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tourism in the Danube sector of the Black Sea
basin (Cahul district, Republic of Moldova;
Reni Territorial Community, Ukraine; Galati
County, Romania)"



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STUDY CONCERNING GOOD-NEIGHBORLY RELATIONS AND STABILITY IN THE DANUBE SECTOR OF THE BLACK SEA BASIN (Cahul district, the Republic of Moldova; Reni territorial community, Ukraine; Galați county, Romania)

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The general objective of the project is to develop and promote cross-border tourism opportunities in the Danube sector of the Black Sea basin (Cahul district, Republic of Moldova; Reni territorial community, Ukraine; Galați county, Romania).

The aim of the project is to promote sustainable management of cross-border green/ecological tourism in vulnerable and protected areas, paying more attention to the protection and respect of the integrity of ecosystems and local communities. Cross-border green/ecological tourism can be a viable alternative for economic development for local communities, having the capacity to contribute to economic growth in cross-border regions and to educate tourists. At the same time, the exchange of good practices between the providers of tourist services, especially by taking over the experience of the providers from Galați county, will contribute to the creation of a “new generation” of entrepreneurs involved in tourism in Cahul and Reni districts.

The target groups of the project are a) regional and local public authorities from Cahul district, Reni territorial community and Galați county; b) 25 tourist service providers; c) civil society organizations and interest groups, research and educational institutions, education centers, including schools in the cross-border region.

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The opinions expressed in the present study belong to the authors and may or may not coincide with those of the partners engaged in the implementation of the project, or with those of its financiers, as well as with interpretations of traditionally accepted facts and historical events. Any use of excerpts or opinions of the authors of this publication must contain a reference to the project “Development and promotion of green tourism in the Danube sector of the Black Sea basin (Cahul district, Republic of Moldova; Reni territorial community, Ukraine; Galați County, Romania)” BSB 817.

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Introduction

The present study aims to review and analyze the elements of history, culture and civilization, common to the territorial administrative units of Reni, Galați and Cahul. It is these elements that have been and are the basis of good neighborly relations between the cohabiting communities in a region with distinct geographical features that define the unitary character of this area, despite the fact that the area can be divided on cultural, political, ethnic criteria, and so on. The good neighborhood is, along with the unitary geographical character, defined in this situation by the presence of the Danube River, the basis of coexistence of these communities and the main opportunity for cooperation to build a peaceful and prosperous future, based on mutually beneficial economic and social relations. At an individual level, the good neighborly experiences are associated with the well-being. Increased mobility, changing business patterns and the pluralization of lifestyles have gradually weakened traditional neighborhood contacts, and social networks have become increasingly regional, national, international and virtual. Consequently, we are witnessing a phenomenon of expansion of the geographical space in which we seek well-being, territorializing social life. Defined as an active control strategy over a geographical area, territoriality is achieved by building networks of institutions, which extend across state borders and exercise administrative prerogatives over cross-border territories. The ultimate goal is to overcome the traditional divisive role of state borders, to allow the integration of border regions with common interests. In this context, the Euroregions are becoming the preferred tools for the territoriality of social life and the best way to achieve cohesion.

An important precondition of good neighborliness in the Galați-Reni-Cahul region is the experience of multiculturalism. Entering various political formations throughout history, the region (as well as those adjacent to it) has “absorbed” many peoples and the variability of their practices. At the same time, the circumstances generating competition between the bearers of different cultures developed only occasionally. Practically, each of the ethnocultures living in the Galați-Reni-Cahul region has occupied its own economic niche,

an important factor in harmonious cooperation and interaction. Cleavages and social conflicts had a distinct “imported” character.

Cahul district in the Republic of Moldova, Reni territorial community in Ukraine and Galați County in Romania are territorial communities in three states, but which, due to geographical proximity and the evolution of the concept of good neighborliness are found within the “Dunărea de Jos” (Lower Danube) Euroregion. Since its establishment (1998) and until now, numerous cross-border cooperation projects have been implemented in the Euroregion. The first projects are mainly cultural, followed by environmental and economic development projects. The effort is recognized by the fact that just 4 years after its founding it receives the “Sail of Papenburg” award, being the first Euroregion to open the annual award of this award by the European Association of Border Regions (AEBR). The AEBR cross-border award was given for intense socio-cultural cooperation, which was established in extremely difficult conditions at the borders between Ukraine, Moldova and Romania.

Despite the common historical landmarks of the communities in the Euroregion and the efforts undertaken, the cooperation did not lead to the crystallization of a clearly defined identity status, but rather to an amalgam of realities. The local communities living in different states makes it difficult to identify areas of common interest. Inhabitants often live in parallel realities, with different mentalities, marked by both the rupture with the past and by the existing political, legal, social and cultural realities in the states to which they belong, which imposes the need to seek and identify solutions in this regard.

The recourse to events and processes developed during the historical development of the region is necessary and useful, especially since there is sufficient evidence of good coexistence at the mouth of the Danube and its inclusion in the natural course of the history of Western civilization.

Geography

The Galați County is located in the eastern part of Romania and in the southern part of the Siret-Danube-Prut interfluvium, being established as a territorial administrative unit in 1968, its composition including territories that belonged, until 1950, to the old counties of Covurlui, Tecuci, Tutova and Putna.

To the north, Galați county borders Vaslui county; to the east, the Prut river forms the natural border with the Republic of Moldova; to the south, the Danube consists the border with Tulcea county, to the southwest, through the Siret line, it has Braila county as neighbor, and at west and northwest, Galați county borders Vrancea county.

Located outside the Carpathian arch, Galați county occupies the area of interpenetration of the borders of the physical-geographical provinces of Eastern Europe, South Europe and,

in part, Central Europe, offering a view with gentle heights, between 310 m in the north and 2-10 m to the south. The region itself presents a tabular relief with a more accentuated fragmentation in the north and weaker in the south, distinguishing, according to altitude, position and relief particularities, the following geomorphological units: Covurluiului Plateau, Tutovei Hills and Falciului Hills; Tecuciului Plain, Covurluiului Plain, Meadow of the Lower Siret, Prut Meadow belonging to the Romanian Plain.

In the above outlined climate and soil conditions, in the county are present specific ecosystems for 5 vegetation units: steppe (30% of the surface) in the southern parts of the Tecuci and Covurlui Plains, silvosteppe (45% of the surface) in the High Plain of Covurlui, Tecuciului Plain and Covurlui Plateau, xerothermal deciduous forests (9% of the surface) located on Tutovei

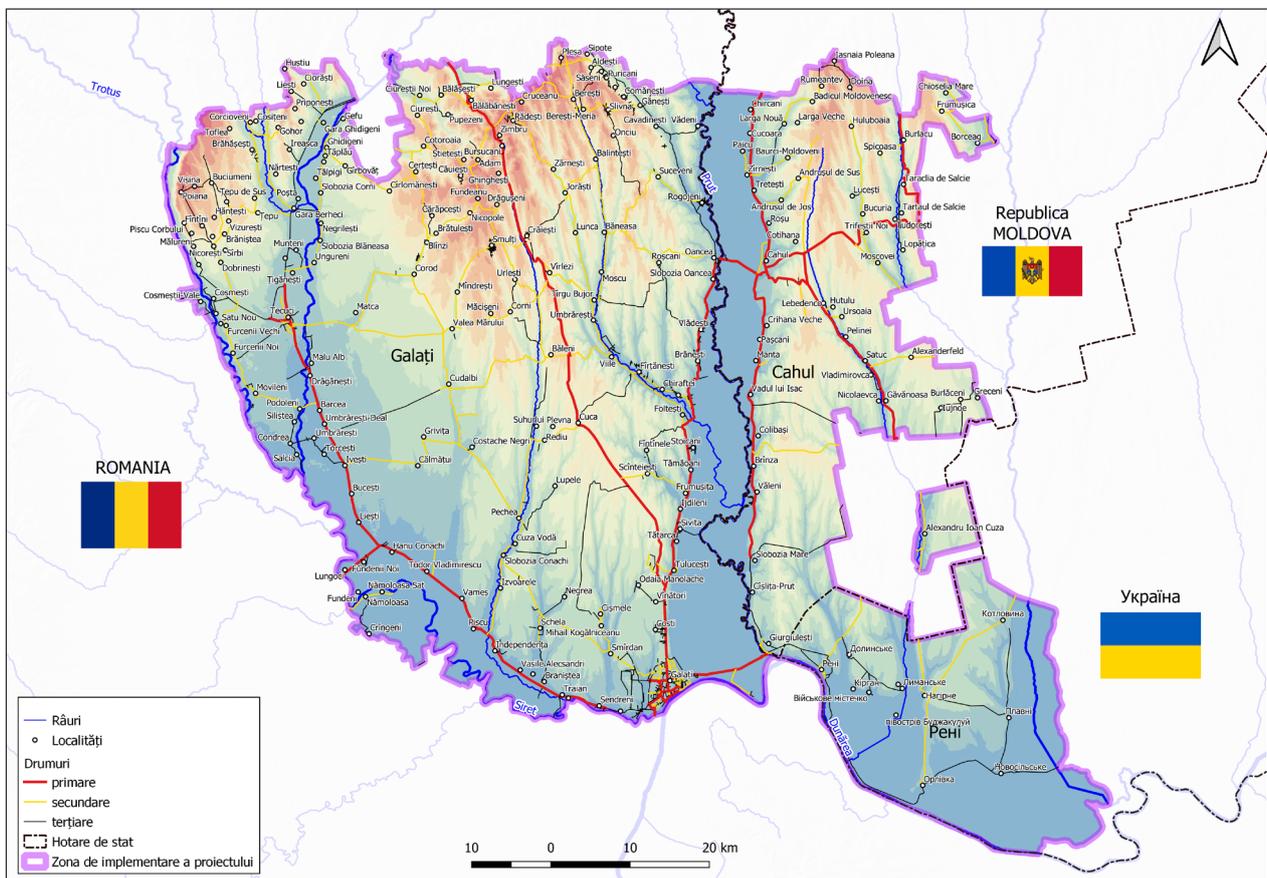


Fig.1. Map of the cross-border region Galați-Reni-Cahul

Hills (Tepu, Dragomanu) and Covurlui Plateau (Breana-Roscani, Paganesti, Reditu, Corni); the mesophilous deciduous forests (6% of the surface), in the north of the county and the meadow vegetation along the Danube, the Prut, Siretului, Barlad), of Danubian-Pontic type and which occupy 10% of the county's surface.

All these determined the appearance and existence of a variety of animals, birds, fish and insects, evolving in their own habitats, creating favorable conditions for hunting, animal breeding and primitive cultivation of plants and, finally, for the appearance of the first human settlements.

Cahul district, the largest district by area (1545.28 km²) and population (116.7 thousand) of the Republic of Moldova, that has a natural, economic and tourist potential still poorly exploited in the Euroregional context. Cahul also has a geographical position favorable to the development of tourism, being flanked to the west by Romania and to the southeast by Ukraine.

For a better capitalization of the existing potential and opportunities, it is indicated to emphasize the cultural and archaeological heritage from all historical epochs, highlighting the specific existential landmarks in the Cahul district. The beneficial effects will be felt firstly, at the level of infrastructure, by building tourist sites and, secondly, by improving the tourist experience and performance. The premises of a viable neighborhood constituted on a very strong geo-cultural background, such as the Lower Danube, are also given by the way in which the identity and cultural resources of the three communities are distributed and capitalized upon.

The Ukrainian segment of the Lower Danube is included in the historical and ethnographic region, called "Bessarabia" or "Bugec". The current **Reni territorial community** occupies the westernmost tip of this region. It should be noted that the Cahul district of Moldova, which is located in the immediate geographical proximity of the Reni locality, is also part of the same ethnocultural space and which, since 1944, began to be divided on political grounds. Throughout human history, the Prut and Danube rivers have also been natural boundaries and binders of the banks with populations with ethnically diverse communities.

The natural and geographical conditions are also quite similar: the arid steppes adjacent to the important water sources of the Danube River, its tributaries and estuaries. The specifics of the Ukrainian part include the presence of large reservoirs: Cahul, Kartal, Kugurlui, Ialpuș (the latter is considered to be the largest freshwater lake in Ukraine). All modern settlements are located on the coast of the estuaries (only the town of Reni is located directly on the Danube). This geography of the settlements corresponds to the historical heritage: most of the known archaeological monuments are part of the current topography. The artificial delimitation of the steppe stretches is made by the so-called "Trojan Wall", which connects the narrow parts of the boundary erected as a barrier against the nomads. The eccentric nature of the referenced territory made its conventional center - the city of Reni (Tomarova) to be located right at its extremity. There is every reason to believe that in antiquity and the Middle Ages, however, this center was in the modern area of Orlovka (Kartal), playing the role of an important node in the processes of population movement.

Prehistory

Research on the territory of **Galați County** has revealed numerous fossils of Quaternary animals contemporary to primitive man (woolly mammoth, giant deer, steppe bison, ox, woolly rhino), but also various ancient objects that show traces of habitation in the current Galați county, since the Paleolithic era. Archaeological discoveries in **Cahul** certify the presence of man on the lands of Cahul from ancient times. The archaeological heritage of Cahul district, rich and varied, includes over 300 sites of different types (mounds, settlements, cemeteries, fortifications, etc.). The population of the territory of the current **Reni region** takes place in the Paleolithic-Mesolithic. The sites of this period from the region have not yet been studied, but have been identified by archaeological surveys. Thus, for example, silex instruments were identified with traces of human processing, along the western coast of Ialpuș lake.

Hunters and gatherers from the north of future Moldova, traveling in search of game in the area between the Prut and the Carpathians, temporarily stopped on the terraces near the springs, or at the water's edge, their material traces, 12.000 years old, being discovered in the northern part of Galați county, in Pleșa and Puricani (localities belonging to Beresti-Meria commune), in Cavadinești, Berești on Dealul Taberei, Crăiești, Bălăbănești, Rădești, Băneasa and Suceveni.

The southern part of the Prut-Dniester area, including the territory of the current Cahul district, began to be populated in the Mesolithic era (12th-8th millennium BC). Mesolithic sites were discovered on the banks of the rivers Botna (near the village of Zaim) and Lunga, (near the village of Tvardița.) These small, temporary resorts served as a shelter for people living a semi-nomadic life. They hunted small and medium-sized animals and traveled long distances in search of them. Mesolithic man began to use the spear, bow, and the axe with tail. He achieved remarkable successes in the sixth millennium BC, during the Neolithic period, characterized by a faster pace of development of human society. Due to the fact that the amount of atmospheric precipitation has increased, the climate has become humid,

the forests, which in the past favored human life, began to occupy an increasingly large area on the Carpatho-Dniester territory, advancing south. In the meadows and valleys of the great rivers, people settled, conquering new living spaces. In the 5th millennium BC, the Carpatho-Dniester area was populated by the bearers of two related cultures - Criș and Bugo-Dniester, and later by the bearers of the culture that occupied a vast territory on the left bank of the Danube. A side of the Bugo-Dniester culture was discovered near the village of Găvănoasa - Vulcănești.

