

**Mircea Ciubotaru, *Cercetări de onomastică. Metodă și etimologie*,  
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The present volume, signed by an author with a vocation to research, is an anthology of studies on toponymy and anthroponymy. It also includes a few papers on lexicography to which, at the end, three reviews are added out of which the first two ones represent a “prophylactic” action oriented against certain authors and the publication of volumes which do not even reach the level of mediocrity.

The reader may observe that a substantial part of the studies gathered here are based on a detailed research of the upper side of Bîrlad basin (cf. p. 8 and 283), carried out through both quite a professional fieldwork and a meticulous historical documentation, many historical arguments for establishing etymologies coming from the direct research of documents from archives. This is not random at all, but it illustrates how one may detect the etymology of a toponym, in some cases even of its corresponding lexeme. Thus, the author points out the fact that toponymy is a science which, beside linguistic data, requires knowledge in geography and history of the object under investigation. We shall exemplify this fact by the assessment made regarding the interpretation of a great linguist, namely Iorgu Iordan, with respect to the toponym *Valea Haosului*: “The passage contains various errors of interpretation, surprising for a linguist with a remarkable sense of language, but expected from a toponymist with no experience of direct investigation and little historical documentary research” (p. 276). The discussion of certain toponyms and their records in writing, occasionally, may seem too long, especially in controversial cases, but this choice is meant to illustrate the research method suitable for the historical and geographical setting of a toponym. As a matter of fact, the actual etymology of a toponym should not be limited to its linguistic etymology but, as far as possible, it should reveal the relation between the object designated by the

anthroponymic etymon or the meaning of the lexical etymon and the object designated by the toponym. But this is possible only by means of historical documentation and enquiry. This is precisely the topic of the last study (since they follow a chronological order), “Ancheta directă și documentarea istorică – temelii ale cercetării toponimice” (p. 383–390), in which the author emphasizes the importance of these aspects. Another study of epistemological nature is “Toponimie și zoonimie. Observații metodologice și distincții etimologice” (p. 297–306), in which the author largely debates the possible ways of interpreting the toponymic series *La Ursoi / Ursoiul / Ursoaia*. Other observations made with respect to the research methodology of toponyms and anthroponyms, which appear in different case studies, refer to the interpretation of sources coming from related sciences. Among these we could mention notes on reading and transcribing names from Slavo-Romanian documents (p. 88–89), lexicographic methodology issues (p. 98, 279, 409–429), the acquisition of historical, geographical and archaeological data in different cases (*Vlașca, Buda, Promoroacele, Movila lui Burcel, Tîrgul de Floci*).

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As mentioned before, the studies do not follow a thematic order, but, in order to provide coherence to their presentation, they could be grouped—based on the main topic of the studies—into three general sections. The largest section would be that which is dedicated to toponymy, also including certain studies on vocabulary. Another section could be made up of studies on lexicography and etymology (notes on lexicographic and etymological issues are found in the previous section too). Finally, another section would be reserved strictly for anthroponymy (personal toponymy implies issues of anthroponymy).

The largest study on toponymy (p. 17–86) is a

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detailed historical account of oikonyms from the hydrographic basin of Rebricea stream (the upper side of Bîrlad basin). It is a comprehensive research of the history of these villages related to its owners (until the agrarian reform in 1864) which led to the establishment of almost all its names' etymology including their changes and of the etymology of several minor toponyms to which we could add the description of villages established by appropriation and of hamlets. The changes in the names of these villages and of their boundaries are summarized in a sketch and on the two maps annexed to the end of the study

The other studies on toponymy, including those with vocabulary concerns, mainly focus on etymology. It is noteworthy to mention the studies on *Buda*, *Promoroacele*, *Vlașca* and *Vlășia*, *Tîrgul de Floci*, and the two studies on *Fălciu* which are remarkable for the difficulty of the problems raised by their etymology.

