

SOBRIQUET OR PERSONAL NAME? THE PROBLEM OF NICKNAMES IN TRANSYLVANIA DURING THE 12th – 13th CENTURIES

Abstract: This study aims to subject to analysis a series of medieval anthroponyms whose use as personal names or as nicknames (sobriquets) is unclear. This is caused by the fact that what appeared as a unique name or a sobriquet in the 12th-13th centuries definitely became a nickname from the late 13th century onwards and especially during the next century.

These anthroponyms are not part of the group of Christian anthroponyms except to a little extent, but they are similar in that they have a certain linguistic meaning, which we have tried to highlight and analyse in this article. Then, on this basis, we attempted to draw a conclusion with respect to the classification of names in the 12th-13th centuries as anthroponyms or as sobriquets.

Keywords: Transylvania, 12th-13th centuries, anthroponym, sobriquet, Middle Ages, documents

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This study aims to subject to analysis a series of medieval anthroponyms whose use as personal names or as nicknames (sobriquets) is unclear. The denominative elements taken into account are those used in Transylvania during the 12th-13th centuries and they have been extracted from volumes of published documents.² The geographical space covered is that of voivodal Transylvania, Banat, Crişana and Maramureş (the latter country to a lesser extent, due to the precarious information until the 14th century).

The reason why we claim that it is difficult, if not impossible, to classify anthroponyms into the category of personal names or sobriquets is as follows: what in the 12th and 13th centuries appeared as a unique name, by the end of the 13th century

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² Georgius Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, II, Buda, 1829; G.D. Teutsch, Fr. Firnhaber, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte Siebenbürgens*, I, Wien, 1857; G. Wenzel, *Codex diplomaticus Arpadianus continuatus. Árpádkori új okmánytár*, tome VIII and XII, Pest, 1870-1874; Fr. Knauz, *Monumenta ecclesiae Strigoniensis*, I, Strigoniú, 1874; *Codex diplomaticus patrius*, VI, Budapest, 1876; *Codex diplomaticus comitum Károlyi de Nagy- Károly / A Nagy- Károlyi gróf Károlyi család oklevéltára*, I (1253-1413), ed. Géresi Kálmán, Budapest, 1882; *A Hunyadmegyei Történelmi és Régészeti Társulat Évkönyve*, Athenaeum R. Társ. Könyvnyomdája, Budapest, I, 1882, pp. 64-67; Johannis Karácsonyi, Samuelis Borovszky, *Regestrum Varadinense. Examini ferri candentis*, Budapest, 1903; Szentpétery Imre, *Regesta regum stirpis Arpadianae critico-diplomatica / Az Árpád házi királyok okleveleinek kritikai jegyzéke*, I (1001-1270), Budapest, 1923; *Documente privind Istoria României*, C. Transilvania, vol. I (1075-1250) and vol. II (1251-1300), Bucureşti, Editura Academiei R.P.R., 1951-1952; Jakó Zsigmond, *Codex diplomaticus Transsylvaniae / Erdélyi okmánytár*, I, 1023-1300, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1997.

and especially in the following century was no longer unique name, but belonged to a category of supra-names,³ which helped to identify the individual more easily and clearly. For this reason we have included the anthroponyms referenced for this research above all in the category of sobriquets. However, they could just as well have been personal names. Therefore, in the context of this study, we will refer to them either as sobriquets (nicknames) or as personal names.

In 12th-13th century Transylvania, the anthroponyms that we consider to be sobriquets were similar to Christian names in that they had a specific meaning in the languages of origin, just like Michael (Mihail, Mihael) means in Hebrew “Who is like God?,” being formed through the juxtaposition of the form *Mika* (“who is like”) and of the abridged form *-el* (an abbreviation for Elohim).⁴ Similarly, John (Ioan) means “Jahve is gracious” or “God is gracious,” the name being the result of the merger between the short form *Jo* (from Jahve) and *hanan* (“be gracious”).⁵ Another example is the anthroponym George (Gheorghe), a name that in the Greek-Roman world (with the origin in the Greek language) meant “farmer, worker of the land.”⁶ One last example in the Christian anthroponymy is that of Nicholas (Nicolae), also with a Greek origin, which was formed through the union of the verb “to defeat” and the noun “people,” its significance being “the victory of the people” or, figuratively, “the victory of simplicity, the victory of meekness.”⁷

However, this meaning can only be captured only in some of the names; in the case of the others, we are, for the time being, oblivious to their linguistic significance and to which cultural group used them. Because of that, those anthroponyms are not examined in this study and we shall consider them, for now, personal names.