The Neolithic or New Stone Age was characterized, first of all, by significant changes in the development of the economy and social relations. During the Neolithic period, the man passed, including on the territory of **Cahul-Galați-Reni**, from the exclusive use of methods of obtaining means of subsistence, which, for many millennia, were harvesting, hunting and fishing, to new forms of activity, ie the productive economy - agriculture and cattle breeding. These important transformations of the Neolithic man, together with advances in instrument manufacturing, are sometimes referred to as the "Neolithic Revolution". The respective processes are well illustrated by a series of archaeological discoveries from

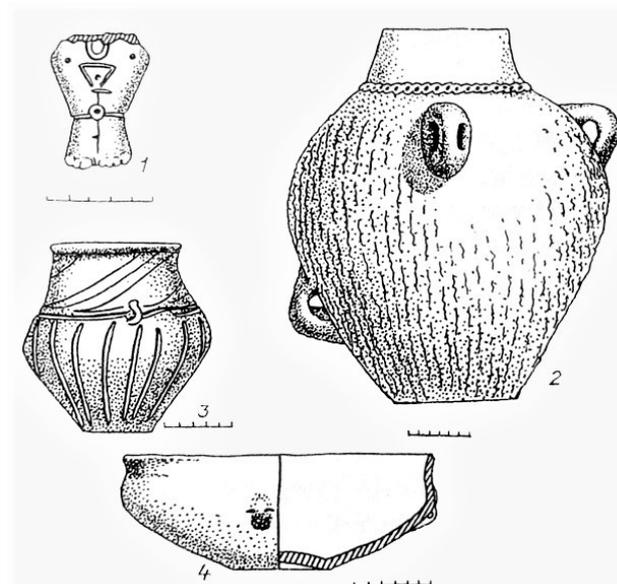


Fig.2. Lower part of a female anthropomorphic figure and vases belonging to the Gumelnița culture; 1.2. - s. Nagornore, Reni; 3.4. - s. Ozernoe, Ismail district.

the **Reni region**. The discoveries of pottery fragments from the Boian culture at the Novoselskoe II settlement are particularly noteworthy. It is also significant that, based on the presence of the fragments of two ceramic decoration vases, it could be determined that the ancient settlement belonged to the Criș culture, whose population lived mainly in the western and south-western Prut River fields.

On the territory of Galați county, human settlements increase in number in the Neolithic era, these being situated on the low terraces of the waters or even on the bottom of the valleys. The main occupation of the inhabitants was the primitive cultivation of plants, and the spiritual life was represented by female and zoomorphic figurines, on burnt clay pints and cult objects, as they were discovered on the water of Bârlad, at Negrileşti and Munteni, localities near the municipality Tecuci.

The Eneolithic era, or the era of copper and stone (4th-3rd millennium BC), is the era in which man learned to use the first metals - copper and gold, and to tame the horse. In the Eneolithic, including on the territory of the **Reni-Galați-Cahul** region, plowing agriculture began to be practiced, the wheel was invented and, consequently, wheeled transport. During this period, the production of ceramics was perfected and ceramic kilns appeared, and spinning and weaving became widespread and developed significantly. In the Eneolithic era, the rite of funerary tombs (archeological monuments otherwise known as kurgans) began to manifest in the referenced region, being spread especially in the steppe part of both Europe and Asia.

In the first half of the 4th millennium BC, on the lower course of the Danube, out of the Boian culture developed the Gumelnița culture, which appeared also on the territory of the **Cahul county** and which covered a large part of the lower course of the Danube and southern Bessarabia, a culture that Gordon Childe says it reflects “the relative stagnation of the industry offset and an extravagant elaboration of magical-ritual equipment”. A variant of it is the Bolgrad cultural group. In the Cahul district, monuments of this culture were discovered near the localities of Cucoara, Colibași, Giurgiulești, Lopățica, Pelinei and Vulcănești. The Eneolithic settlement, belonging to the Gumelnița culture (Bolgrad-Aldeni group), Chioselia Mare from Cahul district is the most documented northern Gumelnița archeological site on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. The site is in a good state of preservation, even if during the Soviet period its surface was planted with

vines. Important vestiges, characteristic of the Gumelnița culture, with its permanent agriculture and the tendency towards industrial specialization, are discovered in the second half of the last century in Lopățica. Traces of habitation from the Eneolithic and Roman eras are discovered in Cucoara, a town located only 15 km from Cahul. An archeological site, which includes a settlement from the late Bronze Age and another from the Roman era, as well as a cemetery with burial tombs from the late Middle Ages, were identified in the spring of 2016 in the village of Roșu.

During the same period, on the territory of the Reni region developed first of all the Gumelnița culture, whose remains on the territory of Ukraine were discovered exclusively in the area adjacent to the Danube. The population of the Gumelnița culture in the Reni region came from groups of migrants from across the Danube and Prut, whose main economic activity was agriculture and raising domestic animals. The bearers of that civilization cultivated several varieties of wheat, barley, oats and millet. Their flocks consisted of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and horses. Hunting also played a significant role in the economy of that population. The settlements of the Gumelnița culture, usually located in natural fortresses, were remarkable for the manufacture of a variety of stone, bone and horn work tools, as well as burnt utensils, whose excellent quality and artistic sense were specific to them. This conclusion follows the studies of the Novoselskoe I monuments and the cultural layers of the Nagorno II, Orlovka II, Novoselskoe II, Plavni I, Plavni IV, Reni and Reni II multilayer settlements.

The early Neo-Eneolithic period, in the same geographical area, revealed to us, thanks to archaeological research, important traces of human settlements with the same cultural aspect as those in the northeastern part of the Romanian Plain, in southern Moldova and Dobrogea. In the south of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine they were revealed by the discoveries from Stoicani, Măstăcani, Smulti, Drăgănești-Tecuci, Băneasa, Suceveni, Tămășeni, Puricani, Smârdan. Amongst these are gray ceramics, similar to those from the area of the Balkan-Danube cultures, either decorated, or colored with white striped painting, applied on the pots before burning, and representing a wide, intensive and extensive cultural development. The local population of that time used a productive economy, based on agriculture, cattle breeding, hunting, as evidenced by the numerous primitive hand rubbers and grinders, bones of domestic and wild animals, especially of ox and wild boar,

deer, dog and wolf, also on fishing and, to a lesser extent, on harvesting. At the same time, the household crafts have a great development: pottery, spinning and weaving.

The most impressive civilization whose traces are found on the territory of Galați County is the Cucuteni-Tripolie culture, one of the earliest civilizations in Europe, which was formed before the emergence of human settlements in Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt. This civilization existed in the 6th-3rd millennia BC and stretched over an area in the Carpathian Mountains to the middle course of the Dnieper River, on the current territory of the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine. Since the middle of the 4th millennium BC, the territory of the current Republic of Moldova, including the Cahul district, has been at the center of the Cucuteni-Tripoli culture, one of the most widespread cultures in south-eastern Europe. This culture has existed for about 11 millennia and has played an important role in the history of Southeast Europe.

The pottery and the forms of the North-Pontic steppe vessels traditionally keep elements of technological essence, as well as stereotypical canons, specific to the craft of pottery, and the mastery of the decoration of the vessels, with bichrome, trichrome or incised painting, having a great volubility and artistic power of expression. The anthropomorphic and zoomorphic clay figurines are not inferior either, proving the same art in handling and processing clay. Hut-type dwellings and surface dwellings are distinguished by their specific architectural style, with walls made of a wooden skeleton, made up of poles and twigs, interspersed with thick forks that were buried on the edge of triangular-shaped floors or platforms. Beyond ceramic vessels with painted spirals, beyond anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines,



Fig.3. "Hora from Berești" (Cucuteni culture), Galați county

tools, etc., a rare piece was discovered in Galați County that comes to complete the Cucutenian thesaurus: "Hora from Berești" discovered in 1981 on "Bulgarului" Hill from Berești. The piece is a supportive ceramic vase, provided with female anthropomorphic caryatides, disposed dorsally with the emphasized shaped hips and buttocks.

The tumuli (kurgans) or burial mounds attesting the penetration of the Indo-European population (Iamnia) and the beginning of the Bronze Age in the Lower Danube region, are the most numerous archaeological sites in the south of the Prut-Dniester area, first and foremost being the kurgan chain between Giurgiulești and Colibași localities (Cahul District) in length of 21 km, including about 100 mounds. Some are arranged in isolation, while others form true tumular necropolises, such as the one at "La Pietricei point" from Crihana Veche (Cahul District). The tumuli are also documented near the localities of Alexandru Ioan Cuza (Cahul district) and Etulia (UTAG). The extent of the kurgans is largely determined by the geographical configuration of the land. The fact that the series of mounds can be traced south to Orlovka and Reni is an indication of common cultural experiences and dimensions and can be considered an integral element of the historical and cultural landscape of the Lower Danube region. As an archaeological value, the mounds reveal how the prehistoric and protohistoric communities changed the natural landscape according to their beliefs and ideologies and how the idea of tumular burial evolved over different epochs and historical periods. In the same context are to be placed the monuments the tribes descending from the Iamnia culture, which advanced from the east to the Danube regions and were discovered on the territory of the Reni region. The main occupation of these tribes was raising cattle. It is to the Iamnia population that we owe the flourishing of kurgan-type architecture and the spread of wheeled transport. Such funerary mounds were discovered in the villages of Novoselsky, Plavni and Orlovka.

The penetration of the new Indo-European migrant populations to the Lower Danube determined the beginning of the Bronze Age and contributed to the enrichment of local cultures, especially through technical contributions related to copper and bronze metallurgy, knowledge of the primitive chariot. At this stage began the process of Indo-Europeanization of South-Eastern Europe, resulting in the decomposition of the great Eneolithic cultures and the beginning of a new period, that of metals. The first germs of the

development of the human society from the beginning of the Bronze Age, on the territory of Galați county, are archeologically represented by settlements, located in the lowlands, on the high terraces of the great waters (Ruptura-Foltești, in the Prut meadow) and at Vânători, on the lower terrace of Lake Brateș, as well as by a series of tumular necropolises, with burial graves, in a crouched position („Cetățuia” -Stoicani, Danube District-Galați municipality, Șendreni). In the middle and final period of the Bronze Age, archaeological research has established that in the northern part, in the hilly area of Galați County, sedentary communities have developed archaeologically concretized by fortified settlements and necropolises (Cetățuia de la Poiana, the settlements from Negrilești, Ghidigeni, the necropolis from Blintești, Cavadinești), as opposed to the plain area, where the settlements were of the dwelling type. An interesting archeological discovery took place on the southern bank of the Cățușa pond, in the peripheral area of Galați, where an archeological piece was discovered,

made of basalt, prismatic, faceted, provided with buttons at the top, beautifully polished, brown-green, representing a “scepter-mace”, a symbol of tribal power, specific to the middle and late Bronze Age. In the final period of the Bronze Age, the population evolved to another cultural stage. The bearers of this culture are the Thracian indigenous tribes of cattle breeders and farmers. The settlements are of the ash type (zolniki), located in the lowland regions, on the terraces, on the water’s edge, near the springs, and the archeological researches from Galați county discovered them in Cavadinești, Ghidigeni, Suceveni, Berești, Berești-Meria, Băneasa, Chiraftei, Cuca, Drăgușeni, Aldești, Băleni, Sivita, Bălăbănești, Țigănești, which attests to a wide spread not only on the county territory, but on the entire territory of Romania, and numerous ash settlements being well known in the north west of Ukraine, as well as in the Republic of Moldova.

Antiquity

Along with the beginning of the first Iron Age, approx. 1200-450 BC, the shepherding acquires a special development along with agriculture. Meanwhile, from the fusion of Indo-Europeans with the native populations, the ethno-cultural formations characteristic of antiquity were born - Greeks, Germans, Thracians, Celts, Scythians, etc. The bronze metallurgy and barter trade intensified simultaneously with the emergence and development of iron metallurgy. All these radical transformations, which in fact characterize the process of formation and development of the first Iron Age, in close connection with those of ethnogenetic nature led to the detachment, in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic space, from the Thracian ethnic group, the of the Geto-Dacian ethnicity. The most numerous discoveries from this period, from the south of Moldova, are in the area of the Lower Prut and the Siret, on the plateau and hill of Galați Municipality, on the lower terraces of Lake Brateș and of the Cătușa and Mălina ponds, on the streams of Covurlui, Chineja and Horinca.

At the end of the first Iron Age, the development of the native culture of the Lower Danube took place under the multiple influences of ancient Greek, Celtic and Roman culture. Ancient Greek pottery of the lecythi type, Hellenistic brooches, the Greek vessel (Kylix attic) covered with black firnis, show the existence of economic and cultural relations that the Thracian-Dacian-Getic tribes had with the Greek colonies: Histria, Tomis, Callatis situated on the northwestern coasts of the Black Sea, and Tyras and Olbia¹ from the northern coast of the same sea. The Danube and its tributaries Prut and Siret, in the southern region of Moldova, become the main arteries of communication and exchange between the native Geto-Dacian population with the Greco-Roman world, and at Bărboși, located at the confluence of Siret and Danube, has developed a real Greek emporium.

On the arid plain of southern Bessarabia in general, and on the territory of the current Reni region - in particular, there are some traces of

¹ Tyras and Olbia were Greek colonies located north of the Black Sea. Tyras was near the Cetatea Albă, and Olbia was located in the southern part of the modern Parutine village, Parutine commune, Oceak district, Mikolaiiv region from Ukraine.

the Cimmerian civilization, but mainly of the Scythians, who seem to have settled in the region in the 7th century BC. The basis of the economic activity of the Scythian tribes was the raising of cattle. They were not only shepherds, but also skilled warriors. The base of the Scythian army was the lightly armed cavalry, whose main types of weapons were the bow and the arrows, the sword and the spear. Scythian art is also distinguished by originality, whose core was the so-called "animalistic style". Images of panthers, deer, wolves, mountain goats, birds, fish, and also scenes of fighting between animals were often engraved or depicted on weapons, horse harnesses, and some Scythian household items. The Scythians developed also the monumental art, which is characterized by the discoveries of stone statues of warriors. With the campaign of the Persian king Darius against these people initiated in 513 BC, and namely in the region of the Lower Danube and in the south of Bessarabia, Herodotus begins his well-known Histories. The presence and influence of the Scythians in the region ended in the 4th-3rd centuries BC, being, as it is supposed, to be mainly caused by the rise of another tribe of Iranian origin - the Sarmatians, who inherited from the former the control over the North Pontic steppe, taking root even in the Lower Danube region (the Roxolani) and forming a civilization that lasted until the 4th century AD. The Sarmatians, like the Scythians, were skilled cattle breeders and warriors. The main shock force of the Sarmatians was the



Fig.4. The archeological excavation from the antique settlement nearby Orlovka village, Reni

heavy cavalry - the cataphracts, whose main types of weapons were the swords and the long spears. Such artifacts were found in one of the cemeteries investigated near Plavni village.

