



Romanian-Ukrainian Anthroponymic Contact on the Interstate Border along the Tisza River

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ans-names.pitt.edu

ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web)

Vol. 71 No. 4, Winter 2023

DOI 10.5195/names.2023.2597



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Abstract

The area between Romania and Ukraine has been the site of frequent language contact for many centuries. This contact has impacted the onomastic store of both nations. This study analyzes anthroponyms (family and first names) in the border area between Ukraine and Romania, along the Tisza River. This study investigates the frequency and etymological origin of family names in the Ukrainian/Romanian communities on both sides of the Tisza. It explores the factors that may have facilitated the spread of Ukrainian/Romanian names beyond their linguistic communities of origin; and it discusses the cultural identity of the two minorities as expressed by their anthroponymic trends. Based on the results of a corpus of historical data gathered between 2000 and 2021, the findings of this research show how language contact, migration, fashion, and tradition can influence anthroponymic choices and reflect ethnic identity.

Keywords: Ukraine, Romania, anthroponyms, language contact, first names, family names, ethnic identity

1. Introduction. Geographical, Historical, and Demographic References

Ukraine neighbors several states of the European Union (i.e., Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania). However, its longest border—almost 650 km on land and over water—is shared with Romania. Romanian–Ukrainian contact has been ongoing across many centuries thanks to the geographical proximity of the two countries and their political relations, which began as early as the Middle Ages. The first record of Ruthenians in Maramureş dates back to the year 1390 when a village called *Oroszfalu* (Romanian for ‘Russian village’) was first mentioned (Mihaly de Apşa 2009). Although historians have not reached a consensus on when Ukrainian migration to Maramureş began, historical documents from the 14th century confirm the mass migration of Ukrainians from the former counties of Ung and Bereg (Filipaşcu 1997). The Ukrainians were eventually given land along the Ruscova River, where they established the villages of Poenile de sub Munte, Repedea, and Ruscova. Later, their settlements expanded towards the Bistra River and the Vişeu Valley (Filipaşcu 1997). During this same period, Ukrainians also began to settle along the Tisza Valley, which now makes up the border between Romania and Ukraine.

