Patterns in Family Relationships in 19ᵗʰ Century Transylvania
Data from the Historical Population Database of Transylvania

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Necronymic naming is, first of all, a tool for analyzing family relationships, because it highlights the significance of names as a factor of identification and solidarity within the family.

I N 19ᵀᴴ century Transylvania, kinship played an essential role in social life, being part of a system that offered a sense of belonging, an identity, but also solidarity and mutual support. The information about the Transylvanian family structures of this period comes largely from ethnographic research. In addition to this, a new direction in the history of the family can be followed and explored, thanks to a historical population database of Transylvania (known as HPDT), under construction at the Center for Population Studies of Babeş-Bolyai University (the public version of this database is available at http://hpdt.ro:4080/). This will allow, for the first time in Romanian historiography, an extensive analysis of the family relationships in this region.

To this date, HPDT includes over 30 localities, with data collected from parish registers covering over 100 years

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(1800–1914). One way to reconstitute the dynamics of family relationships, possible with HPDT, is by way of onomastics, through the analysis of the names given to children at birth.

Child naming is an essential act within the family, and the name is never chosen at random, but has a particular meaning for the child's parents. The factors that determine the choice of a name vary greatly from one period to another, and from one region to another.[1] Through naming, the child receives an identity, being integrated into the family, and at the same time in the community, he is socialized and placed within a hierarchy.[2]

In 19th century Transylvania, people relied heavily on family ties, both in everyday life and at special events. In this context, the naming of children was not at all random. The recurrence of certain names, and not of others, in a particular family during three or four generations, could be an indication of the type and the quality of links in that family.[3]

The name of the child was chosen according to several criteria: the first-born male often received the name of his paternal grandfather or that of his father; at other times, the nearest holiday was considered, in which case the child was baptized with the name of that saint.[4] In some communities, the reason why the child was given the name of grandparents or grandparents was the belief that they were beneficial spirits who watched over the family. Sometimes children were given the names of more important people in the village, believing that their qualities could be passed on to the children in question.[5]

Among these practices, one in particular suggests that names made an essential contribution to the strengthening and perpetuation of the fabric of the family: the so-called "necronymic naming": naming a child after a deceased sibling, a common practice throughout the world, from the Middle Ages to the 19th century.

To analyze this practice, two localities included in HPDT were selected: Ocna-Mureş and Războieni-Cetate (1811–1914). Ocna-Mureş was a mining town (salt mines), with an ethnically diverse population (Romanians, Hungarians, Jews, Germans, Gypsies), with many denominations (Greek Catholic, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Calvinist). Războieni-Cetate was a neighboring village, with Orthodox Romanians and Calvinist Hungarians. This diversity was the main reason why these two localities were chosen.

More than 10,000 births were registered, and about 10% of them involve necronymic naming. This practice is common to all the Christian denominations, to Romanians, Hungarians and Germans; not even one case was found within the Jewish community.

To better understand this practice, some examples are given below.

The first is of a couple from Ocna-Mureş, Albert Gulácsi (born in 1844) and Rozalia Roşca (born in 1847). Between 1871 and 1889, they had nine children, including three sons named Albert (obviously the father's name), and two daughters named Józéfa (Rosalia Roşca, among others, had a sister called Iosefa). Among the children, there was also a boy baptized with the name of the paternal grandfather, István. The parents of Rozalia Roşca, Iuliana Herin and Cosma Roşca, gave their descendants their own names, also having, among others, a son named Cosma and a daughter named Iuliana. The available records do not contain more data about the grandparents' families, so the analysis of names cannot be extended to more generations.

Another example is from Războieni-Cetate: the couple Agripina Câmpean and Ioan Vasinc had thirteen children between 1884 and 1901 (including two pairs of twins). Among these, there were four daughters named Maria, two daughters named Ana, two daughters named Victoria, two sons named Alexandru, and two sons named Ieronim. Most of these children died at an early age; the table below shows the succession of their births and deaths:

Child name	Date of birth	Date of death
Alexandru	11.07.1884	03.08.1884
Maria	29.05.1885	22.06.1885
Ana	29.05.1886	01.06.1886
Maria	29.05.1886	30.01.1892
Victoria	08.02.1888	07.05.1890
Maria	12.05.1890	28.05.1890
Victoria	16.08.1891	05.03.1932
Alexandru	09.09.1893	Unknown
Maria	23.08.1895	23.07.1896
Ana	07.06.1897	Unknown
Ieronim	25.12.1898	02.05.1899
Lazăr	25.12.1898	Unknown
Ieronim	19.01.1901	Unknown

We see that this couple really wanted to have the name Maria in the family, since it so named four of their daughters. The first, born in 1885, lived for only three weeks; the second, born in 1886, died in 1892; in 1890, another newborn girl was baptized Maria, but she lived only for a few days. The fourth Maria, born in 1895, lived for less than a year. The name Maria, being the name of the Virgin, has always been popular on the Romanian territory, but this is not enough to explain the determination of that couple to have this name in the family. Unfortunately, there is not enough data to reconstruct the extended family. The only

information found was that the father of these children, Ioan Vasinc, had two sisters named Maria.

