

# **POPULAR CULTURE AND RELIGION IN ROMANIAN AREA/CULTURE POPULAIRE ET RÉLIGION DANS L' ESPACE ROUMAIN**

## **RELIGION AND POPULAR BELIEFS IN THE ACTUAL ROMANIAN SURNAMES**

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**Abstract:** The anthroponymy holds a great number of lexemes that belong to various fields. Especially the surnames have a unique and rich basis of which resources can be found in all the aspects of the material and spiritual life of the people who once lived on this territory. In this article we intended to present the actual surnames that are related to the religion field and that appeared either through anthroponymical conversion, from a first name or based on a nickname. The greater or smaller number of anthroponyms, in a determined region, allow us to notice the spiritual boundaries within which occur in old people's lives and the importance of faith in the conduct of their daily existence; researching them, we can also establish some aspects of our historical reality – the role played by the church in a community, the church hierarchy, the frequent shift to the orthodox religion etc., or linguistic – the restoring of certain stages of language development on vocabulary, lexical borrows, the change of the value of some appellations through their transfer and use in the terminology of other compartments of the language etc.

**Keywords:** anthroponomy, Romanian language development, religion influence, popular culture.

The anthroponomy holds a great number of lexemes that belong to various fields. Especially the surnames have a unique and rich basis of which resources can be found in all aspects of the material and spiritual life of the people who once lived on this territory.

Two of the aspects that contributed essentially to the creation and the setting of the patronymic inventory from nowadays are, on one side, the words transfer from one lexical class to another (the heritage of the names from our parents or relatives made that many of the our baptismal names to become surnames) and, on the other side, the using – on a large scale – of the nickname (a callificativ given to a person in connection with a characteristic feature of his external aspect, psychic, behaviour or with the activity he/she is carrying on etc.). The last one constantly accompanied the human being along his evolution, bearing a well-determined statute in the community: that of highlighting the position of members of any social group towards a particular person. Starting from this aspect, that of the individual-group relationship and, in the same time, from the fact that the tendency of satirizing is an intrinsic feature of the human personality, the place and the role of the nickname<sup>1</sup> in anthroponymy, especially before the legislation of the names, was an extremely important one. The results of its using can be easily noticed in the richness of the patronyms (registered in the official denomination system), beard today by the Romanian people that assume as a basis appellatives from the most diverse ones.

In this article we intended to present the actual surnames that are related to the field of the religion and that appeared either through anthroponymical conversion, from a first name, or based on a nickname. The greater or smaller number of these anthroponyms, in a determined region, allows us to notice the spiritual boundaries within which occur in old people's lives and the importance of faith in the conduct of their daily existence; by researching them, we can also establish some aspects of our historical reality – the role played by the church in a community, the church hierarchy, the frequent shift (in a period of relaxation of the economical and social conditions for the foreigners) to the orthodox religion etc., or linguistic – the restoring of certain stages of language development on vocabulary, lexical borrows, the change of the value of some appellations through their transfer and use in the terminology of other compartments of the language etc.

First, we'll focused on the transfer of the first names in the patronyms class. The first step towards the gaining of the identity was, especially during the old times, the baptism. After the baptism, the new-born child joined the group of the Christians and obtained his/her identity both inside the family and the community<sup>2</sup>. A great number of first names had as source of inspiration the

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<sup>1</sup> We will use in this article the generic term of "nickname", taking into account the fact that the point of our discussion is other than that of the theoretic discussions on the theme nickname / appellation. This subject had been treated by many onomasts over time and we also approached it several times.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.asrocatolic.ro/documente/studiu-antroponimie.pdf>.

