COLLOQUIAL – SLANG VOCABULARY: FROM *MAIDANAGIU* TO *CULTURAGIU*

Ramona PREDOI (MA student)
University of Craiova

Abstract

The paper deals with Turkish borrowings and derivatives ending in *-giu* in Romanian. A colloquial-slang form, *maidanagiu* is a newly derived word, with no entry in any dictionaries of the Romanian language, yet in use. It belongs to a category of derivatives characterizing suburban culture and occurring in internet chats and in the language of the current Romanian press.

Key words: *Turkish borrowing, derivative, colloquial-slang, deprecating, suburban culture*

Résumé

Le present article discute des anciennes influences Turques et de leur nouvelle actualite en roumain, sise en registre colloquial-argotique. *Maidanagiu*, *culturagiu* et des noms similaires sont de nouvelles derivations, pas encore enregistrees par les dictionnaires du roumain, mais vivement actives. Celles-ci appartiennent a la culture suburbaine et apparaissent dans les conversations par l'internet et dans le langage de la presse roumaine actuelle.

Mots-clés: *influence turque*; *derivation, langage colloquial-argotique, sens pejoratifs, culture suburbaine*

During the Phanariote period (the end of the 13th century), Turkish, popular borrowings were widely spread in Romanian, some words entering the basic lexical fund. These words refer to different domains: home, trades, food, drinks, abstract, various notions. For instance: *acaret/ outbuilding*, *cerdac/ veranda*, *duşumea/ floor*, *cafea/ coffee*, *ciorbă/ soup*, *ciulama/ white sauce stew*, *iaurt/ yoghurt*, *berechet/ plentiful*, *bucluc/ trouble*, *ciubuc/ profit* etc.[1]

1. The suffix *giu*/*-agiu* of Turkish origin (< Turkish *ği*, *či*) is present in Romanian by a series of borrowings: *abagiu* < Turkish *abači*; *boiangiu* < Turkish *boyači*, *cazangiu* < Turkish *kazanči*, *halvagiu* < Turkish *halvači*, *geamgiu* < Turkish *čamči*, *giuvaiergiu* < Turkish *čevahirči*, *herghelegiu* < Turkish *hergeleči*, *iaurgiu* < Turkish *yoğurtçu*, *lefegiu* < Turkish *ulûfeči*, *limonagiu* < Turkish *limonatači*, *zarzavagiu* < Turkish *zerzevaţçi* etc.[2]

Nowadays these words are obsolete, many of them are no longer in use, since they have no correspondence in Romanian realities. Some of these borrowings are standardized within informal language: *cafegiu* (< Turkish *kahveči*) "a man who drinks a lot of coffee"; *papugiu* (< Turkish *papuççu*) "a scoundrel, a man who deceives"; regionally: *harabagiu* (< Turkish *arabači*) "a carter"; disapprovingly:

[1] Dimitrescu et al., 1978, p. 110.
[2] Direct etymology is taken from DEX.

BDD-A3915 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:18 UTC)

palavragiu (< Turkish *palavrači*) "a person who speaks too much, a windbag, a chatterer"; deprecatingly: *chilipirgiu* (< Turkish *kelepirči*) "a man who hunts for bargains". The suffix has been productive in Romanian since the 16th-18th centuries. It is first of all attached to bases of Turkish origin: *cusurgiu/ fault-finder*, consisting of *cusur* (< Turkish *kusur*) + *-giu*; *macaragiu/ crane operator*, derived from *macara* (< Turkish *makara*) + *-giu*; *mahalagiu/ suburbanite*, from *mahala* (< Turkish *mahalle*) + *-giu*; *moftangiu/humbug*, from *moft* (< Turkish *müft*) + *-angiu*; *sacagiu/ water-carrier* (< Turkish *saka* "sacagiu") + *-giu*; *tarabagiu/shopkeeper* (< Turkish *tarab*) + *-agiu*. Its productivity at that time is also proved by its association with bases of different origins: *reclamagiu/complainer*, derived from the verb *reclama* (<French *réclamer*) + *-giu*; *scandalagiu/brawler*, from *scandal* (< French *scandale*) + *-agiu*; *barcagiu/ boatman*, from *barcă* (<Italian *barca*) + *-agiu*; *tablagiu/ backgammon player*, from *tablă* (< Greek *távli*) + *-giu*; *pomanagiu/cadger*, from *pomană* (< Slavic *poměnŭ*) + *-giu*. Most Old Romanian words were related to social, political and economic life.