In some cases, a child began to be called with the name of a dead sibling, even though she had initially been baptized with her own name. Such is the case of Veronica Aldea from Ocna-Mureş, born on 19.11.1857, who had an older sister, Elisabeta (b. 9.08.1855, d. 27.01.1857). At some point, over the years, it seems that Veronica began to be called with the name of her dead sister, because the record of her marriages stated: "The bride is called today Elisabeta after an older sister who died, but her name at baptism was Veronica."

I N ORDER to identify the possible patterns in child naming, and to deduce from it the existing patterns in the structure of the extended family, it is necessary to reconstitute the families for at least three or four generations. This is, unfortunately, possible only in a limited number of cases, due to the lack of information from sources. Thus, not all the births, marriages and deaths in the parishes were recorded in the parish registers, mainly because of the negligence of the priests (those who had the duty to record these events).

Other confusing situations are those of people with common names living in the community, with similar birth dates, whose family of affiliation is hard to establish. One such example is that of Iacob Damian of Războieni, the father of nine children between 1879 and 1897: trying to identify his parents, one may found out that he could be the son, born in 1854, of the couple Anisia and Onisim Damian, or of the couple Maria and Ştefan Damian (in which case he would have been born in 1853). There are no clues in the registers to correctly establish his affiliation, and therefore it is not possible to reconstitute his family.

In many parish registers, when the baptism (birth) is recorded, the mother of the child is often mentioned only by her forename, making it difficult to establish her family of origin, and the recurrence of certain names.

Another major difficulty is that the names of people included in HPDT are not yet standardized: a person's name can be written in many ways, depending on the competence of the clerk who recorded the event, and on the time it took place (a common example is the name Ioan, written as such, or Ion, Iuon, Juon, Ioannes, Joannes, János, Johann). For this reason, the family reconstitution cannot be done automatically, but only manually, being a very slow and time-consuming process.

Unfortunately, Romania does not yet have a large-scale, standardized historical population database, in contrast to other countries in Europe and America. For this reason, studying family structures and dynamics through family reconstitution is still at the beginning.

Only a few dozen families have been reconstituted until now. Until the completion of this process, which will result in an extensive paper, some examples of reconstituted families, with recurrent names, may be given.

One of it is the Baciu family of Ocna-Mureş, a large family with three–four generations recorded throughout the entire period covered by the registers. There are 35 families with the name Baciu; some used necronymic naming, others did not. The reconstruction of as many of them as possible enables us to notice the recurrence of names, and their possible significance in the case of necronymic naming.

Unfortunately, there is no data in the registers to accurately reconstitute all the families on both maternal and paternal lines.

As far as the existing data allowed, we followed a branch of the Baciu family starting with the couple Ioan Baciu (b. 1813) and Oana Dănilă (b. 1813).

They had eight children between 1834 and 1850 (Augustin, Cruciţa, Maria, Nicolae, Vasile, Iosif, Sava, Ioan). The parents of Ioan Baciu were Sava and Nicolae Baciu, who had three children between 1811 and 1816—Ioan, Chiriana and Maria. The parents of Oana Dănilă had two children between 1813 and 1816, Oana and Nicolae. The relationship between their names can be summarized as follows:

Grandparents	Parents	Children	Year of birth	Relative after which the child was named
Sava Nicolae Baciu	Ioan Baciu b. 1813	Augustin	1834	Unknown
		Cruciţa	1836	Unknown
		Maria	1837	Father's sister
Ana Vasile Dănilă	Oana Dănilă b.1813	Nicolae	1840	Paternal grandfather/ Mother's brother
		Vasile	1843	Maternal grandfather
		Iosif	1844	Unknown
		Sava	1847	Paternal grandmother
		Ioan	1850	Father's name

Of the children of this couple, it was possible to reconstitute only the families of two: Augustin (b. 1834) and Nicolae (b. 1840).

The first-born of this couple, Augustin, was married to Ioana Vlad (daughter of Lina Codre and Ioan Vlad), and had five children, including two daughters named Maria. His wife came from a family of seven children: Iudita, Ioana, Melintie, Nicolae, Ieremia, Ana Cruciţa, and Ieremia (there is a case of necronymic naming, with Ieremia). The relationship between their names can be summarized as follows:

Grandparents	Parents	Children	Year of birth	Relative after which the child has named
Ioan Baciu	Augustin Baciu	Maria	1864	Father's sister
Oana Danila	b. 1834	Maria	1865	Father's sister (necronymic naming)
		Ioan	1867	Paternal grandfather
Lina Codre	Ioana Vlad	Ana	1869	Maternal great-grandmother
Ioan Vlad	b. 1842	Vasile	1872	Maternal great-grandfather/ father's brother