On the territory of the current **Reni** region have also been discovered important vestiges of Greek civilization, but also earlier evidence of the presence of the Thracian-Geto-Dacians, even from the beginning of the first millennium BC. Most traces of their civilization appear concentrated in southern Bessarabia right next to the Danube. Among them is, first of all, the settlement located near the village of Novoselskoe in the Reni region. Geto-Dacians as a branch of the Thracians, actively spread on the Reni-Galați-Cahul territory to the shores of the Dniester estuary, which is convincingly proven by the rich material of Thracian nature, primarily - ceramics. Also, in 2004, near the village of Orlovka, Reni district, a significant cemetery from the Middle Hallstatt period was discovered. So far, over 70 graves have been researched here, most of them accompanied by a rather rich and varied inventory. Near the same village, on a hill called "Muntele de Piatră" (The Stone Mountain), it seems that in the middle of the first century BC, the Dacians built a fortress to control the crossing of the Danube, which took place in the area of Orlovka villages - Novoselskoe.

On the other hand, the local evolution of the Geto-Dacian cultures in the Lower Danube region, with a pronounced genetic essence and strong catalytic reactions, being in close relations with the surrounding civilizations, Greek, South Thracian, Scythian, Celtic and Roman, have given to this geographical area a specific color, showcased also by the archeological discoveries from Galați County from Poiana on Siret, Rateș near Tecuci, Brăhășești, Bărboși. The presence of the Geto-Dacians in the current space of **Cahul** district is demonstrated by unfortified Getic settlements discovered near the localities of Gotești, Lărguța, Cucoara. On the southwest territory of Prut-Dniester there were numerous Geto-Dacian settlements, the traces of which were discovered on the place and near modern villages: Manta, Văleni, Zărnești, Gotești, Filipeni, Sărățeni, Tigheci, Cazangic etc. Most of the settlements were situated near rivers and lakes, and the water was used for irrigation and household chores. Large settlements, of urban type, were few, but the population maintained commercial connections with the townspeople of the ancient Greek colonies of the North Pontic and of the later Roman cities. The names of the settlements of the natives have often remained unknown because no documents have



Fig.5. Dacian and Roman objects from the Bărboși Castrum, Galați County

been preserved from those distant times. Only the names of the large Greek localities (cities, fortresses) have remained memorable over the centuries: the Cetatea Albă (The White Fortress) (derived by translation from the Greek Asprocastron), and Lycostomo that later became Chilia.

The basic occupations of the Geto-Dacians, including the inhabitants of Cahul, were agriculture and cattle breeding. Alexander Macedon's army passed through their wheat fields in 335 BC. Wheat straw, according to Herodotus, was used in various religious rites. In addition to wheat, they cultivated barley, used to make soft drinks. The wheat and the barley were cut with an iron sickle. The collected fruit was kept in holes glued and burned all around to eliminate the danger of moisture. Clay pots were also used for this purpose. The vine was also cultivated, which in winter was buried in the ground to protect it from frost. From hemp, Herodotus mentioned, very fine clothes were made, which did not differ from those of linen. An important source of food for the Geto-Dacians was cattle breeding. Among the domestic animals on the first place were the cattle, and on the second - the sheep. From milk they made cheese and urda, which, according to Strabo, were among the favorite foods of the cult officers. In addition, oxen were used as traction force to plow and transport weights. Shoes and shields for soldiers were made of thick ox skin. The Thracians, as reported in the famous Iliad, were good horsemen who formed a large part of their army. The Geto-Dacians also raised pigs, but their share in the household was insignificant. In the 4th-3rd centuries BC, the Geto-Dacians processed iron and bronze. Axes, sickles, knives, needles, fishing rods, weapons were made from the iron

extracted from the pond ore, and from bronze - various ornaments. In the field of ceramics, the potter's wheel became increasingly used.

Rome's intention to gain control of the Lower Danube was clearly visible in the first half of the 1st century BC, but the defeat of the Macedonian proconsul Gaius Antonius Hybrida in 61 BC, at the hand of the combined forces of the Greeks, Geto-Dacians, Scythians and Bastarnians and, more than that, the consolidation of the Geto-Dacian political union of the tribes led by Burebista in the middle of the 1st century BC, have delayed the early attempts of the Romans to take possession of the lands adjacent to the Lower Danube.

Following the wars of conquest waged by the Roman Empire against the Geto-Dacian tribes, in 101-102 and 105-106 AD, the Dacian settlement of Bărboși is conquered, the Romans built on the site of the former Geto-Dacian fortress a military camp (today a historical monument) as an outpost for the defense of the province of Lower Moesia. At the same time, they built a limes, a wall of defense (today Trajan's Wall, a historical monument), with a road and a guard. Although the name suggests paternity, the attribution of this huge bastion is still debated, with controversial points and archaeological research that has not yet been carried out, in order to dissolve the last doubts. Most often, two such walls are mentioned, 70 km away from each other: the Lower Trajan's wall and the Upper Trajan's wall. The first protects the Bărboși-Dinogeto-Dacia shallow water, the second Aliobrix and the pass next to it over the Danube. During the time of Duca Voda, a marble stone was found here with the inscription: "Emperor... son of Nerva, Trajan". From here started a Roman road that connected Barboși with the Tyras and that passed by the future town of Reni. The Upper Trajan's wall starts from the bank of the Prut near the southern edge of the town of Leova continuing towards Copcui, Seliște, Cazangic, crosses the Sărata meadow to Ecaterinovca and Grădiște in the Cogâlnic valley, after which through the Costangalia and Schinoasa meadows it reaches Batâr from where it crosses the valley of the Ceaga brook, and near Sălcuța it passes Botna and ends on the Chițcani-Copanca plateau on the Dniester. The adjacent ditch from which the earth was removed is in the northern part of the wall. The height is about 9 m, the width at the base - 24 m. The level of preservation is somewhat satisfactory, some parts being affected by annual plowing, country roads, etc. Its length is 120/138 km. The Lower Trajan's Wall, with a total length of 126 km, also starts from the bank of the Prut near the village of Vadul lui

Isac, continues between Vulcănești and Bolgrad from there, on the territory of Ukraine, it turns towards the lakes Ialpuș, Catlabug and Chitai, ending on the steep shore of Lake Sasac in Hliboke (Eschipolos), Tatarbuniar district. On the territory between the Danube and this wall, the lakes Cahul, Ialpuș, Catlabug, Chitai served as transversal dams. The popular tradition has always linked the appearance of these walls to the name of the Roman emperor Trajan, known from the two Dacian wars (101-102 and 105-106 AD) resulted in the conquest of Dacia. In fact, as mentioned before, it is not known whether the Roman legions did cross the Prut and the Danube in the region covered in this study. It is true, however that Dobrogea entered the province of Moesia after 85 AD, and at Isaccea - Noviodunum was the Roman flotilla Classis Flaviae Moesicae. The camp of Barbosi, together with the few Roman settlements on the bank of the Siret (Șendreni), inside the limes played an important economic and strategic role for the Roman Empire, because it connected Moesia Inferior with the northeastern part of Roman Dacia on the line of Siret to Poiana, in Galați county, of Trotuș and Oituz to Bretcu, in Transylvania, as attested by a military diploma from 140 AD, discovered in Bulgaria. The existence of this limes suggests that from the current territory of Galați county, only a small part, the southern one, had become a Roman province, the other still belonging to the tribes of the free Dacians. The Upper and Lower Trajan walls, located at a distance of about 70 km, cross the territory of Southern Bessarabia approximately on the WNW-ESE axis. These structures are also known in the popular tradition as "Drumul lui Traian" (Trajan's Road), "Șanțul lui Traian" (Trajan's Trench), "Troian" (Trojan), „Troiene” and less often, and in some places as the "Valea Șerpilor" (Snake Valley), the "Valea Zmeului" (Dragon's Valley), "Movila Uriașului" (the Giant's Mound). Both walls continue far west beyond the right bank of the Prut. The so-called "Valul Gălățean" (Galatean Wall) has a 24 km long segment and connects the lower courses of the Prut and Siret between the localities of Serbesti and Tulucești, the central part being near the city of Galați. That of the Lower Moldova - in length of 85 km, is extended from Ploscuțeni on the Siret River to Stoicani on the Prut River, a little to the south from Vadul lui Isac locality on the left side of the river.

It is assumed that in 106 AD, the precursor locality of the modern Reni is mentioned, under the name of "Arbium". The study of this unique archeological site takes place since the 19th century. At present, hundreds of original epigraphic, numismatic and other artifacts



Fig.6. "Valul lui Traian" near Vadul-lui-Isac village

Photo by Roman Friptuleac.

have been identified and studied. The social and economic life continued even after the Roman conquest, the soldiers of the empire coexisting with the conquered natives, developing, around the Roman camp, in the part of Siret, a rich civil settlement, made up of walled houses and probably barracks (canabae), according to Roman custom, where mainly married veterans, merchants, craftsmen and engineers who have accompanied the Roman armies lived, leaving behind them marble statues, ceramic and glass vessels, metal objects and jewelry attest to the taste for beauty of those inhabitants. The votive altar with a Roman inscription, discovered on the outskirts of Galați, also attests a first leader of this vicus - Lucius Iulius Iulianos, who was also called Rundacio. The necropolises near the settlement revealed a rich Daco-Roman inventory, a sign of colonization and merging of the two cultures. A tomb of a Christianized Daco-Roman was discovered in this place, along with other objects found in the tomb, of Christian essence, among which was a gold brooch with the inscription INNOCENS, a name given to the first Christians. Stone sarcophagi were also discovered, which had carved solar motifs, the representation of the Danubian knights, the Thracian knight and the bull's head, a mithraic symbol, a sign that here, in the south of Moldova and north of the Danube, the coexistence of the natives with the Romans world and with other tribes was marked by a process of symbiosis. The predominant occupations continued to be agriculture, cattle raising, and handicrafts. Work tools and household items were purchased in Roman cities in exchange for agricultural products. In the rural localities, among the Geto-Dacians, also lived Roman settlers. In order to communicate with the local authorities and with the Roman citizens, the Geto-Dacian population had to learn Latin. Administrators, priests, merchants, craftsmen communicated with the rural population in Latin. An important role in the process of Romanization was played by the army and the spread of Christianity, Latin being

indispensable for this latter process. On the territory of some villages from Cahul district, cult objects were found (statuettes, crosses, etc.). In this way, together with the language, the Geto-Dacians took over from the Romans some traditions, customs and faith.

The population of Dacia and the Geto-Dacians living on the lower course of the Danube and the Pontic coast, previously conquered, were subject to intense influence by the Romans. One of the main factors of Romanization was the army, stationed at different points on the Roman border: Kartal (Orlovka), Tiras, Bărboși, Capidava, etc. Roman civilian settlements appeared near the military camps, which, over several decades, became cities and a strong factor of Romanization. Roman influence came from within the frontier of the empire, spreading among the free Geto-Dacians. It was also carried out through trade relations. This is proved by the monetary circulation on the territory near the mouths of the Danube. The coins of the emperors Nero (54-68), Vespasian and Diocletian (81-95) were found near the localities of Tudora and Tighina; Traian (98-117) - Răscăieți, Cismichioi, Brânza, Tighina, Taraclia; Adrian (117-138) - Besalma, Colibași, Tighina, Taraclia; Antoniu Pius (138-161) - Hârtop (Cimișlia), Antonesti (Cantemir), Baurci (Ceadâr-Lunga), Tighina, Căușeni; Marcus Aurelius (161-180) - Căușeni, Cioburciu, Chioselia, Ștefan Vodă, Etulia, Văleni, Tighina, Taraclia; Septimius Severus (133-211) - Tighina; Gordian II (238-244) - Ialpuș; Dioclețian (284-305) - Giurgiulești, Câșlita-Prut; Constantin II (337-361) - Antoneuca (Cantemir), Palanca, Cucoara, Ștefan Vodă, etc. The presence in the cities of the Roman army and administration, involved in the economic and political life of the Roman provinces, the high economic and cultural level produced a profound influence on the local population on both sides of the border (limes) of the empire. Locals enlisted in the Roman army, with priority in cavalry and auxiliary units, returning to their homeland

continued to be the bearers of the Roman way of life, including by their way of thinking and expressing themselves, ways to which they became accustomed. Gradually, the towns took on the appearance of provincial cities which, in turn, exerted a strong influence on the surrounding rural localities. The language of communication between the representatives of the Roman administration and the local population, between the Roman city and the Geto-Dacian village, became the Latin language, gradually learned by the local population living under Roman jurisdiction.

The increasingly frequent attacks of the free Geto-Dacian tribes (Carpian), as well as the invasion of migrating peoples from the steppes of today's Russia, led the Roman Empire to withdraw its administration from the newly created provinces. With the Roman administration, a part of the Dacian-Roman population left, south of the Danube, without the territories being completely abandoned by the population. The settlement from Tirighina, Bărboși was probably abandoned, the inhabitants moving to the fortress of Dinogeto-Dacia, south of the Danube, in today's Tulcea County, others forming small fishing settlements, and thus laying the foundations of the future city of Galați. At the beginning of the migration period, the 3rd century AD, the local population had to fight with different Sarmatian, Gothic, Hunic tribes, which, temporarily, passed in successive waves on these lands. It is the period when the earth defense wall, which crosses Galați County from the east, near Stoicani locality, Foltești commune, to the northwest of the county, at Buciumeni, on a distance of 90 kilometers, is being reinforced. The wall is a continuation of the wall of defense in the modern-day Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, but due to the ditch positioned to the south, it was probably raised by the free Geto-Dacians against the Roman Empire. The new reinforcement was attributed to the Goths, respectively to Athanaric, one of the leaders of the Goth tribes, who likely built it in order to defend themselves from the invasion of the Huns in the 4th century AD.

From the eastern part of Romania to the south of Ukraine, a very interesting civilization developed, in which Germanic, Dacian, Iranian (Scythian / Sarmatian) and in some places Slavic elements were combined. A stage in this complex process is marked by a new culture in the development of the society, which flourished on a vast territory, during the migrations, immediately after the Roman withdrawal from Dacia. It was named the "Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov" culture, after the eponymous archeological sites in Romania and Ukraine,

and brings to light very interesting things about life in Dacia during the migrations and turbulences of Late Antiquity. The civilization was unique cultural unit, from Romania to Ukraine, as proven by the houses, the types of graves, but also by objects discovered following the archeological researches on the territory of the area between Romania and Ukraine, which looked strikingly alike. Archaeologists realized that it was a sedentary population, which sometimes inhabited certain areas permanently over a century, living in villages and having about the same culture and customs over a large area. This culture survived and was attested in the 3rd-4th centuries AD, approximately before the Hunnic invasion in Europe and the conquering of the Danubian basin by these steppe riders. Monuments of this culture, from the 2nd-4th centuries AD, the bearers of which, in the territory concerned, were mainly Geto-Dacians, were discovered on the territory of Flămânda, Chircani, Găvănoasa, Cucoara, Paicu, Crihana Veche, Manta, Pelinia, Etulia, Alexandrovca, Lopățica.

Archaeological research proves that for over a millennium, the surroundings of the city of Galați and the entire territory of the county, have been the gateway for migrant peoples on their way west. The cultural elements specific to these tribes can be observed either in the funeral rites or in the taste and refinement for certain ornaments. Sarmatian burial tombs were discovered in Șendreni, dating from the 3rd century AD, and in Bălințești, Berești, Gănești, Cavadinești, Branești, Virlezi, Bursucani, Jorăști, Reditu, Braniștea, Suceveni, Draganești, Negrițești, Rateș-Tecuci, Caușești, Ghidigeni, where traces of life characteristic of this culture have been discovered. In the second half of the third and fourth centuries, the territory of the current Reni region was used by the Sarmatians primarily as a "transit" area for their incursions into the Roman provinces south of the Danube. The Sarmatian vestiges of this period are concentrated in a rather limited space on the Lower Danube, namely near the only safe crossing point of this river. These vestiges consist of small burial cemeteries with a fairly "modest" number of such graves.