Stylistically, many derivatives are associated with the informal register: *chiulangiu*, *moftangiu*, *reclamagiu* or have a deprecating connotation: *pomanagiu*, as mentioned in DEX.

2. Other coinages, spontaneous creations, are also part of the colloquial-slang register, and they can be noticed in the communication of bloggers and of the chatting ones. We have selected a derivative which is not included either in general dictionaries[3], or slang dictionaries[4]: *maidanagiu*, deriving from *maidan* (<Turkish *meydan*/*maydan*) + *-giu*. Its colloquial-slang meanings are: 1. "a person who does sports (as some do) on a waste ground"; 2. "a vulgar, uneducated person, behaving as if he were on a waste ground". They stand out of context, being identified by the current Romanian press, as well as out of the forum discussions. For instance, for the first meaning:

"Ei bine, da, Radu Paraschivescu a fost fotbalist. Ştie ce spune. A debutat ca *maidanagiu* 'în iarba Banatului', a încins şi un-doiuri cu bordurile şi maşinile de prin parcări"./ "Well, yes, Radu Paraschivescu was a footballer. He knows what he's saying. He began like a *maidanagiu* 'in the grass of Banat', then he played with the curbs and cars in the car parks". (*http://www.evz.ro*/26.11.2008, *Paraschivescu, dezamăgit de 'ocultarea' lui T.R. Ungureanu*);

"Zidane este un derbedeu educat pe maidan ajuns, cu ceva talent de *maidanagiu*, pe un maidan de lux la Berlin"./ "Zidane is a scamp brought up on a waste ground, who, with some talent of a *maidanagiu*, got to a luxurious waste ground in Berlin". (http://www. hotnews.ro/13.07.2007, *Conferința de presă susținută de Zinedine Zidane*);

"Ieri, miercuri 20 aprilie, când toată suflarea fotbalistică urmărea mediatizatul Barcelona-Real Madrid, am avut inspirația (venită din experiența mea de microbist şi *maidanagiu* în ale fotbalului), să refuz această tentație şi să-mi îndrept privirea la altă partidă, Tottenham-Arsenal"./ "Yesterday, on Wednesday, 20 April, when all footballers were watching the much mediated match between Barcelona and Real Madrid, I had the inspiration (arising out of my fanatic and *maidanagiu* experience in football matters), to turn down this temptation and watch another match, Tottenham-

[3] DEX, DEXI, MDA III, DCR_3, DEX on-line.
[4] Croitoru Bobârniche, 1996; Volceanov, 1998.

BDD-A3915 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:18 UTC)

Arsenal". (www.blogspot. ro./21.04.2011, *Un meci de zile mari, un regal fotbalistic*);

"Gestul de *maidanagiu* nu putea fi iertat în templul tenisului"./ "The gesture of a *maidanagiu* couldn't be overlooked in the temple of tennis". (www.tolo.ro/29.06.2010, *Cele 10000 de ore ale lui Victor*: *Cătălin Tolontan*).

The hint to the lack of professionalism in a sports game is marked by the negative connotation of the derivative.