Before we go any further, we should bring a few explanations regarding the meaning of the two main terms used along this study: *poreclă* (nickname, sobriquet) and *nume personal* (personal name).

The term *poreclă* is old in the Romanian space, having been derived from the Slavonic *poreklo*.⁸ It is a type of name obtained in a non-ritualistic way, doubling the official anthroponym.⁹

By contrast, personal names are considered to be the most general and constant human institution, having a dual function: to identify and individualize a person, as

³ Sobriquets represent a category of supra-names, being characterized by a certain degree of emotionality, of subjectivity; compared to personal names and supra-names proper, sobriquets are occasional and less (or not at all) stable; also, through a sobriquet, the speaker may express appreciation or disdain towards the wearer. – *Enciclopedia limbii române*, second edition (ed. Marius Sala), Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică “Iorgu Iordan,” București, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 2006, p. 444.

⁴ Aurelia Bălan-Mihailovici, *Dicționar onomastic creștin: repere etimologice și martirologice*, București, Editura Sophia, 2009, p. 385 [Infra: Bălan-Mihailovici 2009].

⁵ Bălan-Mihailovici 2009, p. 238.

⁶ Bălan-Mihailovici 2009, p. 234.

⁷ Bălan-Mihailovici 2009, p. 416.

⁸ Nicolae Felecan, “Categoriile antroponimice: nume, supranume, poreclă,” in *Onomasticon. Studii despre nume și numire*, I, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Mega, 2010, p. 102.

⁹ Daiana Felecan, *Aspecte ale polifoniei lingvistice. Teorie și construcție*, Editura Tritonic, București, 2010, p. 181 [Infra: D. Felecan 2010].

well to locate them socially and integrate them within a family group, a city, a tribe, etc.¹⁰

The complete list of sobriquets identified for Transylvania in the 12th-13th centuries is as follows:

- *Men*: Achus; Aianduk; Albeus / Albas (Jan dictus) / Fehersa / Fejer (7 persoane); Altus (Leonardus); Amen; Artificis (Dionysii); Arua (2); Batur (2); Beke / Beche (6); Bellus (2); Bena (2); Ber; Bessu; Bicca; Boz; Boynuc; Bug; Bundu; Butha / Buta / Buhta (4); Cantus; Cato; Centurio (Yan); Chikou; Chol (Nicolaus dictus); Chue (Iacobus dictus); Chupa; Colond; Coma / Choma (2); Cumanul (Wanthuk); Cute; Cysar; Dersi; Erdeus / Erdey / Erde / Erdeu (4); Farkas / Farcas / Forcos / Forcus / Forcosu / Forcosii / Forcasius / Farcasius / Forcost / Vilc / Wilc (38); Fermenus; Fichur; Focate / Fecate Juna / Fakate Iuna / Fequete / Cel Negru (Nicolae) / Niger (Petrus dictus) (5); Foth; Furman; Fyoch; Gall (4); Gegus (2); German (2); Graecus; Hazuga; Henchmann; Herceg / Herseg / Hertueg / Herczeg / Herceeg (6); Horogus; Igeben; Kaluz; Kekeu; Kelemus; Kemen / Keminus (3); Keue; Keuerug / Kewereg (2); Kezed; Kopoz; Kuke (Iacobus dictus); Latinus (Iohannes); Latus; Lotomas; Magnus (5: Paulus, Petrus, Damianus and Magnus-2); Magus / Mogus (2); Maradek; Medue; Meggyes; Modoros / Modorus (3); Mog / Mogd; Mondou; Mour; Neuer; Orman; Orrossag; Otos / Uttos / Vtos (2); Palachk; Parvus / Iung (3: Gregorius, Cosmas, Petrus); Patkan; Pentek (2); Pirus / cel Roșu (2); Porcan; Puer; Raak / Roac; Rigou; Rotundus; Samus; Sanctus / Senta / Sentes (4); Santo; Secuiul (3: Zubuslaus; Petru; Johannes zis); Serechen; Solumus (Johannes dictus); Sopos; Sorloudam; Sous; Suka / Syka (2); Șchiop (Jula cel); Taca; Tanach; Tarca; Tata; Tenqneu; Teutonicul (Martin); Tornator (Ardeu); Tumpa (6); Ur (Benedictus dictus); Vaca; Varou; Vendeg / Wendeg / Vendegu (4); Viodol; Vir; Virhar; Vodas / Wodasi; Voioiuda/Voiavoda (2); Vosos (5); Vrcund / Urkun / Urkund (3); Vrdug / Urdug / Wrdu (2: Simon dictus); Vros / Wruz / Uruz (6); Vrug; Wechelyny (Iacobus dictus); Zombot.
- *Women*: Agnna; Fehera; Ancilla (2); Cincea; Genuruch; Huga.¹¹

We have recorded 119 possible masculine nicknames that were used to designate 232 people. As regard the feminine ones, we have 6 nicknames and 7 people they designated.