Based on written and archeological materials, it can be seen what an important transit role the Lower Danube region played for ancient populations. Here converge two main vectors of mobility: European (Balkan) and steppe. This model was perpetuated in the Middle Ages.

Middle Ages

The medieval history of the region in question is characterized, first of all, by the appearance of the Turanian tribes, who replaced the Iranian and Indo-European nomads who had dominated the landscape for almost 1400 years. This phenomenon was part of a broader process designated in historiography as the "great migrations"; during this process, the Huns appeared in 375-376 AD, in the north of the Black Sea steppes, but they left insignificant traces of their stay in the Lower Danube region.

Judging by written sources, following the Huns, the tribes of the Acatziri, Utigurs, Ponogurs and Avars passed through the steppes of the northern Black Sea region, including Budjak, in the second half of the 5th-6th centuries. After the middle of the 7th century, he crossed the Danube with his army Asparukh, one of the sons of the Khagan of Greater Bulgaria - Kubrat, who founded a new state - Bulgaria on the Danube (later the Bulgarian kingdom). Starting with the 8th century, the tribes of the Saltovo-Mayaki culture began to inhabit the territory of the current Reni region, representing a mixed population of Slavs and Turks (mainly Bulgarians), who engaged in agriculture and viticulture. In the characteristics of this

community, on the territory we are interested in, researchers distinguish the signs of Balkan-Danubian culture from the time of the First Bulgarian Kingdom (VIII-X centuries).

Towards the end of the ninth century, first the Pechenegs entered Bugeac, followed by Turks (the Uzi). In the tenth century, these nomads dominated the region, coexisting quite peacefully with the sedentary population of the Balkan-Danubian culture. At the end of the 11th century, the Cumans appeared at the confluence of the Danube and the Dniester, and their domination of these lands lasted until the middle of the 13th century. The remains of these Turkish nomads are known, consisting overwhelmingly of burials in older kurgans, with a somewhat uniform inventory. After the Cumans, the Tartar-Mongols arrived in this region around 1240 and drove out the Cumans.

Socio-economic development from the VI-X centuries on the territory of the Galați county was stimulated by the presence of Slavic tribes. These, being in the stage of organizing "zdaruga", were assimilated by the local population that reached the stage of transition to feudalism. Numerous elements of the local, extra-Romanian material culture from the IX-X



Fig.7. The Lower Danube Region on a Greek map from 1797

centuries are found in the surroundings of Galați, on the lower terrace of Brateș Lake, and near the Tuluc valley, and in Sendreni, in a place called "Casa lui Secan", huts with stone ovens were discovered. Historical sources at the time show that in 969, during the battles of Sviatoslav, the prince of Kiev, against the Bulgarians, he conquered "80 gorods" from the southern part of Moldova. Although they are not named, we can assume that among them was Galați. At the same time, the large number of discovered Byzantine coins emphasize the economic links and relations between the region and the Byzantine Empire.

The oldest written news about the existence of a Romanian population appears in Nestor's Russian chronicle "Povesti vremennâych let" from the X-XI centuries, where it is attested under the name of Vlachi or Volochi, being located in the Carpatho-Danubian region. Also, from the documents of the 13th century, we know of the presence of the Wallachians in the Cumanian episcopate, which was in the south of Moldova, their empire occupying the entire space between Baragan, Moldova, Bessarabia, the steppes of the northern Black Sea, Don and Volga, and being known as "Dest-I Kipciak" - The Empire of the Steppes. From the Cumans have survived some hydronyms that can be found even today in Galați County: Covurlui, Suhurlui, Calmațui.

After the formation of the medieval Romanian principalities, the northern part of the territory of the current Galați county became part of Moldova, while the other half was belonging to Wallachia, a situation that lasted until the reign of Alexander the Good, when the southern part of the county became part of Moldova, together with all the land to the mouths of the Danube into the Black Sea. According to the interpretation of medieval historical sources, Basarab I, the founder of Wallachia, extended, in the first half of the 14th century, the eastern borders of the state to the mouth of the Danube. Hence the name of Bessarabia of the southern part of the territory between the Prut and the Dniester. Later, this region became part of the feudal state of Moldova, with Alexander the Great declaring himself lord of Moldova "from the mountains to the Danube and the sea". Covurlui County, Tutova and Tecuci (component parts of the current Galați County) are for the first time documented in an act of September 1st, 1435, by which the voivode Ilias (son of Alexander the Good) communicated to Vladislav, "to the beloved Prince of Poland, Lithuania, Russia and Ruler of many countries", that he had reconciled with his brother Stefan, to whom he had given possession of several territories

in the southern part of the country, which were in the Land of Vaslui, the Land of Tutova, the Land of Covurlui and the Land of Tecuci („... the city of Vaslui and the district adjacent to this city, and the land of Tutova and the town of Barlad, with all the surroundings, and the mills of Covurlui and the city of Tecuci, with all its surrounding, and Oltenii...”). It is the period in which the first documentary attestations of some settlements on the territory of Galați county appear, through the princely gifts to those who proved loyalty to the lord, while during the reign of Stephen the Great, the phenomenon of settlements being mentioned through princely gifts to becomes widespread: Nicorești-Nicoara, Ivești-Ivașcu, Berești-Berescu, Comănești-Coman, Mânjina-Mânjea (today Costache Negri), etc. The construction of the great fortresses in southern Bessarabia - Cetatea Alba, Chilia, Cetatea Smilului - began during the reign of Alexander the Good (1400-1432), which were later rebuilt and fortified by Stephen the Great (1457-1504) and Petru Rareș (1527-1538, 1541-1546). Fortifications in the interior of the country, usually located in the woods, on the tops of hills, on the banks of rivers and which served as places of refuge and shelter for locals were also built in localities today in the region under consideration, or in its immediate proximity, for example Reni, Kartal (on the Danube), Sărata (near Leova), Tabacu / Tobacu (near Bolgrad, Odessa region, Ukraine), Tintu (near the old village of Greceni, Cahul district), Troian (near Vadul lui Isac, Cahul district), etc.

The towns were located in well-chosen places, either at the fords of rivers or at the crossroads, many of them being based on the site of previous settlements, from the Daco-Roman period. The occupations of the inhabitants were and will remain, for many centuries, of the agrarian type: agriculture, viticulture, shepherding, domestic crafts, fishing, hunting, etc., the differentiations being made only by the means used, these knowing only little progress over time. Trade was a rather urban activity, with most merchants being linked to the existence of trade routes, whether on water or on land. Benefiting from important salt resources of excellent quality, Moldova exploited this mineral. An important role in the salt trade in the 14th century was held by the cities of Chilia and Cetatea Alba, which, in the 14th-15th centuries were centers of salt collection from the territory of the Romanian Lands and, probably, from other parts.

On the territory of the current Galați County, the commercial exchanges were made in several ways. One of these was the old Moldovan road

that connected Liov with Cetatea Albă and Chilia. It reached Tecuci and, going on the bank of the Siret, on the territory of Braniștea commune, it joined the road that went down to the Danube. After the conquest of Cetatea Albă and Chilia by the Ottoman Empire (1484), Moldova was left without the possibility of trading at sea. Thus, the Danube remained the only resource for trade on water. This was the moment when the fishing settlements from the south of Moldova came to the attention of the rulers and merchants, the road on the Bârlad valley becoming in the following centuries the main road of Moldova, due to the existence of the Galați harbor.

The appearance and development of the port of Galați had serious repercussions on the urban centers of the neighboring lands, because, due to the interest shown for the port and the trade exercised by it, towns such as Tecuci - the capital of Tecuci, or Bârlad - the capital of Tutova, could develop only to a small extent. The city of Galați was the engine of the development and well-being of the neighboring territories since its appearance, and this is the reason why in the following we will refer mostly to the current administrative center of Galați County.

Sources from the 16th century confirm the international value of the road to Galați, where caravans coming from Poland passed through on their way to Constantinople. Another road, after the appearance of the port from Galați, connected Lviv to this port on the route Hotin-lasi-Vaslui-Barlad-Tecuci, called for a certain part "the Moldovan road", "Drumul Galaților" (the road of Galați) or "Drumul spre Țarigrad" (the road to Tzarigrad). This road had another variant, from Iași on the Bohotinului valley to Huși and from here, on the Elanului and Horincii valley (in Galați county) through the villages of Oancea, Foltești and Șivița. But this branch had a lower traffic due to the road being used by the Tartars in their invasions of Moldova, and thus being known as the "Tartar Road".

Reliable sources about the foreign trade that took place through Galați also exist from the middle of the 16th century, when there are mentioned merchants from Galați who traded in Liov with malvasia (wine from the Mavasia peninsula, Greece) and morun, or in Halici, where in 1536 malvasia and muscatello were brought from Constantinople, through Moldova.

After the transformation of Braila into a Turkish region, in 1538, the port of Galați still retains some freedom, being able to trade with centers outside the Ottoman Empire. Due to the trade, and especially to the one performed abroad, the revenues of the Galați fair increased,

arousing the interest of the governors for the neighboring the fair.

The current locality Ren(i) probably dates from the 15th century when it appears as a Moldova settlement on the banks of the Danube, near the confluence with the Prut. It first appears on a map of Moldova from 1541, drawn up by G.Reichersdorf. The town of "Ren" is mentioned in a letter from Nicolaus Szynewa of August 24th, 1551. The Danube pier and the nearby town belonged to the principality of Moldova until 1621.

After the annexation of the Reni by the Turks, the Moldovan pier received a new name - Tomarova or Timarova and was included in the administrative unit with the center in the Turkish fortress Isaccea, located on the right bank of the Danube. In the seventh decade of the 17th century, Tomarova was transferred to Ismail administrative center. D.Cantemir mentioned that although the locality was subjected to the Turks, there were no Turks there, the garrison being made up of Christian Moldovans. Near the pier there was a fortification of small importance, similar to the Kartal, also mentioned by Dimitrie Cantemir. There is also sufficient documentary evidence to believe that the Romanian population in Kartal and Satunov is the oldest currently living in the region. This is well known since the early seventeenth century. In the fiscal register of the villages from the Isaccea administrative unit are mentioned (on 25.05.1845) Timarovo (Reni), Barta (Plavni), Enichioi (Satu Nou or Novoselsky) and Kartal, where a guard post was located. D.Cantemir categorized this settlement as a town and a "minor fortification". At the same time, in 1714, the "Turkish bridge" is mentioned, which connects the two banks of the Danube in the Sakcha (Isaccea) area. It seems that such temporary structures could have had a military utility only in summer.



Fig.8. The bust of Ioan Vodă the Terrible from Cahul

In the winter season, almost every year, the transition could be made on ice.

As for Cahul, it went down in the history of the Middle Ages largely due to the two battles on its territory, in 1574 and 1770. The battle of Cahul Lake in 1574 was fought by the ruler of Moldova, Ioan Vodă the Terrible (Ioan Vodă cel Cumplit), with forces numerically inferior and betrayed by some of the boyars, against the Turks and Tartars, who invaded southern Moldova after the first refused to pay double tribute to the sultan. Defeated, Ioan Vodă surrendered to the Turks in exchange for the promise that his army would be spared, he himself being executed. The respective events were described by the chronicler Grigore Ureche. In 1937, a bust of the ruler was unveiled in Cahul, cast in bronze by the artist Tudor Burca; located at the entrance to the Public Garden, near the "The Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel" Cathedral, the bust was destroyed in the year of Soviet occupation 1940, but then restored in 1991. The second famous battle of Cahul took place during the Russian-Turkish war of 1768-1774, when the Russian army, under the command of Marshal Piotr Rumeantsev obtained two brilliant victories (at Cahul and Larga) against numerically superior Turkish-Tatar forces. Due to these victories, a bust of Marshal Rumeantsev was erected in 1985, destroyed in 1990, and restored in 2001.



Fig.9. The bust of the hetman Mazepa from Galați

Starting with the first half of the 17th century, great village dominions were in the **current Galați county**. The proximity of Galați ensured to the owners an easier sale of the products and a higher profit. For example, the great chancellor Ionașcu Ghenghea manages, in a short time, to capture the villages of Tulucești, Stoicani, Rădeni, Ghindușeni, which, through his successors, come into the possession of the ruler Gheorghe Duca. The monasteries were not without estates with villages on them.

Among the families with historical names, whose members ruled the county in some periods or had rural properties, were the prince M.G. Cantacuzino (Băleni), C. Sturza (Filiști), D.M. Sturza (Tulucești), A. Mavrovordat (Vladești), D. Mavrocordat (Ghidigeni), Calimah Alexandru (Rogojeni), Iorgu Ghica (Frumușița), Lascăr Catargiu (Tg. Bujor), Paul Bals (Ivești), Conachi (Fundeni, Țigănești, Matca), C. Moruzi (Pechea), Costache Negri (Blânzi, Mânjina).

The churches, founded either by the voivodes (the only princely church left standing is in the city of Galați - the Mavramol church, was founded by Gheorghe Duca), or by those with positions in office, or by merchants (the church founded by the logothete Costache Conachi, Țigănești, the church of the Adam monastery, founded by the serdar Adam Movilă, the churches "Sf. Nicolae-Banu", "Nasterea Maicii Domnului" (Birth of the Virgin mary) - Negustori



Fig.10. Bust of A.V. Suvorov from Cahul

and “Adormirea Maicii Domnului” (Assumption of the Virgin Mary) - Serdaru from Nicorești, the church “Adormirea Maicii Domnului” (Assumption of the Virgin Mary) founded by the merchants Constantin, son of Toader, and Diia and Serbul-Galați) were dedicated to the monasteries in Greece or Jerusalem. Most of them were made of wadding or wood (a beautiful wooden church, dated 1776, still exists today on the territory of Certești), the stone being a construction material that was not found on the territory of the county. Only two churches were built of stone, and those in the scaffolding of the Galați, “Precista” (The Virgin), founded in 1642 and „St. Gheorghe” (St. George) (1664), the stone being taken from the Roman camp from Bărboși. The church “St. Gheorghe” (St. George) from Galați (demolished in 1962), was dedicated to the church of the “Holy Sepulcher” in Jerusalem. This served, in 1710, as a burial place for the lifeless body of the hetman Mazepa, brought from Varnita, his wish to be buried at the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem being fulfilled only thus, since the administration of the Ottoman Empire in Dobrogea forbade the passage the earthly remains of the great hetman. Those who accompanied the lifeless body of the man considered the father of Ukrainian independence were stranded in Galați, on the banks of the Danube. As soon as they found out that the church of St. Gheorghe (St. George), also located on the high cliff of the Danube is dedicated to the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, they asked for permission for this church in Galați to be Mazepa's resting place. But his eternal rest was disturbed, according to the legends, either by the Tartars or by the Russians, who took the bones of the hetman and threw them in the Danube, leaving only the stone of Chrissoveloni Palace from Ghidigeni grave. Unfortunately, the demolition of the church and the construction of blocks of flats erased any possibility of discovering anything from this tomb. However, a street and, later, two neighborhoods in Galați came to bear the name of the hetman Mazepa.

