ON COLLECTIVE NICKNAMES

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Abstract

The study concerns some of the least explored aspects of onomastics in the public space: collective nicknames. This is carried out at three levels – word-nickname, syntagm-nickname and sentence-nickname – which stand for unconventional naming, specific to the Romanian traditional, rural society. The territory under investigation is mainly the upper part of Someşul Mare and its tributaries, but in order to support the demonstration, we have also made use of *The Romanian Linguistic Atlas of Regions*. *Transylvania*.

Key words: *collective nicknames, unconventional naming, structure, features, expressive impact*

Résumé

L'étude met en discussion certains des aspects les moins explorés de l'onomastique de l'espace public: les sobriquets collectifs. Ceux-ci se réalisent sous trois aspects – le sobriquet-mot, le sobriquet-syntagme et le sobriquet-énoncé – et ils représentent des actes de nomination non conventionnelle, spécifiques à la société rurale traditionnelle roumaine. Le territoire étudié concerne notamment la partie supérieure de la rivière Someşul Mare et de ses affluents, mais, afin de soutenir la démonstration, nous avons également eu recours à l'*Atlas linguistique roumain par régions*. *La Transylvanie*.

Mots-clés: *sobriquets à portée collective, dénomination anti-conventionnelle, structure, caractères, impact expressif*

1. Preliminary issues

The aim of this paper[1] is to deal with collective unconventional naming acts. Unlike individual nicknames, collective nicknames concern a village[2] and their agent (the one who gives the name) lives in the neighbouring villages (cf. Paşca, 1936: 48; Golopenția-Eretescu, 1972a: 147). Therefore, it is based on distance observation, which refers to an unusual occupation in relation to the traditional one or ones, the way of wearing clothes or a certain behavioural feature, etc. This note may characterize a person or a number of inhabitants of a village, and later on, due to its original nature or involvement of other villagers, it is extended to the whole community. In the village of Caila, the county of Bistrița-Năsăud, for instance, because someone, before 1948, had

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[2] Sometimes, reference may be made to a region or population: *mămăligari* – the Romanians, *macaronari* – the Italians. (cf. Felecan, O., 2012, p. 220, note 3).

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owned an oil press for sunflower and pumpkin seeds, all the inhabitants were called "oloieri" (Felecan, O., 2012: 225). The reason is that every farmer who grew sunflower and pumpkins, had enough seeds to produce oil which he then sold in other villages or on market days, in Bistrița, Năsăud, Beclean, even Dej.

The characteristic of "ciufală" is proved in terms of the respondents' testimony, as well as of the mocking intention and intonation in particular (cf. Golopenția-Eretescu, 1972b: 208-209; Stan, 2012: 164), visible in the attempt to put those structures into verse. This proves the tendency towards the game of rhymes and musicality, specific to vernacular language, just as the language of children (Goran, 1987: 174), which the Italian linguist V. Bertoli commented: "the creations of a childish language must be interpreted rather in their rhythmic value, but always in relation to their symbolic content, thus highlighting the permanent tendencies of fantasy to embed a series of images, sometimes temporary and unusual, in the mobility of a rhythmic *dominant*"[3]. We can illustrate those situations when two-, three-, or four-line poems may appear, or the nicknames of several villages may be put together: *iluani cu lapte-n tioc,/ măgureni cu pipa-n foc*; *napci fripți, șănțăni/ păduchioșii de rogneni,/ coțobreii*, *măiereni/ cuşmă lungă*, *sângeorzăni*; *poienarii dracului,/ șăd în vârvu scaiului,/ de doru mălaiului* (ALRRT: 17); *vărărenii*[4], *poamă rea,/ unde văd o coțobrea/ hop cu carul după ea*[5].