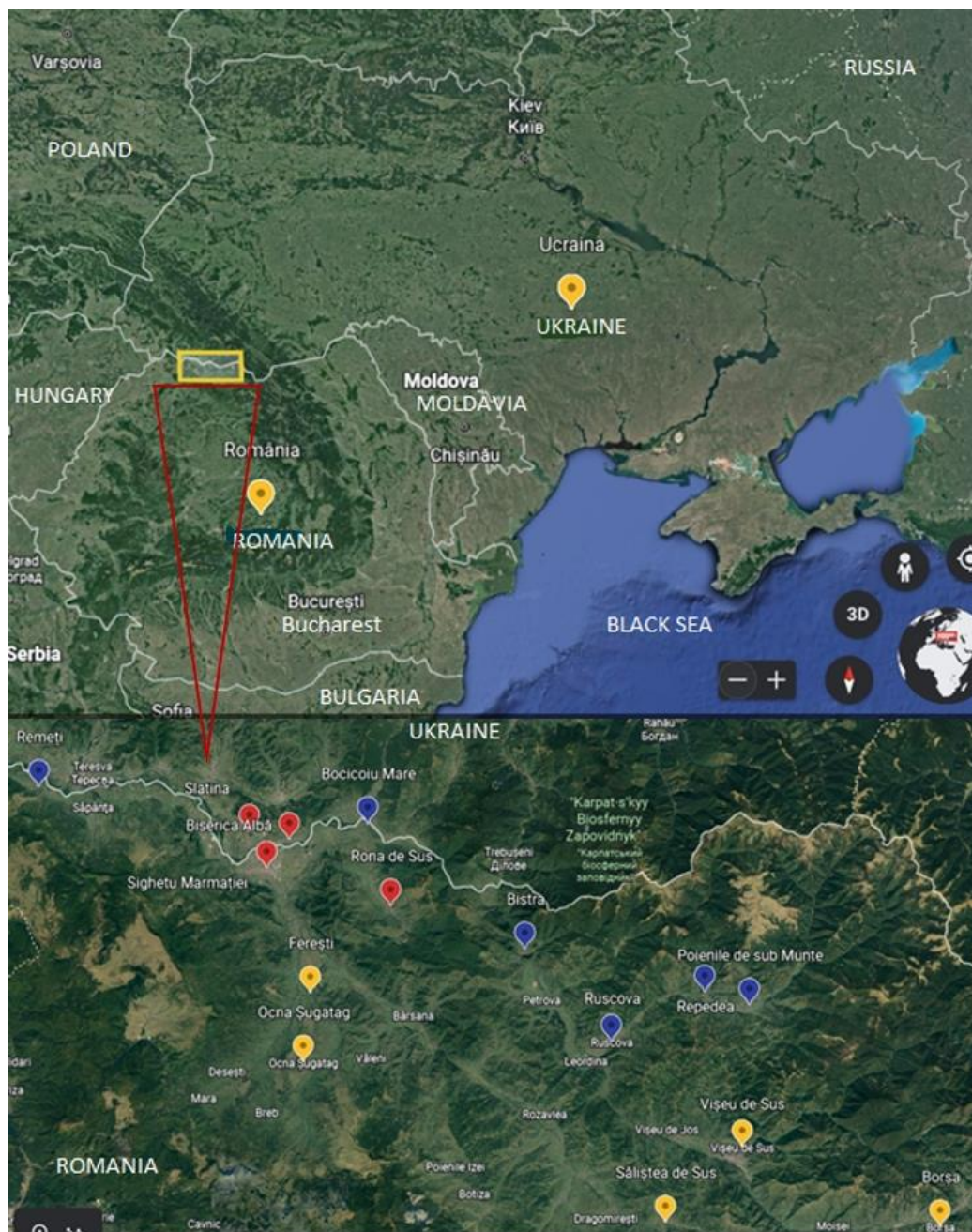


Figure 1: Maps of the Region and Settlements Investigated (Copyright of the Authors)

According to the 2022 census, there are about 30,000 Ukrainians who reside south of the Tisza; and there are approximately 45,800 who live in Romania. Most of these inhabitants live in areas that are considered Ukrainian, despite their geography (e.g., Poienile de sub Munte, Ruscova, Repedea, Bistra, and Rona de Sus). There are some areas that are considered ethnically mixed settlements (e.g., Remeți, Bocicioiu Mare, and Sighetu Marmăției) (see table 1).

Table 1: Number of Ukrainians in Communes of Maramureș

Commune	Inhabitants (total)	Romanians	Hungarians	Ukrainians
Poienile de sub Munte	10,073	307	36	9,254
Ruscova	5,541	190	5	5,011
Repedea	4,716	90	-	4,472
Bistra	4,174	443	-	3,543
Rona de Sus	3,855	193	313	3,213
Remeți	3,040	571	225	2,156
Bocicioiu Mare	3,818	1,445	226	1,975
Towns				
Sighetu Marmăției	37,640	28,634	4,417	750

Just as there are Ukrainians who reside south of the Tisza River, there is a Romanian community in Ukraine. In fact, this community is the third-largest ethnic group “after the Ukrainians and the Russians, if it were not artificially divided into Romanians (151,000 people) and ‘Moldavians’ (258,600 people)” (Embassy of Romania in Ukraine). Most Romanians north of the Tisza (2.6% of the population) live compactly in Zakarpattia Oblast and Maramureș. Historically, the region used to encompass both sides of the Tisza. However, following treaty agreements signed at the end of World War I, it was separated from Hungary and divided between Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland; and between Romania and the USSR after the end of World War II in 1945. In 1991, when Ukraine declared its independence, the region was divided between Romania and Ukraine.

The main Romanian settlements north of the Tisza are *Slatina*, which is called *Solotvino* in Ukrainian; and *Biserica Albă*, or *Bila Tserkva* in Ukrainian. According to the 2003 census, *Slatina/Solotvino* includes the largest Romanian community in the district of Teceu. Of the ca. 9,000 inhabitants, 60% are Romanians, 30% are Hungarians, and 10% are Ukrainians. *Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva* has 3,056 inhabitants of whom 97% are Romanians.

The geographical proximity of Romania to Ukraine has facilitated centuries of complex interethnic contact, which has resulted in important sociocultural, economic, and educational exchanges. At the linguistic level, this contact can be clearly seen in the vocabulary of the two nations. There are Ukrainian words in the Romanian lexicon (e.g., *calic* ‘destitute’, *crainic* ‘herald’, *horn* ‘chimney’, *lan* ‘field’, *nămol* ‘mud’, *parșiv* ‘vile’, *tencui* ‘(to) plaster’, *zarvă* ‘clamour’). There are also many Romanian lexemes in the Ukrainian language (e.g., *bryndza* < Romanian *brânză* ‘cheese’; *bukata* < Romanian *bucată* ‘morsel’; *kolyba* < Romanian *colibă* ‘hut’; *malaj* < Romanian *mălai* ‘corn’; *mamalyga* < Romanian *mămăliță* ‘polenta’) (Vrabie 1967). At the same time, the Romanian–Ukrainian contact is also evident in the respective onomastics. The two languages share, for example, many surnames, first names, and nicknames (e.g., *Andreica*, *Guliniac*; *Liuba*, *Miroslav*, *Miroslava*, *Veniamina*). They also have many toponyms in common (e.g., *Bistra*, *Certeze*, *Beresta*, *Bucovinca*, *Horavița*, *Lucova*, *Mohelca*).