Also in the 18th century, the territory of Galați County served as a camp for tsarist and Austrian armies in the wars against the Ottoman Empire. General Suvorov passed by Puteni (today Valea Marului locality), and during the campaign of 1770, General Alexandr Vasilievich Gelhard found his end, a beautiful stone monument being erected in his memory, in the locality, in 1802, on Stalpului Hill.

Towards the end of the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th century, the port of Galați became a great commercial point, the variety of goods and, especially, their cheapness, making it appreciated among foreigners. Processed silitra was brought from across the Prut, from the lands of Orhei and Soroca. Only from the village of Lăpușna, Orhei county, 12,000 pounds of silitra were transported annually to the Danube. Part of the Austrian export to Russia passed through Galați. The manufacturing products were loaded at Semlin and brought on the Danube to Galați, and from here sent, through Iași, to Ukraine. Trade routes have also multiplied. The connection between Iași and Galați was made through Scanteia-Vaslui-Barlad. From here one could reach Galați in several directions: Bârlad-Blânzi-Puteni-Pechea-Galați; apart from Barlad, the other localities are situated today on the territory of Galați county. A more detoured road from Bârlad to Galați was through Lungești-Popricani-Crăiești-Umbrărești-Foltești-Șivița, and often the road passing from Iași through Huși-Stăniliești-Fălciu-Cârja-Oancea-Foltești-Șivița-Galați was used. It took five days to reach Hotin by ox-carts. To Tighina the road went through Reni, a distance covered in four days.

The modern age

The Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812 ended with the Peace of Bucharest of May 16th, 1812, as a result of which the Russian Empire occupied Eastern Moldova as far as Prut. A direct consequence of this was that the territories of the current administrative units Reni and Cahul became part of the Russian Empire, while Galați remained part of the Principality of Moldova, and thus the connection between the local communities at the confluence of the Danube and the Prut was hindered. The specificity of the administration of the national peripheries of the Tsarist Empire was determined by the tasks of Russian tsarism in the region, which consisted in consolidating and furthering the military successes of the Empire. The Russian authorities expected that, by demonstrating the advantages of Russian rule in Bessarabia, they would be able to attract the sympathy of the Balkan peoples. That is why they adopted a policy of attracting foreign settlers to the region of southern Bessarabia who were granted a preferential administrative regime. The result of this policy was that in a short time the ethnic composition of southern Bessarabia changed substantially, and by 1827, its population was distributed as follows: Romanians 33.58%, Bulgarians and Gagauz 22.78%, Ukrainians 19.45%, Russians and Lipovans 9.15%, Germans 5.68%, Poles 2.86%, Jews 2.36%, Greeks 1.93%, Armenians 0.87%, other nationalities 1.84%. The new Russian administration of Bessarabia deported the Nogai Tatars from the region, and settled colonists from the Balkans and other regions who were either brought in an organized manner, or came alone in the context of the Russian-Turkish wars even before the peace of 1812. The newly-arrived received fiscal

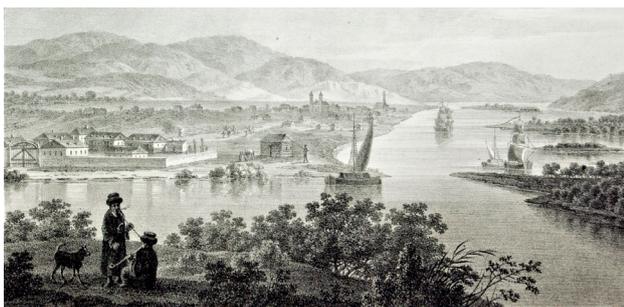


Fig.11. View of the Danube crossing near the Reni, 1826

facilities and the Tsarist Empire also expected them to form a social category faithful to the regime.

In the modern era, the town of **Reni** became the center of the annual international fairs, which brought together through trade a number of regions of the Lower Danube. Two such events took place each year: the fairs of Georgievskaya (April-May) and Pokrovskaya (September). The population of the locality is growing significantly: from 1.5 thousand inhabitants in 1812 to 7321 in 1847. At that time Reni was a typical city for southern Bessarabia, where several ethnic communities coexisted peacefully: about a third of its inhabitants were Moldovans/Romanians; another third - Ukrainians and Russians; almost a fifth - Bulgarians and Greeks; every twentieth inhabitant of the city belonged to the Jewish community. The rural population formed in the 1830s was represented by Moldovans (Kartal, Satu Nou, Anadol, Barta), Bulgarians (Karagah) and Gagauzians (Bolboca) Before 1873, all these settlements had the status of „cross-Danube colonies”, operating under the self-governing of the „Carta of the colonists” from 1819.

Also from this period dates the urban beginnings of **Cahul**, which, until 1835, was in fact a village called Frumoasa and the very name of Cahul was given to it by the decree of Tsar Nicholas I of December 18th, 1835, when the town became an administrative center. Southern Bessarabia, which included the three counties of Cahul, Bolgrad and Ismail, was returned to Moldova following the Peace Treaty of Paris, which ended the Crimean War (1856), a decision motivated by Austria, France and Britain's desire to restrict Russia's access to the mouths of the Danube. After this date, works to build the city began in Cahul, the cultural life of the people of Cahul begins, small industrial enterprises appear, the organs and institutions of the Romanian administration are installed. There is an intense activity of culturalization and training of the population. In 1857, in the town of Cahul, a primary four-grade school for boys was founded. The teaching staff of this school was represented in 1863 by three teachers. In November 1864, a girls' school began its activity. The 1864 census determines the existence in the city of Cahul of 926 houses,

1146 families, 2 churches. The Cathedral of St. Archangel Michael, built in 1837-1850, is the foundation of the Fyodorov family. The Russian church in the Lipovanca quarter was built in 1856-1857. In 1864, in southern Bessarabia, a new diocese was founded, which was named the Lower Danube, and a four-class seminary was opened. Documentary sources attest on the territory of the city about 20 windmills, a few mills, blacksmithing and carpentry workshops, small awning and brick factories, a smelter, a wool processing plant, a dying workshop, etc. The main occupation of the inhabitants was, of course, agriculture and animal husbandry.

In the rest of southern Bessarabia, small naval construction and agricultural raw material processing enterprises operated in maritime and riparian cities (Cetatea Alba, Chilia, Ismail, Reni), although in the 19th century industry was a still poorly developed branch of the economy. After all, existing businesses were geared towards meeting the current needs of the local population. The first factories appear in urban centers, for the production of timber, bricks and tiles, cheese, bakery. In some villages there were steam mills and horse-drawn mills, tanneries, dying workshops, brickwork, blacksmithing, and woodworking workshops, furriers, tailors. In the area of southern Bessarabia, viticulture and winemaking were some of the most widespread branches of nineteenth-century agriculture. Most of the vineyards were in the counties of Cahul, Ismail, Cetatea Alba. Considerable viticultural areas were in the villages of Crihana, Frumoasa, Roșu, Gotești, Filipeni, Hanaseni Noi, Tigheci, Borogani, Sărata-Razeși, Tomai, Mingir. The vine and the wine contributed to the survival of the peasant households, somehow improving the situation and the life of the Bessarabian peasant.

In the first half of the 19th century, in the **Galați county**, the process of transition from the stage of the natural economy to that of commercial relations took place, animated equally by merchants, but also by the owners of estates or peasants. Within the estate there are some transformations, the most important of which are the increase of days of work and the extension of the property, by different means, some of which were rather forceful, because the arable lands near Galați, and here we consider the land of Tecuci and Covurlui, part of modern day Galați County, produced much higher revenues, compared to those in Northern Moldova. For example, in the land of Covurlui, the wheat culture brought a profit of 361 piastres for a sickle, unlike in Iași, or Suceava where 79 piastres were barely



Fig.12. Costache Negri mansion from the locality of the same name, Galați county

obtained.

The aristocratic household, by expanding the arable land, became more and more profitable, feeding almost exclusively the foreign trade, while the peasant household, that of the free peasants, supplied the fairs and cities.

The Treaty of Adrianople of 1829, concluded after the Russian-Turkish war, had substantial consequences for Moldova and, especially, for the port of Galați. A decisive factor in the flourishing of the Galați trade, with many repercussions on the entire trade of MoldovaMoldova, was the granting of the status of free port to the city of Galați, in 1836. The freedom of trade contributes to its great development. A Sardinian report from May 10th, 1842 stated that Moldova produced a lot of wine that was exported especially to Odessa. It is the period in which the commercial connections with the port of Odessa are strengthened, the transport of goods from and in this port being carried out with Russian ships.

The first steps of Europeanization of the two Principalities appeared with the reforms of Constantin Mavrocordat, in the 18th century, but the real modernization programs of Moldova and Wallachia were set up at the mansion of Costache Negri from Mânjina (today Costache Negri locality from Galați county), and carried out only partially after the Revolution of 1848, finding their finality in the achievement of the union of the two Romanian Principalities in 1859 and in the reforms that followed.

Housing architecture reflects the same Western influence, although not directly, but received through Russian mediation. The romantic, eclectic style, then the neoclassical one, the baroque elements begin to be encountered more and more in the urban constructions and even in some mansions that become real palaces. This is the case of the mansion of the great logothete Costache Conachi from Țigănești, which he transforms into a modern mansion for his period, building a gate in

romantic style, with neo-Gothic elements. It was to be transformed again by his son-in-law, the caimacam of Moldova, Nicolae Vogoride and, later, by Costache Conachi's stepson, Costache Negri, becoming a real palace. In Ghidigeni, the owner of the estate, the banker Chrissoveloni builds on the site of the former mansion a palace in the style of the French academism and the first tennis covered court in Romania.

The creation, in 1856, of a European Commission of the Danube, an international institution for regulating navigation on the Danube and ensuring its navigability, and the establishment of its headquarters in Galați (CED Palace, today the headquarters of the "V. A. Urechia" Library), but also of the Prut Navigation Commission, had major repercussions in the modernization of the social and economic life of the city and the county by strengthening the commercial connections on water and on land. The city of Galați became a transit area for the tsarist army in the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878, in which the Romanian army also participated against the Ottoman Empire. After the end of the war, the tsarist army erected a monument to the Russian soldiers who fell in battle on the Tiglina estate, today in the courtyard of the Gymnasium School no.2. After the conquest of independence from the Ottoman Empire, the pace of development in Galați County was reflected in the increase in the production of goods for the domestic market and in the increase in foreign trade. Also, real reforms are being made in the field of secularization of monastic wealth and in the field of education, with an emphasis on building public schools.

The population of the county begins to increase, as proved by the new rural settlements that appeared on the county map. After the years following the agrarian reform of 1864 and the partial allotment of 1879, new settlements were created. Other settlements appeared due to the displacement caused by the frequent floods caused by Siret. In rural areas, in addition to traditional occupations related to land cultivation, viticulture, beekeeping, cattle breeding, fishing, traditional crafts, there begin to develop transport, trade (taverns, grocers, grain traders, gardeners, potters) and industry, especially by increasing the number of owners of windmills, steam mills, and alcohol factories. Also during this period, the first signs of industrialization appear, especially in the cities of Galați and Tecuci. However, even in rural areas, the new breath of modernization would be brought by some owners of estates with innovative concepts. The economic development of the county was also stimulated

by the appearance of the railway network on its territory and by the railway transports. In 1872, the Roman-Tecuci-Bărboși railways were put into operation. In the same year, a railway was built that connected the port of Galați with the railway network. Another railway was built to Reni during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 to facilitate the transport of Russian troops. The railway, which still exists today, is one with a wide gauge and is currently used to transport iron ore from Ukraine. From Reni and Ismail, the connections with the city of Galați were also made on water, there functioning not only commercial transport, but also passenger transport. The new customs law of 1873, by which the city of Galați was deprived of the status a free port and the exchange of territories decided in Berlin following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, would be felt in a few years in the city's economy. So were the building of the port of Constanța and the entry into competition of the port of Galați with the port of Odessa, where the price of traded goods was lower.

For several decades, the city of Galați has also played the role of the main port of Romania, the government allocating significant sums for the construction of modern port constructions: docks and grain silos, works of the great engineer Anghel Saligny. The growing industrialization of the city attracted a larger number of people from all neighboring territories of the county, including Ukrainians and Russian-Lipovans. The number of public schools increases, so that almost every commune in the county had one or two primary schools, secondary ones being established in the town of Tecuci and Galați. After southern Bessarabia was annexed by Russia in 1878, the Normal School of Teachers moved from Ismail to Galați, as did the "Dunărea de Jos (Lower Danube)" Episcopate. Some of the teachers and priests came to Galați, to continue practicing.



Fig.13. Chrissoveloni Palace from Ghidigeni, Galați County

The contemporary era

The First World War led to a doubling of the number of inhabitants in the Galați county, as a result of the non-occupation of Moldova by the Austro-German troops. Diplomatic relations between the Tsarist Empire and Romania as allies in the First World War resulted in the detachment of the Fernic Shipyard from Galați to Odessa and the preparation, in the same city, of buildings for the royal family, parliament and government. Only a part of the Romanian parliamentarians travelled, in refuge, to Odessa, the royal family and the government choosing to stay in Iași after Bucharest's German occupation was effected at the end of 1916.

In the interwar period, Cahul, as well as the whole of southern Bessarabia, were part of Romania. After the economic crisis of 1929-1932, the region's economy also took off. The opening of new roads (roads, railways) favored trade with more distant economic and commercial centers. The documents of the time mention several internal roads, which connected the southern fairs and cities with those in the north. One of them would

have been called Drumul Peștelui (the Fish Road), because on it the fish caught in the Danube and Prut ponds was taken by carts to the mountainous regions. The other, with the reverse direction, from north to south, starting from the Carpathian mines, was called Drumul Sării (the Salt Road). The cattle breeders, and the mocans from Bugeac, needed salt for the preparation of sheep meat and cheese, and the fishermen of the ponds, for the preparation of the salty fish.

On the Prut and the Danube, the barges transported to Reni and Galați everything that the Bessarabian peasant produced: cereals, honey, cheese, fruits, vegetables. According to some statistics, in the period 1928-1936, 53,996 grain wagons were transported on the Prut by barges from the ports of Cahul and Leova, the maximum transports being performed in the years 1929 - 8,400 wagons, 1932 - 8,461 wagons, 1934 - 8,189 wagons. The exploitation of ponds, through the production and marketing of fish, was an important source of income. Between 1932 and 1936, about 1,5 million kg of fish were



Fig.14. Cathedral of the Holy Ascension from Reni, 1883

caught in the ponds of the Prut, from Văleni to Leova, worth 16,1 million lei. The Cahul county produced 60 wool wagons annually, worth 42 million lei. The capitalization of the reed grown in the Prut ponds achieved an annual income of 20-25 thousand lei. The value of sheep's cheese was estimated at 1 million lei annually, and that of the cheese produced in the county at 3 million lei.