The toponym *Buda* and its etymon, the appellative *budă*, are discussed in two studies (p. 93–118, 119–124), in which the author establishes the meaning and etymology of the appellative, deriving it from the toponym, based on a careful documentation about places bearing this name. The author begins his endeavour by summarizing the previously formulated hypotheses regarding the appellative *budă* (p. 93–99), in which he detects certain methodology and interpretation errors found in important dictionaries, which register the incorrect meaning 'barrack', retained by geographers, toponymists and historians too, although the latter ones edited texts in which the toponyms *Buda*, appear. Thus the author reanalyses the documents on these exploit places or in which the toponym *Buda* appears and reaches the correct solution for the etymology of the appellative, giving the meaning 'place of potassium or nitre exploit' and implicitly the correct etymology of those *Buda* toponyms which have no anthroponymic root. The second part of the first study presents the history of these exploit places, especially of those on Moldavian territory, and then the toponyms *Buda* which have this etymon. There is also given a list of the toponyms which are believed to have no relation to the exploit of potassium or nitre (p. 112–113). In addition, the author takes into account the synonyms of *budă* (*cenușărie*, *hută*), which also led to certain correspondent toponyms. The second study dedicated to this subject matter, "Arheologie și

toponimie. Despre numele de locuri *Buda* și *Cenușa / Cenușăria*" discusses issues of archaeological interpretation of places bearing this name. In another article the author resumes the debate on the *budă* appellative, discussing the presumed derivative *budiște* and its correspondent anthroponyms *Buda*, *Budiște*, *Budișteanu*, which includes the study in the third section mentioned above.

In the study "*Promoroacele*, o metaforă lexicală necunoscută în funcție toponimică" (p. 253–257), the author identifies the metaphorical meaning of the etymon by interpreting a text which explains how saltpetre has been extracted: the water resulted from washing the land rich in sodium nitrate was boiled in boilers, then sticks were introduced on which the saltpetre deposited. This process of "nitre crystal deposition on a stick during the manufacture of saltpetre" (p. 257) represents the figurative meaning of *promoroacă*. Although the text is not explicit in this respect, the given interpretation is sustained by the saltpetre exploit traces in the designated places (*La Promoroace*).

A few studies are concerned with the etymology of the toponyms *Humulești*, *Movila Răbîiei*, *Movila lui Burcel*, *Podullung* and of two disappeared hermitages in Bîrlad Valley. In the study "*Humuleștii – un model derivativ popular*" (p. 269–273), the author examines the previously proposed etymologies after which, based on the documents which attest the presence of various families named *Humă* (certified soon after the founding of the village at the beginning of the eighteenth century), he identifies a derivative root *Humul*, unrecorded but sustained by several other oikonyms resulted from an old folk derivative model, in which the derivatives keep the article of the anthroponymic root as an interfix. In the study "*Movila Răbîiei. Cîteva precizări*" (p. 333–337) the author contradicts the foregoing etymologies, some of them quite remote from reality, and he argues in favour of a Romanian toponym designating "a mound on the land ruled by a Răbîia". Another article of the same kind is "*De la Vilnești la Movila lui Burcel. Observații onomastice și istorice*" (p. 87–92), in which the author rectifies the incorrect reading of the name of Ivașco Vilna (not Venea), thus relating it to the village Vilnești on Telejna and establishing the etymology of the toponym *Movila lui Burcel* on the estate of Chircești, whose owners are descendents of Sima Purcel, who, in his turn, was a great-grandson

of Ivașco Vilna. Therefore the correct reading would be *Movila lui Purcel*, which does not confirm the folk etymology in the chronicle of Neculce. The annex at the end of the study depicts the genealogy of the Purcelești family, beginning with their ancestor, Ivașcu Vilna, up to the middle of the seventeenth century. In the study entitled “*Podullung. Un toponim din harta Moldovei a lui D. Cantemir*” (p. 13–16) based on historical documents, the author claims the anthropological origin of the toponym which in 1746 is certified as *Podul Lungului*. Another study, “*Două schituri dispărute de pe Valea Bîrladului*” (p. 319–324) discusses the localization of Mera hermitage and the relation between Mănăstirea Buhăiescului hermitage and Poiana Olarului situated next to the former one. Thus, the localization of the hermitage was made taking into account this clearing, fact which contributes to the correct interpretation of the denotation *Larwe / Larve* found on German maps at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, as a distortion of the name *Olaru*.