The most common sobriquets are: *Farkas*, with the forms Farcas, Forcos, Forcus, Forcosu, Forcosii, Forcasius, Farcasius, Forcost, Vilc, Wilc (38 persons)¹²; *Albeus* / Albas / Fejer / Fehersa (7); *Fekete*, with the forms: Focate / Fecate / Fakate / Fequete / Niger (5); *Beke* / Beche (6); *Herceg*, with the variants: Herseg / Hertueg / Herczeg / Herceeg (6); *Tumpa* (6); *Vros* / Wruz / Uruz (6); *Magnus* (5); *Vosos* (5); *Butha* / Buta / Buhta (4); *Erdeus* / Erdey / Erde / Erdeu (4); *Gall* (4); *Sanctus* / Senta /

¹⁰ Anne Lefebvre-Teillard, *Le nom: droit et histoire*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1990, p. 7.

¹¹ In this case it could also be about the old Germanic-Scandinavian name Hugi, the term corresponding to it in other parts of Europe being Hugo, see Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, Edited by Anthony Faulkes, Second Edition, Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, 2005, p. 170 (Index of names).

¹² For a detailed discussion of the name Farkas, see: Victor V. Vizauer, "Povestea unui nume: antroponimul Farkas (Lupu) în Transilvania veacului al XIII-lea. Posibilități și opinii," in *Acta Musei Maramorosiensis*, XI, 2015, pp. 24-41.

Sentes (4); *Vendeg* / *Wendeg* / *Vendegu* (4); *Kemen* / *Keminus* (3); *Modoros* / *Modorus* (3); *Parvus* / *Iung* (3); *Secuiul* (3); *Urkund* / *Vrcund* / *Urkun* (3).

The rest of the names/sobriquets appear only once or twice, which betrays their tremendous diversity. It should be noted that all of the nicknames included among the most widely used are masculine, a single name/nickname carried by women being encountered twice, namely *Ancilla* (meaning “servant,” “maid” in Latin). Also, we have recorded the name *Fehera* in one case (probably meaning something connected with the attribute of *whiteness* – *fehér* in Hungarian), which could be added to the six entries of *Albeus* / *Fejer* / *Fehersa* designating men.

The meaning of the sobriquets in the languages of the populations that lived in this area

It is important to note that we have not discovered the unquestionable significance of the moniker in all cases; we have often resorted to assumptions, based on the similarity of the sobriquet with a specific term belonging to one of the languages spoken by the populations that were residing in this geographical space in the 12th-13th centuries.

Sobriquets with meaning in Hungarian

Men: *Achus* (*ókós* = smart); *Aianduk* (*ajándék* = gift, present; it could be a child born later, which is why he was called “gift” – from God?); *Arua* (*árva* = orphan); *Batur* (*bátor* = brave); *Beke* / *Beche* (*béke* = peace); *Bena* (*béna* = paralyzed, handicapped); *Bicca* (*bika* = bull); *Boynuc* (*bajnok* = champion; or it could be the word used by Arabs to designate the Pechenegs: *Bjanak* / *Bajanak* – V. *Spinei*, p. 88); *Bundu* (*bunda* = fur); *Butha* / *Buta* / *Buhta* (*buta* = stupid / silly); *Chikou* (*csikó* = foal); *Chue* (possibly a distorted spelling of the Hungarian word *kő* = stone); *Colond* (*kaland* = adventure); *Coma* / *Choma* (*kóma* = in law); *Cute* (*kutya* = dog); *Cysar* (*csiszár* = tanner, or *császá*r = emperor, Caesar); *Erdeus* / *Erdey* / *Erde* / *Erdeu* (*erdő* = forest, *erdős* = forest, forested; here, possibly, it could also mean hairy (?); or, the variant *erdey* = from the forest); *Farkas* (*farkas* = wolf); *Fejer* / *Fehersa* (*fehér* = white); *Fichur* (*ficsúr* = son / “fecior” or “ficior” – popular); *Foth* (*folt* = tain – colloquially it may also be pronounced *fot*); *Fyoch* (*fioka* = fowl, bird); *Gegus* (*gögös* = arrogant); *Fequete* / *Fecate Juna* / *Fakate Iuna* / *Focate* (*fekete* = black; could the name *Fecate Juna* be, perhaps, related to that of the Goddess Hecate in the lunar pantheon, also known as Hecate Luna?! Or is it just a *Fekete Jona* – *Iona the Black*?); *Hazuga* (*hazúg* = liar); *Herceg* (*herceg* = prince); *Horogus* (*haragos* = cranky); *Igeben* (*idegen* = foreign); *Kaluz* (*kalóz* = pirate or *kalauz* = guide); *Kekeu* (*kék* = blue); *Kelemus* (*kelemes* = pleasant); *Kemen* / *Keminus* (*kemény* = hard); *Keue* (*kő* = stone); *Keuerug* / *Kewereg* (*keverék* = blend); *Kezed* (*kéz* = hand; the form *kezed* / *a kezed* means “your hand”); *Kopoz* (*kopasz* = bald); *Lotomas* (*látomás* = apparition); *Magus* / *Mogus* (1. *mágus* = magus, sorcerer, 2. *magas* = tall – more plausible in these cases; it could also be a misspelling of *Magnus*); *Maradek* (*maradék* = remainder; or it could be the name *Mařádek*, encountered in the Slavic space); *Medue* (*medve* = bear); *Meggyes* (*megy* = sour cherry/ies, and *megyes* = “with sour cherries”