The cultural activities in the former county of Cahul were basically reduced to the gatherings and choirs in the villages, to the performances of some traveling theater troupes and to the performances staged by the students of the middle schools and high schools from Cahul and Leova. In the 1920s and 1930s, Cahul had a post office, telegraph, boys and girls high schools, agricultural, agro-industrial and commercial enterprises. In Leova there were 3 general education schools, a vocational school, a theater hall, a cinema, a printing house. Cultural centers and secondary schools existed in the majority of larger villages. The 1930 census presents the following demographic and ethnographic situation of Cahul county: 196,693 inhabitants, of which 100,714 Romanians, 35,299 Gagauz, 28,565 Bulgarians, 14,740 Russians, 8,644 Germans, 4,434 Jews, 1,466 Gypsies, 619 Ruthenians (Ukrainians), 503 Greeks, 247 Czechs, 100 Poles, etc.

The interwar period is characterized by the need to liquidate the consequences of the aftermath of the war and the activity of integrating the territories united with the Old Kingdom, which left its mark on the development of Romania and of the Galați County. Although the construction of the port of Constanța had taken off, and the commercial revenues produced by it being were much higher than those of the ports of Galați and Brăila, the Galați County had begun to prosper through new trade relations with the cities of Chișinău, Reni, Cahul.

In 1912, the city of Galați became the fishing center of Romania, by building a modern and well-equipped fishing facility. Also during this period, the Romanian government allocated funds and ordered the construction of a first rank airport in Galați in order to maintain commercial and passenger links from Bucharest to Galați and, from here, to Chișinău, Odessa, Cernăuți, Danzing.

The occupation of Bessarabia by the USSR in 1940 threw the Cahul-Reni-Galați region into the whirlwind of many new dramatic events. For example, through a Soviet-German agreement, all descendants of German settlers in southern Bessarabia were relocated within the Reich borders. On this occasion, approximately

100,000 people passed through Ismail and Reni, as well as the Prut River, in the direction of Galați. From here, on barges, they headed upstream the Danube. The establishment of the Soviet regime in Bessarabia preceded the transition of southern Bessarabia to Ukraine. Almost immediately, on the basis of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR of November 14th, 1945, the settlements throughout the Ismail region were renamed. Thus, Kartal became Orlovka, Anadol - Dolniski, Karagaci - Nagornai, Satunou - Novoselski, Barta - Plavni, Bolboca- Kotlovina. Only the Reni district center has kept its historical name.

The unfolding of the events of World War II brought some European countries, including Romania, under the hegemony of Soviet Russia. After 1947, under the new political regime, there was a substantial change in all aspects of political, economic and social life. In the attempt to standardize the social layers, the nationalization of economic and commercial properties takes place, the economy becomes owned by the state, the imposed economic policy being centralized. The workshops and small factories are abolished, their place being taken by the industrial giants distributed, in a planned way, all over the country. Galați County was designated, after long national and even international disputes, as the site for the construction of the largest steel production complex in the country, which would transform the city of Galați, from a mercantile into a working-class city (the number of workers was, at one time, 37,000) through a formidable migration of peasants and workers from other parts of the country to Galați. In 1961, the foundation stone of the largest plant was set, with over 12,000 workers, engineers, technicians participating in its construction on Smârdanului Hill, being separated from the territory of Galați only by the Calicea valley, now Filești, and the Cătusa brook. With the

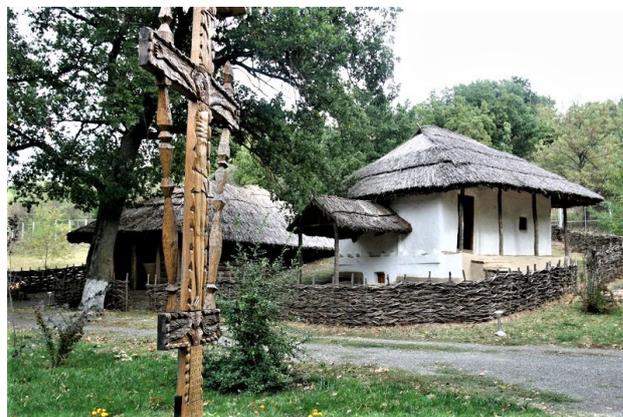


Fig.15. The museum of the “Petre Caraman” village from Gârboavele Forest, Cahul County



Fig.16. Galați steel plant

plant being situated far from any mining source or supply of ore, the existence of the old railway built in 1877, which connected Galați to Reni, together with the transportation potential of the Danube river, proved its effectiveness, with the major supplier of coke and iron ore being Ukraine, both by railway, as well as on water. Galați was then systematized, an attempt being made to remove any trace of the opulence of those who, by building their homes, helped to raise the city. The houses, also nationalized, were handed over to several families. Apartment blocks were built so as to eliminate the idea of social differences. In the same block lived the worker, the teacher, and the director of an enterprise. The architecture of the buildings loses value, the new style, rigid, without proportions, rhythm and harmony makes its place more and more at the expense of the old buildings which, with or without the help of the natural earth movements, fall one by one in front of bulldozers, and whole neighborhoods called micro-districts, with little rooms instead of regular rooms, rise on the lands once used as agricultural fields. During this period the city limits expanded by a lot. The rural environment is also undergoing radical changes. First of all the collectivization of agriculture was followed by a massive migration of young people to cities. After that, an urbanization of the villages was attempted by building blocks of flats, without, however, providing the necessary infrastructure. But

education and culture have nonetheless boomed. New schools and kindergartens have been built, and new museums and cultural institutions have emerged.

As for **Cahul**, after the Second World War, it became the main industrial and cultural center in the south of the Moldovan SSR. The brewery (1957), the industrial plant (1966), the dairy factory (1968), the cannery (1971), the city printing house (1972) began to operate. The Basarabasca - Cahul railway line was being built, with the first train arriving at the local station in 1971. Numerous educational institutions were opened: pedagogical school (1945), medical school (1946), boarding school no.1 (1961), technical and trade schools (1969).

The municipality of Cahul is the only locality in the Republic of Moldova that benefits from the status of a spa resort. This is due to the fact that in 1984 the "Nufarul Alb" (The White Water Lily) sanatorium started its activity here. The sanatorium is a modern health recovery center and has a clinic, a hotel complex with a capacity of 502 seats, a food block and other social and cultural-entertaining objectives. The favorable climatic peculiarities allow the application in the spa resorts of the Republic of Moldova of different treatment methods, and the springs with mineral waters due to their curative qualities can contribute to the development of spa tourism.

The anthropic, natural, cultural and tourist heritage potential of the Reni-Cahul-Galați cross-border tourist region

In the period after the end of the Cold War, a great emphasis was placed in Galați on the protection of the historical-cultural heritage made up of the 263 historical monuments throughout the county, on the conservation and promotion of traditions, as well as on the protection of reserves and conservation of protected natural areas (five bird protection areas and 14 sites of community importance) as elements of local, national, regional and international identity. Diplomatic and trade relations with neighboring countries are improving significantly. The memory of the great hetman Mazepa was strengthened through the cooperation of the Romanian and Ukrainian communities of Galați, who, together with the Ukrainian state, erected a bust of the hetman in the city of Galați in 2005.

Everything that means social and economic life in Galați County has striking similarities with the territories beyond the Prut, and this is due to the roots whose depth goes down to prehistory: occupations, working land, viticulture, animal rising, construction of houses belonging to the same cultures of those who lived on these lands.

We notice these similarities, through the objects discovered following the archeological

researches conducted in the Galați county, objects that are exhibited at the history museums from Galați and from Tecuci; the connections with the Geto-Dacian and Roman world can be admired at Poiana (Piroboridava), or through the ruins of the Roman camp from Galați, of the hypogenous tomb, but especially of the Roman defense wall (from Tuluțești to Serbeștii Vechi) and the Ostrogothic wall (from Stoicani, 95 kilometers, to Ploscuțeni, Vrancea County) and which has an extension beyond the Prut. The Christian churches, the binders of faith, in addition to architecture, history and memory, awaken strong feelings of belonging to a two-millennium old creed. Whether they are made of wood (Certești), or of brick or stone, the churches from Galați, Nicorești, Buciumeni, Carlomănești, Adam, Roșcani, Fârtțânești, Tudor Vladimirescu, Cudalbi, most of them being classified as historic monuments, their age descending up to the 17th century, can turn into landmarks of an ecumenic pilgrimage.

The churches of the Bulgarian or Russian-Lipovan communities are not inferior either. These communities have been preoccupied since the second half of the 19th century with the construction of their own places of worship (Galați). Many of the private schools, or the public ones from the end of the 19th century,



Fig.17. The church "St. Nicolae"-Banu from Nicorești, Galați County



Fig.18. The wooden church from Certești, Galați county

the beginning of the 20th century, have kept their configuration, and can be admired in the Galați County, being designated as historical monuments. Such educational institutions can be seen in Galați, Tecuci, Independența, Lunca, Jorăști.

The architecture of traditional houses, unfortunately, tends to fade, but thanks to the ethnographic museum "Petre Caraman", the "Living Museum - Vatra cu Dor" in Șivița, Tulucești, or the rural house "Avram Dunăreanu" they can be seen today, together with the other specific types of rural buildings ("chimnița" / "căsoaia", "samaluc", "saia", "coșâr", "cotenețe-coșterete"), descending from the traditional architecture of the ancient times, of crafts (processing of pottery, fur, leather sandal making, weaving, knitting, sewing, mask making), and of movable patrimony (tools, agricultural and household equipment, household objects, folk costumes) and intangible patrimony (folk songs and games, mimes, traditions related to birth, baptism, wedding, enchantment, caroling, death). Completely isolated, in their natural setting, one can still see some traditional houses in Tulucești, Căvădinești, with their perforated wooden elements from the eaves, but especially the colors of white and blue, so common in the cross-border area.

The famous vineyards of Galați County are in Ivești, Nicorești, Buciumeni, Adam, Târgu Bujor, Oancea can join together to form a road of vineyards and wine, just as they mark the few still standing old mansions. The linden forests from Buciumeni, the acacia forests and the sand dunes from Hanu Conachi or the peony reservation from Roșcani together with the Prut or Siretului meadow complete the tourist, recreation and sports repertoire of the Galați county. The interweaving of the few millennia of human existence on this territory, in symbiosis with the elements that nature, in its generosity, has created over millions of years, is a geographical, historical and cultural framework that must be preserved, maintained and capitalized from an educational, and touristic point of view.



Fig. 19. The Cahul Museum

The essential dimensions for the evaluation of the tourist potential at the level of Cahul district are the natural resources, the anthropic component, the infrastructure and the human resources. Cahul district must be treated as a unitary tourist destination with a certain potential for cooperation, which has both strengths and weaknesses, benefiting from many opportunities, but also facing many difficulties and threats inherent to a society marked by political instability, inconsistency in public policy making and economic and pandemic uncertainty. Tourism is positioned as one of the priority areas for the development of the Cahul district. Some of the strong points of the development potential of tourism at local level are related to the existence, at district level, of external assistance projects for tourism development; the existence and implementation of tourism development programs at district level; the existence of various specialized associations and non-governmental organizations that promote local tourism; the existence of several travel agencies: in the Cahul district, according to the information placed on the official website of the Cahul District Council, there are currently 11 travel agencies; the existence of some tourist reception structures with accommodation functions: the evolution of capacity of the tourist reception structures with accommodation functions in the Cahul district shows an ascending trend in the last ten years: from 959 in 2010 to 1020 accommodation places in 2019; the functioning of an extensive network of restaurants, cafes, pizzerias, bars, nightclubs, etc.

Regarding the intangible heritage (traditions, customs, events, holidays) in the rural area of Cahul district, it is the result of the millennial interaction between man and nature and carries in itself a huge touristic potential. The presence in daily life of local traditions and customs could be an important element in the development of rural tourism in Cahul district. Local traditions and customs rooted in the localities of Cahul district, passed down from ancient times from generation to generation, can be capitalized on and promoted through festival tourism. The "Lăsata Secului" before the Great Fasting is a cultural practice in the cycle of spring customs, still preserved in southern communities. Focused on the worship of the sun, it involves ritual fires being lit, around which actions prescribed by traditions take place. The practices have different names. "Focurelele" in Caslita-Prut, Cahul district, and "Focurelul" in Gotești, Cantemir „Ulilica” Giurgiulesti district, Cahul district; "Focărețul" in Popeasca, Ștefan-Vodă district, "Iertăciunea"

in Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Cahul district, or Olăria in Kartal, Reni district, Ukraine. These habits are related to the renewal of time, of the year. It is a period of purification of space through fire, of reuniting communities around a purified space. Ritual actions invoke the abundance of the agricultural year. People rejoice, sing, play, renew old relationships and friendships, in order to have a prosperous year.

The Cahul District is the organizer of several local, national and international festivals, among which the following can be mentioned: "Festivalul Internațional „Nufărul Alb" (The White Lotus International Festival) held in Cahul, promotes artistic groups of dance and song lovers, which present the developed, stylized or reconstructed folklore of the country they come from. The international festival "Chipuri de prieteni" (Faces of friends) - which promotes young music performers from various countries and which takes place annually at the end of June. The international festival "Dulce floare de salcâm" (Sweet acacia flower) is organized in the Văleni village, the main activities that take place at the festival are: ethno-folk performances, exhibitions of works of folk craftsmen, preparation of traditional dishes, fair of agricultural products, educational activities for children. The festival-contest "La vatra horelor bucuriene" (At the heart of the horas) is organized in the village of Bucuria and aims to promote folk song and dance and promote the creation of folk craftsmen. "Sărbătoarea roadelor" (the harvest Festival) is organized annually by the Cahul District Council. During the celebration take place exhibitions of professionals in the field of agriculture, viticulture and bakery, farmers, businessmen in the fields related to agriculture and exhibitions of folk craftsmen, as well as concerts with the participation of artistic groups from the district.



Fig.20. "Nufărul Alb" Sanatorium from Cahul

Cahul benefits from an ethno-folk potential that can be capitalized upon through tourist programs. The traditions and specifics of the costume, song and folk dance are promoted by the folk groups "Doina Prutului" and "Colibășeanca" from Colibasi village, the folk dance ensemble "Vălenașii" and "Crăițele" from Valeni village, "Bucuria" from Bucuria village, „D. Botgros" from Badicul Moldovenesc village, "La roata norocului" from Andrușul de Sus village, "Cimpoieș" ensemble from Manta village, "Vatra horelor" artistic collective from Slobozia Mare village, "Doruleț" from Pelinei village, "Cucorenii" from Cucoara village, "Comăncuța" from Crihana Veche village, "Sălcișoara Mare" and "Sălcișoara Mică" from Taraclia de Salcie village. There are also folk craftsmen specializing in processing local materials and resources. In Cahul district, there are 37 operating popular craftsmen specialized in the following activities of crafting popular costumes, painting, osier knitting, knitting of baskets, making of drums, making puppets, waving, wood processing, leather processing, crocheting, embroidery, crafts using straw works, husks, or shells.