In the study “*Lexic și toponimie din Moldova. Toponimie și zoonimie*” (p. 289–295) the author gives etymological explanations for the toponyms *Podul Roș*, *Podul Verde*, *Tîrgul Cucului* and for the aboriginal *vlaștină*, whereas in “*Reflexele ucr. veža în toponimia românească*” (p. 205–212) the toponyms *Veja*, *Vejul / Văzul* and *Soveja* are discussed.

In four other studies the author treats certain difficult etymologies which are largely debated in discussions of linguists and of historians. In two cases the author manages to give a definitive solution, namely for *Vlașca* and *Vlășia*, in one of the studies, and for *Tîrgul de Floci*, in the other one. The toponym *Fălciu*, which is the object of another study, presents serious difficulties regarding its etymological approach but this leads to an analysis based on complex linguistic arguments.

Given the historical significance of the name of the former county near the Danube, *Vlașca*, and the geographical interpretations of *Vlășie* woods, the study “*Revizuire toponimice: Vlașca și Vlășia*” (p. 141–188) begins with an overview of the whole series of explanations and opinions formulated by historians, linguists and geographers regarding these two names. Up to the present day there exists a false etymology, proposed by historians and geographers, which is based on the homonymy with the *vlah* eth-

nonym (pl. *vlahi / vlahi*). Thus, these toponyms are considered to be very old and it is believed that they represent evidence in favour of Romanians’ continuous presence within the Romanian Plain. The whole history of these toponyms, sustained by a voluminous documentation, covers two-thirds of the study (p. 141–173). In this way the reader interested in this topic has at hand all the existing interpretations and arguments which oriented the author in his etymological approach. His findings are unquestionable: in none of these two cases, just like in case of no other territory populated by Romanians, the toponyms are derivatives of the ethnonym, but they have either an anthroponymic root, *Vlasie*, or an appellative root of Slavonic origin *vlașcă* ‘wet, muddy place’.

Among these series of toponymic reviews there figures the study “*Revizuire toponimice: Tîrgul (Orășul) de Floci*” (p. 189–203), in which the author gives an explanation of the etymology based on homonymy, with no other argument. As a matter of fact, the author sustains his demonstration by what we might call “*reductio ad absurdum*”. Verifying all the arguments given in favour of the presumed etymon *floc (de lînă)*, which cannot be sustained by scientific evidence, and based on analogy with other toponyms formed by direct plural, the author reaches the undoubtedly pertinent conclusion that the toponym derives from the anthroponym *Floc(e)a*, probably a nickname used with toponymic function.

The third study which may be included in this series is called “*Revizuire toponimice: Fălciul*” (p. 213–230), though in this case we encounter quite a different issue. Just like in all the other cases, the author begins his demonstration by presenting the history of the existing etymologies (p. 213–222), which is a necessary step in any etymological endeavour. The anthroponymic origin of the toponym is sustained by historical documents. However, the historical documentation does not offer evidence of Romanian forms or contexts which would explain the phonetical changes from the *Falcin* anthroponym, attested in the same region, to the form *Fălci* / art. *Fălci*. The author discusses the hypothesis of a direct plural *Falcini*, which could have given the form *Fălci* by changing the voiced *n* into the palatal *ñ* and afterwards into *i* within Romanian language. Lack of phonetic evidence, however, make the author consider it to derive from a suspended genitive of the anthroponym *Fălcea*, namely from *Fălci* (< *Tîrgul*

*Fălciu*), which, due to a stress shift, became *Fălci*.

