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The Names in the Family of King Matthias Corvinus

From Old Sources to Contemporary Historiography

The family of King Matthias Corvinus (1458–1590) has long been the object of complex investigations, but also of historiographical and even political-national disputes. The main reason behind these disputes is the scarcity, the ambiguity and the distortion—deliberate or not and operated since the Middle Ages—of the data regarding this issue. Another reason is the occasional interpretation of the data in question from the vantage point of modern and contemporary mentalities, of the national perspectives that dominated the investigation of the past and other fields of spiritual creation starting chiefly with the 18th century.

The debate was structured on several levels, focusing on the ethnic origin of the family, on its place of origin, on the denomination embraced by its members, on the precise identity of the paternal grandmother of Matthias, on other relatives of the Hunyadis, and even on the names they bore. No serious historian would nowadays question the Romanian origin of the family, even if many rightfully discuss the importance played by this ethnic origin at that time. Still, beyond the significance of the medieval nation, (Pop, 1998; Brezeanu, 2002) since this ethnic origin was mentioned even in the 15th century—in a neutral fashion, with admiration, or with contempt—it is the duty of the historian to take note of it and to interpret it. Also, it is almost certain that nearly all of the known family members were born in Transylvania and in Hungary, but it is difficult to say whether the more distant paternal ancestors of Matthias were themselves local Transylvanian Romanians or came from the lands south of the Carpathians. In what concerns their religious affiliation, we can only assume that the paternal grandfather of the king (Vojk/*Voicu*) and some of his relatives having Slavic-Romanian names, not present in the Catholic calendar (Sorb/*Șerb* or *Șerban*, Radol/*Radul*, Magos/*Mogoș*, another *Radul*), had initially been of the Byzantine rite, like most Romanians at that time. Elisabeth of Marsina (Margina? Mușina?), Vojk's wife—probably coming from the Marginea district or from the Land of Hațeg (a member of the Mușină family of Densus)—could have been a Catholic, in light of her given name, but she may just as well belonged to another denomination. Apart from two certain marital alliances with two Hungarian families belonging to the middle nobility—Dengeleg and

Rozgonyi—the other known paternal relatives of Matthias are families of knezes, voivodes, and small Romanian nobles from the region of Hunedoara-Hațeg.¹ Here, in the Land of Hațeg, the father of King Matthias had “co-owning brothers,” with whom he shared certain lands.

In what follows, we shall focus our attention on certain names used in the family of the Hunyadis, especially in light of recent allusions to “a true strategy concerning the use of onomastic errors” (Rusu, 1999: 22) in Romanian historiography, as if a conspiracy well prepared by occult communist forces had caused deliberate distortions of some 14th century names. We shall begin with the very name of the illustrious king of Hungary, born in Transylvania. Any Westerner, or anyone familiar with Catholicism and even with the Protestant doctrines, knows that the name Matthias or Mathias or Mathia (with several variants) comes from the homonymous apostle and was given to boys in Western Europe quite frequently in the past and more rarely nowadays. The feast of Matthias the Apostle was celebrated in the Catholic calendar of medieval Hungary on February 24 (in normal years) or on February 25 (in leap years). As the future king was born in the Mech House (later known as Matthias House) of Cluj (Klausenburg, Kolozsvár), in the voivodate of Transylvania, probably on 23 February 1443, he was given the name of Matthias, in celebration of the apostle whose feast was the following day, on February 24.² It is also possible that the future king was actually born on 24 February 1443, as suggested by a document issued by John Corvin of Hunyadi (*Ioannes Corvinus de Huniad*) on 24 February 1495 (*in festo beati Matthiae apostoli*) in memory of his father and confirming a paternal donation to Jozsa of Som, deputy *comes* of Timiș (Erdödy: no. 970). Besides, Nicholas Bethlen ordered that a sermon be delivered in memory of Matthias every year, precisely on the feast of Matthias the Apostle. (Lupescu Maku, 2002: 172,180)

In the Romanian environment, however, the name Matia, Mathias, or Matthias is not used and was never a given name. This might seem strange, since the Byzantine calendar does include the day of the saint in question. Thus, in the Romanian Orthodox calendar, the name of the saint—*Sfântul Apostol Matia*— is mentioned twice, once directly, on August 9, and once indirectly, on June 30, the feast of the 12

¹ We shall not discuss here the family of Nicolaus Olahus (1493–1568)—archbishop primate and regent of Habsburg Hungary—related through marriage with the Corvins: it seems that a sister of John Hunyadi—Marina—married a paternal uncle of the illustrious humanist and clergyman. This kinship is irrelevant for the purposes of the present study. The same applies to the alleged kinship between John Hunyadi and the Moldavian ruling family (also through one of Vojk’s daughters, married to Voivode Peter III, who ruled, intermittently, in 1447–1448). See Rezachevici, 2001: 98, 192, 505.

² Quite symptomatic is the fact that a boy named Matia/Matthias, the son of a Transylvanian voivode of Romanian origin and who would become an illustrious king of Hungary, was born in a town that *intra muros* was still dominantly German (as was the case with Cluj around 1440).

apostles. Of course, these were not major feasts and enjoyed little attention. They were merely names of saints in the calendar, and there were some for every day. At any rate, Romanians do not use the name Matthias. One name they do use, however, is that of Matthew the Evangelist (*Matei*), as the gospels and their authors were always mentioned by priests in front of the congregation. When later Romanian chroniclers (in the 17th century) began writing in the Romanian language, they rendered the name of the Hungarian king as *Matiaș* or *Mateiaș*, starting from the Hungarian name *Mátyás* (Ureche, 1967: 63-78). Quite possibly, in those days the name was pronounced not in the customary Romanian but in the Hungarian fashion, with the stress on the first syllable (*Màtiaș*). Interestingly enough, Slavonic documents from Moldavia mention a deacon named *Matiaș*, who lived at the time of Stephen the Great, but this is an isolated case.³ Romanian historians from Transylvania operated in the same fashion. For instance, in the late 18th century, Gheorghe Șincai constantly referred to “Matiaș, king of Hungary.” (Șincai, 1978: 154-194) Even Nicolae Iorga – the greatest Romanian historian – systematically used the form *Matiaș*/*Mateiaș*. *Matiaș* gradually changed into *Mateiaș*, used in Romanian as a diminutive for *Matei*; the immediate consequence was that the king was renamed *Matei*. Consequently, modern Romanian historiography rendered the name Matthias as *Matei*. A. D. Xenopol, the author of the first critical synthesis of Romanian history (13 volumes published between 1896 and 1912 and relevant as a model even nowadays), systematically used the form *Matei Corvin*. (Xenopol, 1986: 252) The form *Matei* was thus adopted in Romanian historiography and by the Romanian public.⁴ Still, this was no occult “strategy,” but rather a particular case concerning the use of a proper name. Such situations are common in all historiographies, as proper names are adapted to the specificity of certain languages and become “invented,” adapted names, used by virtue of custom and of tradition, and in such cases no one even suspects a conspiracy or an occult strategy. Precisely during the communist period, through the voice of Francisc Pall, the Cluj school of history pointed out the error generated by the confusion between the name of Matthias the Apostle – the actual name of the Hungarian king – and the name of Matthew the Evangelist, given to the sovereign by Romanian historians. Currently, historians and especially those specializing in the Middle Ages use the correct Romanian form *Matia*, but the name *Matei* is still solidly rooted in the popular

