# ROMANIAN ONOMASTICS IN THE CENTRAL BANAT DISTRICT OF SERBIA

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**ABSTRACT**

*Starting from the 20th century, the study of Romanian names has raised the specialists' interest.*

*In fact, one should mention that the number of professional works in this area is not big and that, when it comes to the Romanian language in the region of Vojvodina, very little research has been carried out.*

*Having all that in mind, we decided to investigate personal names in the Romanian villages on the territory of Serbian Central Banat – Ečka, Jankov Most, Sutjeska, Torak and Uzdin. The personal names were collected from birth registers and all anthroponyms appearing in the period from 1900 to 2000 were analyzed.*

**Key words**: *Central Banat*, *onomastics*, *anthroponym*, *etymology*, *language*

The research of Romanian personal names became more alive at the beginning of the 20th century. In the fourth decade, there were two attempts to regionally synthesize the language material, but neither of the attempts succeeded in creating a hagiographic basis or in specifying the dominating principles concerning this branch of onomastics.

Almost all studies in the field of toponymy and anthroponymy in the Romanian specialized literature investigate the concrete material from the area of onomastics which was collected from various old documents or directly, in polls. Having in mind a more practical point of view on researching onomastic material and due to the lack of research of names, we decided to base this work exclusively on theory[1].

Referring to the research dealing with onomastics in the region of Vojvodina, we can note that there were very few works, thus the number of

[1] We cannot ignore a few great works on Romanian anthroponymy and toponymy. Firstly, we must mention the precious study of Ştefan Paşca (1936). *Nume de personae şi nume de animale în Ţara Oltului*, Bucharest. Even though it analyzes material from only one region, this study is the first which sheds light on the general features of the Romanian anthroponymic system. The work of N.A. Constantinescu (1963) *Dicţionar onomastic românesc*, Bucharest comprises valuable material, especially for the study of history of Romanian anthroponymy. In another study of the Romanian Academy Al. Graur (1965) *Personal Names*, Bucharest we can find many problems connected with the anthroponymic system in general, illustrated by concrete examples from different languages. A further invaluable study of toponymy is (1963) *Romanian Toponymy* published by the Romanian Academy Al. Graur, Bucharest.

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professional works in this area is insufficient[2]. Having all that in mind, we decided to investigate personal names in the Romanian villages on the territory of Serbian Central Banat – Ečka, Jankov Most, Sutjeska, Torak, Uzdin.

The names used between 1900 and 2000 were collected from birth registers. There are about 1200 names (excluding graphic variants and corresponding forms from other languages). In that sense, we can talk about three different periods during which the names were registered:

1. The first, until 1919, when the writing of names was made in the Hungarian language, due to the influence of the Austro-Hungarian rule;

2. The second starts with the year 1920, when the writing of names was made using Cyrillic characters, this was maintained until 1941, when Latin characters were introduced;

3. The third coincides with the end of World War II (1945), when the names were written in birth registers using Cyrillic characters. This is so even now.

Regarding the origin and the use of the personal names we can conclude the following:

Starting from 1900 until after World War I, apart from the traditional names among the Romanian population in these regions, we also register a series of Hungarian and German names (András, Ezsébet, Ferenc, Ibolyka, István, János, Jóska, Sándor, Hans, Klaus). Their presence can be explained by the fact that Hungarian and German families of tradesmen and craftsmen lived in Romanian villages on the territory of the Serbian Central Banat. As mentioned above, in this period all the names were registered in the documents in Hungarian language. Here are the Hungarian equivalents of the names mentioned above: *Alexandru - Sándor*; *Andrei - András*; *Anghelina - Angyalka*; *Augustin - Ágoston*; *Avram - Abrahám*; Barbara - Borbála; Catița - Katalin; Dezideriu - Dezsö; Elisabeta, Saveta - *Erzsébet*; *Filip - Fülöp*; *Floarea - Virág*, *Flora*; *Gheorghe - György*; *Ilia - Illés*; *Iosif - József*; *Iuliu - Gyula*; *Luca - Lukács*; *Magdalena - Magdolna*; *Margareta - Margit*; *Martin - Márton*; *Matei - Mátyás*; *Mihai - Mihály*; *Nicolae - Miklós*; *Pavel - Pál*; *Petru - Péter*; *Ştefan - István*; *Todor - Tivadar*; *Toma - Tamás*; *Vasa - Vazul*; *Vichentie - Vince*. We have a very interesting situation in Torak where personal names have a more "Romanian" appearance in documents, in the sense that some of them were registered in their original form or the name was transferred from the Hungarian variant into the Romanian variant. For example, *Sándor* (*Alexandru*) *Balos*.