For the second meaning:

"Există în această țară ca un cimitir refuzat câte unul care se străduia să vorbească academic, foarte ponderat, care purta haine lejere, aduse din alte țari, dar toate nu făceau decât să-i sporească vulgaritatea de *maidanagiu* parvenit"./ "There is, in this country like a refused cemetery, a man here and there striving to speak like an academic, calmly, wearing comfortable clothes brought from other countries, and all these did nothing but increase his vulgarity as a newly rich *maidanagiu*". (http://www.zf.ro/ziarul-de-duminica/05.05.2010, *La frontiera istoriei/* '*Cadavre in vid*' *din Biserica Neagra*);

"Avortonul ăsta, birepetentul Antenescu ce a venit pe lume pe duşumeaua unei taverne din Sulina printre picioarele unor beţivi îşi trădează dimensiunea de *maidanagiu* şi mahalagiu"./ "This moron, Antenescu, two times a repeater, who was born on the floor of a tavern in Sulina in the middle of sots, gives himself away, he is just a *maidanagiu* and a foul mouth". (http://ziarero.antena3.ro/16.03.2011, *Antonescu*: *Băsescu şi Boc râd întruna ca proştii într-o țară cu oameni din ce în ce mai trişti*);

"Insultele de *maidanagiu* adresate de Haşotti la adresa consilierului Lăzăroiu, reflectă nivelul 'cultural' al ministrului 'culturii' USL-as!"/ "The insults of *maidanagiu* addressed by Haşotti to counsellor Lăzăroiu, reflect the 'cultural' level of the USL minister of 'culture' ". (www.ziare.com/16.11.2012, *Comunitatea*).

The deviation from the correct use of language may often be noticed in the failure to know the meanings: the derivative substitutes the superlative meaning of the noun, in a pleonastic construction:

"În al doilea rând, tu eşti *un mârlan maidanagiu* cu o gură foarte mare şi cu nu mai mult de 8 clase de şcoală, aşa vorbeşti, aşa trăieşti, aşa vei muri!"/ "Secondly, you are a *maidanagiu boor* with a big mouth and no more than 8 years of school, so you speak, so you live, so you die!" (http://www.gandul.info/30.05.2013, *Barack Obama, un coşmar pentru Secret Service*).

The "positive" meaning is assigned to the derivative, as associated with a noun of this category:

"De când acest dinozaur roşu... a aderat la doctrina liberală Antonescu demonstrează adevărate *calități de maidanagiu*, care, în loc de argumente, trece la atacuri suburbane şi la invenții nedovedite de nimeni"./ "Since this red dinosaur… embraced the liberal doctrine Antonescu has shown real *qualities of maidanagiu*, who, instead of providing arguments, gets down to suburban assaults and inventions that no one has proved". (http://webcache. googleusercontent.com/23.05.2013, *Marga*: *Băsescu şi-a trimis odrasla agramată în PE şi vorbeşte despre nepotism*).

3. Colloquial-slang forms, with disapproving, deprecating connotations, such as *maidanagiu*, *gargaragiu* "chatterer", *culturagiu* "fake man of culture", *țepangiu*

BDD-A3915 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:18 UTC)

"scoundrel, dodger"[5] confer a certain expressivity upon language:

"Horia-Roman Patapievici: 'Proştilor le pare inteligent, ignoranţilor le pare erudit, iar omului de pe stradă îi pare competent. Dar pentru oamenii de bun-simţ e pur şi simplu un *gargaragiu*' "./ "Horia-Roman Patapievici: 'He seems intelligent to stupid people, a learned man to ignorant people, and competent to ordinary people in the street. But he is just a *gargaragiu* to decent people". (http://www.evz.ro/04.06.2009, *SENATUL EVZ*: *Adrian Severin*);

"*Gargaragiul* minte cu japca/ "A *gargaragiu* is a shameless liar". (http://www.ziare. com/04.11.2010, *Gargaragiul minte cu japca*);

"Conflictul dintre Iancu şi Ostaficiuc s-a acutizat după ce preşedintele CJT a anunţat că instituţia pe care o conduce a investit trei milioane de euro în stadionul 'Dan Păltinişanu'. 'Ce spune acest om sunt nişte minciuni! Cine iubeşte clubul trebuie să ştie cine este acest gargaragiu!' "./ "The conflict between Iancu and Ostaficiuc was aggravated after the CJT manager announced that the institution he was running had invested 3 million Euros in the 'Dan Păltinişanu' stadium. 'This man is lying! Those who love this club must know who this *gargaragiu* really is!" (http://banateanul.gandul.info/ sport/06.04.2008, *Iancu îl face 'mincinos' şi 'gargaragiu' pe Ostaficiuc*)