or “sour cherry orchard”); Modoros / Modorus (*madaras* = bird handler, *madár* = bird; or *módórós* = with character, *módór* = character); Mog / Mogd (*mag* = kernel); Mour (*moór* = Moor); Orman (*órmány* = trunk; more plausible: *örmény* = Armenian); Orossag (*úraság* = lord; or *orosz* = Russian); Otos / Uttos / Vtos (*ötös* = five; *útas* = traveller); Palachk (*palack* = recipient, bottle – for liquids); Patkan (*patkány* = rat); Pentek (*péntek* = Friday); Pirus (*piros* = red); Raak / Roac (*rák* = crab); Rigou (*rigó* = blackbird); Samus (*Szamos* = Someş; *számos* = numerous); Senta / Sentes (*szent* = saint); Santo (*santa* = lame in one leg; but also possibly a variant of Sanctus = saint); Serechen (*szerecsén* = Sarasin – perhaps a Muslim; but it can also refer to the fact that he has a darker skin, like a Sarasin); Solumus (*solymos* = with a hawk-?; or *szomias* = thirsty); Sopus (*szopos* = suckling); Sorloudam (*sarlatán* = charlatan); Sous (*sós* = salty); Suka / Syka (*szuka* = bitch - female dog); Tanach (*tanács* = counsel); Tarca (*tarka* = mottled); Tata (*tata* is used for *grandpa* or an *old man*); Tenqneu (*teknős* = turtle); Tumpa (*tompa* = dull); Ur (*úr* = gentleman); Varou (*vár* = fortress; or from *várni* = to wait, and the form *váró* = a man who is waiting for something or someone); Vendeg / Wendeg / Vendegu (*vendég* = guest); Viodol (*viadal* = confrontation, battle); Virhar (*vihar* = storm); Vnuca (it is either the name Unica, or it comes from *unóka* = nephew); Vodas / Wodasi (*vadász* = hunter); Vosos (*vas* = iron; *vasas* = irony, with iron); Vrdug / Urdug / Wrdug (*ördög* = devil); Vros / Wruz / Uruz (*orosz* = Russian); Vrug (*öreg* = old); Zombot (*szombat* = Saturday);

Women: Fehera (*fehér* = white); Genuruch (Melich János believes that Genuruch meant *Gyönyörű* – Wonderful¹³; she may have been named thus because she cast spells – she was accused of that); Huga (*huga* = younger sister).

Sobriquets with meaning in Latin¹⁴

Men: Albas (*albus* = white, pale, quiet, clear)¹⁵; Albeus – 4 (*albeo* = to be white, *albineus* = white, whitish; it may also come from the Latin-Roman family name Albius or from the anthroponym Albucius / Albutius); Altus (*altus* = high, tall); Amen (could it be the formula that ends a prayer?); Artificis (*artificiosus* = masterful, skilful, and *artificium* = trade, profession); Bellus (*bellus* = nice, gentle, pleasant, kind); Bessu (*bessu* = it may come from *bissenus* – Pecheneg; in Latin, Vinţul de Jos was also called Binstum, this place name could be a source for *bessu*); Cantus (*cantus* = human or bird song, the sound of an instrument); Cato (*cato* = gloomy, grumpy¹⁶; but also, figuratively, “a man of great virtue”, like the Roman censor M. Porcius Cato or his nephew M. Porcius Cato Uticensis); Centurio (*centurio* = leader of a cohort, centurion); Coma / Choma (*coma* = the hair on the head, mane); Fermenus (*fermento* = to rise, swell, ferment; *fermentum* = risen, swollen; *ferme* = about, close); Gall

¹³ Melich János, “Névmagyarázatok,” in *Magyar Nyelv*, VI/6, 1910, pp. 241-247 (p. 241-242).