2. Naming in a Bilingual and Multilingual Context: Theoretical Guidelines

In multi-ethnic communities, anthroponymic decisions are correlated with name givers’ native language. These onomastic choices are often indicative of how majority/minority citizens see themselves and define their individuality as a people, as family members, and as human beings.

Anthroponymic choices also mirror the way in which people use language to express their culture, religion, and ethnic and social belonging (Abubakari 2020; Ainiala et al. 2016).

This being the case, a nation state may use language policies to regulate the use of anthroponyms in an attempt to mediate cultural and individual identities. For instance, the regions of Zakarpattia Oblast and Maramureș were a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918. During this period, Ukrainian and Romanian were not acknowledged as official languages. The Budapest administration replaced the non-Hungarian names of ethnic groups representatives. There were even official guidebooks for the implementation of this Magyarization process (see Telkes 1898). This historical practice accounts not only for the presence of Hungarian names among the Romanian majority and the Ukrainian community in Maramureș; it is also one of the reasons why there are multiple spelling variants of a single name. By the end of World War I, the region

of Zakarpattia Oblast was divided amongst several different nations. This development was reflected in anthroponymy, as pre-existing names were translated into Hungarian, Czech, Russian, or Ukrainian respectively (see Beley 2020; Sholia 2020; Khrypko & Iatsenko 2019; Knoblock 2019). The appearance of Romanian, Hungarian, and German family names in the Ukrainian community of Maramureş is consequently the result of political factors such as governmental language policies as well as social developments like the emergence of interethnic marriages.

North of the Tisza, family names consist of Ukrainian, Russian, Hungarian, Romanian, and Slovak onyms despite the russification policies imposed by the former Soviet totalitarian regime; or the post-1991 push to “Ukrainianize” proper names. As Knoblock pointed out, somewhat subjectively perhaps, “Since gaining independence, the Ukrainian authorities have, among other actions, implemented standardization of personal names according to Ukrainian language conventions regardless of the linguistic background of the person being named” (2019, 137). Family names nevertheless make up a relatively stable sub-class of anthroponyms

By comparison, first names are more susceptible to changes in onomastic fashions. For this reason, first names can inform researchers about parents’ preferences and expectations, name givers’ cultural identity, educational level, and religious affiliation; they can also provide information about the influences in mass media, and the effects of waves of immigration (see Aldrin 2017, 2014; Watzlawik et al. 2016). As research has shown, the interplay of political, social, and historical factors is commonly reflected in the selection, frequency, and structure of children’s first names (Mihali 2022; Beley 2020; Khrypko & Iatsenko 2019; Sholia 2019, 2017; Felecan 2009). Name choices can also provide information about name givers’ attitudes and values (e.g., the importance they place in belonging to a particular ethnic group; their desire to integrate into the surrounding community) (see also Mihali 2021a, 2021b).

Given the wealth of information anthroponymy can provide, language contact has piqued researchers’ interest and has been analyzed diachronically (Ragauskaite 2021; Brgles 2018; Jordà et al. 2016) and synchronically to describe various geographical spaces in Europe (Griķe 2019; Ainiāla et al. 2016), Canada (Dechief 2009), South America (Tonda & Rossebastiano 2014; Rossebastiano 2012), Asia (Sabet & Zhang 2020), and Africa (Abubakari 2020; Neethling 2008). In addition to these macro-level investigations into national patterns, there are many micro-level studies that have concentrated on smaller communities (Kasap 2021; Mihali 2021a, 2021b; Fernández Juncal 2018; Felecan 2010, 2009) and even individual families (Collet 2019; Aldrin 2009). Complementing this body of work is research that has examined the interaction of migration and naming (Gerhards & Tuppatt 2021; Gustafsson 2021; Eskola & Hämäläinen 2019; Arai et al. 2015; Becker 2009; Gerhards & Hans 2009).

3. Research Methodology

This article uses sociolinguistic methods to analyze the influence of language contact on the anthroponymy of Ukrainians in Romania and of Romanians in the Zakarpattia Oblast region of Ukraine. The corpus consists of family and first names collected from two settlements in Maramureş situated on the border with Ukraine: Rona de Sus and Sighetu Marmatei; and two border settlements in Ukraine’s Zakarpattia Oblast with a Romanian majority: Slatina/Solotvino and Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva. The present investigation comprises the period between the years 2000 and 2021.

The names from the Romanian community were taken from farming registers of 2022 (family names in Rona de Sus) and parish registers of baptisms which mention the names of both children and their parents residing in Rona de Sus and Sighetu Marmatei. These data were corroborated with names collected from registers of marriages and births. Beginning in 2000, these records include transcripts of the birth certificates of children born abroad.¹ For the analysis of the anthroponyms of the Ukrainian community in Sighetu Marmatei, parish registers of individuals baptized in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were investigated. Data were also obtained from the two Ukrainian settlements and were taken from registers of marriages and births between the years 2000 and 2020. For the purposes of this research, the Ukrainian names were transcribed into the Latin alphabet by a bilingual speaker.