Bible and the saints' life. "Treasure of the archetypal characters and destinies"<sup>3</sup>, the Bible contributed in an essential way to the choosing and the spreading of the baptismal names, not only in our country, but also among all the Christian peoples. Thus, the inventory of the Romanian surnames compresses today a wide range of surnames (ex first names) that are originated in the Holy Book and the older history of the Christianity: *Abel, Abraham, Abram, Adam, Ana, Arie, Aron, Avram, Baltazar, Barabas, Barac, Bartolomeu, Cain, Constantin, Daniel, David, Elena, Emanoil, Eremiea, Eva, Ezechia, Ezechil, Filip, Gabriel, Gheorghe, Ieremia, Ilie, Ioachim, Ioan, Ioil, Iordan, Iona, Iosif, Iov, Irimia, Irod, Irodia, Isac, Isaia, Isaiea, Iuda, Iudita, Lazăr, Luca, Magdalena, Marta, Manase, Marcu, Maria, Matei, Melhior, Mihail, Moise, Nabuconudosor, Naum, Noe, Noie, Pavel, Petre, Petru, Pilat, Rafael, Rafail, Ruf, Ruth, Salomeia, Salomia, Salomeia, Samson, Simon, Solomon, Ștefan, Tabita, Toma, Vasile, Veniamin, Zaharia, Zaheu*. They had been adapted to our phonetic system and can be met in different ways of spelling: *Isaia, Isaiea, Noe, Noie, Petre, Petru, Rafael, Rafail, Salomeia, Salomia, Salomeia*. In this moment, a small number of them is used as a first name (*Ana, Daniel, David, Gabriel, Ioan/Ion, Luca, Maria, Mihail, Petre, Ștefan*). The modern society, characterized by a great feeling of individualization, is permanently looking for exotic sources of inspiration in giving a first name and seldom loses the connection with the historical past. After the role of the religion in society had been weakened in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the result, from the anthroponymical point of view, was the laicizing of the first names inventory.

The custom of naming the children after the saints, trying to place the new-born child under divine protection, was also one of the main sources of the first names. They are still kept in the Romanian families, not as intensively<sup>4</sup> as they were in the past when was taken in consideration the name of the saint from the day the child had been born or baptized, the saint around the birthday of the child or an important holiday<sup>5</sup>. In centre was almost always placed the birthday

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Bocian, Iris Lenz, Ursula Kraut, *Dicționar enciclopedic de personaje biblice*, (translated by Gabriela Danțiș and Herta Spuhn), București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1996, p. V.

<sup>4</sup> Now, music, television, radio, sports are the main sources in choosing a name. The try to find an original, unusual name sometimes lead to extreme, ridiculous situations. There are many cases when the teenagers give up to their names they have or keep only one of them. See also Christian Ionescu, who said that "The general phenomenon, characteristic to all the peoples, the laicization is manifested not only through the elimination of some names but also through their replacement by other names, with no connection to the Christianity and also by the renouncing at the religious factor when choosing a name. The reasons that determine the choosing of the first names are only laic" (*Mică enciclopedie onomastică*, București, Editura Enciclopedică Română, 1975, p. 15).

<sup>5</sup> See also Șt. Pașca, *Nume de persoane și nume de animale în Țara Oltului*, București, 1936, p. 24.

of the child, with the saint or the saints celebrated in that day, that name being chosen in order to protect<sup>6</sup> and guide the new family member. From the ritual books – menaions, horologhion – or from the orthodox calendar, many names passed into the frequent use of the people, step by step, during a long period of time. Widely spread were those that belonged to the active militants of the Christianity or those who suffered for this religion. Practically, appeared an “appellativization”<sup>7</sup> of the anthroponym, by changing its function, namely its transformation into surname that designated a concrete person in the canonical family from the calendar, into a quasi-anthroponym. The connection between the name and its referent became weaker and weaker, fact that led both to the modification of the antropony semantics and of its linguistic statute.

In the Romanian anthroponymy, not only the byzantine culture (of which product is the orthodox calendar), but the Slavic one too (the Christian names from the Slavic calendar of saints were used in our onomastics at least from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, since the church hierarchy had been organized<sup>8</sup>) influenced the Romanian first names. Thus, nowadays, are kept, as patronyms, names of different origin: *Agripina, Ambrozie, Avacum, Azarie, Bogdan, Bogorodița, Bogoslov, Boje, Calinic, Calistrat(e), Casian, Cazimir, Chiriac, Chiril(ă), Clement, Cristofor, Damaschin, Damian, Duminică, Dumitru, Efrem, Eftimie, Elefterie, Elisei, Emanoil, Epifan, Eufrosin, Eustațiu, Evanghelie, Evlampie, Evlampiu, Exarhu, Filimon, Filon, Filotei, Ghelasie, Ghenadie, Gherasim, Ghervasie, Grigorie, Hariton, Hristodulo, Ieronim, Ignat, Ilarie, Irina, Irineu, Macarie, Mina, Mircea, Mitrofan, Modest, Nazarie, Neofit, Nestor, Nichifor, Nicodim, Nicolae, Olga, Pahomie, Paise, Palaghia, Pantelimon, Parasche/iva, Partenie, Serafim, Serapion, Serghie, Serapia, Sofia, Sofronie, Sofronia, Spiridon, Stahie, Stelian, Tatiana, Tecla, Teodor, Teodosie, Teofan, Teofil, Tihon, Timotei, Trifon, Trofim, Visarion* etc. These are only few surnames, which entered in the Christian onomastics with the certification of the first names (even if they are, sometimes based on common words) of the first martyrs from the Calendar of Saints and in the History of the Christian Martyrs.

