ASPECTES RELATING TO THE ETYMOLOGY OF FAMILY NAMES

Ioan Herbil
Lecturer, PhD, "Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca

Abstract: Family names are, today, non-semantic signs which do not describe the denotatum; they play a prominent part in designating a family, as well as in identifying each member of a community officially. Consequently, in the study of the origins of family names, it would be adequate to focus not only on their semantics but also on the semantics of anthroponyms, lexemes or stems, which, alongside the introduction of the Civil Code, have become family names. The etymology of family names may give rise to many questions, especially in multi-ethnic regions (as in the case of Ukrainian family names in Maramureș). Here, the foreign element is not only significant but also diversified, so the result is that all these family names show multiple etymologies. In order to lay stress upon the etymology that has been suggested, the researcher must reveal the linguistic environment in which the anthroponym, which became a family name, was formed; the linguist must also observe the circumstances under which lexemes became anthroponyms and, later, family names. At the same time the researcher must describe their initial stage of these lexemes as well as their functioning as personal names.

Keywords: anthroponym, family name, appellative, principle of onomastic probability, multiple etymology.

Family names are words, as a constituent part of the lexis of a language, and the lexemes from which they have formed reproduce, phonetically, themes and roots which can be found among common or proper names which are contemporary with us. Nonetheless, this does not allow us to state that, until today, family names continue the meaning of those appellatives or personal names from which they have formed. Thus, as part of the process etymologising family names one ought to speak only of the semantics of the anthroponyms (which, with the introduction of the Civil Code, would become family names), of the lexemes or of the themes from which these have formed, for, nowadays, family names, being only some asemantic signs, do not characterise the denoted person, their only role being to identify, especially in an official manner, each member of a community.

One of the reasons for the above-stated is that the anthroponyms (the soubriquets, the agnomen, etc.), which had become family names, were not created with this purpose in mind (at the time, the notion of *family name* being non-existent), but, because, at that stage in the existence of an individual or of a family or of a people, their identification be made as clearly as possible.

According to the meaning of the lexemes which underlie the anthroponyms turned family names, the latter may be divided in three groups: those which are formed from the names of persons, those who are built upon the appellatives and those formed from toponyms. And still, some of them may be included without any problems both in the ones formed from the names of persons and in those formed from toponyms, while others have etymons which can be traced back either to the appellatives or to the toponyms.

BDD-V5179 © 2018 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 06:00:41 UTC)

The family names of the Ukrainians of Maramureş (which from the point of view of the origin are Ukrainian, Romanian, Hungarian, German, Polish, etc.[1]), are over two centuries old. However, up until then, any person, beside the baptismal name, could have an individual soubriquet or an agnomen which would not, necessarily, be passed down to the descendents, and which were not distinctive signs of the family. Before the introduction of the Civil Code, which led to the legal consolidation of these anthroponomical signs, usually borne by a generation which would become stable family names, borne by the future generations, almost each one of them being a word full of meaning which, beside the fact that would name one, it would also characterise as a member of a human community. In this case, the respective word had "both a denominative function and a semasiological function of the name" (Chuchka 2005: XVIII).

Once the anthroponym (the agnomen or soubriquet, the patronymic or matronymic, etc.), which was initially used as a supplementary means in the individualisation and differentiation of the people within a community, would become a family name, it would lose the semantic connection to the name, that is to say, the existing relationship between the sound complex and the content. "The morphematic structure of the anthroponym under discussion, turned family name, would, in time camouflage, until it got to erase itself, and the former name which had a clear meaning would become unintelligible, that is to say unmotivated from an etymological standpoint. Therefore, it would be the *de-etymologisation* of the personal name (of the primary anthroponym). This is why in order to discover the origin of the family name, both its original meaning (i.e. the one it had before it became a family name), and its old phonetical form, the researcher must travel back in time at least 200-300 years" (Chuchka 2005: XVIII). One of the means of achieving this goal lies in the study of the agnomens and soubriquets. These anthroponymic categories which, nowadays, are part of the unofficial system of personal denomination, continues the old system of characterising and individualising or of indicating the descent or the origins of an individual. However, much more important in the research of these supplementary names, ever so necessary in a community (especially in a rural one), leads to the *discovery* of some of the manners of formation of those anthroponyms (which were based on the most diverse forms of hypocoristics or derivatives of the personal names or various derivatives of the appellatives) which would become family names[2].

The numerous lexemes, whether common names (appellatives) or proper names (personal names or toponyms), which, at the end of 1780 AD, with the introduction of the Austrian Civil Code[3], would become family names, may be older than two to three centuries, maybe even a millennium, therefore, their process of de-etymologisation may have taken place even earlier or even right the words which underlie them had acquired an anthroponymic function. As stated by P.P. Chuchka (2005: XL), "one might think that in the etymologisation of such family names, we ought to focus our research on the etymology of the appellatives which are, from a phonetic standpoint, correlative with them, thus indicating the origin of each proper name corresponding to the family name or the history of each geographic designation connected to it". Keeping in

[1] One has reached this conclusion as a result of the etymologisation of a few hundred family names, existing in the anthroponymic systems of the Ukrainian communities in Maramureş. On has analysed, entirely, the family names in Rona de Sus, Crăciuneşti and Lunca la Tisa, and partially those in Poienile de sub Munte, Repedea, Ruscova, Bocicoiul Mare, Tisa, Câmpulung la Tisa, Remeţi, and Teceul Mic (where people speak Trascarpathian speeches), Crasna Vişeului, Bistra and Valea Vişeului (where one can find Hutsul speeches).