³ Văcaru, 2003: 93-106. We may be dealing with a Catholic deacon bearing the name of Matthias, a member of the Moldavian Catholic community of Hungarian extraction.

⁴ Mureșanu, 1996: 131-136. He did not feel the need to explain why the name Matia is the correct one, but simply used it as such. An important role in the circulation of the name Matia in the 20th century could have been played by Vasile Pârvan, who was extremely interested in the history of the Middle Ages, especially around the year 1900. However, the great historian, who invariably used the form *Mathias*, quickly abandoned these pursuits and turned his attention to ancient history and to archaeology. See Pârvan, 1990: 129-206. In the long run, the form most widely known in Romania was that of *Matei Corvin*.

mentality. It is used strictly by virtue of tradition, custom, and sometimes ignorance, but not because of a “strategic” pressure or because of the “immaturity of our medievalists,” as it has been tendentiously claimed (Rusu, 1999: 22). It is absurd to draw such dramatic and catastrophic conclusions starting from trivial, minor, and fully explained matters. We shall only mention here the fact that even a contemporary Italian chronicle (predating the death of the sovereign) mentioned the Hungarian king not as *Mattia*, as it would have been proper in the Italian language and as the name appears in other Italian documents, but as *Matteo*, the equivalent of the same *Matei*/Matthew (Cronica, 1904: 88). This Milanese example foreshadowed the onomastic diversification of the modern era and which began with the Late Middle Ages.

Equally problematic is the cognomen *Corvinus*, *Corvin*, or *Corvinul*. Some things are certain in this respect.⁵ Albeit a famous sovereign, Matthias was still the target of ironic and sarcastic jabs because of his modest “Wallachian” origins, because of the fact that he was related to his “schismatic” subjects. Therefore, he took a number of measures. *Valachorum regulus* is the customary title used by Bonfini (to whom we shall return later) for both Matthias and for Stephen the Great. A deliberate offense against the Corvin – accused by the “pure blooded” Hungarian elite of being just a “Romanian princeling” – the title is quite flattering in the case of Stephen the Great, who had gained (in 1492) the admiration of the dead king’s chronicler for having protected Hungary by preventing the Tartars and the Ottomans from attacking Transylvania by way of Moldavia.⁶ *D’origine humile de progenie de Valacchia* was the formula (taken up by Stefano Magno) used by the Venetian bureaucracy to describe Matthias upon his coronation,⁷ drawing on the rumors circulating in Hungary. Also, Emperor Frederic III contemptuously declared that *Matthias* was *natus a Valacho patre* (Armbruster, 1993: 67–68.). It is true that the Romanian origin of the king was sometimes mentioned in a positive context in the foreign sources (thus, in 1475–1476 Venetian envoy Sebastiano Baduario praised the Romanians, whom he described as being the people of the “most serene king” Matthias, for their constant bravery in the battles against the Turks, “alongside his father and alongside his majesty” (Iorga, n.d.: 101), (Drăgan, 2000: 380)), but this did not change the negative perception within the kingdom. It seems that the king himself did not always make

⁵ We shall not discuss here the idea initiated by Petrus Ransanus and then taken up by Antonius Bonfinius, according to which Matthias’ father was born in the village of *Corvinus* (recently embraced by Péter Kulcsár, *op. cit.*), because it lacks credibility and has been seen as a deliberate distortion related to the propaganda meant to strengthen the descent of the family from the old Corvins. Contemporary Hungarian and Transylvanian sources make no mention of this fact. It is hard to believe that two foreigners, two Italians who resided in Hungary only for a limited period of time and much later, knew more about the birthplace of the king’s father and about the origin of his family than the local people.

⁶ De Bonfinis, 1941: 212. On a previous occasion, the Italian secretary had criticized Stephen.

⁷ Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Codices, 6215, Ad annum 1457 [MV 1458], f. 6r.

a secret of this embarrassing origin: according to the late 16th century testimony of Polish author Varsevicius (Krzystoff Warszewiecki), who drew on the work of authors from the time of Matthias, the Hungarian king received some Moldavian envoys (whom the Polish author called "Wallachians"⁸) dispatched by Stephen the Great.⁹ When they began their message with the Romanian words "*Spune domnului nostru*" [Tell our lord], he told them that if that was their language, then he did not need an interpreter.¹⁰ Nicolae Iorga believed that Matthias' refusal to use an interpreter after hearing the three Romanian words in question may have been "a way of showing that he understood that language of his ancestors, so similar to Latin." (Iorga, 1935-1936: 265) It is unclear whether the king could understand Romanian just because it was so close to Latin, or because it was the language of his ancestors and of some of his subjects. However, beyond any doubt, the episode confirms the similarity between Romanian and Latin. Still, by declaring in front of the entire court that he did not need an interpreter, after hearing a few words in Romanian, the great politician fueled and confirmed the rumors concerning his Romanian ascent. Generally speaking, the Hungarian elites knew that the king was "of humble Wallachian origin" and that his alleged descent from Sigismund of Luxemburg was more of an invention, just like the idea of his kinship with the Basarab princes of Wallachia. At any rate, princes or not, kinship with a "schismatic" Romanian dynasty, whose members were vassals to the Hungarian kings, did not automatically bring with it the prestige desired by the sovereign of a Catholic country like Hungary. Still, the obvious connection between the king and the Romanians (rumors about it were circulating all over the place!), as well as the presence of the raven holding a ring in its beak on the family escutcheon were two important elements that could be used in order to "ennoble" the sovereign. The one entrusted with this task was the Ascoli-born Italian secretary and lecturer of Queen Beatrice, Antonio Bonfini (Antonius Bonfinius in Latin), who wrote (precisely in order to demonstrate the Roman origin of the king) so expressively about the Latin origin of the Romanians: "For the Romanians are descended from Romans, as indicated until today by their language which, even if they were surrounded by

⁸ In Polish medieval sources, Moldavia is often called "Wallachia" and its inhabitants "Wallachians." In order to make the necessary distinction, Wallachia proper was referred to by the Poles as "Multana," maybe a distorted form of the Romanian "Muntenia." Just like the Hungarians, the Poles designated the Romanians using a name very similar to the one they gave to Italians, implicitly alluding to the kinship between the two peoples.