The intonation and rhythmicity are visible in all the recorded structures which preserve the same number of syllables, seven: *napci-fripți-sun-teți-voi-șăn-țăni/ pă-du-chio-şii-de-rog-neni/co-țo-brei-de-mă-ie-reni/ lap-te-a-cru-voi-il-veni,// po-ie-na-rii-dra-cu-lui/ şăd-în-vâr-vu-sca-iu-lui/ de-dra-gul-mă-la-iu-lui*, just as in the vernacular language line: *fost-au-ci-că-un-No-vac/ un-No-vac-Ba-ba-No-vac/ un-vi-teaz-de'ai-lui-Mi-hai/ ce-să-rea-pe-şap-te-cai./…//*. (Alecsandri, 1965, I: 221); *fost-au-fost-un-cră-i-şor/ ti-ne-rel-mân-dru-fe-cior/ cum-e-bra-dul-co-dri-lor/ sus-pe-vâr-vul-mun-ți-lor* (Alecsandri, 1965, I: 116).

1. The structure of collective nicknames

In the work *Aspecte ale polifoniei lingvistice/Aspects of Linguistic Polyphony*, Daiana Felecan showed that "structurally, there are several distinctions: *word-nickname*, *syntagm-nickname*, *sentence-nickname*" (2010: 187). Below, we will deal with each type, as they occur as collective nicknames.

We have selected the examples from *Atlasul lingvistic român pe regiuni*. *Transilvania/The Romanian Linguistic Atlas of Regions*. *Transylvania* (1992) and a field research conducted through successive questionnaires, starting in the 2011 autumn, in some villages of the upper part of Someşul Mare and its tributaries.

2.1. The word-nickname

The *word-nickname* makes reference to a single term, existing in the vocabulary of the language and, undoubtedly, in the dialect where it is recorded as a nickname. We have made this remark because, quite often, it is not attested in either general dictionaries or regional dictionaries. Anyway, based on the sound image or context –

[3] V. Bertoldi, *La parola quale mezzo d'espressione*, Napoli, 1946, apud Câmpeanu, 1975, p. 83-84.

[4] From the old name of the village, Vărarea, called Nepos nowadays.

[5] In the terza rima, the rhyme is common.

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the emphasis on the negative feature, which is portrayed from the physical traits or behaviour of the nicknamed person –, one may infer the meaning of the word.

The way of presenting this structure contains data allowing us to include it into collective nicknames. First of all, the official name of the inhabitants in a plural form, in the nominative, identical with the vocative[6], which also has the role to preserve the seven syllable measure, is added to the nickname term: ***aloraita*** *feldriheni*, ***cicicari*** *rebrişoreni*; ***hospodarii*** *poienari*; ***hurlupanii*** *mocodeni*; ***ticăiții*** *poienari*. When these two elements fail to fulfil the number of seven syllables, the interjection *măi*[7] is added or the preposition *de* is used before the names of the inhabitants: *cucurigu*, ***măi*** *ruseni*; *coțobrei* ***de*** *măiereni*; *guşații* ***de*** *prundeni*; *guşații* ***de*** *rebreni/ guşalăii* ***de*** *rebreni*; *păducioşii* ***de*** *rodneni*; *răşinarii* ***de*** *leşeni*; *răşinarii* ***de*** *tiheni*; *sărăntocii* ***de*** *plăieni*; *țiganii* ***de*** *măgureni*. In one case only, instead of the names of the inhabitants, there is another nickname they have: ***cucurigu guşălăi***, when both terms make reference to a feature: *cucurigu*, because they prefer growing ducks and geese to growing hens (and cocks), and *guşalăi/guşălăi*, since most of them suffer from a disease called *guşă* 'goitre'.

In an attempt to decipher the meaning of the terms used, we can identify the following cases:

a. Features/shortcomings of appearance:

Coțobrei (Maieru, Mititei) "short people (and, possibly, in a great number)"[8], cf. *coțobrel*, *coțobrei*, s. m. (reg.) "bushes also called *porumb*(*r*)*el*, with small, black and round berries (*prunus spinosa*)" (DLR, II: 844; DAR, s. v. *coțobrel*). The same explanation for *coțobreii mititeni*. DLR (II: 844) also mentions that the name of the berries, *coțobrele*, sg. *coțobrea*, is used as "the name given to a probably short and dark-skinned girl".

