ON TWO ROMANIAN TERMS: *BRAD* AND *SALCIE PLETOASĂ*

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Abstract

In this article we draw the linguistic and extra linguistic micromonograph of two important words of the Romanian forest terminology: *brad* (*fir-tree*) and *salcie pletoasă* (*Babylon willow*). First, we discuss the possible reasons why brad is inherited from the substratum, while almost all the other tree names in Romanian are inherited from Latin. Then, we mention the lexical family of the word, as well as its toponymical and anthroponymical "echoes". When it comes to *salcie pletoasă* (*Babylon willow*), we start from the map in the Romanian Linguistic Atlas and discuss the rich synonymic series (nouns and noun + adjective phrases).

Key words: *fir-tree, willow, toponym, hydronym, mythology*

Résumé

Dans cet article nous avons dessiné la micromonographie linguistique et extralinguistique de deux mots roumains d'importance majeure dans la terminologie de la forêt: *brad* (*sapin*) et *salcie pletoasă* (*saule pleureur*). D'abord nous avons donné les raisons pour lesquelles brad a été hérité du substrat, tandis que les autres noms d'arbres en roumain viennent du latin. Puis, nous avons signalé la famille lexicale du mot, ainsi que ses échos toponymiques et anthroponymiques. Quant à *salcie pletoasă*, nous avons commencé par la carte de l'Atlas Linguistique Roumain, et nous avons analysé la riche série de synonymes (des phrases avec des noms et des adjectifs).

Mots-clés: *saule pleureur, sapin, toponyme, hydronyme, mythologie*

The Romanian word *brad* (*fir-tree*) appears in most dictionaries along with the following definition: *brad* n., pl. *brazi* – 1. "generic term for the trees in the coniferous family"; 2. *European Silver Fir* – "tree native to the mountain areas, growing to 50 m, with straight trunk, whitish bark,

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evergreen needle-like dark-coloured lives, with flowers and seeds arranged in cones" (*Abies alba*)[1].

The fir-tree, as well as the oak-tree, is named in Romanian with an autochthonous word: the comparison with the Albanian language (*bradh*, *bredh*) confirms the hypothesis of the substratum.

We can ask ourselves: why *brad* (*fir-tree*) and *stejar* (*oak-tree*) are inherited from the autochthonous linguistic substratum while nearly all the other tree names in Romanian are of Latin origin?

This word has been preserved from the substratum due to the spiritual significance – mythical, magical and religious – this tree has with the Romanian people from time immemorial until today: "Between the dweller of the Carpathians and the Carpathian fir-tree there has always been a mythical-magical consubstantiality and a communion of destiny which has been present in all circumstances of life and death: the infant was ritually consecrated to a fir-tree. He grew up taking care of his double: the fir-tree. Their destinies intermingled during their entire life. Every time the young man fell ill, his parents went to the fir-tree asking for help. When he got married, he went to the fir-tree to ritually let it know about the marriage, the fir-tree was symbolically invited to the wedding and was taking part in the ceremony, alongside the groom and bride. When the man died, the funeral fir-tree was used"[2].

Apart from being an important element in the rites of passage, the fir-tree symbolizes *the cosmic tree*, *the axis mundi*. In the Romanian mythology, the fir-tree is present in three instances[3]: *the cosmic tree* properly, *the heavenly tree*, *the tree of life*. Other structures are related to events and traditions: *the birth tree*, *the wedding tree*, *the fertilizing tree*), *the good omen tree*, *the funerary tree*, *the alms-giving tree* (replaced by a fruit-tree), the prophylactic and icon-bearing *Maypoles*.

The fir-tree is typical of the Carpathian population, initially the Dacians, and then transmitted as a coherent ensemble of rituals, legends, myths and religious practices to their Daco-Roman successors. The process

[1] Cf. *MDA*, *I*, 2001, p. 310.
[2] Vulcănescu, 1985, p. 186.
[3] Vulcănescu, 1985, p. 186-188.