[2] We mention two papers: Radu Flora (1976), *Nume de familie româneşti din Banat*, Pancevo, 71-125 and from the same author, *Romanian Nicknames from Yugoslav Banat*, *a Contribution to the Cultural History of the Romanians from Vojvodina.* Zrenjanin, 73-105.

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As far as Romanian traditional names are concerned, we can state that they are preeminently the same in all five villages. We list the most popular names used in this period:

I. *Ečka*: Ana, Aurel, Floarea, Gheorghe, Gheorghina, Ion, Ionel, Iosif, Iulian, Iuliana, Maria, Mădina, Mărioara, Petru, Roman;

II. *Jankov Most*: Ana, Gheorghe, Luciana, Maria, Pavel, Persida, Todor, Valeriu, Vioara;

III. *Sutjeska*: Ana, Elisabeta, Floarea, Ion, Iosif, Maria, Nicola, Pavel, Petru, Valeriu, Vioara;

IV. *Torak*: Ana, Anghelina, Catița, Costa, Floarea, Gheorghe, Ion, Iosif, Iuliana, Maria, Petru, Todor, Vichentie, Vioara.

V. *Uzdin*: Adam, Ana, Costa, Floarea, Florica, Gheorghe, Ion, Linca, Maria, Petru, Sofia, Todor, Vasa.

Indisputably, the most popular and the most frequent feminine names are Ana and Maria (with all their variants). They were liked and used in the past as well as in the present, although their popularity today cannot be compared to the popularity of another name influenced by the West which is still used despite time. Masculine names are dominated by Ion (with all their variants) which, like the feminine Ana and Maria, is still used today. The majority of the names mentioned above, as well as the names like Abel, Achim, Arcadie, Cătălin, Cătălina, Damian, Damianca, Domnica, Evdochia, Felicia, Ileana, Iordan, Iosif, Livia, Rafila, Rusalin, Rusalina, Saveta, Solomia, Vărsăvia are never used today. Names which are characteristically used in some of the villages were abandoned as well: Coriolan and Sever (Ečka), Cuzana (Jankov Most), Levi (Sutjeska), Reveca and Vichentie (Torak). We also found rare personal names like Arzén, Bazil, Meda, Srboslav, Kranislav, and Ranislav which appear only once.

After 1918 (after the end of the war), Hungarian and German names are used less and less since they had been replaced with names of a different origin. Apart from the traditional names which still persisted after 1920, Slavic names were (sporadically) used. The use of Slavic names marked a real expansion after the colonization (of the population from Bosnia) which happened after 1945. (Boža, Božica, Jasmina, Jelena, Mile, Milesa, Milica, Milka, Milutin, Miodrag, Milivoje, Milorad, Radomir, Nedeljko, Nemanja, Nenad, Obrad, Obren, Radenko, Radivoje, Radmila, Spomenka, Sreten, Željko, Živan, etc.).

In the last decades of the 20th century (during the 70's and the 80's) there is a real "invasion" of modern personal names of Western origin (Eduardo, Mirandinio, Patric, Patricia, Raul, Roberto). Also, it became popular for the newborn to receive two names (Darisela-Vanesa, Adina-Maria, Sergiu-Valentin) which was not the case in the past. In this sense, we can state the following:

1. Avoidance of traditional names;
2. Interest in foreign names.

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In the past, the choice and the use of a name for a newborn was tightly connected with the tradition to name the baby after a parent or grandparent. This is very rarely practiced today. Another factor which strongly influences the choice of the name is a mixed marriage. We can state that this kind of marriage was very rare in Uzdin, still present nowadays. But this is not the case in the other four villages. Even though they were rare in the past, mixed marriages are more and more common in Ečka and Sutjeska, less in Jankov Most and Torak. Apart form the mixed marriages, towards the end of the 20th century, men from this territory married women from Romania. This phenomenon led to the enrichment of the anthroponymy inventory in this area, with modern names under the Western influence and at the same time the custom of giving two names to the newborn.