Guşați/guşalăi (***guşălăi***) (Ilva Mică, Prundu Bârgăului, Rebra), after *guşat*, adj., s. m. and f. "a (person) who has a goitre" (DLR VI, s.v.; DEX, s.v.). *Guşalău/guşălău*, derived, not recorded in either current dictionaries of the Romanian language or DLR, from *guşă* + the suffix *-ălău* (from *-ală* + *-ău*), just as *păpălău*, *țingălău*, *câcălău*, *pişălău* or the adjectives *mutălău*, *prostălău* (Pascu, 1916: 417).

b. Mental or behavioural features or the economic state:

Aloraita (Feldru). According to what the respondent said, it could be a gipsy word. In the past, it was used to denote the running away from something. It might originate in the expression *a da o raită* "to run somewhere", "to visit somebody in a hurry".

We believe that the term must be related to *alo* and *raita*. The information in DLR supports our hypothesis. *Alo*, an interjection, "go away, run", from Germ. *hallo*!, used "only in Transylvania", for which it provides the examples: "*alo, raita, la cămară*" (Reteganul), and "*alo, marş*" (DLR I: 120); *raita*!, interj. (old use) " a

[6] This also proves that the one who gives nicknames addresses the nicknamed persons directly.

[7] The presence of this interjection constitutes both an element of vernacular language and a mark of addressing somebody directly. "In colloquial speech, in order to give intensity when addressing somebody, the vocative, either in its own form or a form identical with that of the nominative (and in this case the need for emphasis is stronger), is often accompanied by interjections: *mă*!, *măi*!, *bre*!, *fă*! or pronouns: *you*!" (GLR, I, p. 80).

[8] Before 1980, according to the inhabitants, Maieru had the highest birth rate.

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password said by the night guards when one came nearer the other"[9]: "*Nici un pedestru nu era pe uliți, afară de fanaragiii care strigau regulat*: *raita*"/'No pedestrian was on the lanes, except for the lamplighters who used to shout regularly: raita' (Negruzzi) (DLR, XIII: 23), in particular because Feldru was among the border settlements. Therefore, *aloraita* is nothing else but the two interjections joined.

Păduchioşi (Rodna). The subject under investigation says that the nickname (meaning 'lousy people') "is caused by the fact that in that village there were many gipsies, known as dirty people, but there were also colonies of miners who lived in poverty".

Sărăntoci (Suplaiul Zăgrii). The word (meaning 'poor people') is "popular and deprecating" (DAR, s. v.) and refers to a precarious economic state, poverty.

Ticăiți (Poiana Ilvei). In this case, we have to consider all the meanings of the adjective *ticăit*, (in its old use and as a regionalism) "1. dawdle, unworthy. 2. miserable, poor, tormented. 3. evil, wretched, villainous. 4. stingy, greedy" (DAR, s. v.). The living conditions make "poor, miserable" people become "evil, wicked". The word may come within the same sphere of semantic evolution as *sărac* 'poor', for which we make reference to Ciorănescu (DER, 7438) or the words *mişel*[10], *nemernic*[11], *mândru* (*mândrie*), *mârşav*, *nebun* etc., discussed by Lazăr Săineanu, in *Semasiologia limbii române*/'Semasiology of the Romanian Language', in the chapter called *Degeneration of Words* (1999: 342-364).

Țigani (Măgura Ilvei). The respondent considers that the name ('gypsies') comes from the fact that "there were many gypsies in the village long ago". We have to take into account here the meaning mentioned in DLR XVII, s. v. 4.: "an epithet denoting an ugly person or somebody who has bad habits", p. 85-87[12].

c. Occupations:

Cicicari (Rebrişoara). If we believe what the respondent says, that "there are many goats in that village", *cicicari* was formed from the interjection used to call the goats, *cici*, to which the consonant *c* was added, from *capră* 'goat', plus the suffix *-ar*, denoting an agent. In support of this, there is a second expression, *cici capre*, *rebrişoreni*.

DLR (II:401) also mentions the interjection "*cici!*" used "to call the goats" in "the mountains of Rodna, in Transylvania": *cici*, *capră!*.

Cucurigu (Ilva Mică, Rusu Bârgăului). The informer thinks that the name "comes from the fact that the villagers got up after the cockcrow"[13]. If we take into account that both the inhabitants of Ilva Mică, and those of Rusu Bârgăului are said to have raised geese, hence the derivative *gâşcălăi* (*găşcălăi*), we tend to believe that the presence of the interjection, as a nickname, might mean, ironically, the very absence of

[9] Etymologically, *raita* comes from the Hungarian *rajta* (DLR, XIII, p. 23).