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of historical continuity and the spiritual importance explain the preservation of a word from the substratum while most of the Romanian forest terminology is of Latin origin. The fact that this word belongs to the mythical, magical and religious sphere – conservative and connected with tradition – ensured its preservation.

The fir-tree, thought to be the cosmic tree, is also proof of continuity. The fir-tree is "the last «ringing» of the forest, towards the mountain lawns and glades"[4].

The term has a lexical family created through derivation with diminutival suffixes: *brădănaş*, *brădeţ*, *brădiţ*, *brădişor*, *brăducean*, *brădui*, *brădişcan*, *brăduşcan*, *brăduştean*, *brăduţ*, *brăduleţ*, *brăduliţă* (*small or little fir-tree*), augmentatives: *brădan*, *brădău* (*big and tall fir-tree*). The syntagm *pădure de brad* and the collective derivatives are mentioned in *ALR*, vol. II, *G-Pădurărit*, map 597, question [6386: *brădet* [^{o}2, ^{o}27, ^{o}182, ^{o}353, ^{o}723, ^{o}791, ^{o}833, ^{o}836], *brădiş* [^{o}414, ^{o}514] *brădişte* [^{o}235], *brădărişte* [^{o}279], *brădiniş* ("fir forest").

The semantic field of the term *brad* includes: *brad-nemeş*, *mălin*, *molete*, *pin*, *porob*, *târş*, *târşan*, *sihlă*[5].

The echoes in the Romanian toponymy are numerous, giving indirect proof of the oldness of the word in the Romanian varieties[6] *Brad* (Bc, Hd), *Brădeanca* (Bz, Br), *Lunca Brad* (Hd), *Lunca Bradului* (Mş), *Valea Bradului* (Ag, Hd, Ph), *Valea Brazilor* (Ag), *Valea de Brazi* (Hd), *Slobozia Bradului* (Vr), *Brădeana* (Ab), *Fântâna Brazilor* (Hg), *Brădeştii Bătrâni* (Dj), *Brădeştii de Jos/de Sus* (Dj), *Brădeştii din Faţă* (Dj), *Brazii* (If, Hg), *Brazii de Jos/de Sus* (Ph), *Brădeşti* (Vs, Dj, Hg, Ab), *Râmeţ-Brădeşti* (Ab), *Brădiceşti* (Iş), *Brădineşti* (Hd), *Brazi* (Ph, Hd), *Brădăţel* (Sv, Hd, Db), *Brădeţel* (Gj), *Brădiţel* (Nţ), *Brădişor* (Vl), *Brăduleţ* (Ag), *Brăduţ* (Cv), *Bradu* (Sb, Nţ, Ag), *Bradu-Clocotici* (Vl), *Bradu de Jos/de Sus* (Ag), *Dragu Brad* (Hd), *Ruda-Brad* (Hd), *Dealu Bradului* (Ag), *Brădeanu* (Bz), *Brădişoru de Jos* (Cs).

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[4] Tohăneanu, Bulza, 1976, p. 16.

[5] They are not properly synonyms, as they are not used by the same speakers, but rather speakers from different Romanian counties and historical provinces use one of these words when they refer to the fir-tree. So, they are synonyms in a very broad sense.

[6] The toponyms are taken from: Bolocan, 2002.

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The term *brad* is the base word for the derivation of hydronyms[7]: *Brad* (8), *Brădeşti* (3), *Brădăţel*, *Brăduţel*, *Brădişor*, *Brădeţ* and of antroponyms[8]: *Brad*, *Bradu*, *Bradul*, *Bradea*, *Brădeanu*, *Brădescu*, *Brădescu*, *Brădoi*, *Brăduţ*, *Brădeţ*, *Brădiş*, *Brădişor*, *Brăduleţ*, *Brăduţan*.

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The syntagm *salcie pletoasă* is mentioned in *ALR* (The *Romanian Linguistic Atlas*), new series, 2nd volume, *G* section - *Forestry*, linguistic map no. 606, question no. [6391] – *Babylon willow*. The term *salcie*: [°95, °728] has the following variants: *salcă* [°836], *salce* (*bătrână*) [°192] (in the southern half of Romania), *răchită* [°29] (in the Northern half of Romania) and *iov* [°514, °536] (in the Northern half of Moldavia).