A characteristic feature of the popular calendar is the use of the hypocoristic forms of the Christian names and their dialectal transformation, sometimes different from that of the canonical prototype<sup>9</sup>. Thus, once entered in the denomination system, the derived or the reduced forms of a name get different aspects. We can draw a distinction between two categories – those

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<sup>6</sup> See also Aurelia Bălan-Mihailovici, *Dicționar onomastic creștin. Repere etimologice și martirologice*, București, Minerva, 2003, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> S.M. Tolstaja, *Antroponimî v narodnoj kalendarnoj terminologhii*, Izvestia Ural'skogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 2001, nr.20, [http://proceedings.usu.ru/?base=mag/0020\(01\\_04-2001\)&xsl=showArticle.xslt&id=a07&doc=../content.jsp](http://proceedings.usu.ru/?base=mag/0020(01_04-2001)&xsl=showArticle.xslt&id=a07&doc=../content.jsp)

<sup>8</sup> N.A. Constantinescu, *Dicționar onomastic românesc*, București, 1963, p. XVII.

<sup>9</sup> S.M. Tolstaja, *cited work*.

created by the Romania people: *Onu, Onea Ionică, Onică, Nică, Ionac, Nacu, Onigă, Niga, Oniță, Niță, Oana, Oancea, Oaneș* etc. (coming from *Ioan*), all registered today as surnames and those, also of popular creation, but borrowed from the neighbouring peoples: Slavic, Russian, Bulgarian *Ivan*, Serbian *Ianoș*, Saxon *Haneș*, the Neo-Greek language *Iani* or *Ene*, all from the Greek and Latin *Ioannes*<sup>10</sup>.

A particularly important role in the formation of personal names was given, rightly, to the nickname. Usually, the moment, the conditions or the happenings that generated the emerging of the nicknames are unknown today; but, their motivation is as transparently as possible: either the need to classify the statute of a person in society (*Botezatu, Călugăru, Diaconu, Popa, Preoteasa, Țârcovnicu* etc.) or the community's desire to banter, to sanction or, not so often, to positively appreciate a particular feature, especially psychic and of behaviour (in this case) of some persons (*Bisericosu, Bodaproste, Dracula, Milostivu, Pomenea* etc.).

The marks from this lexical range are referring, generally, to the religious objects (in a large extent), to the cleric representatives, holidays, superstitions, more or less abstract things, related to the faith.

Searching the inventory<sup>11</sup> of the actual patronyms, as much as we could, we have selected and alphabetically ordered the anthroponymical material that is divided in the next categories:

**Church hierarchy.** In a period where the surname wasn't yet officialised, one of the main ways of personal identification (characterized by objectivity and concision), was the naming of the function or the occupation of a person. In this way, reached to us old professions<sup>12</sup>, which were long time ago lost, but with an inestimable value for the history of our society and language. The occupations from the church hierarchy couldn't be an exception, especially if we consider that in the past the church and the priest had an important role in the community's life. The surnames, coming from church occupations, extracted

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<sup>10</sup> N.A. Constantinescu, *cited work.*, p. XVIII.