The author resumes this etymology in another study, “Fălciul – o controversă etimologică” (p. 307–318), which is actually a response to the observations and etymology proposed by Dragoș Moldovanu (a derivative of Old Ukrainian) who does not support the suspended genitive solution. The counter-arguments provided by Mircea Ciubotaru to these observations cannot be neglected, even though he occasionally inserts certain personal opinions into this highly scientific riposte. The lack of palatalization in case of other toponyms within the same series (*Bobotin*, *Miletin*, *Strabotin*, *Zeletin*) is considered to be an important argument which would object to the possibility of the derivation *Fălci* > *Fălci*. However, it should be noted that their regime is different since all of them are primarily hydronyms, although some of them present oikonymic polarization too. It also should be pointed out that the suspended genitive solution is amended by its advocate himself; the explanation by means of stress shift makes it to be included in the category of hypotheses.

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Several studies deal with vocabulary issues, in case of which the author establishes correct etymologies based on historical documentation. Here we could mention the appellatives *budă* (p. 135–140), *cămin*, *cămil* and *cămană* (p. 125–134), *șargă* (p. 278–280), *voz*, *vozarcă*, (*a*) *vozi*, *vozie* (p. 325–331) and the indigenous names for ‘wet, muddy place’ (alongside the toponymic correspondences) (p. 231–251). The semantic and etymological issues dealt with often lead the reader into a lost world revived by the author through historical documents, following the words’ diffusion within the Balkans. It is remarkable, in this regard, the study “Note etimologice și semantice: *voz*, *vozarcă*, (*a*) *vozi*, *vozie*” (p. 325–331).

Onomastic issues often occur in studies which deal with personal toponyms, but they more frequently appear in two articles including lexical observations too: “Noi observații asupra apelativului *budă* și a numelor *Buda*, *Budiște* și *Budișteanu*” (p. 135–140) and “Lexic și onomastică în centrul Moldovei” (p. 275–287), in which the author discusses toponyms deriving from anthroponyms by means of homonymy or paronymy with an appellative, which could lead to incorrect etymologies. We might observe that, in cases like the aboriginal name *sudol* (p. 286), it is hard to accept the argument of its absence, in earlier times, within areas in which it is

not to be found in the present day. The same problem arises in the case of the appellative *șiștar* (p. 298) and the same observation can be made in case of the territorial diffusion of the aboriginal name *osoii* (p. 302, 304).

The study “Antroponimie, etnologie și istorie. Contribuții ale lui Petru Caraman” (p. 339–382) poate fi considerat prezentarea unei receptări critice a editării lucrării lui Petru Caraman, *Conceptul frumuseții umane reflectat în antroponimie la români și în sud-estul Europei. Prolegomene la studiul numelui personal*. The work is assessed in the light of the editor’s (Ion H. Ciubotaru) introduction in which the merits of Petru Caraman are rather exaggerated. In order to offer a correct view on the contribution of Peter Caraman, Mircea Ciubotaru places his work in the European scientific context of antroponymic research of his time and relates it to the existing studies on this topic within Romanian territory. At the end of the study, the author makes a few remarks on how the work has been published.

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The volume ends with three reviews. The first two ones are more like warnings for readers and a reprehensible act addressed to authors (Costea Marinou and Constantin Parascan). The author’s rating as “scrap in all respects” (p. 391), fully justified in the first case, may be applied in the second case as well, merely qualified as a “failed research” (p. 409). The etymological explanations are not even fanciful, and the lack of knowledge of history and geography “scars the mind”, says the chronicler. The reader’s patience is challenged even by reading these reviews.

In the third review the author discusses several terminological and etymological issues and proposes solutions to a number of terms (49) found in the remarkable work of the Bessarabian linguist, Anatol Eremia, called *Dicționarul explicativ și etimologic de termeni geografici*, which are quite fruitful for the users of this dictionary.

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The volume *Cercetări de onomastică. Metodă și etimologie* gathers studies on onomastics, but the argumentation and investigations in such a field lead the author through several related domains (history, geography, Slavonic studies, archæology, genealogy, anthropology) whose historical and methodological meanders are skilfully crossed by means of excellent documentation which enable the author to give new and quite often conclusive interpretations.