⁹ For an interesting and original comparative analysis of the two leaders, see Simon, 2005: 663.

¹⁰ *Idioma valachicum est corruptum, nec tamen latinitati admodum absimile; adeo ut rex Mathias Hungariae, cum legati valachici per interpretem apud eum verba facere sic incepissent: "Expone, inquit, domino nostro", se, si hac lingua uterentur, etiam sine interprete intelligere eos posse responderit.* Mentioned in N. Iorga, "Dovezi despre conștiința originii Românilor", in *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, series III, tome XVII, 1935-1936, p. 265; also present in Armbruster, 1993: 119-120.

various barbarian peoples, did not perish... Swollen by the barbarian wave, they [the Roman colonies and legions in Dacia, our note] still exulted the Roman language and, in order to keep it at all cost, fought more fiercely to preserve their language than they did in order to preserve their life." (Holban, 1968: 482–483) For many foreigners, someone's descent from the Romanians could only be honorable and glorious, as the Romanians in question (regardless of whether they lived in Transylvania and Hungary or in Wallachia and Moldavia) possessed two great qualities, in the context of that time: 1. they were descended from the great and noble Roman people, and 2. they were bravely fighting for Christianity in the crusade against the Turks. Bonfini knew for a fact that the Romanians were the descendants of the Romans, that they had always fought bravely to preserve their identity and keep the Ottomans at bay, and that King Matthias was of Romanian origin (on his fathers' side, the side that mattered in those days). From here there was just one small step to constructing a credible genealogy for the king, related to an illustrious Roman family. After all, if Romanians were descended from the Roman colonists and legionnaires, and Matthias was himself a Romanian, then he most likely descended from a Roman family. Since the king's father was a Romanian, and Romanians were descended from the Romans—as all humanists knew and wrote—, then one did not have to invent a Roman origin. One merely had to find a suitable illustrious Roman family. In this respect, one valuable clue was already available, namely, the raven (*corvus*, *corvinus*) holding a ring in its beak and featured on the family coat of arms. Thus, in October 1486, the king was presented with the book called *De Corvine domus origine libellus* (Book on the origin of the House of Corvin), in which it was "proved" that the illustrious King Matthias was descended from the family of Valerius Volusus¹¹—*Corvinus*—, a Roman nobleman whose ascent actually predated Rome itself and whose illustrious descendants had reached the area of the Danube and of the Carpathians, where the Romanian people was born (Armbruster, 1993: 69–70). Of course, the occasional ironies concerning the modest and uncertain Wallachian origin of the king continued to circulate, but, by finding an ancestry in the Roman Valerius, Bonfini immensely pleased his royal

¹¹ E. Kovács Péter, 2000: 12–13. The idea whereby the name *Corvinus* and the Roman origin of the king were embraced only in 1484, strictly in connection to the planned marriage of Matthias' son to Bianca Sforza, is not supported by any evidence (Kulcsár, 1993: 15–17). The fuss around the name *Corvinus* and of the illustrious ascent of the Hunyadis may have helped in perfecting this matrimonial alliance, but the raven featured on the coat of arms (the source of the name), as well as the idea of the Roman origin of the king, born to a Romanian (=Olah) father, descended from the noble and ancient Romans, are much older than that. If the year 1484 was so important, if it was of capital importance to the king, then how come that Bonfinius' opusculum was written only in 1486? It is therefore inaccurate to claim that "King Matthias assumed a Roman ascent only for the sake of his son." However, it is obvious that the sovereign did use his "Roman kinship" to the advantage of his son, in order to provide him with a glorious life and a throne, and in order to establish a solid dynasty.

patron and came up with a name that remained in historiography. In a later hypothesis, the same Bonfini spoke about a possible descent of Matthias from King Sigismund, also starting from the presence of the raven on the family escutcheon. Thus, in the history dedicated to the Hungarians and completed after the death of Matthias (in 1496), the Italian historian included both the version of the descent from the illustrious Roman family and that of the descent from Sigismund. Bonfini and many other people knew quite well that these were merely hypothetical constructs or oral traditions, but they continued to circulate.

At any rate, the name Corvinus remained in use, but we believe it can only be used in the case of Matthias and of his descendants, namely, his only son, John (deceased in 1504), and his only male grandson, Christopher (deceased in 1505). Of course, Matthias's granddaughter, Elisabeth, Christopher's sister, was herself a Corvinus, but she also died prematurely, in 1508, leaving no heirs. Thus, to use the name Corvinus in connection to Matthias' father is a serious error and is most likely to create a lot of confusion. The name "John Corvin" or "John Corvin of Hunyadi," coined during the Romantic period and used since the 19th century—even by some major historians (Bariț, 1873, no. 5.)—in connection to the name of the hero of Belgrade, a name present even today in some popularization texts, only comes to continue the fallacy. The Ban of Severin, Voivode of Transylvania and Comes of Timiș, also called in his youth by the name of *Johannes Olah*, had no idea that his name was also Corvinus. Besides, to call this great crusader "John Corvinus of Hunyadi" can create confusion, as his grandson, the only son of Matthias, used the exact same name for himself.

Interesting issues can also be raised in connection to the other names of Matthias' paternal relatives. Most of those confirmed beyond any doubt can be found in the famous act of donation concerning the estate of Hunedoara, dated 18 October 1409, even if here they are rendered in a distorted manner, as Latin was the chancellery language and the notary scribe did not speak Romanian. In this document we find the names of *Voyk* or *Woyk*, *filius Serbe* or *Serba*, with his brothers *Magas* and *Radul*, their cousin *Radul*, and the son of *Voyk*, *Iohannes*. (de Hurmuzaki, 1890: 462–463) As they were all Romanians, we have to assume that the original Romanian names, which could not be rendered exactly in Latin, were *Voicu*, *Șerbu* or *Șerban*, *Mogoș*, *Radul*, and *Ioan* or *Iuon*. They all circulated at the time in the Romanian community, and they appear, under various forms, in Latin¹² and Slavonic documents, etc. In other words, the great-grandfather of King Matthias was called *Șerbu* (*Șerban*), his grandfather *Voicu*, his uncles *Mogoș* and *Radul* (two of them), and his father *Ioan* (*Iuon*). Even in the Latin document in question, the name

¹² In 14th and 15th century Latin documents, these names appear as *Schereban*, *Schereb*, *Radul* (in 1383), *Mogos* (in 1404), *Moga Serban* (in 1410), *Sarban* (la 1428) etc., associated with Romanian families from the regions of Sibiu, Banat, and Beiuș. See De Hurmuzaki, 1900: CCXXII, p. 281; no. CCCLX, p. 437; no. CCCLXXXVII, p. 469; no. CCCCLXV–CCCCLXVI, p. 556–557, etc.