<sup>11</sup> The information was taken from the next works: Gh. Bolocan, "Dicționarul numelor de familie din România", in *Studii și Cercetări de Onomastică*, nr. 2, 1996, Craiova, p. 7-45; *Dicționar de frecvență a numelor de familie din România (DFNFR)*, vol. I (A-B), Craiova, Editura Universitaria, 2003; vol. 2 (C-D) manuscript; Liliana Lazea, *Nume de persoane din Dobrogea. Dicționar invers*, Constanța, Ex Ponto, 2004; *Inventarul numelor de familie din județul Iași* (manuscript); Aurelia Bălan-Mihailovici, *op. cit.*; Iorgu Iordan, *Dicționar al numelor de familie românești (DNFR)*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1983; N.A. Constantinescu, *Dicționar onomastic românesc (DOR)*, București, Editura Academiei Române, 1963. We mention the fact that we kept the writing of the names as it is in these sources.

<sup>12</sup> See also Iustina Burci, *Dicționar de meserii și funcții vechi*, Craiova, Editura Universitaria, 2009.

from the material we had, are the next: *Acălugăriței*<sup>13</sup>, *Anagnoste/i*, *Apopei*, *Apreotese(i)*, *Apreutese(i)*, *Apriotese(i)*, *Arhereu*, *Cantor*, *Cântărețu*, *Călugăr/u*, *Călugărița/ă*, *Clopotar*, *Dascăl/u*<sup>14</sup>, *Dăscălița/ă*, *Diacon/u*, *Diaconița*, *Diac/u*, *Egumenide*, *Episcopescu*, *Monah/u*, *Popa/ă*, *Preoteasa*, *Preotu*, *Presbiterianu*, *Preuteasa*, *Preutu*, *Prioteasa*, *Protopopescu*, *Răspopa*, *Starețu*, *Țârcomnicu*, *Țârcovcicu*. The most frequent surname in Romania is one that designates a church occupation – *Popa* (meaning Priest) – with a frequency of 171.195<sup>15</sup> bearers, followed closely by its derivate term *Popescu* [meaning “the son of Pop(a)”], with a frequency of 132.424 and on the fourth place<sup>16</sup> is *Pop*, with 111.563 bearers. If to the names mentioned in our list we add, to each of them, all the derivates and all the graphic forms that appeared since then, then our inventory will increase. There are few examples: **Călugăr/u** (monk)– *Călugărașu*, *Călugărean/u*, *Călugărescu*, *Călugărici*, *Călugărițoiu*, *Călugăroiu*, *Călugărul* etc.; **Diacon/u** (deacon) – *Diaconaru*, *Diaconașu*, *Diaconeasa*, *Diaconescu*, *Diaconesi*, *Diaconică*, *Diaconiuc*, *Diaconovici*, *Diaconul*, *Diakonescu*; *Deaconu*, *Deaconescu*, *Deaconița*; *Dieaconu*, *Dieaconescu*, *Dieaconița* etc.; **Popa** (priest) – *Popadiuc*, *Popan*, *Popana*, *Poparcea*, *Popeanu*, *Popăuțanu*, *Popazu*, *Popeci*, *Popei*, *Popel*, *Popescu(l)*, *Popi*, *Popia*, *Popianu*, *Popic*, *Popica*, *Popii*, *Popiță*, *Popițanu*, *Popoaea*, *Popoaei*, *Popoaiia*, *Popoi(u)*, *Popov*, *Popovici*, *Poppa*, *Poppel*, *Popuță*, *Popuțanu*, *Popuțoiaia*, *Popuțoaei*, *Popuțoiaie* etc.

A special construction is *Sânpopa*, where the element *sân* (the Slavic from of “sin” – son), frequently used in the past in the denomination formula, joined with *popa*, resulting the surname *Sânpopa*. We also met surnames where the name of the occupation joined with the name of the person who practiced it: *Popatanasiu*.

The anthroponyms from this category frequently appear as the second surname, helped by the fact that they describe in a concrete and neuter way a certain situation from the personal life. There are few examples: *Radu-Diaconu*, *Popescu-Popa*, *Vasiliu-Apreutesei*.

**The shift to the orthodox rite religion.** One of the resorts that contributed to the economic development of the Romanian society, especially during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, was the presence of the foreign qualified workers and traders; they could especially be found in the urban centres, where

<sup>13</sup> The form, specific for the Romanian language, with the possessive article “a” before the word and connected with it is particular for Moldavia.

