beginning of the Pontian (~ 6.0 Ma) this fauna populated the Eastern Paratethys. The Pontian brackish mollusks of the Eastern Paratethyan fauna comprised *Congeria, Dreissena, Abra*, inherited from the Maeotian time, and lymnocardiines *(Pseudocatillus, Paradacna, Pontalmyra, Eupatorina, Euxinicardium),* migrated to the Eastern Paratethys (Popov, Nevesskaya, 2000). Two last genera are unknown in the Pannonian Basin, but are present in the Aegean association. The species of the Late Pontian fauna inhabited the Mediterranen at the "Lago-Mare" stage (Esu, 2007).

At the same time, a few brackish basins existed in the Anatolian part with endemic non-Paratethyan fauna: Denizli Basin, in the western Anatolia, with *Theodoxus, Micromelania*, sculptural *Valvata, Radix, Pseudocardita* (Oppenheim, 1918; Taner, 1974a, b; Wesselingh et al. 2008) and Yalova Basin, (Yalakdere formation) in the Eastern Marmara region (Emre et al. 1998).

During the Pliocene continental environments prevailed again in the Thracean–Aegean region. However, earliest Zanclean Mediterranean transgression reached the northern Aegean, Dacic, and Taman basins (Çağatay et al. 2007; Maruntianu, Papaianopul, 1995; Semenenko, 1997).

Later, at the early-middle Quaternary time one-way connection prevailed and the Chaudian *Didacna* of Black sea origin was found in Çanakkale region (Andrussov, 1896; Taner, 1983), and Caspian *Didacna subpyramidata* Pravosl. was described from the middle Pleistocene of the Iznik lake basin (Islamoğlu, 2009). Late Pleistocene connections took place and were described in details based on microphytoplankton (Aksu et al., 1995, Mudie et al., 2002) and mollusks (İslamoğlu et al., 2001; Kazancı et al., 2004). In the latest Pleistocene (Neueuxinian), the Marmara basin was affected by only Paratethys, by interrupting the connection with the Mediterranean (İslamoğlu & Tchepalyga, 1998).

Evolution of drought severity for a 118-year period in the Republic of Moldova

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The Republic of Moldova is among several Balkan countries affected by extreme drought. Some districts in the country suffer from severe droughts approximately once per every 3 years, with serious consequences for the agricultural and food sectors. Any contribution to understanding and predicting drought conditions will be a step toward minimizing drought impacts. Droughts in Moldova were evaluated using meteorological data since 1955 and/or a long time series (1891–2009) recorded at Moldova's State Hydrometeorological Service. Evolution of drought severity for the 118-year and/or 54-year time series is based on the S_i-m drought index, using temperature and precipitation series for the calculations. In addition to meteorological data, the crop yields for corn (*Zea mays* L.), a crop widely grown in Moldova, were used to demonstrate drought impact. The S_i-m shows an increasing tendency toward more intensive and prolonged severely dry and extremely dry summer months. The analysis shows that 86% of the poor yield years were recorded for corn when drought occurred during April and July–August. Corn yield is also highly sensitive to the occurrence of a short drought spell in August (e.g., 1994, 1999, 2003 and 2007). Finally, the negative regression coefficient for corn yield indicates that corn is most vulnerable to extreme droughts during April. This was the second cause for poor yields, and particularly in southern districts during 1946, 1947, 2000 and 2009. In these dry steppe areas, extremely dry Aprils may explain 38% of the variability in corn yield.