Radul, born by two members of the family, includes the morpheme *-l* of the enclitical masculine definite article, specific only to the Romanian language. The uncle named *Radul* of the boy *Ioannes* was also referred to as *Ladislau*, a name from the Catholic calendar. Whether or not it was an adaptation (and not a “translation,” as contended by some (Rusu, 1999: 34) of the original Romanian name *Radul*, through the intermediate stage *Ladul*, the name *Ladislau*—designating the same person who called himself *Radul*—was not an exception or a singular case. Romanian Transylvanian onomastics includes many cases of people having two names, one traditionally Romanian and/or taken from the Byzantine calendar, and one Catholic, typical for the official elite of Transylvania and Hungary. In certain narrative sources (Bonfinius), *Vojk/Voicu* is also referred to as *Buthi* (and then *Buth*, *Butho*), without any explanation. Later historians were also unable to explain this name. Indeed, in Romanian we find the forms *But*, *Bute*, or *Butea*, present in the documents of that time or in later ones, and in several regions, from Maramureş to Făgăraş. Drawing on Sebastian Munster’s *Geography*, Samuil Micu wrote: “And John Hunyadi was the son of a Romanian named But (*Fuit autem Ioannes Hunyades Buthi Valachi filius*),” and, in the wake of Iosif Benkő, he added: “John of Hunedoara or Corvin—others call him Huniadi, Laonikos calls him Honiat, the Turks, after Leunclavius, Iancu—was the son of a boyar (*Bojerii*), a certain But (*Buthi seu Buthonis*)¹³), descended from Elisabeth Paleologus of the imperial Byzantine family.” (Micu, 1995: 74) We see that, here as well, actual facts combined with the fiction of narrative sources. Then, in his collection of genealogies, Mike Sándor claimed that one of the two *Radul* was the brother of *Şerb* (*Serbe*),¹⁴ while the son of *Şerb* was designated as *Vojk Buthi*; among *Vojk*’s brothers, apart from *Radul* and *Magoss*, Mike also mentions *Iarislau Vojk Csolnakosi* (in Romanian, *Voicu Iarislau de Cinciş*), (Micu, 1995: 74) because a certain *Vojk* of Cinciş was indeed mentioned as *frater noster* by the Governor of Transylvania, John Hunyadi, in 1448. However, the phrase in question was followed by the word *condivisionalis*, meaning “estate brother,” or “co-owning brother.” (Rusu, 1987–1988, 262–263) This did not necessarily refer to a blood relation, but did not rule one out, either. On the contrary, there were many cases of estate brothers who were actually related, in the sense that a common ancestor once held the estate or estates in question, later divided repeatedly (but only theoretically, without new boundaries actually being set) among the heirs. In such cases, with the passing of time, the blood ties became thinner and thinner, to the point of disappearing. In what concerns the names in question, it is important to note that the father of this estate brother of the governor (who had the same name as

¹³ The two forms—purely artificial and imaginary constructs—and in the genitive singular, the first after the second declension (assuming that the nominative singular is *Buth*), and the other after the third imparisyllabic declension (assuming that the nominative singular is *Butho*).

¹⁴ The Latin *frater patruelis* can mean both cousin and paternal uncle.

the governor's father!) was called *Șerbu* or *Șerban/Șorban (Sorbe)*, just like the governor's grandfather, while a son of the same estate brother was named *Ladul* or *Ladislau*, just like uncle *Radul-Ladislau* of the same high official. (Rusu, 1987–1988, 262–264) Potentially significant is the fact that the given names in the family of Cinciș—identical to those used in the Hunyadi family, namely, *Șerbu-Voicu-Ladislau*—appear exactly in the same succession as with the relatives of John Hunyadi. This similarity, combined with the estate brotherhood and with the shared heraldic elements, suggests that the family of Cinciș were probably blood relatives of the Hunyadis, living in the Land of Hațeg. All three aforementioned arguments are quite solid and cannot be easily overlooked. As they are not directly related to the topic of the present paper, we shall not discuss here the issues concerning the other relatives of the Hunyadis living in Hațeg or in Hunedoara, the confirmations, the donations, and the massive ennoblements operated by John Hunyadi in the same region, or the other solid arguments that demonstrate the geographic origin of the family. In fact, Antonius Wrancius or Verancius (Verancsics), quite familiar with the history and the topography of Transylvania, argued that the Romanians from the district of the land of Hațeg (*districtum Hazak*) had been ennobled by John Hunyadi, “a native of that place” (*inde oriundi*). (Wrancius, 1857: 143) A similar statement is made by Ioannes Lucius, in the 17th century, who wrote that John Hunyadi was descended from the Transylvanian Romanians, from the Roman family called Corvina (*Ioannes quoque Huniades inter Valachos Transilvaniae natus ex Corvina Romana familia ortum ducere gloriabatur*).¹⁵ Starting with Wertner M., some historians believed they had identified some distant ancestors of the Hunyadi: a document dated 1 June 1360 and issued in Hațeg speaks about a Romanian knez named *Costea (Koztha)*, with his grandchildren *Balata, Bay, Surs et Nan*, lords of Răchitova and Lunca (*Documenta*, 1981: 506–508); taking into account the bizarre rendering of names in the document in question, it was assumed that *Surs* was one and the same with *Surb, Serb, or Serbe*, Vojk's father, mentioned in the 1409 donation of the Hunedoara estate. (Pascu, 1989: 445) While this filiation is chronologically possible, the data is too vague to allow for a valid conclusion. In 1890, drawing on the writings of G. Fejér (*Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, X/8, Buda, 1844, p. 492; *idem, Genus, incunabula et virtus Joannis Corvini de Huniad, regni Hungariae gubernatoris*, Buda, 1844, p. 33), who had himself taken the information from Joseph Nalaczi, Nicolae Densușianu wrote that Louis I, King of Hungary, had himself made a donation to Vojk in 1378, but the document in question had been burned by accident. (Hurmuzaki, 1990: 463, note 2)

¹⁵ Lucius-Lučić, 1966: 274; Armbruster, 1993: 180. In the same context (concerning the Romanian origin of John Hunyadi) Lucius mentioned another important thing regarding the Romanians, namely, the fact that they never called themselves Wallachians, using instead the name *Rumenos* (=rumâni), because they were proud of their Roman language and origin.