In the registers of Rona de Sus, 680 families were identified. Of this group, 591 individuals (306 boys, 285 girls) were born between 2000 and 2021. From the Sighetu Marmatei registers, there were 160 families identified with 182 children (85 boys, 97 girls). In Slatina/Solotvino, the research yielded 724 individuals (341 boys, 383 girls); and in Balta Albă/Bila Tserkva, there were 433 individuals (205 boys, 228 girls) located. For explanations regarding the choice of Ukrainian/foreign names in the settlements in Maramureş, a survey was carried out with parents and/or children. Along with this data, this study also examined previous research published on family names that exist in other Ukrainian communities within Maramureş (Songott 2015; Horvat & Horvat 2005) or during older field research.

Using these information sources, the aim of this investigation is to examine the anthroponymic connections between Romanian and Ukrainian ethnic groups to answer the following research questions: (1) How many Ukrainian/Romanian family names are there in the Ukrainian community south of the Tisza and in

the Romanian community north of the Tisza, respectively?; (2) Which factors are related to the spread of Ukrainian/Romanian/Hungarian names beyond their ethnolinguistic community origins?; and (3) Do the two minorities preserve their cultural identity at the anthroponymic level?

4. Research Findings

4.1. Family Names

South of the Tisza, there are 109 different family names (141 including the spelling variants of the same name) in Rona de Sus and 98 family names (in addition to 6 spelling variants of already recorded anthroponyms) in Sighetu Marmăției (see table 2). In the documents consulted in Slatina/Solotvino, there are 121 family names (151 if one includes the spelling variants). In Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva, there are 103 family names (131 including the spelling variants).

Some family names north of the Tisza occur in the same form in Ukrainian and Russian (e.g., Russian, Ukrainian *Zakharova/Захарова*, *Pastukhov/Пастухов*, *Zakharov/Захаров*). In this study, they were included in the category of “Ukrainian” names. In the category for names of “Other Slavic origin”, anthroponyms borrowed from Czech, Slovak, Polish, or Bulgarian were included. Also placed in this category were derivatives with suffixes specific to these languages or Old Slavonic. Some of these names recorded north of the Tisza (e.g., *Fonta*, *Popșa*) are frequent in Maramureș among Romanian and Hungarian ethnic groups. For this investigation, the category “multiple etymologies” includes family names which have been attested as having various origins, including Slavic (e.g., *Danci*, *Godja*, *Turda*). Some of the names with unknown etymology seem to be dialectal Ukrainian formations or Slavic ones. Some might also belong to members of the Jewish community which was quite prevalent in this region until World War II. However, as the exact origin of these names remained unclear, they were placed in the category for names of “Unknown origin”.

Table 2: Origin of Family Names Gathered in Five Border Areas between Romania and Ukraine

	Rona de Sus		Sighetu Marmăției		Slatina/ Solotvino		Biserica Albă/ Bila Tserkva	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ukrainian	61	55.96	46	45.91	52	42.97	42	40.77
Romanian	32	29.35	29	29.59	29	23.96	29	28.15
Russian	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.82	9	8.73
Hungarian	6	5.50	11	11.22	14	11.57	7	6.79
German	2	1.83	5	5.10	0	0.00	0	0.00
Other Slavic origin	2	1.83	0	0.00	4	3.30	3	2.91
Multiple etymologies	5	4.58	2	2.04	2	1.65	3	2.91
Unknown origin	0	0.00	5	5.10	19	15.70	10	9.70
Total	109	100	98	100	121	100	103	100

As shown in table 2, in all the settlements investigated, Ukrainian family names are the most numerous. Their number is higher in the Ukrainian communities in Romania (55.96% in Rona de Sus; and 45.91% in Sighetu Marmăției) than in the Romanian community in Ukraine (42.97% in Slatina/Solotvino; and 40.77% in Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva). The relatively large number of Ukrainian names in Rona de Sus mirrors the ethnic configuration of the settlement.

The names of the Ukrainians in Sighetu Marmăției come from different Ukrainian villages in Maramureș. Examples include *Anișoreac*, *Miculaiciuc* from Poienile de sub Munte (Songott 2015, 100); *Grecica* in Ruscova (Horvat & Horvat 2005); and *Bodnariuc*, *Romaniuc*, and *Semeniuc* in Rona de Sus. The presence of these anthroponyms in the onomasticon of Sighetu Marmăției may reflect the population’s migration from rural to urban settlements, from the northern outskirts of Maramureș to the most important urban center in the area.

