

A FEW DACIAN TOPONYMS IN *TABULA PEUTINGERIANA*

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Abstract. *This article contains some new reflections upon a few Dacian toponyms in Tabula Peutingeriana: Drobeta, Castra Nova, Ad Mediam, Masclianis.*

Keywords: *Ad Mediam, Castra Nova, Dierna, Drubeta, Masclianae, Pelendava, Tabula Peutingeriana.*

The imperial road connecting the fortresses at Singidunum and Viminacium followed the Danube line reaching, after 10 Roman miles, *Lederata*, where the Danube was crossed; subsequently, *Tabula Peutingeriana* registers a few toponyms from Dacia (segm. VII): *Apus fl.*, *Arcidava*, *Centum Putei*, *Berzobis*, *Aizizis*, *Caput Bubali*, *Tibiscum*. From *Lederata* still, another road along the Danube reached *Taliata* (today Donji Milanovac), close to the entrance in Cazane area; the point was important, as it is marked by two-towered tailpiece. Indeed, another road marked with 20 miles ran from there along the Danube (on certain portions, the road was cut in rock¹) to today's Tekija², there crossing to the Dacian territory, at Dierna and continued through *Ad Mediam*, *Praetorium*, *Ad Pannonios*, *Gaganae* and *Masclianae*, reaching *Tibiscum* (where it connected to the road coming from west Banat); from there, passing through various stages, the imperial road reached *Ulpia Traiana* and then further to *Apulum*, *Potaissa*, *Napoca*, *Porolissum*³.

From *Taliata*, where a mountain massif forces the river to turn northwards⁴, another road along the Danube starts, crossing *Gerulata* and *Una*, reaching the Danube line at *Egeta* (today Brza Palanka; another important point, marked by two turrets), continuing eastwards, to the Danube's flow into the Sea. From *Egeta*, another road advanced on the Danube and after 16 miles, another toponym is registered: *Drubetis*. From *Drobeta* (subsequent to which are indicated XXXVI = 36 of Roman miles; 53.460 km), the road ran across *Oltenia*, marked by a few toponyms: *Amutria XXXV*, *Pelendova XX*, *Castris Novis LXX*, *Romula*; then, the road advanced on *Olt* river, crossed the mountains, reaching *Apulum* (where it coupled with the imperial road from west Dacia).

It is worth mentioning that such toponyms, accompanied by a number of miles, are rendered almost invariably in Ablative ("from that place to the next there are respective miles)."

Among the toponyms registered by *Tabula Peutingeriana*, a few draw stand out (all in segment VII; see fig. 1).

1. Form *Drubetis*, misunderstood to even certain classical authors⁵; thus, Ptolemy, who uses *Tabula* as source for places in Dacia, registers the same form: *Δροβήτις* (*Geogr.*, VII, 4); similarly, it appears in Anonymus of Ravenna's *Cosmographia* (IV, 14): *Drubetis*. In fact, this is plural Ablative, referencing two points: the fort (137.50 × 103 m) and subsequent settlement on the northern bank, in Dacia (*municipium Hadrianum*, later *colonia Septimia Drobeta*; today Turnu Severin) and the right bank fort at Kostol – *Transdrobeta* (130 × 123 m) in Moesia Superior⁶; the forts were located by the two ends of the bridge erected by architect Apollodorus of Damascus, the three sites forming together a strategic unit (defended by *cohors III Campestris*⁷, most likely a *milliaria* troop).

Several etymologies were proposed concerning toponym *Drubeta*. According to certain scholars⁸, it would be translated "Despicata", since the Danube splits there, in front of a small island (Ostrovul Șimian). VI. Georgiev

¹ See "Tabula Traiana": CIL III 8267 (= 1699; ILS 5863).