[2] See, in this sense, Herbil 2007; Idem 2010.

[3] This is a reference to Transylvania, which, like other European territories, was, at the time, ruled over by the Empire of Austria and the Kingdom of Hungary, since, in other areas of the Romanian territory, the officialisation of family names was done only in 1864, with the introduction of the Civil code (cf. Iordan 1983: 12).

BDD-V5179 © 2018 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 06:00:41 UTC)

mind the well-known fact in linguistics that the history of the appellatives is different from the one of proper (personal) names, the method of etymologisation of the former should not, entirely (s.n.), be used in the etymologisation of the anthroponyms, for, as A.V. Superanska (1971: 36-37) states, "the etymology of the appellative requires reconstructions of the oldest forms and meanings, while the etymology of a personal name may be limited to (even stop at) the closest name (onyma), and hence the transanthroponymised appellative which underlies it. In this case, the multiple meanings of the appellative which help with the discovery of the origin of the family fame, are obtained according to *the principle of the onomastic probability* (s.n.). In fact, it is the idea (developed by comparing the etymologies of the appellatives with those of proper names), which A. Meillet (1934, apud Constantinescu 1963: XLII) had enounced a few decades earlier, stating that, generally, "it can be said that, the etymologies of the proper names are uncertain".

In this sense, the Ukrainian researcher P.P. Chuchka (2005: XL) highlights the fact that the etymologisation of appellatives, of personal names and the toponyms which underlie the current family names do not form the scope of the onomast, nor do they form the scope of one which etymologises, of the anthroponomast. They are presented: in the etymological dictionaries of the words (explanatory dictionaries), in the dictionaries of personal names and in the etymological dictionaries of toponyms. And, still, P.P. Chuchka is not completely right, because, in the case of the appellatives, it is necessary to indicate the meaning or meanings of the lexemes which underlie the anthroponyms, while, regarding the personal names or, more precisely, the hypocoristics or their derivative forms, they have to be presented in order to discover which was the language in which the truncation took place or which were the means used in the creation of the form of the (primary) anthroponym turned family name.

A differentiation between the researcher of family names (anthroponomast), the one of appellatives (etymologist) and that of toponyms (toponomast) is made by the same Ukrainian linguist, P.P. Chuchka (2005: XL-XLI). Thus, we discover that the onomast who studies the etymology of family names (i.e. their primary meaning and the primary form) one needs to discover the origins of the anthroponym (later turned family name), to show which language it originates from, indicating the role which the respective designation (semantically and structurally) until one reaches a conventional but stable sign of identification of a family or of a people (and not just of a generation) and what phonetic and grammar changes it has undergone since the introduction of the Civil Code. Furthermore, when possible, one ought to bring to light as well the reasons which have led to the creation of the respective family name.

It is a known fact that the *degree of credibility* of the onomastic etymologies (and even more so in the case of the anthroponyms) is much more reduced than that of the etymologies of a common name, for, as N.A. Constantinescu (1963: XLII) stated, "the proof to this was brought about by all the onomastic researchers". Anyone who etymologises an appellative will start one's work relying on three well-known details: 1) the exponent under the guise of the acoustic or optical signal, that is to say, the word whose meaning has to be discovered; 2) the designate, more precisely the content or the meaning, which are included in the exponent (in the word) and 3) the referent, that is the denoted, as a concrete object (in most cases), referred to by means of the exponent. Thus, the researcher of the etymology of an appellative, searching in the form the first meaning of the common name, as well, has, on the one hand, the possibility of researching the phonetic history of the name, and, on the other hand, its semantic evolution. At the same time, the etymologist of common names may follow closely both the name (onoma), and the as well as the denoted (the object or the notion), but especially the connections between them (Chuchka 2005: XL).

BDD-V5179 © 2018 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 06:00:41 UTC)

In the same context, the researcher of the etymology of a toponym (the toponomast) has some advantages over the anthroponomast. The toponomast is familiar with the etymology of a geographic name, whose etymology needs to be discovered (for a toponym is the name of a concrete geographic object, of a mountain, of a settlement, of a hill, of a river, etc.). One has, in most cases, the ability to see each of the enumerated denoted (mountain, settlement, hill, river), namely the geographic objects named and localised in a certain space, in order to "be able to establish the degree of semantic correspondence between the name and the named object" (*Ibidem*).