From the point of view of origin, we have:

*Latin names*:

Adrian, Adriana, Angel, Angela, Aurel, Aurelia, Cornel, Cornelia, Cristian, Cristina, Felicia, Iulian, Iuliana, Laura, Lavinia, Marin, Marina, Natalia, Roman, Romana, Romulus, Sabin, Sabina, Silvia, Silviu, Titus, Traian, Valeria, Victor, Victoria, Virginia;

*Greek names*:

Alexandra, Alexandru, Anastasia, Andrei, Casandra, Ciprian, Damian, Diogen, Elena, Eugen, Eugenia, Filip, Gheorghe, Isidora, Melania, Minodora, Nicolae, Olimpia, Parascheva, Persida, Petru, Sebastian, Sofia, Ştefan, Teodor, Teodora, Vasa, Vasile;

*Slavic names*:

Blagoje, Bogoljub, Boža, Čedomir, Draga, Dragan, Dragica, Dragomir, Dragomirca, Dušan, Dušanka, Gordana, Jablan, Jasmina, Ljubica, Mircea, Nada, Nedeljko, Ognjen, Radmila, Slađan, Slađana, Smiljana, Spomenka, Srbislav, Stanko, Vukašin, Vukosava, Zdravko;

*Hebrew names*:

Adam, Avram, Beniamin, Daniel, Daniela, Elisabeta, Eva, Gabriel, Gabriela, Ilia, Ion, Isac, Iordan, Iosif, Magdalena, Mihai, Rachila, Sima, Solomia;

*German names*:

Bruno, Elvira, Genoveva, Gizela, Hilda, Irma, Luiza, Matilda, Richard, Robert;

*Hungarian names:*

Arpád, Géza, Ibolya, Piroska;

*Names characteristic for Romanian onomastics*:

Brânduşa, Doina, Horea, Mărioara, Sorin, Sorina, Şerban, Viorica;

*Modern names* (creations or borrowings from the West):

Alberto, Alessia, Bianca, Brigitta, Grațiela, Mirandinio, Monica, Patric, Patricia, Robert;

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*Local forms* (personal names, diminutives or hypocoristics that come from known names or names which can be explained from the point of view of etymology):

- Ecica: Bosioc – corresponds to the dialectal noun *bosioc* “busuioc” (*basil*); Codrea – corresponds to the noun *codru* (*forest*); Ginu – the masculine form originates from Virginia; Tini – hypocoristic from Cristina, Constantina or Valentina; Verginica – form for Virginia;

- Iancaid: Delian, Deliana – forms for Delia;

- Sutiesca: Ginel, Ginica – forms for Virginia; Octi – hypocoristic from Octavian;

- Torac: Băluța – corresponds to the dialectal adjective *băluță* “blond” (*blond*); Chentă < Vichentie; Gineta < Virginia; Măceş < Măteieş*/*Măteiaş (if *t* becomes *ĉ* or *ć*); Pica – hypocoristic of Sofia;

- Uzdin: Coliță – hypocoristic of Nicolae; Iosimel, Iosimela < Iosif; Iovinel – diminutive of Iova; Linţu – was formed from the family name Lința; Păvilică - diminutive of Pavel; Petrinel – diminutive of Petru; Petroi, Spăriosu – family name used as a personal name; Vasin – form for Vasile; Vinculescu – was formed from the family name Vinca.

Parents usually name their child, but this priviledge can also be given to an entrusted person (godfather, law, etc.). Be it as it may, the naming of a newborn was and still remains a very important event in the life of every family. Nowadays, literature, music and film became popular sources from which the names are chosen. Aesthetic factors play an important role in choosing the names which sound “nice” to the parents who pay due attention to the harmony of sounds. It is certain that in such situations the subjective factor is the most powerful one. Probably popularity and imitation are taken into consideration as well. A newborn is named after a great person.

Often, the choice of a name for a newborn becomes a personal problem for the parents; there are those who ask others for help. Before taking a decision, parents should consider the following: the chosen name will be held the whole life together with the family name. If, during childhood, hypocoristic and diminutive forms given in affection are welcome and they do not upset, the same thing is not valid in adulthood and old age. Formal, solemn and neutral forms are more convenient. That is, names which can be turned into a great number of hypocoristic and diminutive names for the family to use. Secondly, the surname must be taken into consideration, i.e. the harmony between the personal and family name. For example, a long family name goes along with a short personal name and vice versa. A family name which is very common and frequent can be associated with a not so frequent personal name. If parents use a name from a foreign language they should do it with style, moderation and sense of language.

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