<sup>14</sup> The anthroponyms *Dascălu*, *Dăscălița* could also mean “teacher”. Only after researching each name and the circumstances when it appeared, we could say what is it’s exact meaning; this thing is more difficult to be done, because the explanation regarding many of them was lost in time.

<sup>15</sup> Gh. Bolocan, *cited work*, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> After the name *Radu*.

they benefit by better conditions and better place to sell their goods, unlike in the rural region. The state had an interest in attracting them, by giving them different privileges, in an attempt to increase the value of the land and to make progresses as regarding the commerce and the religion of the adoptive country. Thus, the inventory books from the past centuries registered frequent situations where the mentioning “botezat” (with the meaning “named”, although can also be translated as “baptized”) appears along with the first names of some foreigners: *Nicolai, leahu* (the Pole), *botezat*; *Tudor, jidov* (the Jew), *botezat*; *Ioan ungiureanul* (the Hungarian), *botezat*; *Dumitrache botezat*; *Sava Nălban, botezat*<sup>17</sup> etc., but there are also situations where this mentions already has the role of the patronym: *Botezatul*, *Nicolai Botezatul*, *legătoriul de cărți* (the bookbinder); *Nicolai Botezat, leah* (the Polish); *Constantin Botezat, precupeț* (the trader); *Ștefan calfă lui* (the journeyman of) *Gheorghii Botezat* etc. In the actual onomastics, we registered the next forms of the appellative *botezat*: *Abotezătoae, Abotezătoaei, Abotezătoaeie, Botez, Botezan, Botezat/u, Botezatul, Botezi, Bottez, Botizan, Botizatu*. The greatest frequency has the name *Botezatu* – 10.710.

**Holidays names.** The tradition of forming a name starting from the term of certain religious holidays was a usual practice to all the Christian peoples from the Western and Eastern Europe, starting with the 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>18</sup>. In the Romanian onomastics are still kept both the name of an important holiday and, especially, derivatives of the term. The surname *Crăciun* (Christmas) – with 43.900 bearers – and those presented in its lexical area are the most common ones: *Crăciuneanu, Crăciunel, Crăciunesc, Crăciunescu, Crăciunoiu, Crăciunică, Crăciunaș*. Along with them are the anthroponyms resulted from other holidays: *Florii* (Palm Sunday) – *Floarea, Florea, Florica, Floria, Flore, Florean, Floricel, Florescu, Floroiu* etc.; *Paști* (Easter) – *Pascal, Pascale, Păscălin, Pascu, Pașcu, Pașca, Paștiu, Paștea* etc.; *Ispas* (Ascension) – *Ispas, Ispasiu, Ispasoiu, Ispaș, Ispășescu, Ispașiu, Ispășoiu, Ispășeanu*; *Rusalii* (Whitsuntide) – *Rusalim, Rusalin*. The popular name of some holidays was also kept as a surname. Among these are *Cârstov* (The Feast of the Holy Cross), *Drăgaică* [a agrarian ritual (June 24<sup>th</sup>); in the popular mentality *drăgaicele* were evil beings who were believed to make people look ugly], *Bradoș* (popular name for the feast day of the 40 martyrs of Sevasta – the Saints’ Day, celebrated on March 9<sup>th</sup>; or boiled or baked knot-shaped breads, coated with honey and nuts).

<sup>17</sup> The examples had been taken from *Moldova în epoca feudalismului, vol. VII, partea I-II, Recensămintele populației Moldovei din anii 1772-1773 și 1774*, Academia de Științe a Republicii Moldova, Institutul de Istorie, Chișinău, Editura Știința, 1975.

<sup>18</sup> Simona Goicu, *Termeni creștini în onomastica românească*, Timișoara, Editura Amphora, 1999, p. 43; also see Ion M. Stoian, *Dicționar religios. Termeni religioși. Credințe populare. Nume proprii*, second edition revised and complete, București, Editura Garamond, 2001, p. 298.

