* (today Corbu de Jos), etc. The two names circulated simultaneously, being used by the local authorities; it is hard to tell which is older, anyway, in time, only one of the toponyms (*Kargalık, Terzi, Kartal, Pelitli*) that appears in the 17th-19th centuries sources.

For the 18th – 19th centuries the number of examples of names of settlements from the local Romanian topic fund increases at the same time with the improvement of the documentation: CERNAVODĂ: *Aschioi, Czernavoda, Cernavoda, Cernădia*; COCHIRLENI: *Skorleni, Kokîrleani, Kokîrla*;

CONSTANȚA: *Chioustange, Chiustenza, Köstence*; GALIȚA: *Galitza*; GIZDAR (azi *Ghindărești*): *Destarkeui, Gezderesti, Guizdar, Ghizdar, Dizdar*; GÂRLICIU: *Gyrma, Gysma*; GÂRLIȚA: *Gîrlița, Gerlitsche*; HÂRȘOVA: *kersova, Gristova, Girstow, Kirslow*; MANGALIA: *Pangola, Magnegolia, Pangola* called by the Turks, *Pujlicora* by the Greeks, *Tomiswara de moldoveni, Mankale, Mangaliza*; OLTINA: *Oltika, Altounaoua, Olteni*; OSTROV: *Ostroveni*; RASOVA: *Rassovat, Rusaata, Rosevata, Răsuata*; SATU NOU: *Dajaköi, Satanoi*; SEIMENII MARI: *Seimen, Seimen Stolar, Seimenii de Sus, Stelnicu*; SEIMENII MICI: *Seimenii de Jos*; TICHILEȘTI: *Tikilestj, Tekeli*; TOPALU: *Tovalu*; VALELI (azi *Vâlcelele*): *Valeli*; VLAHII: *Lake*.

We have to remark that the villages that appear with a non-Turkish toponymy, either in the Turkish sources (*deftere, tapiuri*), either on the Austrian, Russian maps, or on that drawn by Ion Ionescu de la Brad, the great majority is found in the 19th centuries as being inhabited by the Romanian population. For some settlements two names circulated: either both Romanian, or one non-Turkish and the other Turkish (toponyms different in meaning: *Cochirleni* or Tk. *Yeni-köy*, either toponyms with the same meaning but in different languages: *Ostrov* or Tk. *Ada, Satu Nou* or Tk. *Yeni-köy, Seimeni* or Tk. *Sekban*), etc.

The sources of the 19th century, that transmit ethnic news, indicate the Romanians living both in settlements with names without any meaning in Turkish and in those having a Turkish toponym. It is obvious in the sources the Romanian expression of the Turkish toponyms at a series of villages for which the ethnic documentation is to be completed: *Baltajestj, Baltacı* (today *Băltăgești*), *Devçe* (today *Gherghina*), Tk. *Saraca* (today *Gălbiori*), etc. The use in toponyms of some endings and the Romanian words used by those who travelled across the county is an additional proof that the Romanian language was heard everywhere in Dobrogea.

Among the settlements inhabited by the Romanians in the 19th century, we mention: ADAMCLISI: *Adamklissi, Adam-kilise*; ALIMAN: *Aliman, Alaman, Alirmanu, Aliman*; ALMALĂU: *Almalîu, Elmalı*; BAZÎRGIAN (today *Rariștea*): *Bazîrgân*; BEILIC (today *Viile*): *Beilik, Beilicul, Beylik, Beilicu*; BOAZCIC (today *Dunărea*): *Boğazcık, Boşcicu*; CALAIGI (today *Făurei*): *Calaici, Kalaici*; CARANLÎC (today *Negureni*): *Caranlîc, Caranlicu, Karanlık*; CASAPCHIOI (today *Sinoe*): *Kazabkeuy, Kasap, Casapchioi*; CERNAVODA: *Boaskeuy, Bogazchioi, Pohatzköiu, Boğaz-köy, Cernavoda*; CÎȘLA (today *Strunga*): *Cîșla, Kischla, Cîșlea, Kışla, Cîșla*; COCARGEA (today *Pietreni*): *Kokarca, Cocargea*; COCHIRLENI: *Kokerliu, Yenikeuy, Cocîrleni, Ienichioi, Kokirleni, Kokerlenji, Cocarlenii, Cokerleni*; COSLUGEA: *Coylogea, Coshuga, Kozlica, Cozluge*; CUIUNGIUC: *Kuyucuk, Cuiugiucu*; CUZGUN (today *Ion Corvin*): *Guzgun, Cusgunu, Kuzgun, Cuzgun*; DEMIRCEA (today *Mircești*): *Demircea, Demirci-cedid, Dimircea*; DOBROMIR DIN VALE (today *Dobromir*): *Dobromir-ziyr, Dobromir de Jos*; ENIȘENLIA (today *Văleni*): *Yemişenli*; ESECHIOI: *Isâ, Esechioiu*; GALIȚA: *Galița, Galitza, Galiça*; GHIOLPUNAR (today *Șipotele*): *Ghiolpunar, Göl-pınar, Ghiolpînar*; GÂRLICIU: *Gîrliciu, Gîrlitch, Gerlitsche, Garliciu, Gîrliç*; GÂRLIȚA: *Gîrlitza, Gîrliç, Gârlița*; GROAPA CIOBANULUI (azi *Ciobanu*): *Gropa Tchowan, Groapa Ciobanului, Gropa Tchoban, Groppa*