Of the family names of Hungarian origin found in the communities investigated, several names were found to be particularly common. These names included *Covaci* and *Tivadar* in Rona de Sus and Sighetu Marmăției; *Fangli* and *Magas* in Rona de Sus; and *Dialog*, *Kanalas*, and *Sabo* in Sighetu Marmăției. German anthroponyms were also found in these areas. Examples include *Herbil* and *Hanțig*, which both appeared in Rona de Sus. *Hanțig* has also been recorded in Poienile de sub Munte (Songott 2015) and Ruscova (Horvat & Horvat 2005, 78). In Sighetu Marmăției, the names *Herbil*, *Huber*, and *Kraus* were also found. According to Herbil (2019), the family name *Hanțig* once belonged to bearers who were Germans who were brought to work in the wood industry in the 18th and 19th centuries. These “Zipsers”, as they were called, settled in the Vaser

valley, in Vișeu de Sus, a settlement close to the Ukrainian villages of Poienile de sub Munte, Ruscova, and Repedea.

In the two settlements in Ukraine, although the majority of the population is Romanian, Ukrainian names are predominant, although neither Ukrainian nor Russian names exceed 50% of the surname stock, even when counted together. Nevertheless, the passage of time, historical conditions, language policies, and the fluctuating status of minorities in Ukraine did not result in the erasure of the ethnic and cultural identity of the Romanian community in Slatina/Solotvino and Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva. Romanian family names are still present in these communities. Even some of the Hungarian surnames show traces of Romanian ethnic identity. Consider the family names *Mihali* which occurred 19 times in the Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva sample and *Șimon* which was found 18 times in Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva and 19 times in Slatina/Solotvino. These names were also primarily recorded in Maramureș for Romanian ethnic groups. As such these names may have been originally Romanian and undergone translation into Hungarian under the Hungarian administration.

As shown in Table 3 below, with respect to the frequency of family names in Maramureș, certain anthroponyms in the Ukrainian settlement Rona de Sus were especially prominent. In Rona de Sus, three surnames were found to occur with more than 30 families: (1) *Romaniuc*, with the variants *Romaniuk* and *Romanyuk*; (2) *Boiciuc/Boiciuk, Boicsuk*; and (3) *Grijac/Gridjac*. There were six other surnames that were attested in between 29 and 20 families: 1.) *Prodaniuc/Prodanyuk*; 2.) *Lauruc/Lauriuc/Lauriuc*, 3.) *Semeniuc*; (4) *Hera/Herea*; (5) *Bodnariuc/Bodnaruc/Bodnaruk*; and (6) *Țifrac/Czifrac/Czifrak*. All of these names are of Ukrainian origin. A comparison of the most frequent names in Rona de Sus in 2022 with the statistical data for 2002 and 2003 (Herbil 2019, 222–227) reveals that the anthroponyms which were widespread in the early 2000s continued to be widespread 20 years later. The one exception is *Bodnariuc*, which had more occurrences in 2022 than it did in 2002 and 2003. The decrease in this name may be due to the increase of external migration and the movement of the population within the borders of Romania (Herbil 2019).

Table 3: Frequency of Families with Ukrainian Family Names in Maramureș

Frequency	>30	20–29	10–19	8–9	6–7	4–5	2–3	1
Rona de Sus	3	6	12	8	6	10	22	42
Sighetu Marmăției	0	0	0	0	2	4	32	60

As shown in Table 3, the situation in Sighetu Marmăției is somewhat different than in Rona de Sus. In the 160 families recorded in this study, two names with F = 7 were found. One was the Ukrainian name, *Petrețchi*; and the other, *Roman*, is common to the Romanian onomasticon. Two other Ukrainian names with F = 5 were found: *Leva* and *Șofineți*. Romanian, Hungarian, and German family names have comparatively low frequencies.

In the registers of births and marriages north of the Tisza (see table 4), the Ukrainian family name *Migalca* stands out. It had a frequency of 154. In several communities in Maramureș, a variant of the name, *Mihalca*, was found. Five family names were recorded with a frequency between 30 and 40: *Dan* (F = 40), *Marina* (F = 36), *Vlad* (F = 34), *Popovic/Popovici* (F = 32), and *Pricop* (F = 31). These five anthroponyms were found in both the Ukrainian and Romanian communities in Maramureș alike. Several names recorded had more than 20 bearers: *Borca/Borka* (F = 27), *Țiple/Ciplea* (F = 23), *Grin/Hrin* (F = 22), and *Iovdi* (F = 20). The first two names were particularly frequent in the Romanian villages of Maramureș.

Table 4: Frequency of Newborns with Romanian Family Names in Ukraine

Frequency	>100	50–99	30–49	20–29	10–19	8–9	6–7	4–5	2–3	1
Slatina/ Solotvino	1	0	5	4	12	5	12	14	18	50
Biserica Albă/ Bila Tserkva	0	1	2	4	5	2	3	8	32	48

As displayed in Table 4, in Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva, the highest frequency (F = 45) was recorded for the name *Popșa*, followed by *Moiș* (F = 34) and *Dan* (F = 25). These names are all widespread in the Romanian onomasticon. Slightly lower frequencies were recorded for *Mihali* and *Vlad* (F = 21). Both were found south of the Tisza in the Romanian communities. *Mihali* was prevalent in the town of Borșa and *Vlad* in the town of Săliște de Sus. A similar situation was found for the family name *Țiple* (F = 20) which was frequent in Ferești, a village in Maramureș.