There had also been kept, as patronyms, the names of some Latin origin saints, through the popular names of some Christian holidays<sup>19</sup>: *Îndrea, Sâmedru, Sângeorz, Sânziene, Sânicoară, Semedrea, Simedrea, Simedria, Simedru, Sinedru, Sâmpetru, Sânpetru, Sântioana, Sântion, Sinpetru, Sintoader, Sintion, Sintoma, Sintpetru, Sinvasil<sup>20</sup>e* and, also, the popular names, of Slavic origin, of the Feast of the Annunciation – *Blagoveștenie* and the Entrance of the *Theotokos* – *Ovedenie, Ovidenie*. And, not at last, even the appellative *sărbătoare* (holiday, feast) was transformed into the surname *Sărbătoare*.

**Objects, church environment in general.** The variety of the nicknames is directly proportional to the variety of the features, preoccupations and the environment where people live. In general, any word has the potential to become a nickname at some point. The right context, the psychological associations, the puns and the ambiguity, all these can transform a simple appellative into a lasting surname or with a remarkable history of “life”. The ecclesiastic environment, with all the things that it involves – on material and spiritual level – isn’t an exception. As a proof, we have the surnames from the anthroponymic actual inventory: *Apostol(u), Apostolie, Apostoloiu, Apostu, Biblia, Biserica/ă, Bisericanu, Bisericaru, Bisericescu, Bisericosu, Bosuioc, Busuioc, Busuioceanu, Busuiocescu, Candela, Ceochu, Colac, Colăcel, Coșciug, Credinciosu, Credință, Creștin, Cruce, Denie, Epifanie, Evanghelie, Feștila, Har, Icoană, Lumânare, Lumină, Mărturiseanu, Mătanie, Mânăstire, Mânăstireanu, Mântulescu, Milostivu, Minune, Miru, Mitra, Mucenic, Mucenica/u, Mucinicu, Măcenic, Măcinic, Măcineanu, Odor, Ortodoxiade, Pasca/ă, Postu, Predica, Predică, Prescornița, Prescura/ă, Proorocu, Pomană, Pomenea, Raiu, Sfântescu, Sfântu, Sfînțescu, Taina/ă, Tămâilă, Tămâianu, Teologu* etc. We can also add to these anthroponyms that came from words of different origin (especially Slavic) and which the Romanian language took and used over time: *Bodaprose, Bodaproste, Bodaprosti, Bog* (God), *Bogdaproste* (God forgives), *Bogonos* (God bearer), *Bogorodea, Bogorodiță / Bohorodiță* (Who gave birth to God), *Bogos, Bogoslov* (God’s word), *Got* (God), *Spasenie / Spăsenie* (repentance, humbleness) etc.

There are names that have a multiple motivation. For example, the patronym *Colac* that assumes as a base the appellative *colak*. But we do not know from which of the meanings of the word comes: bread, round shaped, made from several rolls of doe; a metal, wooden, rubber etc. object, round shaped or wreath. From this perspective, the employment in this category of nicknames may be somewhat arbitrary. This is due to the fact that we don’t have

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<sup>19</sup> Simona Goicu, *cited work*.

<sup>20</sup> In the preface to *Dicționar al numelor de familie românești* – București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1983, p. 9), Iorgu Iordan noticed the fact that because “sân was the perfect homonym of the Latin word *sanctus*, around the name of some holidays, as *Sâmpetru*, was confusion”, the two words – sân “fiu” și sân(t) “*sanctus*” had been confused, many times, being used mostly with the first meaning.



the possibility anymore to know exactly, post factum, the circumstances and the semantic characteristic that led to that certain nickname.

**Names of monasteries from our country.** In the actual denomination formula also appear the names, simple or derived, of some monasteries. Is a frequent procedure in our anthroponymy and not only here; a person can be identified taking into consideration his/her birth place or he/she adds to his/her surname (especially when it is frequently met), another one, for a better individualization. Here are the patronyms that we have selected: *Agapia, Cernica, Cotmeana/ă, Cotmeanu, Cozia, Cozian/u, Cozieanu, Nicula, Voroneț*.

**Local landmarks in the history of the Christianity.** The surnames that we have presented in this section can be directly connected to the corresponding toponyms: *Erusalim, Israil, Izrail, Nazaret, Sion*. The person named in this way could have been in a trip in one of the mentioned regions. We don't know for sure that this is true because we don't know, at the moment, as we have already mentioned before, the circumstances in which the nicknames appeared. They could have resulted after some associations made with the mentioned names by the people who gave the nicknames. Their frequency in the Romanian onomastics is a very small one.