² Roman traces from Tekija were identified as *Transdierna* (*Tabula Imperii Romani*, L 34, Budapest 1968, 113), mentioned in Late period: *Notitia Dignitatum* (Or., XLII 29); see stamps DIERTRA, discovered during excavations of 1967-1969 at Orșova (Em. Popescu, *Inscriptiile grecești și latine din secolele IV-XIII descoperite în România*, Bucharest 1976, no. 417; IDR, III/1. no. 45).

³ On this "cartographic" source: K. Miller, *Itineraria Romana. Reisewege an der Hand der Tabula Peutingeriana*, Stuttgart 1916; Annalina and Mario Levi, *Itinera picta. Contributo allo studio della Tabula Peutingeriana*, Rome, 1967; E. Weber, *Tabula Peutingeriana. Codex Vindobonensis 324*, Graz, 1976 (*Kommentar und Vollständige Faksimile Ausgabe in Originalformat*). For Lower Danube lands, a few remarks: Al. Suceveanu, Iuliana Barnea, *Dacia* (N.S.) 37, 1993, 167-171 (= Al. Suceveanu, *Opuscula Scythica. Grecs et Romains au Bas-Danube*, Bucharest 2009, 145 and next); C. C. Petolescu, *Dacia în Tabula Peutingeriana*, *Thraco-Dacia* 19, 1998, 157-160 (overtaken in *Contribuții la istoria Daciei romane*, I, Bucharest 2007, 276-279).

⁴ For this area see *Atlasul complex «Porțile de Fier»*, Bucharest 1972, 19 (basic cartogram).

⁵ The errors persist even to certain Modern scholars: see thus D. Tudor, *Oltenia romană*⁴, Bucharest 1978, 170-171 (however form *Δροβήνυς*, which the author preferred, is a corrupted variant); see also I. I. Russu, IDR III/3, 1984, 207: *Petris* (!), evidently: *Petrae* (a homonym locality from Dobrudja, today Camena; see ISM, V, no. 222: *vicani Petrenses*).

⁶ There, a tile stamp records form *Tra(n)sdrub(eta)* (AĖ 1998, no. 1115 g); see also *Notitia Dignitatum* (Or., XLII, 35: *praefectus legionis tertiae decimae Transdrobeta*).

⁷ On the troop: C. C. Petolescu, *Auxilia Daciae*, Bucharest 2002, 92-95, no. 28; cf. idem, *Dacia în timpul domniei împăratului Hadrian*, in *Drobeta*, 15, 2005, 123-129 (= idem, *Contribuții*, I, 173-177).

⁸ Thus: W. Tomaschek, *Die alten Thraker*, II 2, Wien 1894 [reissued 1980], p. 73; V. Pârvan, *Getica, o protoistorie a Daciei*, Bucharest 1926, 278, 286. See also G. G. Mateescu (in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională*, 1924-1925, 278), who derives it from the knight god epithet *Deus Dobrates* (mentioned on an relief at Intercisa).

suggested a different etymology, deriving this toponym from the Indo-European **druw(o)* – “timber, tree”; the author thus noticed the presence in the Romanian language of the word *druete*: “wooden piece”⁹. Such etymology was also accepted by C. Poghiric¹⁰.

The Thraco-Dacian form is found in the anthroponym *Drubius* from Moesia Inferior¹¹; suffix *-eta* is found in several toponyms even from Dacia (see also the Transdanubian *Egeta*)¹².

In my view, this toponym is related to the ancient name (unrecorded) of the river flowing into the Danube, downstream today’s Turmu Severin municipality: Topolnița; this hydronym is Slavic, designating a river crossing poplared land¹³ (acc. to the Slavic-Bulgarian *topola* = “poplar”), landscape specific to the lower river course. It is possible it purported same meaning in Thraco-Dacian (see the etymology proposed by Georgiev and Poghiric; acc. to the Greek δρῦς, -ός “oak”): *Drubeta* – “the river passed through oak woods”. In fact, other settlements from Roman Dacia have their names derived from rivers: *Tibiscum* (fort and Roman municipium) from river *Tibiscus* (today Timiș)¹⁴, *Ampelum* (today Zlatna) from a river *Ampelus* or *Ampeius* (today Ampoiu)¹⁵, possibly even *Dierna*¹⁶, from the river named in present days Cerna¹⁷; other settlements have Roman-nature names, made up of preposition *ad* preceding a local hydronym: *Admutrium* (*Amoutria* in Tabula Peutingeriana, *Αμουτρίων* in Ptolemy, III, 8, 4) on river *Mutrius* (Motru) and *Adsamum* – on river *Samus* (Someș)¹⁸.