The Cahul district is also rich in religious buildings which are 38 in number and that can be integrated into the tourist circuit of the region. Although they are similar in architecture, there are churches that are of special interest through their history or arrangement, among them: the Church of St. Peter and Paul in the village of Borceag, the Church of St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel in the village of Colibăși, the Church of St. Nicholas from the village of Tărtăul de Salcie. Among the oldest and most representative places of worship in the district can be mentioned: The Cathedral „St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel" from Cahul, built on the initiative of the military governor of Bessarabia, P. Fiodorov. From its foundation until now, the church building has been the artistic center of the city of Cahul. From 1962 to 1989 the church did not function. In 1989, when the Cathedral resumed its activity of divine service, the church was repaired. The old Rite Church "The Protection of the Mother of God" in Cahul, built by Lipovans in the middle of the 19th century was closed in 1963 and reopened in 1994. In Cahul district there are three monasteries that can be places of pilgrimage: the monastery of "Holy Prince Vladimir" is located 3 km from Cahul, is a religious community of nuns, and the "Holy Trinity" Monastery, located in the vicinity of Cahul Municipality; the monastery „The Descending of the Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Virgin Mary" from Găvănoasa Locality was built in 2008.

There are several museums in Cahul, including the Museum of the Cahul land, which is the largest and most important museum in the south of the Republic of Moldova. In the museum there are about 40,000 exhibits, divided in 3 compartments - history, natural sciences, ethnography. Remarkable in this respect is the existence of the 34 km portion of the archaeological monument of international importance "Valul lui Traian", which starts from the village of Vadul-lui-Isac and extends to the village of Tabacu near Ialpuș Lake. On the territory of the city works the only theater in the southern region of Moldova, the Republican Musical-Dramatic Theater "B.P. Hasdeu" from Cahul. In Cahul there are also leisure camps: the "Romantica" rest and camping facility in the village of Moscova and the leisure camp in the village of Larga, as well as several areas and leisure centers ("Lacul Sărat", "Lacul Frumoasa "La Cotihana", "Manta Lake", "La Izvoare", the touristic complex "Eco-Village Văleni"). At the same time, in Cahul there are wine factories competitive at international level (SRL "Grape Valley" IM, SA "Slobozia Mare", SC "Agrosudresurs" SRL, SA "Vismos", SRL "Vieru Vin", SA "Vinia Traian" IM, „Podgoria Dunării”, etc.).

The tourist potential of Cahul district also lies in a developed transport network: a) an auto vehicle connection to national and international routes (the Cahul-Chișinău road distance is 162 km; Cahul-Galați - 65 km, Cahul-Reni - 54 km); b) railway - Giurgiulești-Cahul-Chișinău railway; c) air - Cahul International Airport which has a runway with a length of 1700 meters and occupies a total area of 100.45 ha and d) sea - Giurgiulești Free International Port, which is the only port in the Republic of Moldova accessible to seagoing vessels, located at km 133.8 of the Danube. The port's passenger terminal has a capacity of about 300 passengers per day.

Perhaps no other type of resource involves such a great interest and potential for the



Fig.21. Commemorative plaque dedicated to B.P.Hasdeu at the entrance to the Museum of the Cahul Land

development of tourism, first of all ecological, than the natural monuments. In this regard, we should mention first of all the "Prutul de Jos" Biosphere Natural Park, which was founded on July 13, 2018 and has a total area of 14,771.04 ha. It is the only reservation in the Republic of Moldova that benefits from international recognition, being included in the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The reservation has a total area of 1755.4 ha including Lake Beleu with an area of 628 ha. For the impressive diversity of habitats and the flora and fauna that it hosts in a unique space of small dimensions, the Scientific Reserve "Prutul de Jos" Biosphere is a true natural museum of biodiversity in the Prut River meadow and is an invaluable value of regional natural heritage. On the territory of Cahul district there is also a wetland of international importance, represented by the lakes of the Lower Prut located south of the municipality of Cahul on an area of 19,152.5 ha and being introduced in the Ramsar List with number 1029.

At the same time, on the territory of Cahul District there are several natural monuments, including geological and paleontological (Râpa de la Tartaul, Aflorimentul de la Văleni, Fossil site near Pelina village, the Fossil site between Moscow and Dermengi villages) and botanical, for example: the pedunculate oaks on the edge of the village of Giurgiulești and Stejarii in the village of Doina), the botanical garden in the municipality of Cahul which is located in the valley of the river Frumoasa, a tributary of the river Prut, on the eastern edge of the municipality and has an area of 32.18 ha.

As for the **Reni territorial community**, which largely overlaps the triangle formed by the Danube Chilia branch and the Kugurlui-Ialpuș lake system, and to north by the "Trojan walls", it is a unique historical and ethnographic region. On the one hand, the relict and conservative nature of the native population and a certain stability in the reproduction of



Fig.22. Fragment of a rural art exhibition, the museum from Novoselskoe, Reni



Fig.23. The traditional festival “Moşul”, Orlovka village, Reni

the human experience can be observed here. On the other hand, this region is characterized by a high degree of mobility of representatives of different peoples and even of cultural practices. Such regions are usually referred to as the “lands between”. The originality of each community of the Reni region is visible from a comparative perspective that would include only them, as part of this region, and the broader ethnic-cultural frame form outside of it.

Resisting the blows of fate, the population of southern Bessarabia in general and that of the **Reni territorial community** - in particular, continues to live in peace and harmony, being represented by over a dozen of ethnicities living together. Like their ancestors, they cultivate the land, raise children, and dedicate their lives to this land. Formed in the 19th century, the model of peaceful interaction between the bearers of different ethnocultural traditions that has been reproduced for two centuries exists and functions today, its main feature being the harmonious cooperation. Such a culture of good neighborliness is based on the simultaneous action of factors of active intercultural cooperation, coupled with a stable isolation of life within this region. The perpetuation of the ethnic group and its specific features was achieved at the level of the family and the local community. At the same time, there were no obstacles to self-affirmation and the declaration of “otherness” in the public sphere. On the contrary, such expressiveness has proved to be required in the practice of interethnic interaction at the regional level.

The strongest ethnic group in the Reni region are the Moldovan Romanians. They have kept almost all the signs of their originality: language, cultural and everyday traditions, historical memory and identity. In both urban and rural



Fig.24. Inventory from the museum in the village of Orlovka

communities, Moldovans are distinguished by a certain conservatism in everyday life and by ritual and everyday habits. They are the bearers of several expressive variants of the Eastern Romanesque culture. In all the villages in the region there were churches where for many years the service was held in the Moldovan church language.

During the Romanian administration (1918-1940) all the local churches passed to the new Gregorian calendar. During the Soviet period, the church in Orlovka was closed and, in time, destroyed. The locals continued to celebrate Christmas on December 25th. Expressive calendar rituals are also fundamental factors of ethno-integrative life. In this sense, the specific Christmas custom "Moşul" takes place in all villages and in the „Moldovan suburb” of Reni. However, it was in Orlovka that it gained a special dimension in the Soviet era. The ritual visit of young people to all local houses with wishes of well-being and prosperity has "carnivalized" considerably in the last half century. The holiday absorbed many elements of St. Andrew's day (December 13th), as well as "loans" from the folklore of the Red Army recruits. This colorful custom flourished even more in post-Soviet conditions. Within this custom, the layers of the different epochs in which it existed can be carefully distinguished, and especially that of the last century. Equally expressive are other realities of culture and everyday life such as housing, the food system, family rituals, family and social life. In the region, there are institutional forms of representation of this expressiveness (museums, houses of culture, folk ensembles, etc.). And, in general, the Romanian is the language of interethnic communication in this small region.

The Gagauz locality - Cotlovina (Bolboca) adds additional color to the picture of the ethnic diversity of the population in the region. The town is the westernmost of the enclaves of the Gagauz people in southern Bessarabia. The Gagauzians there perceive their territorial exclusivity with a certain pride, declaring that "the Gagauz villages are up there; we are the only ones here, we hid behind Ialpuş Lake". At the same time, they maintain active ties with the rest of the Gagauzians in Ukraine and Moldova. In a sense, an elite professional version of Turkish culture was created over there, and at one point representatives of the legendary Ciakir clerical family served here and did much for the national-religious rebirth of the Gagauz

people in the late nineteenth century - early twentieth century. From the same family name, but already at the end of the 20th century, one of the most famous Gagauz artists appeared - Piotr Mihailovici Ciakir.

The young generations of Gagauzians in this village can assimilate the originality of their past and their culture at school, but also at their wonderful museum and local house of culture. The private family life of the Gagauzians in Cotlovina directly contributes to the preservation of the cultural expressiveness of a number of ritual, culinary and economic traditions. The local church should be considered a special place of preservation and, at the same time, of development, the services being held at the request of the believers in the Gagauz language. The spirituality of this people generates optimism about its future. In these conditions, the organization of an international festival of Gagauz culture precisely in Kotlovina in 2010 does not seem accidental.

The Bulgarian culture is also represented on the territory of the Reni Territorial Community. Bulgarians make up a significant part of the population of Reni, but live mostly in the former Karagaci colony, now the village of Nagornoye. This is one of the oldest settlements of "Trans-Danubian immigrants" in the whole of southern Bessarabia: we have every reason to believe that it dates from the middle of the XVIII century. It can be said with certainty that the first waves of immigrants passed through Karagaci and spread widely in the region: Imputsita, Chiyshiya, Kubei, Karakurt and a number of others were founded by this ethnocultural group of the Balkan population, which crossed the Danube.

As in other Bulgarian settlements in Bugeac, in Nagornoye there is a family-everyday as well as public-community infrastructure that contributes to the reproduction of popular culture. The housing, households and food complexes of local residents are also remarkable for their expressiveness. The specific holidays "Trifon Zarezan", "Ianuvden", "Gergevden", "Dimitrden" and others are kept in the ritualistic calendar. Through the school and the local house of culture, modern institutional options for the preservation and development of Bulgarian culture were created. Given all this ethno-cultural variety, the creation in 2019 in the central park of the city of Reni of the "interethnic cultural residence" is not accidental.

Good neighborliness patterns in the cross-border region of Cahul-Reni-Galați

The development of good neighborliness models requires, in modern times, the existence of broader cooperation frameworks to regulate the development of all aspects of cross-border relations. Thus, the cross-border connections on the Galați-Reni-Cahul axes are regulated by a series of cross-border programs, such as the 2007-2013 Romania-Ukraine-Moldova Joint Operational Program 2007-2013; Joint Operational Program of the Black Sea Basin for the periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020; Joint Operational Program Romania-Republic of Moldova 2014-2020, Joint Operational Program Romania-Ukraine 2014-2020 and Romania-Ukraine Joint Operational Program 2014-2020; transnational cooperation of the Republic of Moldova with Romania, Ukraine, and other European Union states on the dimension of cultural heritage within the Transnational Danube Program 2014-2020. Within these programs, a series of cross-border projects have been and continue to be implemented in the Lower Danube Euroregion, such as:

Proactive health without borders (2SOFT/4.1/104, Galați-Cahul, 2020-2021). The aim of the project was to improve the health of 630 students and employees of the universities „B.P. Hasdeu” from Cahul and “Dunărea de Jos” from Galați through training, awareness, and first aid activities.

Exploiting and enhancing the visibility of cultural and historical heritage within a cross-border network of museums - Tourist Information Centers (2SOFT/2.1/129, 2020-2021, beneficiary - Lower Danube Euroregion Cross-Border Cooperation Association, Galați). The project aimed to increase the visibility of cross-border cultural and historical heritage of the Central Region of the Republic of Moldova and Galați County, Romania by strengthening the capacity of cultural institutions, creating a network of Tourist Information Centers in major destinations.

Innovative learning and collaborative methods in the field of education at bilateral level in Romania and Republic of Moldova (beneficiaries from Cahul - Colegiul

„Iulia Hasdeu”, beneficiaries from Galați - Liceum „Dumitru Moțoc” of tourism and food industry, Association “Emoții”, Christian Medical Philanthropy Association “CHRISTIANA”, 2SOFT/1.1/7, 2021-2022). The project aims to improve the access and employment capacity of 560 pupils and high school students in Romania and the Republic of Moldova on the labor market by developing the knowledge and skills needed for a modern, flexible and dynamic labor market through inter-institutional collaboration in cross-border education.

HEALTH IN GOOD HANDS Bigger HOSPITALS, Better CARE, Best DOCTORS for people in the border area Romania - R. of Moldova (1HARD/4.1/24, 2021-203, beneficiary - Târgu Bujor Town Hospital, Galați)

Cross-Border Wine Tourism Cluster Development (2SOFT/2.1/153, 2020-2021, beneficiary - SMART Development Center, Galați)

Cross-border research study on the exploitation of ecosystems in the Lower Prut Meadow (Cahul-Galați, 2020-2021, 2SOFT/1.2/38.) The project assesses the socio-economic potential of the Galați-Cahul border region and the needs of the local population regarding economic activities and the sustainable use of aquatic resources in protected areas. The project partnership will increase the institutional capacity of ICDEAPA and of its partners in the field of applied research, with the aim of capitalizing on the transboundary potential of aquatic resources in the Lower Meadow area of the Inferior Prut in a sustainable manner.

Sustainability, Mobility and Accessibility of the Cahul-Oancea Cross-Border Region - Improved Transport Infrastructure (1HARD/3.1/12, Cahul-Oancea, 2021-2023). The project aims to: improve accessibility and mobility in the Cahul-Oancea cross-border region by modernizing the road infrastructure in the city of Cahul and Oancea commune and ensuring a better cross-border connection;

developing an integrated cross-border mobility plan for the Cahul-Oancea area; promoting the use of less polluting means of transport and increasing road safety in the city of Cahul and the commune of Oancea.

Integrated cross-border approach for an improved capacity to prevent, manage and respond to emergency situations (2SOFT/4.2/12, Galați-Cahul, 2020-2021). The project aims to: inform the rural population about the risks of floods and other disasters and provide them with the necessary preparedness to deal effectively with the consequences of these disasters; strengthening the institutional capacity of local public authorities to manage emergencies through capacity-building activities and the exchange of good practices across borders; improving cooperation between public authorities and specialized agencies for better joint management of cross-border emergencies.

Regional cooperation for prevention and combating trans-border criminality in Romania and Moldova (THOR, 2019-2022, beneficiary - Galați Count Police Inspectorate)

Rehabilitation and modernization of the customs offices from the Romanian/Moldavian border, respectively the public finances and fiscal-fiscal responsibility customs offices of Albița-Leușeni, Sculeni-Sculeni and Giurgiulești-Giurgiulești (2019-2022)

Cross-border cooperation and research through the interdisciplinary approach of the genesis, clinical manifestations, and therapeutic/preventive aspects of specific oral/written language disorders and the development of an innovative method of intervention in the cross-border area (2SOFT/1.2/78, 2020-2022, beneficiary - County Center of Resources and Educational Assistance Galați)

Cross-Border health infrastructure (Tulcea-Izmail, 2019-2022, beneficiary from Galați: Association of Cross-border Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion” - ACT EDJ). Increasing the level of access of the population of the Lower Danube Euroregion to quality health services, by improving (modernizing and equipping) the existing health infrastructure in the administrative units Izmail and Tulcea; strengthening the Euroregional Partnership on Health by developing a common health strategy, implementing a capacity-building program for health actors in the Lower Danube Euroregion and conducting a joint awareness-raising campaign on the importance of ongoing health monitoring.