[10] "*Mişel*, from Latin *misellus*, a diminutive from *miser*, vernacular *meser*, meant "poor", an exclusive meaning in old texts. In modern language, the word *mişel* has acquired a pejorative meaning "wicked, cowardly, evil, damned, infamous" (Săineanu, 1999, p. 342, 344).

[11] *Nemernic* is another word which "in modern language has almost totally lost it primitive noble significance, becoming today a quasi-synonym of *mişel*" (Săineanu, 1999, p. 345).

[12] Cf. DEX s. v. *țigan*, 3.: "an epithet given to a person with bad habits".

[13] In villages, people always considered the cockcrow, so waking up after the cockcrow would not be a specific, isolated fact.

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cocks and, as a result, the presence of other factors instead of *cucurigu* (which means 'cock-a-doodle-doo!').

Hospodari (Poienile Zăgrii). We do not believe that *hospodari* explains "more clearly" (sic!) the meaning of *hoaspe* in *hoaspe acre suplăieni*. On the contrary, we see here a contamination between *hoaspe* (see below, *hoaspe*) and *gospodari* > *hospodari*, used ironically: "such householders (= hospodari) who don't even have good vegetables" (DLR, II: 288-289) records *hospodar* as a variant for *gospodar* "a rich, sparing peasant, a small owner", (from Russ. *gospodari*, "master, ruler").

Hurlupani (Mocod), from *hurlup* (s. m., reg. "unripe plum which degenerated because of a fungus, *exoascus pruni*; gurlup, chirlaucă, cocoşel, corlat, ghirtoc, birtoc, alişoi, cocoş" (DLR, VI: 421-422; DAR, s. v.) + the suffix *-an*. This name may be explained by a metaphor: *hurlupani*, "people affected by diseases, of weak health, degenerated people".

Răşinari (Leşu Ilvei, Tiha Bârgăului), from *răşinar*, *răşinari*, s. m. (reg.) "a person who deals with extracting or selling resin" (DLR, XIII: 161; DAR, s. v.). In this case, it is about *răşina* 'resin' (Lat. *resina*) "produced by various plants, mainly by conifers" (DEX, s. v. *răşină*), that the inhabitants of Leşu Ilvei and Tiha Bârgăului collected and sold.

2.2. The syntagm-nickname

In this category, we have included two-element syntagms, as defined by D.D. Draşoveanu: "a syntagm is 'the relational unit – both minimal and maximal – of the syntagmic level, comparable, with regard to its position in the chain of speech, with a molecule preserving the properties of the substance" (1997: 34).

From this perspective, any syntagm has a fixed structure: two terms (regardless of the way of expression: *solzii peşti**lor**/solzii **la** peşti* ('fish's scales/scales on the fish') between which there is a relationship (T – R – T)[14], with the same relational meaning, possession, first expressed by a flexion (***lor***) and secondly, by a connector (***la***) (Draşoveanu, 1997: 27).

Starting from these explanations, we consider that the following syntagms are equivalent (*baraboi amari/ brânză cu godaci*) and they do not need another delimitation.

It is interesting that this time, too, in order to maintain the seven syllable structure, the syntagm is accompanied by the names of the inhabitants, in the nominative, or the same name preceded by the interjection *măi*, or the personal pronoun, 2nd person, plural, *voi*: ***baraboi** amari, strâmbeni* (Strâmba, today Romuli); ***brânză** cu godaci, telceni* (Telciu); ***broaşte**-n tău, voi sălăuani* (Salva); ***cofe** nouă, susenari* (Susenii Bârgăului); ***curea** lată feldrihani* (Feldru); ***cuşmă** lungă sângeorzeni* (Sângeorz-Băi); ***cuşmă** lungă bistrițeni* (Bistrița Bârgăului); ***guler** lat, voi vărăreni* (Vărarea, today Nepos); ***hoaspe** acre, suplăieni* (Suplaiul Zăgrii); ***hribe** roşii, găureni* (Aluniş-Zagra); ***lapte** acru voi ilveni* (Ilva Mare); ***napci** fripți, voi şănțăni* (Şanț, cf. ALRRT: 17); ***oale** negre, măi joseni* (Josenii Bârgăului); ***pipe** roşii, mijloceni* (Mijlocenii Bârgăului); ***zeamă** de cute, zăgreni* (Zagra); ***zgârâie brânză**, mureşeni* (Mureşenii Bârgăului).