¹⁴ For the translation of the sobriquets which have meaning in Latin, we have used: G. Guţu, *Dicţionar latin-român*, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1983 [Infra: Guţu, *Dicţionar*] and Ioan Nădejde, Amelia Nădejde-Gesticone, *Dicţionar latin-român*, fifth edition, Iaşi, Editura Viaţa Românească, 1931 [Infra: Nădejde, *Dicţionar*].

¹⁵ Nădejde, *Dicţionar*, p. 25.

¹⁶ Nădejde, *Dicţionar*, p. 83.

(*gallus* = cock; Gael –ethnicity); German (*germanus* = from the same parents, brother; *germana* = sister; *germen* = seed, germ, bud); Graecus (*graecus* = Greek, Grecian); Latinus (latin); Latus (*laetus* = 1. fat, pleasant, jolly; 2. a foreigner that received a lot of land to cultivate it, paying a tax in exchange); Magnus (*magnus* = big); Mour (*maurus* = Moor, African); Niger (Petrus dictus – *niger* = black); Parvus (*parvus* = small, young); Porcan (*porcarius* = swineherd, or *porca* = 1. sow, 2. the line of a furrow of land, but also an agrarian measure in Spain); Puer (*puer* = child); Rotundus (*rotundus* = round); Sanctus (*sanctus* = holy, sacred, inviolable); Tornator (*tornator* = turner); Vaca (*vacca* = cow, or *vaco* = or = free, without a master); Vir (*vir* = man, individual, husband);

Women: Agna (*agna* = female lamb, lamb, but could also be related with: *agnatus*, -i = birth after the death of the father or after the conclusion of a testament, posthumous birth); Ancilla – 2 (*ancilla* = handmaid, slave); Unica (*unica* = unique, single, rare).

Sobriquets with meaning in German¹⁷

Men: Ber (*Bär* = bear – pronounced *ber* –, or powerful, stout man or dour, grumpy nature); Chol (*Kohl* = cabbage, empty talk; *Kohle* = coal); Furman (*Fuhrmann* = carrier, but also furrier, fur hunter); Henchmann (*Henkel* = handle, knob, peevishness – regionalism; or *Henker* = executioner – the safest, in this case; or, figuratively = devil, dammit); Iung (*Jung* = young, vigorous); Kuke (*Küche* = cuisine, the cooking manner of a people; and *Kuchen* = cake, pie, sweet bread); Neuer (*neu* = new, fresh, novice, inexperienced, unknown; *neuer* = newest); Urkund / Urkun / Vrcund (*Urkunde* = document, act, evidence; or *Ur* = old); this could also be the old Hungarian nume Urcun.

Sobriquets with meaning in the Romanian language (?)

Men: Fichur (fecior or ficior = son); Raak / Roac (crab), this nickname could have the same meaning in Hungarian.

Women: Cincea (“the fifth,” in terms of birth order?).

Sobriquets with meaning in Slavic languages¹⁸

Men: Suka / Syka (in the languages of the Northern Slavs, in Slovak and Polish, *suka* = bitch; in Serbian it is *kučka*; the term means “bitch” also in Hungarian); Vilc / Wilc (among the Northern Slavs *vlk* = wolf; among the Serbs it is *vuk*); Voioioda/Voiavoda (*vojvoda* = voivode).

¹⁷ For the translation of the sobriquets which have meaning in German, we have used: *Dicționar german-român*, second edition, București, Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1989.

¹⁸ For the translation of the sobriquets which have meaning in the Slavic languages, we have used: Anda Mareș, Nicolae Mareș, *Dicționar polon – român*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1980; Anca Irina Ionescu, *Dicționar român – slovac / slovac – român*, Editura Universal Dalsi, 1999; Mirco Jivcovic, *Dicționar sârb – român și român – sârb*, București, Editura Teora, 1999.