At the disposal of the researcher of the etymology of family names (of the anthroponomast), as noted by P.P. Chuchka (2005: XL-XLI), are just the names, namely the exponent (and that isn't always authentic). The bearers of the current family names are not their first denoted. Almost every family name has lost (or has changed) its lexical meaning, at least two-three centuries ago, and the relevant motivation of its way of formation has disappeared ever since then, when its ancestors began transmitting to their children or nephews the name of the authentic denominated (of the first named). The Anthroponomast – as stated by the Ukrainian linguist – is unable to see the first bearer of the that respective name (which functioned as a soubriquet or an agnomen), a privilege enjoyed by the toponomast. For example, after the disappearance of the first *Mureşan* or a *Ruscovan*, of *Cobel* or *Hamor* or of *Kormos* or *Magas* a few dozen generations have passed, and, as such, in the physical, mental or other characteristics of the offspring of *Mureşan*, *Ruscovan*, *Cobel*, *Hamor*, *Kormos* or *Magas*, one cannot see the features of the first one to bear this name. The current offspring of *Mureşan*, *Ruscovan*, *Cobel*, *Hamor*, *Kormos* or *Magas* no longer have the same features of differentiation and individualisation their ancestors used to have a few hundred years ago. Only the family names have remained, but their aspect has often been deformed, *disfigured*[4], by the representatives of the administrations which spoke a different language than the one wherein the respective names where formed (born). This *disfigurement*, i.e. change in the sound level and the orthography of the family names specific to the Ukrainian settlements of Maramureş, has been done in time in two ways, compared to the other villages, where, there was usually only one.

The first consisted in the fact that, in some cases, the civil servants working at the register office were not very (or at all) familiar with Ukrainian or Romanian, registering family names according to the phonetic system of the language they mastered, thus, changing its form (orthography). Consequently, these forms have been adapted, according to the degree of mastery of Ukrainian, (or, in some cases, of Hungarian). The numerous orthographic varieties of a single name, borne by members of the same family, which were recording mistakes in the documents of the Registry Office, bear witness to the latter. For example, the family name *Andraşciuc* shows up, in the official registry, with the spelling varieties *Andrasciuc* and *Andrascuk*; *Ardelean – Ardelan*, *Ardelian*, *Ardyelan* şi *Argyelan*; *Babinéţ – Babineţi*, *Babinecz* and *Babinets*; *Boiciuc – Boicsuk*, *Boiczuk*, *Bojcsuk* and *Boiciuk*; *Calena – Calina*, *Kalina* and *Kalena*; *Copoşciuc – Coposciuc*, *Kopoşciuc*, *Koposciuc*, *Kopoştiuk*, *Kopostiuk*, *Kopoştiuc*, *Kopostiuc* and *Koposcsuk*; *Cvaşciuc –Kvasciuc*, *Kvaşciuc*, *Kvaşciuk* and *Kvascsuk*; *Grijac – Grizsak*, *Griijac*,*Gridjac*, *Gridjak*, *Gridzsak* and *Gridjeak*; *Holovciuc – Holouciuc*, *Holociuc*and*Holovcsuk*; *Laviţa – Lavicza*, *Lavica* and *Laviţă*; *Malearciuc – Maliarciuc*, *Malyarciuc*, *Malyarcsuc* and *Malyarcsuk*; *Mesaroş – Meisaroş*, *Meişaros*, *Mesaros*, *Meşaroş* şi *Meszaros*; *Míki – Mica* (the two forms – *Miki* şi *Mica* – can be found in members of the same family); *Nebeleác – Nebeliac*, *Nebelyeak*,

[4] It is the reality one has noticed as a result of analysing the family names and of the anthroponymic systems specific to this part of Romania.

BDD-V5179 © 2018 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 06:00:41 UTC)

Nebileac, *Nebiliac* and *Nebiliak*; *Novoselenski – Novoszelenski*, *Novoszelenschi*, *Novoszlenski* and *Novoszlenschi*; *Romaniuc – Romaniuk, Romanuk, Romanyuc* and *Romanyuk*; *Semeniuc – Semeniuk, Szemeniuk* and *Szemenyuk*; *Traista– Traistă, Treista* and *Treiszta*; *Ţifrac – Czifrac, Czifrak, Cifrac* and *Tifrac* (even three of the respective forms can be found in members of the same family); *Vârva – Varva* and *Vărva*.

The second cause of the disfigurement and of the emergence of the different forms of one and the same name is not specific just to the Ukrainian villages in the area but to all settlements in Transylvania (regardless of ethnicity), as well as to other areas formerly under Hungarian rule. It is about the campaign of Magyarisation of the family names which had started earlier, but the "first constraint in this sense was made by Emperor Joseph II against Jews who were clinging on to their traditions and would not get it through their minds to quit the habit of adding the particle *ben* to the name of the father. By decision 10.426 of 23 july 1787, it was decreed that, without any exception, each jew would take on a German name and bear it unchanged for the rest of his life" (Chende-Roman 2009: 92).