Getting back to the issue of names, we know that in 1409 Vojk, *aule nostre militis* (a knight at our court) and his relatives (the family's place of origin is not indicated) were rewarded by the king with the estate of Hunedoara (which included an old fortress, probably in ruins) and the surrounding villages. The most important family member is the boy John, the future high official and anti-Ottoman fighter. Latin documents written in Hungary or in Transylvania mention him as *Ioannes* or *Iohannes*. When he was still young, before he became the Governor of Transylvania, his name was accompanied by the nickname *Olah*, clearly indicating his ethnic origin. Quite possibly, his peers at the court, the other sons of noblemen alongside whom he was learning combat techniques, called him by this name, John the Romanian (*Olah János*). However, the nickname *Olah* was quickly dropped once the character in question began to rise in the hierarchy, maybe as a deliberate move on the part of John himself, embarrassed by his humble origins and by the pejorative connotation of the term, and eager to become fully integrated among the "true nobles of the realm."

However, the story of the name born by this illustrious character does not end here, not only because of the various circles in which he moved, of his many relatives and acquaintances, of various ethnic origin and of various denominations, of the soldiers belonging to so many peoples whom he had under his command, of the friends and enemies coming from so many places, who either praised or criticized him, but also because of a rather particular occurrence: he had a homonymous blood brother,¹⁶ a younger brother who was also called *Ioannes*! We can logically assume that when the two brothers were children and lived together in the family home, they were not called by the same name. Besides, their name could not have been *Iohannes* or *Ioannes*, forms used in Latin chancellery documents and not so much in everyday life. They were used as such only when necessary and only within certain elite circles, chiefly among clergymen. We shall return to this aspect later.

For the time being, we shall investigate the other names (or forms of the same name) given to our hero by his contemporaries, that is, during his lifetime or shortly after his death. As we have already seen, even since the 18th century, historians such as Samuil Micu were aware of this diversity of names. It is obvious that in official Latin documents (especially since the homonymous brother died early, in 1441, fighting the Turks in the vicinity of Belgrade¹⁷), the man who became Voivode of Transylvania in 1441, Governor of Hungary after 1446, and held many high positions in the realm was called *Iohannes* or *Ioannes*, as indicated above. Generally speaking, these forms were also used in the Latin documents written in the neighboring countries, in the German environment, in Poland, in Italy, and even at

¹⁶ Another younger brother, Voicu, died quite early, sometime after 1419.

¹⁷ Today the capital of Serbia, at that time a fortress on the territory of Hungary.

the Holy See. The same happened in the case of the narrative sources in Latin. In the neighboring countries, also familiar with the everyday Hungarian equivalent of the name, *János*, we also find forms such as *Ianăș*, *Janusch*, etc. The situation changes dramatically when we speak of the Greek contemporary sources, and we shall give some examples in this respect. An anonymous poem written shortly after 1453 in Greek vernacular and called *The Fall of Constantinople* includes an exhortation to the pope, to the emperor, and to the “armies of Ianco,” accidentally misspelled as “Pianco” (Πιάγκω) and later called “the wise Ianco (Pianco), pillar of the Romanians” (Πιάγκω φρονιμώτατε, καὶ στῆλε τῆς Βλαχίας). (Mihăescu *et al.*, 1982: 384–387) In a poem written after 1456, Zotikos Paraspondylos, an eyewitness to the 1444 battle of Varna, called John Hunyadi “emperor” (βασιλεὺς), described him as “wise,” “great,” “wonderful,” and called him by the name of “Iango” (Ἰάγγο), “Iangou” (Ἰάγγου), or “Iangoula” (Ἰάγγουλα). (Mihăescu *et al.*, 1982: 394–413) The great writer Dukas (ca. 1400–1470) called him “prostrator Iangou” (Ἰάγγου). (Mihăescu *et al.*, 1982: 428–430) His contemporary, the refined and educated Georgios Phrantzes (1401–ca. 1477), a servant to three emperors and enjoying access to official documents, also called the great Christian leader “Iancou” (Ἰάγκου). (Mihăescu *et al.*, 1982: 440–441) A Phrantzes falsifier of the 16th century, a certain Makarios Melissenos, used the exact same name as his model. (Mihăescu *et al.*, 1982: 444–445) The great historian Laonikos Chalcocondyles (ca. 1423–ca. 1490), quite familiar with the realities of Southeastern Europe, even used the name “Iancu de Hunedoara,” that is “Iango de Choniates” (Ἰάγγος δὲ ὁ Χωνιάτης),¹⁸ calling him “a man of great repute,” but he alternated between this name and the official one of *Ioannes* (Ἰωάννης), or simply “Choniates,” meaning Hunyadi. (Mihăescu *et al.*, 1982: 451–499) Chalcocondyles wrote about the fight of the allied Christian forces, Hungarians and Romanians among them, against the Turks, under the command of John Hunyadi. Critobulos of Imbros (1410–ca. 1470) only mentions our hero as “Ioannes” (Ἰωάννης), but he writes that “John the Romanian” (“John the Getae”) led into battle “the Hungarians and his Romanians,” the former designated as “Peons” and the latter as “Dacians,” in keeping with the contemporary custom of using archaic forms for the names of peoples and countries. (Mihăescu *et al.*, 1982: 520–533) We believe that, in the same desire to use only classical Greek or Latin names, Critobulos avoided the “vulgar” contemporary name of *Iancu* and only used the form John. In fact, this author also called Matthias Corvinus “King of the Peons and of the Dacians,” never actually calling him by name, as such a name had not existed in the classical antiquity. (Mihăescu *et al.*, 1982: 536–537) The *Ecthesis Chronica*, drawn up in the 16th century, systematically uses the form “Iancos” (Ἰαγκος), (Mihăescu *et al.*, 1982: 540–543) while certain minor chronicles, starting with the 15th century and continuing after 1500, once again mention the Hungarian-Romanian cooperation against the Turks and the

¹⁸ The Hungarian name *Hunyad* appears in Greek under the distorted form “Choniat.”