2. **Castra Nova**; form *Castris Novis* is an Ablative, followed by *LXX* (“there are 70 miles from Castra Nova to Romula”). Insofar, its location remained questionable. K. Miller located Castra Nova at “Dragoneschti” on Olt river (“am Alt”); on the map that Miller accompanies to the Ancient reproduction, the point is however marked on river Teslui, equally placed between Craiova and Reșca (*Romula*). Nonetheless, village Drăgotești is found in respective location; therefore, Miller confused it with *Drăgănești*, which is indeed on Olt river, on the left bank. Conversely, D. Tudor located Castra Nova between current villages Puțuri (Giorocul Mare) and Căcaleți¹⁹ (current name changed: Castranova), both in Dolj county; subsequently, Tudor proposed Vișoara (now in commune Drăgotești!). It results that both quoted authors actually located Castra Nova at Drăgotești²⁰.

Noticeably, this toponym, as well as Romula, is recorded on the same line on the road route in Tabula Peutingeriana (12th C manuscript). In fact, *Castris Novis* appears to have been missed (omitted) when copied, being subsequently added (after *Romula* was erased and rewritten to the right). As mentioned, 70 miles are entered after *Castris Novis* – useless indication to an itinerary (reason for which D. Tudor “corrected”: 19 or ?XX miles²¹); we argue that, upon the manuscript correction, the 70 miles distance cumulated in fact three – four stages, omitted when copied.

The other two toponyms, between Drobeta and Castra Nova, were identified by D. Tudor based on distances from *Tabula*, as follows: *Admutrium* at Butoiești or Botoșești Paia and *Pelendova* at Mofleni (Craiova)²². In our view, considering archaeological facts, *Admutrium* must be identified with the fort at Cătunele, on Motru and *Pelendova* (in fact, *Pelendava*) may be located at Vârțu (place of a Dacian fortification²³; additionally, on river Tismana, a small camp with earthen vallum was found)²⁴. Hence, *Castra Nova* would be located at Răcari (Dolj county)²⁵.

⁹ Zbornik za filologiju i lingvistiku, Novi Sad, 4-5, 1961-1962, 85-86 (apud C. Poghiric, v. infra).

¹⁰ C. Poghiric, *Etimologia și semnificația toponimului dac Drubeta*, in Drobeta, 2, 1976, 30-33.

¹¹ AE, 1999, no. 1354. See also F. Cumont, in *Archaeologisch-Epigraphische Mittheilungen*, 17, 1894, 21, relating it to the Thracian anthroponym *Drebius*.

¹² C. Poghiric, *op. cit.*, in *loc. cit.*

¹³ I. Iordan, *Toponimia românească*, Bucharest, 1963, 95-96: < Slavic *topol(a)*: a poplar species (*Populus alba*). A river *Topolnița* is also found in Bulgaria, a Maritza tributary.

¹⁴ This river is mentioned by Priscus Panites (Τιφήςας), overtaken from the Anonymus of Ravenna (IV 14: *Tibisia*) and Constantine Porphyrogenete (*De administrando imperio*, 40, 35-44: Τιφήςας) (see *Fontes historiae Daco-Romanae* II, Bucharest 1970, 260-261, 580-581, 666-667). See I. I. Russu, *Nume de râuri din vestul Daciei*, in *Cercetări de lingvistică*, 2, 1957, 256.

¹⁵ IDR III/3, no. 280.