The great diversity of anthroponyms in the settlements investigated may be a result of Ruthenian migration and prolonged language contact in the area north of the Tisza. In the Romanian villages in Maramureș, the population movement was less extensive. This difference may account for the large occurrence of a small number of family names with low frequencies (see Vișovan 2007).

4.2. First Names

An analysis of the names of children born between the years 2000 and 2021 yielded evidence for an anthroponymic revitalization in the north and south of the Tisza. Onomastic diversity was especially great for female first names (see Table 5).

Table 5: Number of Male and Female First Names by Area and Gender

	Children	Boys	Male First Names	Girls	Female First Names	Total No. First Names
Rona de Sus	591	306	158	285	190	348
Sighetu Marmatei	182	85	73	97	96	169
Slatina/Solotvino	724	341	107	383	137	244
Biserica Albă/ Bila Tserkva	433	205	83	228	106	189

With the exception of Rona de Sus, there were consistently more female first names than male ones, both with simple and compound structures.

In all the communities investigated, the most numerous first names appear in Romanian form (see figure 2). These make up 51.72% of the anthroponyms recorded in Rona de Sus, 59.76% in Sighetu Marmatei, 54.50% in Slatina/Solotvino, and 43.91% in Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva. This group includes Romanian formations (e.g., *Crina, Lăcrămioara, Viorica*), diminutives and hypocoristics coined in Romania (e.g., *Dănuț, Ghiță, Ionel, Ionuț, Nicușor, Nuțu, Răducu; Anișoara, Anuța, Dumitrița, Lenuța*), liturgical/Biblical names, and female variants of certain Romanian hagionyms (e.g., *Andrei, Constantin, Emanuel, Gheorghe, Ion, Luca, Samuel, Teofil; Ana, Cristina, Daniela, Elena, Gabriela, Maria*). It also includes scholarly borrowings from Latin and Greek, and modern borrowings from western/eastern onomasticons which became predominant in 20th century Romanian anthroponymy (e.g., *Adrian, Alexandru, Alin, Casian, Emilia, Laurențiu, Octavian, Ovidiu, Sebastian; Adelina, Adina, Angela, Aurelia, Bianca, Claudia, Delia, Mirela, Diana, Elena, Iuliana*).

Slavic first names accounted for 9.77% of the first names used in Rona de Sus after 2000, 13.01% in Sighetu Marmatei, 24.59% in Slatina/Solotvino, and 15.87% in Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva (see figure 2). The group of Slavic first names includes anthroponyms specific to the Ukrainians (e.g., *Ivasek, Miroslav, Ruslan, Serioja, Veniamin, Vladimir; Hafia, Natașa, Olena, Svetlana, Tania, Vasilena*), first names pertaining to the Russian onomasticon (e.g., *Igor, Iurii, Ivan, Serghei; Andriana, Arina, Augustina, Darina, Evgenia*), and Old Slavonic names that were borrowed centuries ago by the Romanians as well (e.g., *Bogdan, Dragomir*). Many Russian first names and names borrowed by Ukrainians from other Slavic peoples were adopted into the Ukrainian onomasticon and were subsequently regarded as Ukrainian (see Khrypko & Iatsenko 2019). With continued social interactions between the Ukrainians and Romanians in Maramureș with the population north of the Tisza, these names also eventually entered the name stock of the communities with Ukrainian communities.