This process has reached its peak with the establishment, in 1881, in Budapest, of the Central Society for the Magyarisation of the Name, whose president, Simon Tekeles published, in 1898, the document *How to Magyarise the family name*. "The results obtained in this sense can be seen by researching the records of the registry office from the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century" (Chende-Roman 2009: 328-329)[5]. We all know what followed next. For example, one can find family names such as *Gerlai* (a variety of *Gherlan*, as it is, as a matter of fact, pronounced by the locals); *Petrovai* (in the mind of the inhabitants identical to *Petrovan*); *Ruszinka* (where, *o* is graphically rendered as *a*, pronounced: [*Rúsin'ko*]; *Morocsilla* (the magyarised form of the Ukrainian family name *Morocylo*< appellative *moróčylo*< verb *moróčyty* (dialectal *moróčity*) "to pull one on somebody, to deceive, to double-cross") as well as numerous translated names[6]: *Almaşi*, *Halas*, *Horvat*, *Logoş*, *Mesaroş*, *Molnar*, *Nemet*, *Oros*, *Pipaş*, *Varga*, etc.

But let us return to the process of the etymologisation of a toponym, in whose case, as stated above, the named geographic objects (the mountain, the settlement, the hill or the river) are exactly localised, compared to the contemporary bearer of a family name who does not enjoy the same privilege. What's more, the first person referred to by the current family name may have not even been form around here, one's great-grandfather coming here from other areas and even from a different country (speaking a different language), whence one has brought a ready-made family name, which may (or may not be) similar to a Romanian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, etc. word, and one's followers may have, in time, been assimilated by another population, while still retaining the respective foreign name (for example, the family name *Cosovan*, who, for the people in the south may have been based on the toponimical name *Kosovo* (in former Yugoslavia, today theRepublic of Kosovo) + the suffix *-an*, but in the case of the Ukrainians, this name has originated in the Ukrainian catoinym) *kosován*< toponimical name *Kosovo* (a place in the Ukrainian region of Ivano-Frankivsk) + Ukrainian suffix *-an*; another example would be the family name *Rîşco* which, depending on the area where it is encountered, could be: 1. a derivative of the Polish *ryś* "lynx (mammal)" + suf. *-k(o)*; 2. a continuation of the personal name *Ryško* which, in some Slavic languages, is a hypocoristic of a western name such as *Richard*,

[5] The content of the document (translated into Romanian) was published (for the first time here – s.n.) at the end of the same volume (Chende-Roman 2009: 459-504).
[6] These names are rendered under the forms which have been found in the official documents of the Ukrainians of Maramureş.

BDD-V5179 © 2018 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 06:00:41 UTC)

Fridrich, *Ditrich*; 3. a transfer of the Hungarian name of the ginger cow to the man (*riška*< Hungarian appellative *riska* "red-headed, ginger"); 4. a continuation of the agnomen *Rьižъko* which is based on the appellative *rьižij* "red-headed") (Chuchka 2005: 485). The anthroponym *Riško* is specific to other Slavic people as well[7].

Under these circumstances, a few more difficult problems stand in the way of the researcher of the etymology of family names. "The object of the etymologisation of family names, as highlighted by P.P. Chuchka (2005: XLI), is not the entire history of the lexeme which underlies that respective name, from its appearance in the language, but only the period when the lexeme became a hereditary proper name of someone who started a certain family." But will the anthroponomast succeed every time in this enterprise? Highly unlikely, and even if one cannot succeed in a certain etymology, but in one "more or less likely [this] many be useful in the systematisation of the onomastic material, until a better one is discovered…", as stated by N.A. Constantinescu (1963: XLIII).

Ideally, the anthroponomast establishes what was, a few hundred years ago, the respective word turned into family name, being compelled to identify the sound level, i.e. the phonetics and the original meaning of the respective lexeme to be able to present "the phono-morphematic structure of the anthroponym, but also the way in which it characterised its first bearer. The etymologist has to clarify if the analysed sound complex has been, in a certain area, at certain point in time, only a rare personal name or a specific soubriquet" (Chuchka 2005: XLI) or an agnomen characteristic for the denoted.

In the case of family names based on personal names (baptismal names), it is very difficult to establish the semantics, they cannot always be etymologised, because personal names are usually asemantic, and, furthermore, their etymologies are covered by dictionaries of personal names. It is important to indicate the language, the dialect or speech of the respective names (for example: *Andraş*, *Ferenc*, *Lucaci*, *Matus*, *Moiş*, *Tamaş*, *Tivodar*; *Calena*, *Fetico*, *Clepa*, *Copa*, *Haraseniuc*, *Hreniuc*, *Meşco*, *Miklos*, *Moisiuc*, *Vancea*; *Barbu*, *Cristea*, *Danci*, *Ieremiaş*, *Ilieş*, *Sav*), the emotional content it had at the time, and, especially, if they have ever been used in a speech or another, having in mind that the anthroponyms borrowed from another language (dialect or speech) have the greatest degree of individualisation. Therefore, as stated by N.A. Constantinescu (1963: XLII), one has to keep in mind that: "Sometimes, the stem-name or a derivative may have two or more different origins, which one needs to take into account…". Consequently, it is worth mentioning that in the situations when a family name is based on a personal name, in most cases, it is preferable to present the etymologies of these name, as they are presented in the specialised dictionaries. But the existence of the numerous proposed solutions, as stated even by some of the authors of such dictionaries, creates some difficulties in choosing the correct etymology, especially if one takes into account the fact that the respective names have appeared two thousand years ago or even much earlier before (it is, especially true, about the hagiographic names of the Old and New Testament). In this context, one may remember the statement of Cristian Ionescu (2001: 7): "for many names the solutions [it is about the explanations of the name put forward over time by various linguists, but not only them – s.n.] seemed unsatisfactory, but one has to admit that our attempts at finding a new explanation have yielded few results".