leader “Ghiangou” (Γιάγγου), who led the Hungarians at Varna, (Mihăescu *et al.*, 1982: 556–557) or “Iangos” (Ίάγγος), who crossed the Danube followed by Romanians (Βλάχων), in 1448. (Mihăescu *et al.*, 1982: 562–563) There is only one possible conclusion: the medieval chroniclers who wrote in the Greek language, the contemporaries of John Hunyadi, systematically referred to him as *Iancu*, even if sometimes their versions of the name are slightly corrupted by the nature of their language, by the lack of precision, by superficial borrowings from other sources, etc. In these contemporary Greek sources, John Hunyadi is often associated with the Romanians, either because of his ethnic origin, or because he led Romanians in battle and was their “lord.” In fact, in a document issued south of the Carpathians in 1447, John called himself “Voivode of Wallachia.” (Documenta, 1977: 394–395) Similarly, Hungarian and Transylvanian Latin sources and the Western ones also mention the many Transylvanian Romanians who fought under John’s command, (Pascu, 1957: 25–64; Drăgan, 2000: 382–401) as well as the fact that he often sought the alliance of the Romanian princes south and east of the Carpathians. The repeated references found in Greek sources to John’s Romanian extraction and to the Romanian nature of his armies is a clear indication of the origin of the name *Ianco* or *Iango*.

We believe that the corrupt forms “Pianco” and “Ghianco” used by some of the aforementioned Greek authors—clearly derived from “Ianco”—illustrate the manner in which the Western versions “Bianco,” “Blanco,” or “Blanc” came to be used. The *Epistola ad Petri (sic) de Jacomiccio de Tagliacocço brevissima, de la vita del Beato Johanni de Capistrano et de la victoria che lui ebe de Turchi et suo felicissimo et beatissimo fine*, written 15 September 1457, mentions the hero of Belgrade under the name of *Johanni Bianco* (Iorga, 1915 : 158–163.) and indicates that he had died of the plague (*morio de peste*). Some French chronicles also called him “le chevalier Blanc,” the prototype of the later cultural archetype of “The White Knight.” In Genoa, geographically and spiritually close to the French environment, Hungary of the 1450s was seen as a *dominium Blanchum*, as it was led and controlled by *dominus Blanchus*.¹⁹ Even a chivalric romance was written about the great deeds of John Hunyadi. Entitled *Tirant lo Blanc*, the romance was the work of a certain Joanot Martorell, born in 1413 in Gandia, the original home town of the Borgias. *Tirant lo Blanc* has been preserved as an incunabulum, printed in Valencia in the year 1490. Joanot Martorell, himself a skilled warrior and a contemporary of John Hunyadi, Vlad Dragul, and of Vlad Drăgulea (later turned into *Dracula!*), never actually

¹⁹ Therefore, it is little surprising that Genoa, quite familiar with the situation on the Lower Danube, but also open to various influences, cosmopolitan tendencies, and rumors, mentioned John Hunyadi under the name of *Gio*—according to some late archival testimonies—and described him as the *Prince of Transylvania* (Archivio di Stato di Genova, Archivio Segreto, *Diversorum*, 3041 (F 21), nn; later annotation on a document dated 24 February 1454).

became acquainted with his hero, the real “lo Blanc” knight. (Filipaş) The Romance enjoyed tremendous success, and was even appreciated by Miguel de Cervantes: “... curious to know whose it was, and found it said, *History of the Famous Knight, Tirante el Blanco*. / - “God bless me!” said the curate with a shout, “*Tirante el Blanco* here! Hand it over, gossip, for in it I reckon I have found a treasury of enjoyment and a mine of recreation.” (Filipaş) Most authors associated the forms Bianco, Blanco, Blanc related to the name of John Hunyadi with the name Valachus, Vlachus, Blachus, Balacus, etc. given by foreigners to Romanians. As in many foreign sources John is referred to as the Wallachian or the Blach, the derivation might seem obvious. However, if we relate the aforementioned forms—especially the Italian ones of Bianco or Bianco—to those of Pianto/Piango or Ghiano/Ghiano found in Byzantine narratives, we see that they actually stem from the popular name of Ianco or Jancho given to John Hunyadi. If Piango or Ghiano come from Ianco, than why should Bianco be any different? In other words, the French “Blanc” was not necessarily a copyist’s distortion of the supposedly original “le Blac” (=the Romanian)—as it is usually assumed—but rather a translation of the Italian form Bianco/Biancho. Therefore, we believe that Bianco actually derived from Ianco/Iancho, and not from Valacho/Balacho. As Ianco/Iancho meant nothing to the Italians, while Bianco/Biancho meant “white,” the latter form was adopted and then translated into other languages using the respective equivalents for the word “white.”

No particular examples are needed in order to illustrate the well-known fact that in may Croat, Serb, Turkish sources, and in Balkan folklore, the hero of Belgrade is called “Janko,” “Janko vojvode,” “Jankula vojvode,” “Iancu Sibianul/Sibinianul,” with certain variations. But, even if we look only at the two major languages of culture used in the Middle Ages, Latin and Byzantine Greek, we see that basically our Christian hero is known by two names, John and Iancu, or rather *Ioannes/Iohannes* and *Iancu/Iango*. Of course, when it comes to the vernacular languages used in the regions where John-Iancu resided, as a rule we can only make educated assumptions, because texts in these language only appeared in greater numbers starting with the 16th century. Still, it would be natural to believe that the Hungarians called him *János*, the Saxons (Germans) called him *Johannes*, and the Romanians *Ioan*. However, these are the official, cultured forms of the name in question. It is difficult to say how the people—especially the common people—normally referred to the great general. This is quite a significant aspect indeed, as John Hunyadi was a great popular hero, worshipped by the masses. There are some clues in this respect. For instance, Petrus Ransanus (1420–1492), a contemporary of our hero, clearly states that the common people and the Italians called John Hunyadi by the name of Iancu: *Ioanne Huniate, Ianco vulgo cognominato, or Ioannes*,