"Desigur, poţi face o întreagă 'filosofie' circumscrisă în jurul unui singur termen – de pildă 'întru', vorba lui Noica. Dar asta înseamnă, iarăşi vorba filosofului de la Păltiniş, să devii un '*culturagiu* fanatic' – şi cam atât. Cultura în sine nu îţi poate oferi un 'God's Eye View', la fel cum între inteligenţă şi înţelepciune nu este o pură şi simplă sinonimie"./ "You can certainly circumscribe an entire 'philosophy' around a single term – for instance 'within', as Noica said. But this means, again, as the philosopher from Păltiniş used to say, to become a 'fanatic *culturagiu*' – and that would be all. Culture as such cannot endow you with a 'God's Eye View', just as intelligence and wisdom are not mere synonyms". (http://convorbiri-literare.dntis.ro/ 13.05.2013, *Basmul – purtător al marilor întrebări*);

"*Ţepangii* sunt peste tot, chiar şi la Constanţa. Când faceţi acte, evitaţi firma de avocatură Bese şi asociaţii, trage ţepe la multă lume"./ These *ţepangii* are everywhere, even in Constanţa. When you need to conclude acts, stay away from this Bese & Associates law firm, they fool everybody". (http://m.cugetliber. ro/04.12.2012, *Ioana Purcărea: Eu nu sunt rudă cu soţul meu*!);

"Foarte corect,la naiba cu *ŢEPANGII* ăştia care îşi bat joc de oamenii neştiutori să le bage pe gât tot felul de kk de receptoare gen...Opticum HD 7700 CICX care nu ştiu LINUX la acelaşi preţ cu receptoarele HD care ştiu LINUX"/ "That's right, to hell with these *ŢEPANGII* who dupe ignorant people, and make them buy this s… of receivers, Opticum HD 7700 CICX, same price as LINUX-based HD receivers". (http://www.rdi-board.com/24.10.2009, *Ajutor, vă rog*)

The semes "stupidity", "vulgarity", "insolence" reunite in the semantics of the above-mentioned colloquial-slang words, which are not used only by less educated people. In the free discussions on the forum, educated youths (speaking foreign languages, looking for sensational, original communication) make frequent use of these words. The tabloid press, in its turn, fosters the creation of many colloquial-slang coinages, characterizing suburban culture.

[5] See also other coinages discussed by Zafiu, 2010, p. 69: *baftangiu*, *damblagiu*, *drogangiu* etc.

BDD-A3915 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:18 UTC)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Academia Română, *Dicţionarul explicativ al limbii române* (DEX), ediția a II-a, Bucureşti, Editura Univers Enciclopedic Gold, 2009.

Academia Română, *Micul dicţionar academic*, vol. III (MDA III), Bucureşti, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 2003.

Dima, Eugenia (coord.), *Dicţionar explicativ ilustrat al limbii române* (DEXI), Chişinău, Editura Arc, Editura Gunivas, 2007.

Dimitrescu, Florica şi colab., *Istoria limbii române*, Bucureşti, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, 1978.

Dimitrescu, Florica (coord.), Ciolan, Alexandru, Lupu, Coman, *Dicţionar de cuvinte recente* (DCR_3), eidția a III-a, Bucureşti, Editura Logos, 2013.

Croitoru Bobârniche, Nina, *Dicţionar de argou al limbii române*, Slobozia, Editura Arnina, 1996.

Volceanov, Anca, Volceanov, George, *Dicţionar de argou şi expresii familiare ale limbii române*, Bucureşti, Editura Livpress, 1998.

Zafiu, Rodica, *101 cuvinte argotice*, Bucureşti, Editura Humanitas, 2010.

BDD-A3915 © 2013 Editura Sitech

Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 17:58:18 UTC)