[7] Met at the Slovaks (cf. Knappová 1985: 156) and Belarussians (cf. Sudnik 1965: 39). Moreover, it has a high frequency at the Poles, where one can find the derivatives *Ryszkowicz* (mentioned in 1425 A.D.) and *Ryszczuk*/*Ryszczyk* (cf. Rymut, 2001:379).

BDD-V5179 © 2018 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 06:00:41 UTC)

The task of the etymologist is considerably more difficult when the family name is based on an appellative. The researcher has to identify the form of the common name and to show its meaning (or even the multitude of meanings) which may (have) become the prototype of the respective anthroponym, turned into family name. If one considers that the majority of the nouns, which underlie family names, are polysemantic lexemes and the metaphoric meanings of the names of beings, plants, tools or other appellatives found in monolingual dictionaries (even more so in the historical or dialectal dictionaries) are not always etymologically analysed, then one "may imagine the research and suppositions an etymologist of family names has to make" (Chuchka 2005: XLI).

Since there is a motivational connection between the names, based on appellatives, which appeared a few hundred years ago, and the real features of their contemporary bearers no longer exist, it is easy to understand why the degree of probability of the proposed etymologies will be lower than in the case of family names based on personal names. As stated by P.P. Chuchka (2005: XLI-XLII), "even if we would take into account all the possible causes of naming people, all the possible functions and the entire valency of each morpheme in a lexeme, our etymologies will, often, be only some probable etymologies. It is not without reason, that the people who compile etymological dictionaries, in the case of such names, set forth prudently and firmly, two or more etymological interpretations".

Taking into account the geographic position of the Ukrainian settlements in Maramureş, it is normal that we witness a "linguistic diversity", which leads to the fact that the family names of the three anthroponomic systems contain many foreign elements. Having been in contact for a few centuries with the speakers of Romanian, Hungarian, German, Czech, Slovak, Hebrew, etc. many family names of the Ukrainians living here, may have alternative etymologic interpretations (as is the case of family names such as: *Babota*, *Bodnar*, *Bondiuc*, *Bota*, *Butean*, *Canius*, *Catrineţ*, *Cobel*, *Covaci*, *Husar*, *Kail*, *Ostaş*, *Pipaş*, *Rişco*, *Rus*, *Sarca*, *Şanta*, *Şevera*, *Vida*, *Vincz*, etc. for example, *Bódnar*[8]: is based on the (local) Ukrainian appellative *bódnar'* "cooper", which has a correspondent in Hungarian, in Slovak, *bodnár* "1. «idem»; 2. wheeler, wheel seller" (Chuchka 2005: 77) and in Romanian (< Romanian appellative *bodnar*, variant of *butnar* „ cooper" – Iordan 1983:62) and many others[9].

Among family names of the Ukrainians, the foreign element is not just significant, but also very diverse. There are numerous names which are foreign creations, formed from personal names and appellatives specific to the (Romanian, Hungarian, German, etc.) languages which the Ukrainians or their ancestors have come into contact with for a few centuries. However, one has to keep in mind the fact that many foreign appellatives have entered the local lexis of the Ukrainians of Maramureş (as well as those of Transcarpathia who, over time, have settled these

[8] It has been mentioned between 1572-1575, in Bocicul Mare: *Jo. Bodnar* (Bélay 1943: 128). Today, it is widespread in the Transcarpathian Ukraine, in the rayons: Teaciv, Hust, Mukacevo, Irşava, Mijhirea, Ujhorod, Velykyi Bereznyi, Svaleava and Vynohradiv (cf. Chuchka 2005: 77).

[9] For example, explaining the family name *Klempuš*, present in the structure of the name *Clempuşac/Klempuşak*, P. P. Chuchka attributes two etymologies to it and several comparisons which may themselves be explanations of the name: «*Klémpuš*: 1. appellative hutsul. *klémpuš*/*klýmpuš* "plug, peg; yoghurt barrel lid", moldavian. *klempúš* "hook, nail, crook"; 2. Neutral familiary. Polish *Klempa*, *Klemp*, *Klaępa* sau *Klępo* + suf. *-uš* (< apppellative. Polish *klępa* "the woman of the clan", and metaphorically, "an old, elderly, woman"); compare with: the Ukrainian appellative *klémpa* "a negligent, dirty man, a rag"; Polish appellative *klępa* "disorderly (woman); fat woman"; eastern Slovak appellative. *kl'ampa* "idem"; Serbo-Croatian appellative *klémpa* "thick-headed; unwieldy, sluggish man; person with an ugly walk"» (2005: 266) and with the «local (Transcarpathian) Ukrainian appellative *kl'ámpa* "jade; a cow barely able to walk"» (*Ibidem*: 276).