EFIGE - Cross-Border Ensemble. Heritage Confluence on Danube (2SOFT/2.1/64 EFIGE, 2020-2021, Tulcea-Izmail-Galați, beneficiary Galați - Association for Sustainable Development Prut-Danube). The project envisages the capitalization and interdisciplinary promotion of the cultural and anthropic potential of the cross-border area of the Lower Danube Euroregion, in order to increase the level of attractiveness of the region by 2023.

Clean River (Izmail-Tulcea, 2019-2022, beneficiary from Galați: Association of Cross-border Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion” - ACT EDJ). The project envisages the rehabilitation of the sewage and sewerage networks of the city of Izmail and the Tulcea County Hospital, the modernization of two sewage treatment plants and of a sewage pumping station in Izmail.

Integrated Emergency Preparedness System of Danube Delta (Danube Emergency/2SOFT/4.2/155, beneficiary Reni Town Council, 2022). The project activities consist in improving the safety of the inhabitants of the Danube Delta by implementing a cross-border early warning system in case of emergency and strengthening the capacity of firefighters in the Danube Delta region by purchasing new equipment and developing a joint action plan for firefighters in Ukraine and Romania.

Trinodal network for the promotion and development of tourism in the Galați-Cahul-Reni cross-border area (2013-2015, source of funding - EU). The project aimed at exploiting the existing tourist potential, developing local leisure areas, and creating a sustainable cross-border tourist network between Galați-Cahul-Reni. Within the project, two Info Centers were established (in Cahul and Reni), and a leisure base was developed in Galați.

Strengthening Integrated Border Management along the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. An EU-funded 5 million euro project aimed at modernizing the Kuciurgan-Pervomaisc and Giurgiulesti-Reni crossing points and supporting the agreement signed in October 2017 by the Government of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine of the new Agreement on joint control of crossing the border.

Increasing the capacity for more efficient waste management in the “Lower Danube” Euroregion (CleanTown, Reni-Văleni, 2017-2019, financier - EU). The aim of the project was to contribute to the creation of an integrated and efficient waste management

system and, respectively, to a better protection of the environment in the Lower Prut and Lower Danube region in Moldova and Ukraine.

In addition to the projects mentioned above and implemented within the cross-border cooperation programs, the good neighborly relations between Galati and Cahul were recognized and framed by the **Cooperation and Twinning Agreement signed between Cahul City Hall and Galati City Hall on March 27, 2018**, while on September 12 of the same year an agreement was signed between the **Galati Local Police and the Cahul Police Inspectorate** which involves cooperation between signatories and joint training and exchange of experience in maintaining law and order, road traffic safety and of the verification of commercial activities.

Beyond the above-mentioned examples related to the frameworks of cross-border cooperation established by the authorities in order to promote good neighborliness models, **in the Reni-Galați-Cahul region, these models are also manifested through cultural and artistic exchanges that take place during the organization of international events of cultural-artistic or gastronomic character, and festivals organized in the three administrative units and which bring together spectators and participants, including from the neighboring regions.**

Thus, in **Cahul** are organized the following events of this type: “Nufărul Alb” - biennial international festival of folklore and folk dance, the folk festival for children “Bobocelul”, International folklore festival “Sweet acacia flower”, held in Văleni village, the folklore festival “Duminica la Florii” which is organized every year, on the banks of the Prut River in the villages of Câșlița Prut, Văleni and Giurgiulești, the international festival “Chipuri de prieteni” - a competition for young music performers from several European countries.

The “Leonard” International Movie Festival is organized in **Galați**, as well as Gulliver International Animation Festival, “Iosif Ivanovici” International Marching Band Festival, and “Doina Covurluiului” International Folklore Festival.

In the **Reni Territorial Community is organized the Gagauz Festival “Bugeac Stars”** which brings together guests and participants from among Gagauzians in Moldova and Tatars in Romania; the **Mărțișor festival of the Romanian culture in Reni** and which awaits guests from Romania and Ukraine. The **Reni Town Day** is also an opportunity to strengthen the good

neighborly practices of the inhabitants of the three regions, as it is an occasion on which Reni receives visitors from Cahul and Galați - from locals to representatives of local public authorities.

The cultural aspect of the good neighborly relations between the administrative units of Cahul and Galați is also highlighted by the fact that the “Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu” theater in Cahul gives performances in Galați, and the “Fani Tardini” theater in Galați offers performances to the inhabitants of Cahul.

Higher education is also an important aspect of good neighborly practices between Cahul and Galați. Thus, with the financial support of the “**Dunărea de Jos**” **University of Galați**, within the university “**B.P. Hasdeu**” from Cahul was set up a cross-border **Faculty of Humanities, Economics, and Engineering**.

At the same time, a good neighborly practice maintained by the local communities and their members is the economic cooperation at this level between these actors from Cahul and Galați. Thus, **the sale in Galați of agricultural production and homemade processed food** by the inhabitants of the villages on the banks of the Prut (and not only) in the Cahul district is for the latter a source of income that helps them meet ends in everyday life. The small border traffic that is freely allowed through the Oancea-Cahul road and Galați-Giurgiulești railway crossing point greatly facilitate these economic exchanges.

From the above, it can be noted that, with regard to cross-border cooperation in the Reni-Cahul-Galați region, there are implemented or ongoing projects or actions which may constitute good neighborly models on which the relations between the communities on both banks of the Prut and the Danube can be built in the future as well. At the same time, we notice a positive trend that is manifested in the fact that these models cover a number of important aspects in the life of local communities: social, economic, health, culture, education, public order, etc. This means that the inhabitants of Cahul, Galați, and Reni learn, together with their neighbors and with them, to solve the problems and to develop the region in which they all live.

The European Union plays an active and most important role in this regard. It is with the financial support of the EU that almost all cross-border cooperation initiatives between the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and Romania are currently carried out and which also cover the Cahul-Reni-Galati region. This can be seen in

both a positive and a less favorable light: on one hand, the fact that the EU is so actively involved in supporting communities on its borders is an undeniably positive trend, but on the other hand, the fact that the initiative in this sense is held almost exclusively by the EU, is revealing, in the same sense, lack of action, inability and/or deficiencies at the level of central and local public authorities of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Thus, by analyzing the picture of cross-border cooperation we can conclude, from the list of initiatives outlined above, that it is clear that, regarding the Reni-Cahul-Galați region, the strongest links are first of all between Cahul and Galați, then between Galați and Reni (the Izmail territorial unit), while the links between Cahul and Reni are very weak, which must be understood in the light of the fact that cross-border cooperation in Cahul-Reni, although covered by joint cross-border programs, is not of interest to local actors in the two regions. Even if it is primarily the prerogative of the central public authorities in

Chisinau and Kyiv, but also of the local ones in Cahul and Reni, the weak cooperation between Cahul and Reni is also due to the insufficient capacities of stakeholders (authorities, civil society organizations at a local level, etc.) to absorb European funds; in fact, it should be noted that cross-border projects on the Cahul-Reni axis were also funded by EU funds.

On the other hand, the good-neighborly relations between Reni and Cahul fall within another international framework - the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Program 2014-2020. At the same time, it must be said that the Romanian-Ukrainian cooperation in the Lower Danube region at the level Galați-Reni communities is far behind that of the Galați-Cahul level, and is overshadowed, from a quantitative perspective, by the Tulcea-Izmail cooperation (in the composition of this region is also the Reni Territorial Community, but which takes little advantage of the opportunities for cooperation in that context).

Recommendations for level I and II LPAs for the development of tourism potential

Based on the above, a series of recommendations can be formulated to the local public authorities of levels I and II, from the three countries, in order to develop the cross-border tourism potential of the three regions:

- To promote tourism strategies at the local level and to connect, through information and promotion campaigns to tour operators and tourists from across the cross-border region;
- To offer fiscal incentives for an initial period to economic operators starting a business in the field of ecotourism;
- To offer specialized and free initial logistical and legal support to economic operators who start a business in the field of ecotourism;
- To allocate the necessary financial resources for the development of the access infrastructure to the main places of tourist interest: signs, information panels, paths, sidewalks, public transport, bus stations, internet access, etc.;
- To promote the objectives of tourist interest in the neighboring countries on various occasions and public events in order to encourage the development of cross-border tourism in the Reni-Galați-Cahul region;
- To ensure the protection and care of the objectives of tourist interest in the cross-border region;
- To ensure the integration of an ecological approach in the general management of the local business;
- To ensure the protection of natural monuments, biodiversity, and integrity of protected areas in the Reni-Galați-Cahul cross-border region;
- To facilitate the cooperation between travel agencies and tourism service providers, both locally - in each of the three regions, and across borders;
- To ensure a fair competitive environment;
- To inaugurate new tourist festivals and/or regularly organized events with ecological, cross-border, agrotourism themes and to invest in campaigns to promote such events;
- To organize trips for children to museums,

nature reserves, and other tourist attractions throughout the cross-border region;

- To organize pieces of training and exchanges of experience for teachers from all three regions in the field of ecotourism and on the opportunities it offers;
- To develop joint, trilateral projects in the field of tourism;
- To organize tripartite meetings at the level of local administrations in Reni, Cahul, and Galați, at regular intervals, three or four times a year and to discuss common strategies to stimulate cross-border tourism, ways to facilitate the development of this branch (such as facilitating border crossing in those regions and at least for a certain period of the year, etc.);
- To conduct joint surveys in the three regions on the need to stimulate the development of the business of tour operators.

In this regard, work has now begun on the preparation of the next cross-border and transnational programs to which the three countries are party. We refer to:

- The Interreg NEXT Romania-Moldova program for the period 2021-2027, among the objectives of which is “increasing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation”;
- The Interreg NEXT Romania-Ukraine program for the period 2021-2027, among the objectives of which is “increasing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation”;
- The Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Program 2021-2027, with the specific objective of focusing on the development and improvement of research and innovation capacities and the adoption of advanced technologies, including in the field of tourism;
- The Danube Transnational Program 2021-2027: developing skills for smart specialization, [fair transition], industrial transition, and entrepreneurship.

Annex of statistical data

Cahul District

Surface: 1,545 km²

The population: 105,325 hab. (2014)

Population density: 68 hab./km²

Administration: The rayon includes the municipality of Cahul and 54 communes and villages.

Education: The capital of the district, Cahul is a university center, being the headquarters of the State University "Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu". At the same time, in Cahul district, there are 50 primary and general secondary education institutions.

Economy: The main economic branch of the district is agriculture, the share of agricultural land being 65.4% of the total area of the district. Other economic branches of the territorial-administrative unit are trade and services represented by 781 commercial objectives, light industry - three garment and knitting factories, and food industry - five factories, as well as seven wine enterprises.

Personalities:

- A. Ciurunga (1920-2004) - writer, publicist, editor of the magazine "Cahulul literar";
- P. Dimitriu (1925-1996) - PhD in history, author of studies, textbooks and document collections;
- I. Osadcenco (1929-1994) - PhD philology, university professor, writer, author of studies on the creation of the classics of Romanian literature;
- A. Eremia (b. 1931) - PhD in philology, linguist, coordinating scientific researcher at the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, author of monographic studies and scientific papers;
- E. Grebenicov (1932-2013) - international scientist, specialist in the problems of cosmic dynamics and nuclear physics, university professor, academician;
- E. Hriscev (1942-2009) - PhD in economic sciences, professor and ex-rector of the Academy of Economic Studies;
- Gh. Reabtov (b. 1946) - university professor (Technical University of Chisinau), writer, publicist;
- Gh. Voda (1934-2007) - poet, writer, publicist, film director;
- I. Bostan (b. 1949) - university professor, academician, ex-rector of the Technical University of Moldova;
- Iur. Grecov (b. 1934) - writer, publicist, translator, editor of the magazine "Literaturnaia Moldova";
- Sv. Strezev (b. 1951) - graduate of the Pedagogical School in Cahul, soprano, performer of classical music, emeritus artist, etc.;
- C. Reabtov (1920-1997) - professor, writer and publicist, honorary citizen of the town of Cahul.

Galați County

Surface: 4,446.3 km²

The population: 536,612 hab. (2011)

Population density: 120 hab./km²

Administration: the county includes four cities - Galați, Tecuci, Tg. Bujor and Beresti - and 56 communes, including 180 villages.

Education: The county of Galați is a university center, being the headquarters of the “Dunărea de Jos” University. In addition, there are 193 primary schools, gymnasiums, colleges and high schools in Galați County.

Economy: the main economic branches of the county are industry and constructions - 43% -services: 38% - agriculture, forestry - 19%.

Personalities:

- M. Auschnitt (1888-1959) - Industrialist and entrepreneur;
- P. Barbu (b. 1962) - writer;
- T. Caranfil (1931-2019) - film critic;
- N. Cassian (1924-2014) - poet, essayist;
- D. Dediu (1942-2013) - cosmonaut;
- D. Dumitru - comedian, artist;
- L. Feldman (1983-1987) - violinist, composer;
- V. Madgearu (1887-1940) - economist, sociologist and politician;
- D. Nicoale (1940-2019) - engineer and mayor of the town. Galați;
- M. Petrescu-Dambovita (1915-2013) - historian and archaeologist, member of the Romanian Academy;
- C. Popovici (1910-1977) - astronomer, astrophysicist and surveyor, member of the Romanian Academy;
- C. Ressu (1880-1962) - painter, member of the Romanian Academy;
- Gh. Zane (1897-1978) - economist, member of the Romanian Academy.

Reni Territorial Community

Surface: 840.1 km²

The population: 36,117 hab. (2015)

Population density: 43 hab./km²

Administration: The Reni territorial community is part of Ismail district, which, in turn, is part of the Odessa region. The jurisdiction of the territorial community includes the city of Reni and seven villages.

Education and culture:

- in the territorial community there are 13 schools (6 in Reni, 7 - in the villages of the community, one school in each village);
- an art school in Reni and 4 branches in community villages;
- a center for creativity and leisure for children and adolescents in the city of Reni;
- a center for young technicians from Reni;
- a center for young naturalists in the village of Novoselskoe;
- a school for sailing, Dolinskoye village;
- a sports school in Reni (sports sections for wrestling, tennis, football, yoga, fitness, etc.).

Economy:

In Reni there are:

- a seaport on the Danube in Reni;
- a river port in Orlivka;
- an oil terminal;
- a free zone “Reni” on the territory of the Reni Seaport;
- “Limanskoe” solar power plant with a capacity of 43.6 MW;
- Reni railway station;
- Reni maritime station.

The food industry is represented by bread factories, meat, and wine products, private wineries. The sphere of fish farming and fishing develops on lakes, which are located on the territory of the community, agriculture (cereals and animals) are other branches of the local economy.

Personalities:

- N. Deutsch (1900-1986) - astronomer, member of the International Astronomical Union;
- I. Dovatur (1897-1982) - historian and philologist;
- R.I. Kaplanski (1911-1966) - artist, singer, violinist;
- A. Malițkii (b. 1942) - economist, professor and researcher;
- P. Cebanu (b. 1955) - sportsman, football player;
- M. Ganciu (b. 1973) - popular music singer, soloist in the National Philharmonic of Moldova;
- L. Iosel (1903-1994) - poet, playwright and teacher.

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