From the standpoint of the *determined* element, these syntagms lead to:

[14] T means "term" and R "relation". The former T is the main term, the latter is the subordinated one.

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a. Objects manufactured and used in the household: ***cofe*** 'wooden buckets'***, oale*** 'pots'***, pipe*** 'pipes', constant occupations[15], according to what the respondents said, for some inhabitants from the occupations of whom other villagers benefited as well, and many others benefited from the local trade.

b. Clothes, made in the household: ***curea*** 'belt'***, cuşmă*** 'fur cap'***, guler*** 'collar'. Making clothes was a day-to-day occupation in older times. Unfortunately, nowadays, it is only practiced as an artisan's work.

c. Dishes or food: : ***brânză*** 'cheese', ***lapte*** 'milk'[16]; ***zeamă*** 'soup'.

d. Plants grown for the peasants' own use or trade: ***baraboi, napci*** (= potatoes), ***fâsoi*** (= beans) (ALRRT: 225), ***hoaspe***. As for this last term, according to its meaning (*hoaspă, hoaspe*, s. f. (reg.) "husk of a cereal grain, bean or pea, etc.", DEX, s.v.), reference is made to several plants or vegetables that they used to grow[17].

e. Seasonal occupations: gathering frogs, at the right time, or picking up mushrooms: ***broaşte*** 'frogs'[18], ***hribe*** 'edible boletus'[19].

As for the determiner, it is expressed by an adjective or noun with a preposition, and has the following values:

a. To put the noun in a register fitting the context:

Cofe nouă 'new wooden bucket', which means the manufacturing of these household objects at home.

Oale negre 'black pots'. The determiner refers to the colour of the clay pots, made by potters, especially for "sarmale" (= meat balls).

Curea lată 'wide belt', because the costume in that region had leather belts which were "wider than in other villages" (ALRRT: 26).

Cuşmă lungă 'long fur cap', because they wear *cuşma* (= *the cap*) "high, not bent" (cf. ALRRT: 17-19).

Guler lat 'wide collar', because their coats had "wide collars" .

Pipe roşii 'red pipes', "due to the fact that, as the respondent said, in this village, Mijlocenii Bârgăului, people made red clay pipes".

b. To place the noun in a negative zone:

Baraboi amari 'bitter potatoes', because the people in that village were poor, and they ate a lot of potatoes which therefore seemed to taste bitter".

Brânză cu godaci 'cheese and worms', because, "having large sheep herds, they got much cheese which took a long time to eat, therefore they ate it even after several years, when it was full of worms" (*godac* – reg. = *worm*).

Hoaspe acre. If we start from the DEX meaning of the word *hoaspă*, *hoaspe*, s. f. (reg.) "husk of a cereal grain, bean or pea etc.", it means that these vegetables were

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[15] The Romanians' ancestors are said "to have practised incessantly the old *trades* or *handcrafts*: they were potters and woodcutters, carpenters and masons, they made bows, arrows and "cucure" or quivers for arrows, they sharpened swords, they wove and sewed clothes, they worked on leather and wool, hemp and flax, in one word they did whatever was necessary to live a decent life (Giurescu 1971: 164).

[16] "Having lots of cows, they used to eat and drink much sour milk".

[17] DLR (VI: 396) also mentions, in Transylvania, the meanings "the peel of grapes" and "chips, stalks, wood stripes that the carpenter planes", meanings which do not comply with the sense denoted by the determiner.

[18] The inhabitants of Salva used to eat frogs in spring.

[19] The inhabitants of the small village of Gaura, of the village of Aluniş-Zagra, used to eat red mushrooms, considered unedible by the people living in the neighbouring villages.