**Elements that belong to some foreign beliefs.** Some anthroponyms, mentioned in the researched material are referring to the beliefs of some minority populations from our country: *Bairam, Barat, Cadiu, Calvin, Capela, Coran, Derviș, Fariseu, Hogeia, Islam, Pastor, Popistaș/u, Ramadan*. They could have appeared both inside the religious communities that they represent and inside the communities where the religious profile is a mixed one. This is as naturally as possible because the nickname functions in the same way, doesn't matter the nation<sup>21</sup>.

**The popular beliefs.** In the Romanian anthroponymy also appear many surnames that refer to the popular beliefs and superstitions, either customs, fantastic or real characters, seldom having evil powers: *Babe, Babele, Balaure, Balauru, Baubau, Brezaie, Caloian/u, Dochia, Dragon, Drăgaica<sup>22</sup>, Ghionoiu, Mag, Moroiu, Paraleu, Sânziana, Scorpie, Stafie, Vârcolici, Vârgolici, Vrăjitoarea, Vrăjitoriu, Zâna, Zmeu*. In this category we can include also the patronyms based on the appellative *devil* or its euphemisms: *Aghiuță, Benga, Dracea, Dracinschi, Dracu, Dracula, Draculea, Draculovici, Drăcos/u, Drăculeț, Drăcea, Drăceanu, Drăcescu, Drăcilă, Drăconiță, Drăconu, Drăculețu, Michiduță, Nesfântu, Șăitan, Șeitan; Ciortanu<sup>23</sup>, Ciortea, Ciortescu, Ciortu*.

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<sup>21</sup> A.V. Superanskaja, "Universalii jazika i onomasticeskie universalii", in *Actes du XI<sup>e</sup> Congress International des Sciences Onomastiques*, 2, Academie Bulgare de Sciences, 1975, p. 34.

<sup>22</sup> Also see supra.

<sup>23</sup> From the Slavic term "ciort" – devil.

The tradition of the nickname have been maintained till today, in the urban, but especially in the rural region, where the people bear their official name, mentioned in the official documents, “only when they get in touch with the state’s life, for example at the mayoralty, at the exchequer, for elections, at school, in the army etc. In the daily life, you call a person by the nickname”<sup>24</sup>. There is a space where the villagers know each other very well, they tell one another their life stories, the qualities and the defects and this fact is reflected by their nicknames. The newspaper Click, from July 30<sup>th</sup> 2008, offers us a sample of qualifications people have in a village from Maramureș: Sălișteea de Sus. Here is a different phone-book (*Paginile lui Aurel*, an analogy to *Paginile Aurii – Yellow Pages*) that presents, near the official name, the nicknames of the dwellers. The motive? The high frequency of some surnames (*Ion* – first name, *Chiș*, *Vlad*, *Iuga* – patronyms) and the inevitable confusion between bearers. Among the numerous registered nicknames (*Haiducu*, *Americanu*, *Robotu*, *Împăratu*, *Libelula*, *Zgârcitul*, *Frunzilă*, *Făt Frumos din Fasole*, *Trei lei 40*, *Păsărelu*, *Godzilă*, *Cucurigu*, *Spânzurău*, *Cap de Chibrit* etc.) is also *Dumnezeu* (God) – “The nickname comes from his grand-father who was a good and faithful person”. If someone would begin now some field investigations, it for sure that would be brought to light some nicknames that have nothing to do with the religious life and the popular beliefs of those communities.

The lexical fund of used nicknames represents the vastest field of a language, where there had been included appellatives – concrete or abstract, simple, derived or composed, archaic, dialectal or literary etc. – from all the other elements of the vocabulary (geography, history, botany, zoology, religion, mathematics, medicine, economy etc.). The anthroponymy “immortalized” those that had the chance to become patronyms and offer us the “concentrate” image – socio-economic, psychological and spiritual – of our past.

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<sup>24</sup> Henri H. Stahl, “Sistemul onomastic drăgușan”, în *Arhiva pentru știința și reforma socială*, Editura Institutului Social Român, anul XII, nr. 1-2, 1934, p. 86.