BDD-V5179 © 2018 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 06:00:41 UTC)

areas), during the past seven centuries or even more. Consequently, many appellatives may be, from this point of view, an integral part of the lexis of their speech. Thus, the polysemy and homonymy may lead to a situation where one and the same family name may, nowadays, have several etymologies, especially in the *multi-ethnic* regions. In this case, the respective family name has a *multiple etymology*. For example, the family name *Rus*[10], considered in onomastics, (and not only in the Romanian onomastics) a name with multiple etymology, may be based on: 1. the invariable adjective *rus* „blond, roşcat, bălai"[11] (Chuchka 2005: 493); 2. The old ethnonym *rus*, which the Poles, Slovaks, Czechs, Croats, Serbians, Bulgarians, even the Romanians, since times immemorial till today have used to refer, especially, to the Ukrainians, (the inhabitants of the kievan Rus')[12] and, in general, to all the easterns Slavs, thus distingushing them from the

[10] The first mention of the anthroponym *rus*, was found in Poland, in a document from 1136, which documents three bishops: *Zlauos*, *Ruz* and *Sul*, while, in Czechia, the name *rus* has been popular ever since the XII century (cf. Chuchka 2005: 493). In the historical county of Maramureș, the male name and family name Rus has been used, according to the documents in the XVI century, being mentioned in the Ukrainian settlement Seredne Vodeane (Apşa de Mijloc), in 1525: *Laz. Ruz* (Bélay 1943: 122); in Moisei, in 1600: *Nic. Ruz* (Bélay 1943: 175); in Budeşti, in 1604: *El. Ruz* (Bélay 1943: 131); in Rozavlea, in 1605: *Rusz Jonucz* (Bélay 1943: 187); in Bârsana, in 1605: *Gr.Rusz* (Bélay 1943: 123); in Danylove, in 1605: *Ge.Rusz* (Bélay 1943: 189); in Săpânța, in 1605: *Ivon MichailaRusz* (Bélay 1943: 193) in Lunca la Tisa, in 1672: *Rusz Miklos* (Bélay 1943: 173) and in many others. Our opinion is that the anthroponym *Rus* (in Hungarian *orosz*) has been used much earlier, because, on the one hand, the ethnonym *orosz* has been used by the hungarians in the XII century (cf. Chuchka 2005: 420), and, on the other hand the valley of Ruscova has been mentioned as *Orosz viz* "the water of the Russian, the Russian water"). Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the ethnonym *Rus* (which was used to refer the population of the Transcarpathian Ukraine, which used to belong to the Kievan Rus', the future Ukrainians), as mentioned in the Hungarian annals (cf. Magister P. (Anonymus) 2005: 27), began to be used in the first half of the XI centrury, when King Stephan I of Hungary named his son Emeric governor of the of these lands titled "duke of the Rusinians" ("dux Ruizorum"), the Hungarians taking the ethnonym *Rus* and translating it, first with *ruiz*, then by *wruz*, and finally by *orosz*(for details, see Herbil 2018: 250 and the others). The same ethnonym, which referred to the future Ukrainians, is found in many place names in Transylvania, all of them mentioned starting with the first half of the XIII century (cf. Herbil 2018: 256-257). With this in mind, one can say that the statement of N.A. Constatinescu (1963: 364-365) according to which Rus may indicate the ethnic origins only after 1775 is completely, at least in this area of Romania.

[11] The *Rus* anthroponomic theme was the basis of the numerous derivatives in the Slavic onomastics, and in some people, for example, the Serbians, Bulgarians and their neighbours it is also used as a personal name (Ilčev1969: 432-433; Constantinescu 1963: 364-365; Grković 1977: 171; Šimundić 1988: 296-297).

[12] And this is proof of the fact that the Ukrainians have lived in these areas ever since the Kievan Rus'. *Rus* cannot be connected, as many people do, to the homonym *Rus* (citizen of Russia), since, to refer to an inhabitant of the Muscovite (Czarist) Empire on would use, until the XVII century (the rule of Peter I), terms such as *muscal*, *moscal*, *moskovian* etc., as their country was called, according to the European maps of the time, *Moscovia*. Studying the ancient documents of the Moldovan region, Corneliu Reguș (2017: 35-61) has reached the conclusion that our chroniclers, especially the Moldavians, would use different names for the two people: Ukrainian and Russian. Accordingly, for the former (the Ukrainians) they would use the terms: the masculine *rus*, the feminine *ruscă*, the plural *ruși*, their language being *rusească*, and their lands – *Rusii* (from *Русь*). For the latter (the Russians), and their country Russia, there are, in the Romanian historiography, the following terms: the masculine *moscal*, the feminine *moscalca*, the plural *moscali*, while the Empire was called *Moscovia* (*Mosc*, *Țara Moscului*, *ȚaraMoschicească*). As such, the etnonyms *rus*, *rusin*, *rutean* (*рус*, *русин*, *рутенець*), originating in the name of the first motherland of the Ukrainians, *Rusi* (in order to create confusion, in the XIX century, the czarist Russians invented the ter *Kievan Rus'*), have been used throughout history, to refer to the representative of the same people, the Ukrainian (*rus* = *rusin* = *rutean* = *ucrainean*). For example the etnonym *rutean* and the phrase *limba ruteană* (= *ukrainian/ukrainian language*) are based on the German *Rutean*, a word originating in Latin (as in the diplomas of the XI-XVI centuries one fequently encounters the forms *Rutenii* and *Ruzinii*, meaning rusini, inhabitants of the Kievan Rus'), by which, during the Austro-Hungarian period, the Germans would refer to the western Ukrainians (the ones in Galicia, Transcarpathia) – *Rutheni*, and the language spoken by them – *ruthenishe Sprache*. The certainty that the ethnonym *rus* was widespread in the Romanian (Vlach) linguistic area is based on both the existence of the numerous