Most of the answers (given by the subjects of the linguistic investigation) are structured in a very simple pattern – noun + adjective; there are few exceptions: *salca a care plânge* (*the weeping willow*) [°250], *salca lu Maica Precistă* (*Virgin Mother's willow*) [°141].

The adjectives give proof of the creativity and the poetic virtues of the peasants' speech: *albă* (*white*) [°260, °812], *supărată* (*angry*) [°235, °316, °334, °346], *moartă* (*dead*) [°349], *jalnică* (*mourning*) [°76, °105, °130, °284], *pletoasă* (*shaggy*) [°531, °551, °723, °998], *plângătoare* (*weeping*) [°876], *bătrână* (*old*) [°192], *plecată* (*bent*) [°102], *amărâtă* (*sad*) [°64], *sălbatică* (*wild*) [°2], *răchitoasă* (*osier-like*) [°172]. The phrase *salcie răchitoasă* (*osier-like willow*) is a very interesting example of pleonastic expressions.

The Romanian word for *willow* (as well as its variants) does have numerous toponymical echoes: *Valea Salciei* (Bc, Bz), *Valea Salciei-Cătun* (Bz), *Valea Salciei de Sus* (Bc), *Valea Sălciilor* (Bz), *Salcia* (Ph, Gl, Mh, Tr, Bz, Bc, Br, Ot, Dj), *Salcia Nouă/Veche* (Vr), *Salcia Tudor* (Br), *Sălcioara* (Ag, Bz, Db, If, Il, Ph, Vs), *Dosu Salciei* (Bn), *Puţu cu Salcie* (Db), *Sălciile* (Ph), *Sălceni* (Vs, Tl), *Salcea* (Sv), *Sălci* (Dj), as well as several anthroponymical echoes: *Salcă*, *Salcie*, *Sălceanu*, *Sălcianu*, *Sălcieanu*, *Sălcioreanu*.

[7] The hydronyms are taken from: Bolocan, Burci, Şodolescu-Silvestru, Toma, 2006.
[8] The anthroponyms are taken from: Iordan, 1983.

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The word also has a few echoes in the Romanian hydronymy: *Salcea, Salcia* (2), *Sălciuța, Sălcii, Sălciilor, Sălcenilor*.

The willow is a very important tree in our mythology and folklore[9]. While the fir-tree and the oak are woods associated with the masculine principle, the willow is "almost the only wood associated with an all-feminine symbolism"[10], that is "the indestructible principle of life, growth and fertility"[11].

Beyond its religious significance (associating it with the Palm Sunday celebrations as well as with the cult of St. Mary – Mother of God), we can also mention facts, deeds and rituals of "popular religiosity": "the wedding by the willow"[12] (in the Apuseni Mountains) – the act of a symbolical wedding celebrated when a woman got pregnant without being married.

If the fir-tree's and the oak-tree's lofty aspect suggests duration and fortitude, the willow's seeming fragility is an image of womanliness: in the folklore imaginary "the bent branches of the Babylon willow are associated with women's long hair"[13].

The willow is an important element in the rites of passage as well as in the spring holidays (both religious and lay). It is loved for the generous shadow, which protects people from the summer scorching sun. We also add a brief comment on a famous pair of opposites: "willow – the blessed tree, poplar – the cursed tree" from an apocryphal biblical legend: as the lofty poplar refused to shelter St. Mary, Mother of God, and Infant Jesus, it was for ever cursed. On the other hand, the willow took pity on the two heavenly travelers and bent its branches to give them shadow and shelter: that's why it was for ever blessed.

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[10] Idem, *ibidem*, p. 406.
[11] Idem *ibidem*, p. 406.
[12] Idem, *ibidem*, p. 406.
[13] Idem *ibidem*, p. 407.

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