¹⁶ On toponym *Dierna* etymology, see I. I. Russu, *Limba traco-dacilor*², Bucharest 1967, 102; see also IDR III/1, 63-64: **dher* “settlement, locality”, not “precipice, gorge”, “as admitted previously”. The Thraco-Dacian etymology is also evidenced in anthroponym *Dernaius Derdipili f(i)lius* *Dacus*, soldier (discharged as *beneficiarius*) from the fleet at Ravenna; the name is also found in Moesia, occasionally as *Die* (see D. Dana, in *ZPE* 143, 2003, 76; D. Dana, *Fl. Matei-Popescu*, *Chiron* 39, 2009, 227).

¹⁷ See CIL III 1568 (= AE, 1960, no. 343; IDR, III/1, no. 60): *statio Tsiernen(sis)*; however I. I. Russu (see IDR, III/1, 64) denies any connection to the “Slavic-Romanian” Cerna.

¹⁸ See ILD no. 765 (= AE, 1957, no. 326): *agens Samo cum reg(ione) Ans(amensium) sub seg(nis)* (!); see also ILD, no. 769.

¹⁹ Concerning this location, the village name was changed to *Castranova*.

²⁰ See C. C. Petolescu, *Castra Nova. În legătură cu două ipoteze*, in *Apulum*, 11, 1973, 729-731 (= idem, *Contribuții*, I, 283-284).

²¹ D. Tudor, *Oltenia romană*⁴, 45-46; idem, *Pelendava – Craiova pe Columna lui Traian și în epoca Imperiului Roman*, Craiova, 1980.

²² Idem, *Oltenia romană*⁴, 45-48.

²³ P. Gherghe, *Așezări și cetăți geto-dacice din Oltenia*, Craiova, 1997, 89.

²⁴ On earth-and-timber camps from northeast Oltenia, see C. C. Petolescu, in *Oltenia*, 2, 1980, 103-108 (= idem, *Contribuții*, I, 31-40).

²⁵ On the fort: Gr. Florescu, *Castrul roman de la Răcari*, Craiova 1930; recently: Eug. S. Teodor, in *Dacia Augusti Provincia. Actele simpozionului desfășurat în 13-14 octombrie 2006 la Muzeul Național de Istorie a României* (ed. E. S. Teodor, O. Țentea), Bucharest, 2006, 219-236; D. Bondoc, N. Gudea, *Castrul roman de la Răcari. Încercare de monografie*, Cluj, 2009 (based however on previous finds).

Recent research from Răcari revealed an earth-and-timber camp with earthen vallum that may be dated as early emperor Domitian's Dacian²⁶. It was rebuilt in stone, under Trajan or Hadrian – which may explain toponym *Castra Nova*.

3. *Ad Mediam*. According to certain historians, the toponym would be indicative of Mehadia. At present, it is generally agreed that *Praetorium* must be located at Mehadia and *Ad Mediam* at Băile Herculane²⁷.

Irrespective such location propositions, the resemblance between the ancient toponym *Ad Mediam* and the Medio-modern locality of *Mehadia* became apparent a long time ago²⁸; the latter, is on river Belareca²⁹, wherein *Mehadica* flows³⁰ – diminutive supposing the once existence of a *Mehadia* hydronym (eliminated gradually by the Slavian form Belareca). This etymology was rejected by N. Drăganu³¹ and I. I. Russu³², who consider that toponym *Mehadia* is Hungarian. The same authors admit however the etymological relation between *Mehadia* and Mehedinți mountains³³.

It was also considered that form *Ad Mediam* is totally Latin, translated by “At Middle”³⁴ – which involves however a grammatical burden and lacks meaning.

In our view, *Ad Mediam* designates a locality near a river course – alike *Admutrium* and *Adsamum* (v. *supra*); this hydronym sounded in Thraco-Dacian probably like **Mehedia*. Since in the Danubian provinces Latin, intervocalic *h* is frequently aspirated³⁵, respective hydronym was perceived *Meedia* < *Media*, from where Accusative *Ad Mediam*. Therefore, this might have been the name of Belareca, while *Ad Mediam* was located probably near its flow into Cerna. In this case, it is possible that the ancient name of the resort from Băile Herculane³⁶ may well be *Aquae*³⁷.