*qui Ianco apud Italos est cognomen.*²⁰ In 1488, Ransanus was sent by his king, Ferdinand I of Naples, to the court of Matthias Corvinus, (Holban, 1968: 435) thus becoming directly acquainted with the realities of Hungary. There, he must have learned that the people, the commoners—including the Romanians—called the king’s father by the name of Iancu. Otherwise, it would have made no sense for him to write that John Hunyadi was called *Ianco* by the people. Ransanus’ references to the name Iancu are all the more important as they appear in a text written as part of the “modernization” of the quasi-hagiographic representation of Matthias’ father. (Szabó, 2007: 383–393) Still, many authors were skeptical about Ransanus’ statement concerning the use of the form *Ianco* in the Italian environment. However, two documents found in the Milan archives by the young and talented researcher Alexandru Simon come to confirm the statements made by the 15th century humanist. Both documents were written in Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik, in Croatia), on 10 October 1454, in the Italian language, and they are meant to inform officials in Milan and Venice, respectively, of the fact that “Governor Iancu crossed the Danube with a large army on the 24th (29th) of last month” (*el governatore Iancho passò el Danubio cum gran copia di gente adi 24/29 del passato*).²¹ The first document is signed by the “great and mighty men,” the rector of Ragusa and his council, the patricians and the merchants of the city, and is addressed to the Duke of Milan and to the other “great and mighty men” leading that city. The second document, also signed by the authorities of Ragusa, “informs your magnificence” (*notifichemo ala vostra magnificenza*) on certain developments, being addressed to an unspecified nobleman of Venice; this letter, or a copy thereof, was also meant to reach the patriarch, who had become an official resident of the Cathedral of San Pietro di Castello in 1451 (*Predicta littera fuit scripta Veneciis, cuidam nobili, a quo illam seu eius copiam reverendum dominum patriarcha habuit*). In both documents, written by different scribes, the name of the “Governor” of Hungary is spelled in the same manner, as *Iancho*. This is quite symptomatic, because Ragusa, Milan, and Venice belong to the Catholic, Italian-speaking environment. This suggests that the name of John Hunyadi was known in the Italian environment (at least in the northern part of the Italian peninsula) also under the popular form of Iancu.²² Had the name Iancu been meaningless to the people of Milan (these documents, including the one addressed to the Venetians,

²⁰ *Epitome rerum Hungaricarum velut per indices descripta, auctore Petro Ransano, apud Mathiam regem olim triennium legato. Nunc primum edita, una cum appendice quam opera Joan Sambuci* (Vienna, 1558). See also Ransanus, 1977: 29, 34. Also mentioned by Rusu, 1999: 15.

²¹ *Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, Turchia-Levante, cart. 647, fasc. [1], Albania, nn, of 10 October 1454.*

²² In the Latin documents of Venice, our hero is usually called *Iohannes*, while in the narrative sources, some of them in Latin, the name also appears under the form *Juan* (and not *Zuan*, *Zan*, or *Zani*, as it was to be expected in the Venetian dialect), pronounced in the same fashion as the Romanian *Iuan*. See, for instance, the form *Juan Uniad/Uniade* or *Juan de Uniad vaivoda dicto Janus*) used by Magno, 1478: 23v, 27r. *Ianus* seems a transcription of the Hungarian *János*.

were found in the Milan archive of the Sforza dukes), the people of Ragusa would not have used it. It would have been a lot easier for them to call the high Hungarian official by the name of John. The presence of the name Iancu in the environment of Milan and of Lombardy may be explained either by the old Italian “sojourn” of the young John-Iancu (1431–1433), spent in Milan in the house of Filippo Visconti, or as an import from the regions south of the Danube. During the two years of his stay in Milan, the local people might have heard (maybe even from John’s companions) that in the familiar language John was referred to as Iancu. Even if this is not the case, and the traditional name spread later, it is certain that in Italian circles the governor was known under the name of Iancu, precisely as indicated by Petrus Ransanus.

Even today, *Ioan* (John) is the most frequent given name with the Romanians. (Constantinescu, 1963: 80) However, the form *Ioan* is the cultured one, taken as such from certain old texts and adapted to the written Romanian language after the 16th century. The name *Ioan*—in the literary form of today, set as a standard in the modern era—has dozens of versions, many of them derived by way of diminutive or augmentative suffixation. Still, with or without suffixes, the popular forms going back to the 15th–16th centuries are *Ion*, *Iuon*, *Iuan*, *Oană*, *Ioancea*, *Oancea*, *Ioanea*, *Ioaneș*, *Ianeș*, *Iuonaș*, *Ioanichie*, etc. Linguists have long established that, in Romanian, the form *Iancu*/*Iancul* is also derived from *Ioan*. It would be important to know how old is the Romanian form *Iancu*, but such a thing is impossible to ascertain. The only thing we could do was to see whether the name *Iancu* was used by Romanians in the 15th and the 16th centuries. Thus, we learned that in the oldest Romanian documents still in existence, the name in question appears in connection to individuals living in several regions. For example, in 1579–1580, in a bill of sale written in Oltenia, we read about a certain Iancul, with his brothers, Preda, Jâte, and Radul, the buyers of some land. Among the witnesses to the transaction we also find a “Iancul al lu Neche.” (*Documente*, 1979: 99) A Moldavian document drawn up sometime in 1587–1591 and in which ruler Peter the Lame recorded the money and the horses sent to Constantinople as part of the due tribute also mentions 5000 thalers representing the debt of Iancul (“Ianancul”) the Saxon. (*Documente*, 1979:161) In an inventory drawn up by the same ruler Peter the Lame, this time in the South Tyrolean city of Bolzano (Bozen) and listing the assets left to his son, the predecessor of this ruler is mentioned as “Voivode Iancu.” (*Documente*, 1979: 193) In what concerns the individual in question, an illegitimate son of Peter Rareș and of a Saxon woman from Brașov, several testimonies indicate that on his birth the future prince was given the names John/Ioan (*dominus Ioannes, filius olim piae memoriae Petri Palatini Moldaviae*)—customarily used under the form Iancul, also rendered in Latin as *Iancula*, *Petrus Iankul*—and Carol (*Carlo Iangula*). (Rezachevici, 2001: 728–729) After staying at the court of his father and then of his brothers, he arrived in Brașov and was recorded in the city registry on 10 March 1554 under the name of *Petrus Iankul*. (Hurmuzaki, 1900: 790) It must be said that this John-Carol, the son of Peter Rareș,

had not spent his childhood among the Balkan Slavs, but only among Saxons and Romanians. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that during his lifetime Moldavians called John Hunyadi by the name of Iancu. We can assume that the boyar elite called him *Ianăș*, as indicated by official Slavonic documents, for instance in those issued at the time of Bogdan II. (Costăchescu, 1932: no. 220, p. 749–752; no. 222–225, p. 755–769) This ruler was familiar with Hungarian politics and had contacts with nobles who most certainly called the high official by the name of *János*.