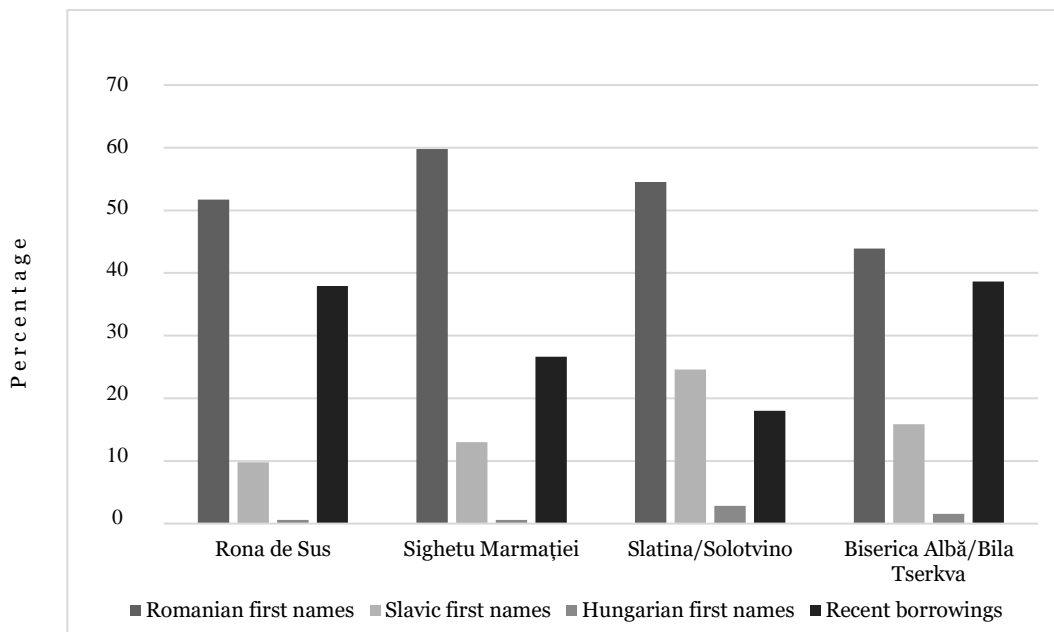


Figure 2: Romanian, Slavic, Hungarian, and Recent Borrowings in the First Names Examined in the Corpus

As illustrated in Figure 2, recent borrowings were relatively numerous in the communities investigated (37.93% in Rona de Sus; 26.62% in Sighetu Marmatei; 18.03% in Slatina/Solotvino; and 38.62% in Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva), and refer to first names which entered the Romanian or Ukrainian onomasticon over the past decades under the marked influence of mass media and migration. Some of these names have been adopted as is into the Romanian language, and also occurred in the Ukrainian communities examined (e.g., *Albert, Brian, Raul, Samir; Denisa/Denisia, Francesca, Evelina, Samira*). Other names retained the sound structure from the language of origin, but their spelling altered (e.g., *Alessandro, Angelo, Dostin, Fabrizio, Leonardo, Pavlos, Raum, Rayan, Stiven, Thomas, William; Giulia, Loren, Milagros, Patrisia, Selest, Valensia*). In the case of *Dostin* and *Stiven*, the alternative spelling may be a reflect of the parents' level of education.

In addition to recent borrowings, Slavic names and coinages based on Slavic patterns were also recorded, although with a low frequency of one, in all of the areas investigated: in Rona de Sus (e.g., *Ieroslav, Kolea, Maftai, Veniamin; Evnora, Katia, Liuba, Ludmila, Natalca, Tamara*); in Sighetu Marmatei (e.g., *Miroslav, Sasha, Saşa, Veniamin*); in Slatina/Solotvino (e.g., *Ademir, Arsenii, Chirilo, Igor, Laurentii, Micolai, Miroslav, Oleg, Vasilii; Amina, Claudia, Nadia, Ocsana, Vasilina, Viejina*); and in Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva (e.g., *Ieroslav, Igor, Rostislav, Serghei; Evgenia, Nikita, Svejana, Tatiana*).

According to Felecan (2009), the main factor determining the adoption of such names in the Romanian-Ukrainian onomasticon may be "the feeling of freedom people have gained after several decades of totalitarian regime and ideological constraints" (404). This freedom has translated into the opportunity people have had to travel abroad, seek temporary employment in a foreign country (seasonal migration), or settle in a different nation (permanent migration). Another factor which may play a role here is the influence of mass media which has facilitated the spread of names of, for example, film characters, actors, singing artists, and athletes.

Hungarian names recorded in the registers were comparatively infrequent: 0.57% in Rona de Sus; 0.59% in Sighetu Marmatei; 2.86% in Slatina/Solotvino; and 1.58% in Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva (see figure 2). It is important to note that, south of the Tisza, these names were primarily borne by children in mixed families where one parent was Hungarian. Some examples include *Tibor, Matyas; Andrea, Ilona*, and the unusually spelled name *Ghizela*.

Regarding the issue of gender and first names, male first names tended to recur more frequently, whereas female first names were found to be more diverse. In all the communities investigated, the number of first names with a frequency lower than three was far higher for female names for male first names similarly ranked (see table 6).

Table 6: Frequency of First Names for Boys (B) and Girls (G) in the Corpus

Frequency	> 40		20–39		10–19		6–9		4–5		2–3		1	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
Rona de Sus	1	0	2	1	10	8	14	9	13	13	33	48	85	110
Sighetu Marmatei	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	3	4	7	19	19	45	66
Slatina/Solotvino	2	0	3	0	3	3	6	11	2	11	27	32	64	80
Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva	0	0	0	0	6	1	4	6	4	10	19	29	50	60

In two of the four areas investigated, there were seven first names with a frequency greater than 20. Two of these had a frequency higher than 40: *Vasile* in Rona de Sus; *Vasile* and *Ion* in Slatina/Solotvino. Both of these first names are Romanian hagionyms. Five first names had a frequency between 20 and 39: (1) *Valentin* and (2) *Marian* in Rona de Sus, frequent in the Romanians' name stock; (3) the Russian name *Iurii*; (4) the Romanian names *Mihail*, and (5) *Gheorghe* in Slatina/Solotvino. One female first name, *Maria*, had an extremely high frequency in Rona de Sus ($F = 32$). It was recorded less frequently, however, in Sighetu Marmatei and Slatina/Solotvino ($F = 10-19$). Overall, first names with a frequency between 10 and 19 were mostly Romanian in the settlements south of the Tisza; and in Slatina/Solotvino, north of the Tisza. By comparison, in Biserica Albă/Bila Tserkva, Slavic first names (e.g., *Amina*; *Ivan*, *Iurii*, *Vasilii*) were used alongside Romanian ones (e.g., *Maxim*, *Mihail*, *Marin*).