Sobriquets with meaning in the Cuman language¹⁹

Men: Boz (*böz* = weapon); Bug (*buug* – knot; more plausible, *buga* – bull); Butha / Buta / Buhta (*buth* = thigh, thigh bone; *butac* = branch, tree, cudgel, bludgeon; or *butun* = clean, untainted, upright, honest, perfect, consummate); Chupa (*chuba* = military clothing made of rings); Dersi (*derxi* = tailor); Herceg / Herseg (*hersek* = luxury, luxurious); Mondou (*mondo bai* – “a cobbler that dresses/puts shoes on”); Orman (*orman* = forest); Sous (*souus* = friend); Taca (*tac* = uneven); Vrus (*urus* = young goat).

Types of sobriquets

Just like proper names, sobriquets can be divided into several categories, the researcher Daiana Felecan highlighting the following:

- **Analytical sobriquets:** they show the way the one bearing the nickname is perceived; the subcategories refer to the *shape*, *colours*, a certain *part of the body* or to a *hobby*).

- **Synthetic sobriquets:** these are qualifying adjectives (Bănos, etc.) or nicknames derived from “*moulding*” metaphors (Frumosu’, Handsome).

- **Anecdotal sobriquets**, which have their origin in an event (happening) in the life of the nicknamed person.

- **Meta-sobriquets:** this kind of sobriquet was born from an *ethnic name*; from the *name of the native village* or of another location with which nicknamed has a connection; from the *name of an occupation*; it could come from the *name of a part of the village* or the town where nicknamed lives; it could derive from the *name of the family*; it could also be a *derivative of the first name*; and, ultimately, it could have its origins in *diminutives* and *hypocorisms*.²⁰

In accordance with the typology suggested by Daiana Felecan we have divided by categories the sobriquets reviewed for Transylvania of the 12th-13th centuries, supplementing the typology where we felt it needed to conform better to the stock of Transylvanian medieval nicknames. A part of these could be included in several categories of this typology.

Men:

- **Analytical sobriquets:**

- *Colours:* Albeus / Albas / Fejer / Fehersa; Focate / Fecate Juna or Fakate Iuna / Fequete / Cel Negru / Niger; Pirus / cel Roşu; Tarca;

- *Part of the body (or references to body):* Bena; Bundu; Şchiop;

- **Synthetic sobriquets:**

- *Qualifying adjectives:* Altus; Arua; Bellus; Boynuc; Cantus; Chol; Chue; Cincea; Colond; Coma / Choma; Cysar; Erdeus / Erdey / Erde / Erdeu; Ferminus; Fichur; Furman; Fyoch; Genuruch; Herceg / Herseg / Hertueg / Herczeg / Herceeg;

¹⁹ According to the Cuman – Latin vocabulary in the work *Codex cumanicus. Bibliothecae ad templum divi Marci Venetiarum*, ed. Comes Géza Kuun, Editio Scient. Academiae Hung., Budapestini, 1880, pp. 245-307.

²⁰ D. Felecan 2010, pp. 192-197.

Kaluz; Kekeu; Kemen / Keminus; Keue; Keuerug / Kewereg; Kezed; Kopoz; Kuke; Latus; Lotomas; Magnus; Magus / Mogus; Maradek; Meggyes; Modoros / Modorus; Mog / Mogd; Neuer; Orman; Orossag; Otos / Uttos / Vtos; Palachk; Parvus / Iung; Porcan; Puer; Rotundus; Santo; Solumus; Sopos; Sorloudam; Sous; Tanach; Tumpa; Ur; Vaca; Varou; Viodol; Vir; Virhar; Vosos; Vrdug / Urdug / Wrdug; Vrug.

- *“Moulding” metaphors*: Achus; Aianduk; Batur; Beke / Beche; Butha / Buta / Buhta; Cato; Gegus; Genuruch; Hazuga; Horogus; Kelemus; Sorloudam; Sous; Vrdug / Urdug / Wrdug.

- *Animal names*: Ber / Medue (bear); Bicca (bull); Bug (bull); Chikou (foal); Cute (dog); Farkas / Vilc (wolf); Patkan (rat); Raak / Roac (crab); Rigou (blackbird); Suka / Syka (bitch); Tenqneu (turtle); Vaca (cow); Vrus (young goat).

- *Degrees of kinship*: German (brother); Huga (younger sister); Tata (grandpa, father?); Vnuca (nephew?).