4. *Masclianis*. A homonym toponym appears in Africa (Byzacena), mentioned in *Itinerarium Antonini*, between Sufetula and Aquae Regiae; based on an inscription, it was recently located at Henchir Sidi Abdelkader³⁸. This toponym may well be carried to Dacia by elements coming from North Africa. In fact, Tabula Peutingeriana shows that only 14 miles separated *Masclianae* from *Tibiscum* (where a north-African origin troop was garrisoned): *numerus Maurorum Tibiscensium*³⁹.

²⁶ During recent researches in the fort at Răcari four *aurei* dated to the reign of Vespasian emerged from the lower layer (see Eug. S. Teodor, Cristina-Georgeta Alexandrescu, Corina Nicolae, in *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2008* [Valahica 21-22. 2008-2009]. 183); one of the coins (reproduced: <http://alexisphoenix.org/racarifort.php>) exhibits Domitian's effigy and legend CAESAR AVG(usti) F(ilius) DOMITIANVS CO(n)S(ul) V; year 77). A golden coin dated to Domitian, precisely from 86, was found in the camp at Porceni (Gorj county); see V. Marinoiu, *Romanitatea în nordul Olteniei*, Craiova, 2004, 52; C. C. Petolescu, *Contribuții*, I. 39-40. It is possible that the crossing point of the Roman troops led by Cornelius Fuscus was Drobeta, where a large earth-and-timber fort was discovered (650 × 576 m = 37.44 ha), that might have accommodated the just landed Roman forces (upon sizes, the fort might have accommodated strengths equivalent to two legions or a corresponding number of other troops soldiers); from there, the invasion troops moved to the sub-Carpathian area of current Mehedinți county, crossing Porceni (v. *supra*), with the aim of reaching through Vâlcan pass, Sarmizegetusa Rhegia. This means that the Fuscus's disaster occurred somewhere in Petroșani basin: see to this end also N. Gostar, *Marele monument funerar de la Adamclisi. Studii epigrafice*, Iași, 2008, 171-172 (however, the proposition to locate *Tapae* in the area of Vulcan pass contradicts sources data). Jordanes also inform us that, after Fuscus disaster, the Getae (= Dacians) pillaged the soldiers forts riches (*Getica*, 76: *divitias de castris militum spoliant*); a few coins (the ones from Răcari and Porceni) still preserved to nowadays.

²⁷ All hypotheses are presented in book: M. Macrea, N. Gudea, I. Moțu, *Praetorium. Castrul și așezarea romană de la Mehadia*, Bucharest, 1993, 9-10.

²⁸ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, I. Iași, 1888, 212.

²⁹ D. Ghinea, *Enciclopedia geografică a României*², Bucharest, 2000, 806: *Mehadia*, village and commune (Caraș-Severin county) (mentioned documentarily around 1440-1444).

³⁰ *Mehadica*: river, village and commune in Caraș-Severin county; D. Ghinea, *op. cit.*, 807.

³¹ N. Drăganu, *Românii în veacurile IX-XII' pe baza toponimiei și a onomasticeii*, Bucharest, 1933, 250-252: toponym *Mehadia* would derive from name *Mihál(y)* + Hungarian topical suf. *d + iia* topical suf. (common in Romanian and Slavic languages).

³² I. I. Russu, in *Banatica* 2, 1973, 103, note 1.

³³ N. Drăganu, *op. cit.*, 251-252: theme *Mehed* + suffix *inți* (after Binți, Fierbinți, Jeledinți etc.). Although Mehedinți county emblem represents the bee, Drăganu rejected any connection to the Hungarian *méh* (“bee”).

³⁴ *Fontes ad historiam Dacoromaniae pertinentes*, I. Bucharest, 1964, 739.