The acceptance expressed by the Ruthenians in Maramureş towards the revitalization of the anthroponymic store may have resulted in the replacement of traditional names with Romanian ones and, subsequently, with borrowings from the countries where the Ruthenians work or worked. This influence may be evident in the multicultural urban environment of Sighetu Marmatei where there was relatively great diversity in the names given to children at baptism. This finding forms an interesting contrast to the results obtained for Rona de Sus, a rural community. Table 7 displays the total occurrence of male and female first names in simple (s) and compound (c) forms (e.g., *Veniamin* vs. *Cristian Veniamin*). For comparison, the results obtained in this investigation are displayed with those reported by Herbil (2009).

Table 7: Frequency of Ukrainian First Names in Rona de Sus

	2003 (Herbil 2019)			2000–2021		
	Total	s	c	Total	s	c
Male First Names						
<i>Fedor</i>	26	21	5	0	0	0
<i>Miroslav</i>	10	0	10	0	0	0
<i>Serioja</i>	7	2	5	0	0	0
<i>Volodea</i>	5	4	1	0	0	0
<i>Venea</i>	3	3	0	0	0	0
<i>Veniamin</i>	3	2	1	1	0	1
Female First Names						
<i>Vasilena</i> (+ variants)	101	91	10	0	0	0
<i>Hafia/Afia</i>	48	44	4	0	0	0
<i>Tania/Tanea</i>	19	10	9	1	0	1
<i>Liuba</i>	19	13	6	1	0	1
<i>Nataşa</i>	12	7	5	2	1	1
<i>Miroslava</i>	7	6	1	1	0	1

While in 2003 *Fedor* is recorded 21 times as a simple first name and 5 times as a part of an onomastic compound, it does not appear in the registers analyzed in the period between the years 2000 and 2021. Of the six male first names listed in baptismal registers as parents' names, only *Veniamin* is recorded after 2000 as a part of *Cristian Veniamin*—namely as the second element in a compound structure with a Romanian name as the first element. With respect to the female names, four first names that used to be frequent in the Ruthenians' old onomasticon have been preserved, but their frequency was low. They also appeared as the second element of compound names (e.g., *Alexandra Tania*, *Adelina Liuba*, *Beatrice Nataşa*, *Maria Miroslava*). Where the spelling of these names is concerned, it is noteworthy that the original form *Tanea* was replaced with the variant *Tania* and that the first name *Nataşa* was spelled either with “ş” or “sh”.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

As this investigation of personal naming along the border region of the Tisza River has shown, anthroponymy mirrors the sociopolitical shifts in not only Ukraine and Romania as nation states, but also the lives of the inhabitants who live there. Despite governmental efforts to control the direction of these changes by implementing official onomastic policies, the people in these regions have continued to express their identities through their personal name choices. Contrary to certain opinions, like those expressed by Knoblock (2019), who criticizes the Ukrainianization of Russians' names in Donbas and claims that "renaming people is a routine practice in Ukraine" (2019, 137), this investigation has shown these assertions do not hold true for the Romanian community in Zakarpattia Oblast. The Romanian minority here has preserved its traditions, language, religion, and onomasticon. The same situation was observed in Ukrainian communities in Maramureş. In this study, it was found that the Ruthenians were free to select the first names of their children on the basis of their personal preferences and not government controls.

The analysis of the first names collected has revealed three strong trends. First, in Maramureş, evidence was found for an ongoing revitalization of Ukrainians' onomastic store of names, which has been enriched by borrowings from Romanian as well as other languages with which they have come into contact. Secondly, this trend was also accompanied, however, by a gradual decrease in the number of traditional and modern Ukrainian names used by Ukrainians. Thirdly, in communities north of the Tisza with a Romanian majority, evidence was found for the preservation of Romanian names, even dated anthroponyms that were recorded in the Cyrillic alphabet in official registers.

Taken together, this comparative analysis of the onomasticons of the Ruthenians in Maramureş and the Romanians in Ukraine sheds light on the goodwill between the two ethnic groups and their peaceful co-existence over the centuries. This research also highlights how sociolinguistic, cultural, and political exchange—unhindered by animosity and resentment—can lead to the enrichment of all.

Notes

¹ Within six months after a child is born, Romanian citizens must request the registration of the birth certificate with the mayor's office located in one of the parents' places of residence.

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