

DOI: 10.17223/23451785/1/13

**Multiethnic Moldavia
(According to Toponymic and Anthroponymic
Information)**

S. G. Sulyak

St. Petersburg State University
7/9 Universitetskaya Embankment, Saint Petersburg, 199034, Russia
E-mail: sergei_suleak@rambler.ru

**Полиэтническая Молдавия
(по данным топонимики и антропонимики)**

С. Г. Суляк

Published in: Rusin. 2013. Vol. 31. Is. 1. pp. 95–105 (In Russian).

URL: http://journals.tsu.ru/rusin/&journal_page=archive&id=1114&article_id=34116

The Moldavian Principality being initially multiethnic was founded in the second half of the 14th century (in 1359) on the territory between the Eastern Carpathians, the Dniester and the Black Sea, the most part of which belonged to the Principality of Halych (Galych) before the Golden Horde invasion.

An old Moldavian legend contains some information on the main ethnic makeup in Eastern Transcarpathia. This story tells of the shepherds from Maramorosh (Maramuresh, the comitatus [jupa], a type of an administrative unit in the northeast of the Hungarian Kingdom) who, when hunting an aurochs, came across a Rusin beekeeper Yatsko (Etsko) in the vicinity of the present-day city Suceava. The tale also describes how both sides brought their countrymen to these lands that had been devastated by Tatars. A large Rusin population, besides Vlachs, lived in Maramorosh. Nowadays a larger part of this historic area is included into the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine and only 2/5 of the territory belongs to Romania. Rusins also resided in the territory of the future principality.

The Moldavian scribes of the 17th century mentioned a considerable size and compact settlement of the Rusin population in Moldavia.

Simeon Dascălul wrote that “the country was created on the basis of two ethnic groups: Romanians (meaning East Romanians) and Russians and up to the present day Russians made up half the country’s population and the other half consisted of Romanians”.

The Moldavian chronicler Miron Costin noted that Rusins “settled in Chernovtsy and Khotyn Counties, throughout the whole of the Dniester Region, Soroka and Orhei Counties, half of the Iași and half of the Suceava Counties along the Prut banks”.

Besides Rusins and Vlachs, some other spatially dispersed ethnic groups lived there. They included Southern Slavs (mostly Bulgarians) who kept moving to the southern part of the Carpatho-Dniestrovian lands not only in the 14th – 15th centuries but later too. (At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries there actually was a mass migration). The above ethnic groups also included Tatars, Transylvanian Saxons aka Sași who were the German-speaking population of Transylvania), Gypsies, Hungarians and Jews. During the Phanariot Rule period (since 1711), Greeks migrated to Moldavia to take up permanent residence. Some of them became forefathers of the Boyar families (Nacco, Cantacuzino, Casso et al.).

Speaking of the toponymic area of Rusin placenames, Professor Margareta Ștefănescu from Iași, stated that they occurred mainly on the Moldavian territory (Trans-Prut Moldavia, Bukovina and Bessarabia). 312 Rusin placenames are nowadays found in Moldova between the Carpathians and the Prut (plus 24 Indo-European placenames); 70 ones have Rusin suffixes. 45 placenames occur in Bessarabia, 119 have Rusin suffixes. There are also Rusin names of towns and villages in Valachia, Dobruja and Transylvania.

The following placenames had been mentioned since the end of the 14th century. For instance, Cursacevtsy, Vladimirovtsy, Maryshevtsy, Dobrinovtsy were mentioned in the Moldavian Gospodar Roman Voivode’s Deed of Gift of March 30, 1392. By the second half of the 15th century the Old Russian suffix *-ovtsy* evolved into the Rusin suffix *-outsy*. Later this Rusin suffix will be modified in some names into its Moldavian derivative *-ăuți* (euts’).

There also were some ethnonyms in the medieval Moldavian toponymy. Such names as Rusy, Rushi, Ruscany, Roshiori, Roshcani (12 toponyms in all) clearly show the Rusin ethnic background of their inhabitants. So do such names as Sirby [Șîrbu – Rom.] pointing out the Southern Slavic, mostly Bulgarian ethnic origin (9 villages most of which were presumably Bulgarian), Shkeyeny, Shkeyee (skiu – plural: skei – derivative from *sclavus-slavu-Slav*, so Bulgarians were called), Bolgary and Bulgary.

Sasseny and Sashchory derived from “Sasses” (the German population of Transylvania); Tsiganeshty and Tsiganeî are derivatives of “Tsigane” (Gypsies);

Gretskoye and Greky derived from the ethnonym “Greeks”; Tatory, Tatareshti, Tatarany originated from “Tatar” and so on.

Moldavian, Rusin, Hungarian, Tatar and other ethnonyms do not mean that those localities were inhabited only by the representatives of the respective ethnoses. Surnames ending in the suffixes *-uk/-yuk/-chuk*, *-ak/yak*, *-ey (ei)*, *-sky/-tsky* are spread across Moldavia. They belong to the southwestern group of East Slavic (Rusin) surnames.

A lot of Moldavian last names originated from Rusin and Little Russian first names and surnames ending in *-yak*, *-ak*, *-yuk*, *-uk*, *-ei* and from nicknames. Moldavian last names Kazaku, Zaporozhan, Russu, Rusnak, Podolian, Guțu, Buț et al. came from East Slavic ethnonyms and appellatives.

The censuses conducted in 1772 – 1774 by the Russian military authorities by order of P.A. Rumiantsev, the Russian Army Commander-in-Chief, are of value for estimating the ethnic composition of the Moldavian Principality population. The household census covering all 24 tsinutys (counties) in Moldavia provided data either on an inhabitant's name or whose son he was or his occupation or his last name or nickname or his ethnicity.

Quite a number of Moldavian residents' names show the ethnic origin of people who have them, thus providing valuable material for the region's ethnic studies.

As of 01.01.2012, the surname *Gutsu* [*Guțu* – Rom.] belonged to 11,489 people, *Russu* belonged to 7,259 people, *Rusu* was the surname of 23,162 inhabitants, 32 people had the name of *Rusin*, and the surname *Rusnak* [*Rusnac* – Rom.] belonged to 4,681 inhabitants.

Keywords

Moldavia, Moldavians, Russians, Rusins, Ukrainians, Gagauz, Bulgarians, Romanians, Russian.