Tschobanului, Coban-kuyusu; HÂRȘOVA: Hîrșova, Hirsova, Hirschowa, Hirsova; LIPNIȚA: Lipnitza, Lipnița, Lipnița; MAHMUDCUIUSU (today Izvoru Mare): Mahmud kioi, Mahmud-köy, Mahmudkuiso; MEDGIDIA: Karassou, Medgidia, Mecidiya, Karasu; MÂRLEANI (today Dunăreni): Mârleanu, Mirleanu, Mirlân, Mirleanu; OLTINA: Oltina, Goltina, Holtuna; OSTROV: Ada keuy, Ostrov, Ostrovu, Ada; PARACHIOI (today Băneasa): Para keuy, Parachioiu, Para; PELETLIA (today Săcele): Periklia, Pelicli, Perikli, Peletli; PÂRJOAIA (today Izvoarele): Părjoaie, Pîrla, Prajaia, Paraçova; RASOVA: Rassowa, Rasova(ta), Rassovata, Rasovat, Rasovai; RÂMNICU DE SUS: Turcrimlîi, Türk- Rimlik; SATU NOU: Satu Nou, Yeni; SEIMENII: Seimeny, Săimenii Mari, Buiuc Seimeni, Seymen, Seimenii Mari, Sekban-kebir; SEIMENII MICI: Seimeny, Săimenii Mici, Kuiuciuk Seimen, Seymen, Seimenii Mici, Sekban-sağır; TOPALU: Topal, Tăpalu, Topala, Topalo, Topalu; VLAHII: Vlachioi, Vlaso, Olahkoi, Vlachkioiu, Ulah, Vlahioiu, etc.

4. Some considerations on the population of Dobrogea

Following the distribution of the Dobrogea settlements inhabited by the Romanians in the 19th century, as in the previous centuries, a compact Romanian ethno-geographic area (in the North, West and Southwest) is observed, while at the same time it can be noticed that the Romanians continued to live in other settlements situated to the East and center, as well. As a matter of fact, besides rural settlements and small towns, the Romanians were spread all over the country and thanks to the sheepfolds (*kışla, yayla*) - permanent settlements of the mountain shepherds - who, according to Ion Ionescu de la Brad, were in the region, annually, about 6,000; always crossing the same Danube roads to the sea for pastures and salt, they had fixed places where they lived, many of them becoming, in time, villages. In some Dobrugean localities, different foreign ethnic groups have settled at different dates. Besides the Turks and Tartars who have come to the region in large numbers since the Ottoman rule, other peoples of the Balkan Peninsula came to these parts: Armenians, Bulgarians, Jews, Greeks, Gypsies. They wanted to practice their craft and sell their products. They infiltrated themselves within the native population and thus it can be explained their presence mostly in small towns and villages situated on both sides of the military roads. At the end of the 18th century and in the first half of the 19th century, other Tatars, Cossacks, Lipovans, then Bulgarians and Germans arrived as emigrants.

Considering the constancy of the Romanian toponymy in the 15th-19th centuries and the information regarding the Romanians in Dobrogea, we can conclude that the Romanian society on the right of the Danube during the Ottoman occupation was very stable; in this respect, we were also provided data from the Russian statistical map, 1835 and 1853 editions; Russian topographers recorded with the Cyrillic alphabet the toponyms and the situation of the settlements in Dobrogea following the Russian-Turkish War of 1828-1829. They mentioned with precision and scrupulously the villages and hamlets inhabited by the Romanians, sometimes mentioning the places of worship, as well.

From the third decade, after the Crimea War until the Russian-Romanian-Turkish War of 1877-1878, abundant domestic and foreign data allow specialists to reconstitute, through comparison and confrontation, a fairly accurate situation of the heterogeneous ethnic composition of Dobrogea; despite its labile character, determined by the fluctuation of those populations whose connections with this province were intriguing and sporadic. More than ever, the existing data prove with certainty that, from a numerical, economic, cultural and national point of view, the Romanians played a predominant role, representing the most stable constitutive element of the province. Their ties and connections with the other two Romanian Provinces and with Transylvania, and later on with Romania, after its establishment as a state, have become permanent, multivalent and have gained an obvious national significance.

The constancy of the Romanian toponymy in the 15th-19th centuries, as we have shown above, associated with the other information and sources, leads to the conclusion that the Romanian society in Dobrogea experienced great stability during Ottoman domination. The villages inhabited by the Romanians, situated in the more secure places along the Danube, have kept their population compared to the ones in the East and South-east, where most of the Muslim inhabitants left the province without ever returning.

About these settlements, their ethnic structure, the number of inhabitants, traditions, occupations, etc., we have a large volume of data from impartial witnesses brought to Dobrogea by the most diverse circumstances and military campaigns, scientific investigations, technical and construction works executed by Western specialists, prospects of resources, economic and demographic censuses. (Platon. 1968: 211)

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the research of the historical sources and the field of investigations, make us appreciate that a great continuity and a stability of life in the historical home of the Romanian settlements in the 15th – 19th centuries was recorded in Dobrogea.

Occasional or ordered data capture either limited realities in space or across the province, but the Romanians are always reported everywhere, from Tulcea to Constanta and Silistra. Therefore, the data obtained from the most different sources and researches enable us to conclude, without a doubt, that the Romanian habitat in Dobrogea between the 15th and the 19th centuries saw a great continuity and stability, while the Romanians made up the majority population.

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