³⁵ After H. Mihăescu, *La langue latine dans le sud-est de l'Europe*, Bucharest, 1978, 203. This phenomenon is also specific to the Romanian language: see form *Meadia* recorded by L. F. de Marsili (apud M. Macrea, N. Gudea, I. Moțu, *Praetorium*, 13, fig. 3).

³⁶ Modern (official) name of the Băile Herculane resort dates to 1817: *Herculesbad* (I. I. Russu, in *Banatica*, 2, 1973, 103-104, note 3; idem, *IDR III/1*, 76).

³⁷ See *CIL*, III, 1562 (= *IDR*, III/1, no. 56): *Dis et numinib(us) Aquarum* etc.

³⁸ *AE*, 2007, no. 1712.

³⁹ C.C. Petolescu, *Auxilia Daciae*, 135-136 no. 71.

ILLUSTRATIONS

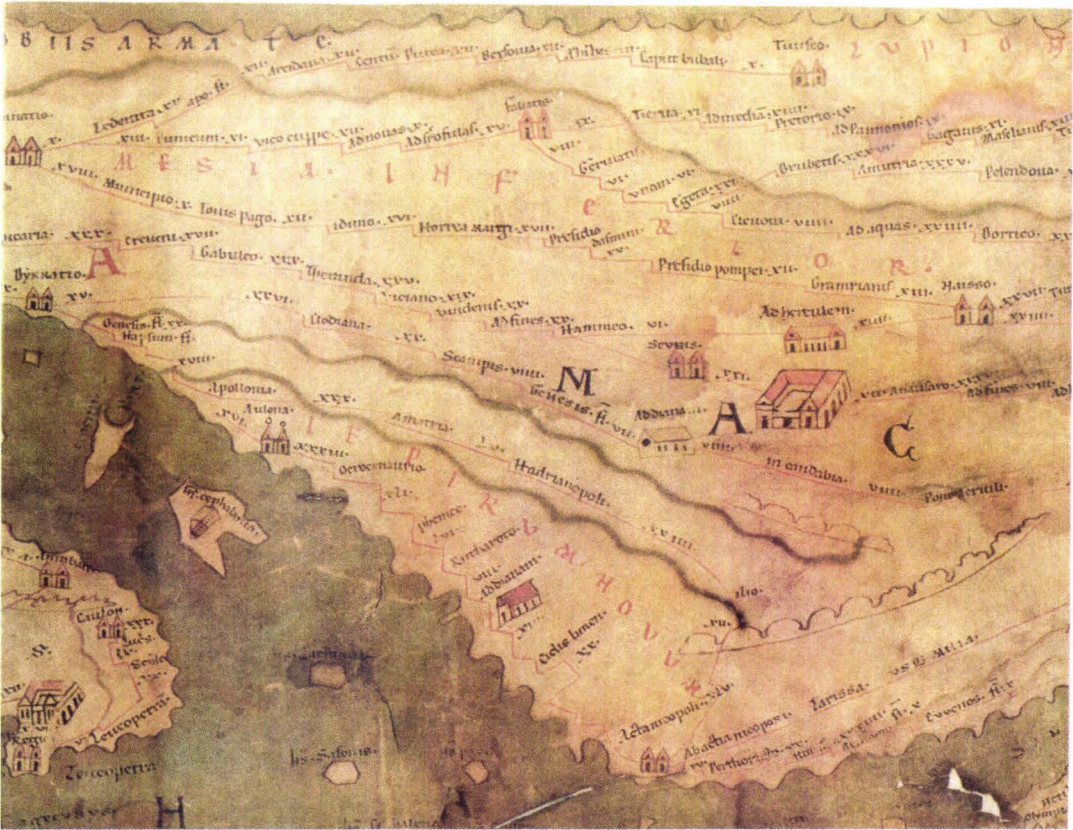


Fig. 1-2. Dacia in Tabula Peutingeriana (segment VII).