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of poor quality or they were used under improper conditions, therefore they tasted sharp. The meaning mentioned by the subject, "dirty remnants from the melting of honey combs in order to obtain wax", does not provide further information, since wax is not used as food.

Napci fripți (= fried potatoes). A hint to the habit of eating plenty of *fried potatoes* (= napci fripți).

Zeamă de cute 'hone soup'. In the respondent's opinion, the expression is due to the fact that the inhabitants of Zagra ate much soup, and to finish it, they used to wet the hone for sharpening the scythe. But there might be other explanations as well.

c. character features:

Poplăceni cu briaşca, "because, according to what the informer said, long before, poplăcenii (from *Poplaca*, a village in the county of Sibiu) used to fight very often, and they used knives" (ALRRT: 211).

Zgârâie-brânză is "an epithet denoting a stingy, avaricious, mean man" (DEX, s. v. *zgâria* 'to scratch'), a name which, in this case, extends to the whole community of Mureşenii Bârgăului, because in general, "they were extremely niggardly people", as the respondent indicates.

Mândri de la mnilaş (ALRRT: 76). The adjective *mândru* 'proud', having here the value of a noun, does not have a positive meaning "pleased, satisfied, delighted; beautiful", but a negative one "proud, conceited, haughty" (DEX, s.v.)[20].

2.3. The sentence-nickname

This type of nickname is based on sentences which condensate an entire story, a legend. As a consequence, they do not imply addressing someone, but they retain a fact, a moment, a story which breaks regular patterns and, therefore, it is often hard to decipher.

Acru-i borşu, năsăudeni (Năsăud). The nickname can be explained, says the informer, by the fact that "the inhabitants of Năsăud, năsăudenii, borrowed from the Moldavians the habit of using borscht to make the soup sour". In Ardeal, it is sour cream, yoghourt, tomato sauce, vinegar, not borscht, that is used to make food sour.

Au suit tauru pe biserică (Ciceu-Giurgeşti, cf. ALRRT: 29). The informer Constantin Ruse, a teacher of Romanian[21], cannot explain the nickname, but he said that the inhabitants of Giurgeşti and Negrileşti, close villages, always cried invectives to one another: *au suit tauru pe biserică* "they lifted the bull on top of the church' for giurgeşteni, the inhabitants of Giurgeşti, and *aruncă nucile cu furca în pod* 'they throw the nuts into the attic, using forks', for negrileşteni, the inhabitants of Negrileşti.

Starting from the second sentence, *aruncă nucile cu furca în pod*, we believe that the weak point is their intelligence, the inhabitants of both Giurgeşti and Negrileşti try to do impossible things, like those told by I. Creangă[22].

Duc dajdia cu capra (Slătioara, Maramureş), i.e. "they take the tax with the goat" (*dajdie*, *dajdii*, s. f. (old use) "tax, tribute, impost": DEX, s. v.). Since this is an

[20] Details for a transfer from the positive meaning to a negative one can be found in Săineanu (1999, p. 348-353).

[21] He is a villager, born in 1953, at present (2014), the mayor of the village.

[22] *Pagini alese*, Bucureşti: Editura de Stat pentru literatură şi artă, 1959, p. 115-119.

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ironical sense, we might think that, out of indolence, they put the tax on goatback or, since they were poor, they had no traction animals and they used goats[23].

Ho hui a ciureşelea (Aciliu). The informer says that it is the formula by which they urged townsmen to buy cherries (ALRRT: 195).

Poienarii dracului / şăd în vârvu scaiului / de doru mălaiului (Poiana Ilvei, cf. ALRRT: 17). This terza rima makes reference to several facts, namely: The presence of the noun *drac* 'devil', *poienarii dracului*, reveals the fact that the inhabitants of Poiana Ilvei, poienarii, are by nature "evil, delusive, changing people". The second line, *şăd în vîrvu scaiului*, is full of irony and humour. As a result of the fact that they are "dați dracului", they can sit on top of a *scai* 'thistle' ("a generic name given to several weedy plats, having prickly leaves and globular fruit surrounded by prickly bracts catching clothes, sheep wool etc.": DEX, s. v.), to see where the maize flour (= maize) is or where it could come from, the maize not being grown in that region.