BDD-V5179 © 2018 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 06:00:41 UTC)

other slavs; 3. Romanian appellative *rus* ”the name of two species of insects”; or the name of a fish ”gudgeon” (Iordan: 1983: 400). And there are numerous such examples.

Setting aside the concept of *multiple etymologies*, Al Graur (1950: 33) reached the conclusion that “the etymology has to be found where it lay, that is to say either in its own language, or in a foreign one, if the elements of enlightenment come from one or more foreign languages. The fact that we have found a starting point in our own language is no excuse for delving into other languages. Only that etymology may be just which takes int account all the present elements, which illuminates all the aspects, of form and content, of the history of a word, without neglecting the fact that it may stem from several places at the same time.”[13] In other words, as stated by I. Coteanu and M. Sala (1987: 78), it is “about the possibility that word may simultaneously have several etymons. A word such as *mausoleum*, …, proves it, as it may have been borrowed by some from Latin, by others from German, still by others from Italian or Spanish. As the forms widely coincide, it is practically speaking, impossible to establish who introduced the word *mausoleum* in Romanian and from where.”

From this point of view, an even more difficult problem for a researcher would be the etymologies of the numerous family names based on appellatives, especially the ones which name professions, crafts or miscellaneous occupations, like *Bodnar*, *Covaci*, *Husar*, *Pipaş*, *Şipoş*, etc. Each of these family names has equivalents (or correspondents) not just in the local appellatives of Ukrainians, but in those of Romanians or Hungarians, or those of other nations in the area. Moreover, many of the family names considered Romanian, may be formed from the appellatives which one also meets in the Ukrainian speech, e.g. *bumbar*, *laviţa*, *traista*, etc. Since the appellative was (or still is to this day) part of the lexis of the Ukrainian speech, the “Namengeber” of the respective anthroponym may have been a speaker of the said speech. This compels us to take into account the fact that the respective family name may Ukrainian in origin. Any appellative of this kind may have been part of the lexis of the Ukrainians at the moment of formation of the anthroponyms which became family names.

A distinct category is made up of family names which are based on several etymologies, even in the same language, since, as Al. Graur (1950: 32) had noted “A word may have more etymologies without originating in different languages, but by being borrowed several times from the same place. This thing happened because the original word may have changed its form or meaning between the first borrowing and the second borrowing, therefore, the second time, it was loaned with a certain degree of alteration”. Moreover, the previous statement is also valid in the case of dialects of a language. The following names may be included in this type of etymology: Belbe, Bota, Bumbuc, Doda – Romanian; Calena, Canius, Cobel, Hera – Ukrainian, etc.

Far more numerous problems are posed by family names whose theme is biblical or calendar-related, and, especially those which are based on hypocoristic constructions or derivatives thereof, they may have identical forms in other languages as well (*Andraş*, *Costea*, *Ferenţ*, *Matus*, *Miklos*, *Moiş*, *Ştefan*, *Tomaş*/*Tamas*, *Timiş*, etc.).

---

toponyms based upon it (*Rus*, *Rusu*, *Ruși*, *Rusca* or derived with various suffixes: *Ruseni*, *Rușești*, *Rusova*, *Ruscova* etc.), and the family names (*Rus*, *Rusul*, *Rusca*, *Rusan*, *Rusescu*) as well as the surnames (*Rus*, *Rusul*, *Rusca*, *Rusiu*, *Ruscan* etc.), which are well-anchored in the Modavian diplomas of the XV-XVII. In conclusion, the existence of the family names and toponyms which are based on the ethnonym *rus*, indicates the presence of a Ukrainian (or Proto-Ukrainian population) in the areas of the current counties: Maramureș, Satu Mare, Bihor, Sălaj, Cluj, Bistrița-Nasăud, Sibiu, Suceava, Botoșani, Neamț, Iași, Bacău, Vaslui, Galați, etc.

[13] The study of Al. Graur (1950) is the first work on this topic. The problem of multiple etymology will be mentioned again in other works of the same linguist: Graur 1963; *Idem* 1975.