Another child of the couple Ioan Baciu and Oana Dănilă was Nicolae (b. 1840), married to Iustina Deac (b. 1845). This Iustina, daughter of Maria Muntea-nu and Ioan Deac, had five siblings—Augustin, Maria, Veronica, Nicolae, and Veronica. In this case, there are also records relating to the wife's grandparents, both maternal and paternal. Iustina Deac's maternal grandparents were Ana and Ioan Munteanu who, between 1815 and 1829, had seven children: Tatiana, Maria, Nicolae, Veronica, Paraschiva, Ioan, and Oana. The paternal grandparents were Maria Florea and Crăciun Deac, who had eight children between 1818 and 1837: Ioan, Nicolae, Grigore, Ana, Maria Lina, Anastasia, George, and Anastasia. The relationship between the names of the children of Nicolae Baciu and Iustina Deac with those of the extended family can be summarized as follows:

Grandparents	Parents	Children	Year of birth	Relative after which the child was named
Ioan Baciu	Nicolae Baciu	Iosif	1868	Father's brother
Oana Danila	b. 1840	Veronica	1870	Mother's sister/Grandmother's sister
		Iosif	1872	Necronymic naming
		Nicolae	1878	Father's name/Mother's brother
Maria Muntean	Iustina Deac	Nicodim	1880	Unknown
Ioan Deac	b.1845	Ilarie	1883	Unknown
		Silvia	1885	Unknown
		Maria	1888	Maternal grandmother/ Mother's sister/Father's sister

Going to the next generation, it was possible to reconstitute the family of one of the sons of the couple Augustin Baciu (b. 1834) and Ioana Vlad (b. 1842), mentioned above. This one, named Ioan (b. 1867), was married to Maria Macaveiu (born 1873), and had eight children, including three sons named Ioan. In this case, there was also available data pertaining to the wife's family—the parents Maria Roşca and Ioan Macaveiu, the siblings Veronica, Vasile, Ioan, Ana, and Rozalia. The relationship between their names can be summarized as follows:

Grandparents	Parents	Children	Year of birth	Relative after which the child was named
Augustin Baciu Ioana Vlad	Ioan Baciu b. 1867	Ioan	1893	Father's name/Maternal grandfather's name/Mother's brother
		Augustin	1894	Grandfather's name
		Maria	1896	Mother's name/Maternal grandmother's name/Father's sister
Maria Roşca Ioan Macaveiu	Maria Macaveiu b. 1873	Ioan	1899	Necronymic naming
		Ana	1902	Father's sister/Mother's sister
		Victor	1906	Unknown
		Rozalia	1908	Mother's sister
		Ioan	1910	Necronymic naming

The number of families reconstituted so far is too small to show clear patterns in assigning children's names. Even the practice of naming the first-born male after his paternal grandfather or after his father is not general, as ethnographic studies suggest. So far, we have noticed that the naming of children after the siblings of their parents or grandparents (uncles and aunts) is quite frequent, which supports the theory that the relationships between siblings were the building blocks of kinship.[6]

As a conclusion, necronymic naming is a practice whose meaning is not yet fully analyzed and understood. Perhaps, as some scholars say, it is inspired by the hope of neutralizing death with the promise of rebirth.[7] This practice may also suggest that the name was part of the heritage of a family, that through such a name both the qualities of a person and the relationship of that person with the family were symbolically transmitted.[8]

Although it is an interesting practice in itself, necronymic naming is, first of all, a tool for analyzing family relationships, because it highlights the significance of names as a factor of identification and solidarity within the family.

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Notes

1. David Warren Sabean, *Kinship in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), XXV.
2. Rodica Colta, *De la naştere la moarte: rituri domestice şi alte comportamente rituale contextualizate din judeţul Arad* (Bucharest: Ed. Etnologică, 2015), 35.
3. See Nicolae Constantinescu, *Etnologia şi folclorul relaţiilor de rudenie* (Bucharest: Univers, 2000).
4. Lazăr Temian, "Obiceiuri, credinţe şi practici în legătură cu naşterea," *Memoria Ethno-logica* (Baia Mare) 16–17 (July–December), 5 (2005): 1617.

5. Pamfil Bilţiu, "Obiceiuri de naştere din Ţara Lăpuşului," *Memoria Ethnologica*, 46–47 (January–June), 13 (2013): 130.
6. Sabean, 24.
7. Stephen Wilson, *The Means of Naming: A Social and Cultural History of Personal Naming in Western Europe* (London: ucl Press, 1998), 224.
8. Frans van Poppel, Gerrit Bloothooft, Doreen Gerritzen, and Jan Verdun, "Naming for Kin and the Development of Modern Family Structures," *The History of the Family* 4, 3 (1999): 263.

Abstract
Patterns in Family Relationships in 19th Century Transylvania:
Data from the Historical Population Database of Transylvania

Child naming is an essential part of family life, because choosing a name is never a random decision. This practice can also be used to reconstitute the dynamics of family structures at a given time. For 19th century Transylvania, due to a historical population database under construction at Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj, such a reconstruction can be done for the first time. The present paper focuses on the practice of necronymic naming, as an indication of the importance of certain names in the family. For this analysis, two localities were selected, Ocna-Mureş and Războieni-Cetate. Although this research is still a work in progress, there is already plenty of data to support the hypothesis that child naming was used to strengthen family relationships.