- *Social condition*: Taca; Vaca (vaco);

- *Anecdotal sobriquets*: Boz (weapon); Foth (patch, stain);

- **Meta-sobriquets**:

- **Names of waters: Samus (Someş?);**

- *Ethnic names*: Bessu; Cumanul; Graecus; Igeben; Latinus; Mour; Orman; Secuiul; Serechen; Teutonicul; Vros / Wruz / Uruz;

- *Occupation/function*: Artificis; Centurio; Dersi; Henchmann; Mondou; Tornator; Vodas / Wodasi; Voiouoda/Voia voda;

- *Religious terms*: Amen; Sanctus / Senta / Sentes;

- **Names of days of the week: Pentek; Zombot;**

Women:

- **Analytical** sobriquets: Agnna; Fehera;

- *Social condition*: Ancilla.

The most common types of sobriquets in Transylvania during the 12th-13th centuries were *qualifying adjectives* and *“moulding” metaphors*. The first category included those sobriquets which described a man on the outside: Bellus – handsome, Herceg – prince, Genuruch – wonderful, Magas – tall or Parvus – young. They speak about the exterior qualities that define, to a certain extent, a man and that can, of course, distinguish him from his peers.

Among *“moulding” metaphors* we encounter inner qualities which describe the character of a person, such as: Achus (okos) – smart, Batur – valiant, Kelemus – pleasant, Gegus (gögös) – proud, Horogus – cranky, etc. Just like in the case of qualifying adjectives, *“moulding” metaphors* arose on the basis of a quality that distinguished its bearer from other people, especially from those in the community in which he lived. At the same time, a sobriquet, primarily if it had a positive message, could play the role of a “business card” for the person it designated, recommending him to other people through the quality suggested by the nickname.

The third most frequent were anthroponyms or the sobriquets derived from *animal names*. Some of these could confer upon the bearer, in a form of magic, as it

were, the qualities of the animal whose name he had: Ber / Medue – bear; Bicca – bull; Cute – dog; Farkas / Vilc – Wolf. It can be seen that every animal mentioned above is characterized by strength, stamina, courage, wild animals also having intelligence and being skilful hunters. Other nicknames could bring out a quieter, nonviolent character (Agna – lamb, Chikou – foal) or the gift of singing or whistling (Rigou – blackbird). By contrast, the names of other animals could suggest negative character traits, which did not do honour to the man: Patkan – rat.

In terms of their frequency, the next category was that of sobriquets derived from *ethnic names* and *occupation/function*. In the case of nicknames born from the name of a population, we are talking primarily of ethnic groups that lived in the area, having arrived here through official colonizations (the Latin, the Teutonic, the Cuman), that had come here at the same time with the Hungarians and collaborated with them (Secuiul – Szekler, Bessu – Pecheneg), that had come before or after the Hungarians (Vros / Wruz / Uruz – Russian, Slavic) or that had arrived here as prisoners in the wake of various crusades or other military conflicts (Mour – Moor, Serechen – Saracen). We may also include in this group a sobriquet that did not directly express an ethnicity, but referred to a foreigner, namely Igeben, in Hungarian *idegen*, meaning *stranger*.

In the category of sobriquets derived from an *occupation* or *function* we have included: Artificis – craftsman, Centurio – centurion, Henchmann – executioner?; Tornator – Turner, Vodas / Wodasi – hunter and Voioioda/Voiavoda – voivode. Here can be mentioned those sobriquets or names that would entail, through a “magical power,” the development and strengthening of the skills required for a particular occupation. Insofar as men were concerned, probably the most evocative sobriquets appeared among soldiers. There were several animal names – Bicca (bull), Cute (dog), Farkas (wolf) or Medue (bear) – which may suggest the existence of a feature of the nicknamed man: power, cunning, intelligence, the craft of hunting, aggressiveness, a warrior spirit.

A category encompassing a smaller number of sobriquets is that which refers to colours: Albeus / Albas / Fejer / Fehersa – white; Focate / Fecate / Fakate / Fequete / Cel Negru / Niger; Pirus / cel Roșu; Tarca – motley. At their appearance, what could be taken into account was the colour of a person’s hair, skin or even eyes.

Some sobriquets were related to the social status of the wearer. Among the nobles we may find nicknames or personal names that speak about a special status, such as Herceg (prince) or Vaivoda (voivode). The person who bore the name Vaca could not be included in a social category, nor is his occupation known. However, if Vaca comes from the word *vaco* (free, without a master), then the man in question could be a liberated slave. In the case of one of the women, the name was extremely suggestive: Ancilla, which means servant in Latin.