BDD-V5179 © 2018 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 06:00:41 UTC)

Ideally, in the etymologisation of family names, would be the discovery and presentation of the origins, the original meaning and the functions of the anthroponyms which had become family names. It is not absolutely necessary to discover the etymology of the stem or that of its underlying theme, and it is not necessary to present their evolutions entirely. An exception, in this sense, must be made for the "debatable" appellatives (with multiple etymologies) and for the personal names, especially the calendar names.

For a better understanding of the proposed etymology, the researcher should try to reveal the linguistic environment where the formation of the anthroponym turned into family name took place, to observe the conditions in which the lexemes became anthroponyms (and, later, family names), illustrating, at the same time, the first steps and their employment in the position of personal names. Starting with this reasoning, family names belonging to an anthroponomic system, ought to be compared to other identical ones, related or similar to the ones from other regions of that country or to the ones of the neighbouring people. The indication of the first mentions in written documents (where possible), of the variants of family names existing tin the official documents of the bearers thereof, the area and the frequency of the anthroponyms turned into family names, but also the contemporary functioning of the lexemes which underlie them, would add a plus to anthroponomastic analysis.

The corroboration of all these data will bring about an answer regarding the problems referring to: the population who created the family name (Ukrainian, Romanian, Hungarian, Polish or any another); to which language the lexemes which underlie them belong; if they are formed directly from appellatives or from proper names; whose are the morphological procedures (of word formation) used in their emergence; are they specific to a language, in general, or to a dialect or local speech.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Bélay, V. (1943), *Máramaros megye társadalma és nemzetiségei. A megye betelepülésétől a XVIII. század elejéig*, Budapesta.
2. Chende-Roman, Gheorghe (2009), *Antroponimie: din onomastica Ţării Silvaniei*, Zalău, Ed. Silvania.
3. Constantinescu, N.A. (1963), *Dicţionar onomastic românesc*, Bucureşti, Ed. Academiei.
4. Coteanu, I., Sala, M. (1987), *Etimologia şi limba română*, Bucureşti, Ed. Academiei RSR.
5. Chuchka, P.P. (2005), *Prizvyshcha zakarpatskykh ukrajintsiv: Istoryko-etymolohichnyj slovnyk*, Lviv, Svit.
6. Graur, Al. (1950), *Etimologie multiplă*, in „Studii şi cercetări de lingvistică", I, Bucureşti, fascicula 1, p. 22-34.
7. Graur, Al. (1963), *Etimologii româneşti*, Bucureşti, Ed. Academiei R.P.R.
8. Graur, Al. (1975), *Alte etimologii româneşti*, Bucureşti, Ed. Academiei R.S.R.
9. Grković, M. (1977), *Rečnik ličnich imena kod Srba*, Beograd.
10. Herbil, Ioan (2007), *Supranume şi porecle din Rona de Sus (judeţul Maramureş)*, in vol. „Un om, un simbol: In honorem magistri Ivan Evseev", coord. Marin Bucă, Bucureşti, Ed. CRLR, p. 292-312.
11. Herbil, Ioan (2010), *Analiza supranumelor şi a poreclelor din Crăciuneşti (judeţul Maramureş)*, in vol. „Studii de limbă, literatură şi metodică" (lucrările „Simpozionului internaţional «Aktual'nyje tendenciji v issledovaniji slov'anskich jazykov, literatur i

BDD-V5179 © 2018 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 06:00:41 UTC)

kul'tur», 19-20 iunie 2008, Cluj-Napoca"), XIII, coord. Sanda Misirianțu, Cluj-Napoca, Ed. Napoca Star, p. 66-83.
12. Herbil, Ioan (2018), *Studii de dialectologie și toponimie ucraineană din România*, Cluj-Napoca, București, Ed. Casa Cărții de Știință, Ed. RCR Editorial.
13. Ilčev, St. (1969), *Rečnik na ličnite i familni imena u bălgarite*, Sofia.
14. Ionescu, Cristian (2001), *Dicţionar de onomastică*, Bucureşti, Ed. Elion.
15. Iordan, Iorgu (1983), *Dicţionar al numelor de familie româneşti*, Bucureşti, Ed. Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică.
16. Knappová, M. (1985), *Jak se bude jmenovat*, Praga, Academia.
17. Magister P. (Anonymus) (2005), *Gesta Hungarorum* (in trans. Kamila Neipavera), Ujhorod.
18. Meilett, A. (1934), *Le slave commun* (2-éme éd. avec A. Vaillat), Paris.
19. Reguș, Corneliu (2017), *Ukrajintsi v Rumuniji*, București, Ed. RCR Editorial.
20. Rymut, K. (1999, 2001), *Nazwiska pollaków: Słownik historyczno-etymologiczny*, tom I (A-K), tom II (L-Ż), Kraków.
21. Sudnik, M. R. (1965), *Slounik asabovych ulasnych imen*, Minsk, Navuka i technika.
22. Superanska, O.V. (1971), *Imovirnisna onomastyka*, in „Movoznavstvo", nr. 4, Kiev, p. 35-40.
23. Šimundić, M. (1988), *Rječnik osobnih imena*, Zagreb.

BDD-V5179 © 2018 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 06:00:41 UTC)