Poienarii-s ca pişcarii (Poienile Zăgrii). *Pişcar*, *pişcari*, s. m. (reg.) "eel, loach" (DAR, s. v.). The informer says that in their dialect, *pişcarii* are "some harmless, small water snakes which coil around legs if you get in the water". As compared to them, "those in Poienile Zăgrii are sticky people". It may be a metaphor, since they are generally tall and thin, just like the *eel* "the fresh, stagnant water fish, with a *long*, *thin*, almost cylindrical body" (DEX, s. v.).

Satu cu tri fereşti, hicat în leucă, satu cu târgu, (Vlădeni, Braşov). The informer gives no information about these expressions. But, from the information included in ALRRT, that "the territory of Vlădeni is large, with many forests" and " as already known, the first houses were in *valĭa boului* 'valley of the ox', but in time the villagers settled where the village is today" (p. 206), we could infer the following facts. Due to the vast forests, in the beginning the village developed in a clearing, in *valĭa boului*, and later, in other, more favourable areas, with only three openings, *trei fereşti* 'three windows'. Being at 25 km from Braşov and having relatively many inhabitants (1407), they exchanged products among themselves, constituting in time a market of their own, hence the name *satu cu târgu* 'the village with the market'. The third name might come from the fact that *leuca* 'stud stave' ("part of the cart consisting of a bent strip of wood, with one end inserted in the axle and the other attached to the side rail in order to support it": DEX, s. v.) is longer and touches, while driving, the liver area of the person who is sitting in the cart, hence the expression *hicat în leucă* 'liver in the stud stave'.

Scot luna din vale (Slătioara, Maramureş). The one who mentions the sentence (Roşca 2003: 124) does not provide any details on the meaning it might have. But it may be explained by the following information.

Scoateți luna, ***hordouani şi o dați la bichigeni*** (Hordou, today Coşbuc). The sentence makes reference to the stories told by Ion Creangă, about those people who tried to "carry the sun into the house, using a bucket" (Creangă, 1959: 116). Here, too, the "story" is about the attempt to lift the moon from the valley/ from the well, using a bucket. Having reached the surface, the bucket is empty and the people "tired, fell back and saw the moon in the sky, in its usual place". The sentence, in its entirety, could be an ironical urge to tell the prank to others!

[23] The information can be found in Felecan, O. (2012, p. 226).

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Vărărenii, poamă rea,/ unde văd o coțobrea/ hop cu carul după ea (*vărăreni*, from *Vărarea*, today *Nepos*). These lines make reference to the real situation of the inhabitants of *Vărarea*, who used to marry women from *Maieru*, a village whose inhabitants were nicknamed *coțobrei*, and the women *coțobrele* (*coțobrea* in the singular).

3. Conclusions

The three types of nicknames are differentiated by relating to a denoted element/ referent. Simple nicknames consisting of a single term (the *word-nickname*) are easier to decipher, because the referent behind the word is much more visible and easier to infer.

The others –the *syntagm-nickname* and *sentence-nickname* – with a complex structure, are harder to explore. The reason is, in general, easy to guess. The decoding of the determined element also involves, simultaneously, the explanation from the determiner. They can clarify the significance conferred by the status of nickname only together, as a syntagm. As for the *sentence-nickname*, the situation is even harder to decode, because the sentence conceals a story, an event which, most often, was lost in the mists of time.

We have also noticed, for the upper part of Someşul Mare, the speakers' tendency towards rhythm and expressivity. All recorded nicknames have the measure of seven syllables, just as the popular verse, and some of them contain interjections of onomatopoetic origin or they derive from interjections (*cucurigu*, *alo*, *cicicari*, *raita*), which represent a characteristic of both oral style and colloquial speech, where emotions "are expressed directly, freely, in their primary form, and imagination is supported by the most obvious concrete elements of the surrounding reality" (Câmpeanu, 1975: 83-84).

Very often, the *sentence-nickname* reveals certain forms of expression of "human stupidity", as they occur in Creangă's stories, especially in *Story* (*Prostia omenească*), where we encounter attempts *to carry the sun into the earth house, using a bucket, to lift the cow on a ladder to the attic, so that it may eat hay, to throw nuts into the attic, using a fork.*

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