Though more rarely, we came across peculiar names or sobriquets, such as *Mour*.²¹ This sobriquet must have made reference to a Muslim. Taking into account the fact that this was a commemoration dușnic (slave) donated to a monastery, it is

²¹ *Regestrum Varadinense*, no. 361, p. 292.

possible that the way in which he had become enslaved was by being captured in battle. Being a Muslim, he may have been taken prisoner and brought to Transylvania by a participant from the Hungarian Kingdom in a crusade or by a soldier from Western Europe, subsequently bequeathing him to the first Catholic place of worship encountered on the way home.

Regarding the name Gall / Gallus, it should be noted that it was worn by a saint also known in the parts of Transylvania,²² which suggests the possibility that the name of the individuals had been granted after that of the saint. Perhaps this is how we can explain the far from negligible frequency of the name Gallus during the next century. However, we must not lose sight of the meanings of that word, namely *cock* (in Latin) or man coming from the area of France, from Gallia. If one of these two explanations applied, then Gall / Gallus is a sobriquet, and where it was granted after the model of the saint's anthroponym, we are dealing with a proper name.

Lack of clarity also affects many of the names or sobriquets used in Transylvania in the 12th-13th centuries, but only through these analytical attempts can the truth or, at least, a partial truth be reached eventually.

A few definite sobriquets

There are a total of 29 people in whose case it is certain that they had a nickname. We have called these "definite sobriquets" and they are as follows: Albas (Jan dictus); Altus (Leonardus); Artificis (Dionysii); Centurio (Yan); Chol (Nicolaus dictus); Chue (Iacobus dictus); Cumanul (Wanthuk); Cel Negru (Nicolae); Kuke (Iacobus dictus); Latinus (Iohannes); Magnus (Paulus); Magnus (Petrus); Magnus (Damianus); Niger (Petrus dictus); Parvus (Gregorius); Parvus (Cosmas); Iung (Petrus); Pirus (Petrus dictus); cel Roșu (Dees); Secuiul (Zubuslaus); Secuiul (Petru); Secuiul (Iohannes zis); Solumus (Iohannes dictus); Șchiop (Jula cel); Teutonicul (Martin); Tornator (Ardeu); Ur (Benedictus dictus); Wechelyny (Iacobus dictus); Wrdug (Simon dictus).

As we can see, the wearers of these sobriquets also had a personal name, making it clear that these were nicknames. These are 20 in number, some of them being repeated: Magnus (3 times), Parvus / Iung (3), Secuiul (3) and Pirus / cel Roșu (2). Most of these persons (22) were mentioned in documents from the second half of the 13th century, thus confirming the fact that sobriquets developed in that period, accompanying primarily Christian names. The other 7 were mentioned in the second half of the 12th century (Iohannes Latinus, Paulus Magnus, Martin Teutonicul and Ardeus Tornator) and in the first half of the 13th century (Leonardus Altus, Dionisius Artificius and Yan Centurio).

²² For instance, a document from 1347 mentions the feast of the blessed Gallus – *Documente privind Istoria României, Veacul XIV, C. Transilvania*, Vol. IV (1341-1350), București, Editura Academiei R.P.R., 1955, no. 577, pp. 400-404 (the Latin text on pp. 673-676).

Conclusions

In this case it is not easy to deliver conclusions, mainly as regards the ascription of the anthroponyms reviewed here to the category of soubriquets or to that of personal names. It is known that Christian names had a certain significance in the languages from which they were taken over (Hebrew, Greek, Latin). This is also the case of the names analysed here, most of them meaning something in the languages used by the local inhabitants or by the authorities (Latin, Hungarian, Romanian, Cuman and/or Pecheneg, Slavic, German). Thus, they could be both nicknames and personal names.

In the case of some individuals, whether we speak of their personal names or their soubriquets, it is possible that the anthroponym changed throughout their life, in keeping with the events, happenings or achievements of those individuals. However, so far, we have not been able to capture this phenomenon.

Also, we may notice that the soubriquet or the name sometimes comply with the social status or the activity of the wearer. In these cases it is more plausible that the anthroponym was a soubriquet.

Another discernible trait of the soubriquets / names from the 12th-13th centuries is diversity. Most of them appear only once and refer to a very wide range of situations in which the person carrying them could find himself or to numerous human qualities.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion is that referring to the period when one can definitely speak of soubriquets, namely the second half of the 13th century, as they became a widely used denominative element in the following century.

Although drawing definitive conclusions regarding the anthroponyms of the 12th and 13th centuries on the territory of Transylvania is problematic, it has been necessary to review and analyse them, since names represent an important element in the lives of humans, often providing information that cannot be found out from other sources.