As no 15th century documents written in the Romanian language have been preserved (although they are known to have existed), we shall concentrate our attention on the Latin documents of that time that speak about the Hunyadi, in order to find out whether the Romanians used the name *Iancu*. The Maramureș diplomas are quite illustrating in this respect:

- on 19 June 1415, the convent of Lelez recognized “Ioancu and Giula, the sons of Dragomir, and Gheorghe, the son of Ioancu” (*Iuanka et Gyula filiorum Dragomer ac Georgii filii Iuanka*) as owners of the estates of Crăcești and Hărnicești (now in the Ukraine) (Mihalyi de Apșa, 1900: 198–199; Popa, 1997: 74, 83);

- on 2 June 1425, the convent of Lelez informed that, at the order of King Sigismund, Iancu (*Ianko*), the son of Pop (or of *popa*, meaning the priest) of Giulești, and his sons (Giula and Tătar), had been granted certain estates in Maramureș (Mihalyi de Apșa, 1900: 264);

- on 30 March 1450, one of John Hunyadi’s men, a certain Iancu (*Ianko*) of Domnești (*Urmezew*), was granted an estate, also in Maramureș (Mihalyi de Apșa, 1900: 344); a few years later (on 2 May 1465), the same individual, now a royal witness in the service of King Matthias, was mentioned as John of Domnești (*Ioannes de Urmezew*) (Mihalyi de Apșa, 1900: 470);

- on 6 October 1462, during the gathering of “many of the prelates, the barons, and the nobles of our kingdom,” held in Transylvania, at Rupea, in the presence of King Matthias, among the plaintiffs we find a certain “John also known as Giula, the son of the late Nan, also known by the name of Iancu (*Ianko*) or Pop (or Popa) of Giulești.” (Mihalyi de Apșa, 1900: 445)

Every time the name *Iancu* appeared in the Maramureș documents published in 1900 by Ioan Mihalyi of Apșa, the editor indicated the equivalence with the name *Ioan*. In fact, this equivalence is indicated even in historical documents, where the same individual is called both ways: Ioan of Domnești, initially mentioned as Iancu of Domnești, upon reaching a high position as a member of the royal household and deputy *comes* of Maramureș, no longer used his local Romanian name (Iancu), or at least was no longer mentioned in documents under this name. It is impossible to claim that the name of *Iancu* – which, as we have just seen, is found in Maramureș documents written in 1415–1425 – had been adopted by the Romanian stating from the nickname given to John Hunyadi by the Serbs of the Balkans, at a time when the

character in question was but an anonymous teenager who had not even visited the respective region.

Furthermore, the name *Iancu* is also common in the region of Hunedoara-Hațeg. Thus, in a 1439 document, we read about Dănilă, Iancu, and Laicul (*Danila, Ianc et Laycul*), the sons of Neacșu of Totești and of his wife Stana. (Rusu-Pop-Drăgan: 103–104) Similarly, in 1464, the deed concerning a part of the Livadia estate mentions a certain Iancul (*Iankwl*), a native of Hațeg, as witness for the king. (Rusu-Pop-Drăgan: 272) In the genealogies of some Hațeg families drawn up by Mike Sandor, we find a certain “Iancul of Șerel” (*Iankul de Serel*). (Mike: 662) In the documents published by Joseph Pataki and concerning the estate of Hunedoara in the 16th century, we find: *Jankwl, puero domini Andree și Janchi, iterum parvulo eiusdem domini Andree* (in the expenditures ledger of Hunedoara fortress for 1530) (Pataki, 1963: 57) and *Janko* of Ohaba (in the list of the serfs living on more remote lands but which were still part the estate, probably in the first decade of the 16th century). (Pataki, 1963: 147)

These testimonies clearly indicate that the name *Iancu*, by which John Hunyadi was known in certain circles, was commonly used by Romanians in the 15th and the 16th centuries, and that this name appears in documents north of the Danube before the hero of Belgrade became famous in the Balkans. But fairly little is known about the name of John’s homonymous brother, who died early, probably in 1441. Approximately a decade ago, together with my colleague Iacob Mârza, we commented on a significant note written by hand on a page from Enea Silvio Piccolomini’s book called *Epistolae familiares*, the 1481 edition, kept at the Batthyaneum library of Alba Iulia: *Iohannes Huniadi et frater eius, Ivachko nomine, et Iohannes; amborum monumentum Albae Iuliae conspicitur, in templo Divo Michaeli Archangeli sacro, intra muros*. (Pop, Mârza, 1999: 53) We see, therefore—this time on the basis of the direct testimony coming from the Transylvanian environment—, that even the homonymous younger brother of John Hunyadi bore the familiar name *Ivașcu* alongside the official one. Numerous documents of that time ascertain the frequent presence of this name with the Romanians, and it is itself obviously derived from the same *Ioan*, as indicated by Mihalyi of Apșa in 1900 and by the Romanian dictionaries of names. Consequently, the brothers John Hunyadi were called by the names of *Iancu* and *Ivașcu* in the family, in the Romanian environment, and generally in the Greek and South-Slavic environments. In fact, as a coincidence, in another 15th-century documents concerning the region of Maramureș we find the same duo Iancu and Ivașcu: on 29 June 1498, the convent of Lelez issued a document confirming that a “noble lady” from the village of Leordina offered three pieces of land as collateral to nobles Mircea, Ivașcum, and Ioancu (*Myrche, Ivasko et Iuanko*), the sons of David Pop of Leordina and of Caterina Urda (sister to the aforementioned “noble lady”), in exchange for the sum of 50 florins of pure gold. (Mihalyi de Apșa, 1900: 621-622)

All of the aforementioned testimonies agree when it comes to certain aspects. The name of the hero of Belgrade, as well as the environments he visited, came in various forms. It is very hard to say which version of the name *Ioannes* was given to John by his parents, on his birth. The name usually given by the Latin sources is the official one, but this is not necessarily the name he was usually called by. Besides, it is natural to assume that in the various stages of his life and according to the ethnic, denominational, and geographic environments in which he found himself, the father of king Matthias bore different names. According to the aforementioned data, we believe that in their native Transylvania, in the region of Hunedoara-Hațeg, during their childhood the three sons of Vojk were called *Iancu*, *Ivașcu*, and *Voicu*. The two who reached maturity were Iancu and Ivașcu, both officially called John, as their names were both derived from the same *Ioan*. If, while Ivașcu was alive, there were enough reasons to call his brother Iancu, in order to distinguish between the two, after his untimely death (in 1441) the name John Hunyadi became widely used in official circles. Other reasons for this may have had to do with prestige and with the common Latin-Hungarian use, which favored the cultured form of John.

The Romanians, who fought in many battles under John's command and whom he rewarded in so many ways—especially those of Hunedoara-Hațeg—continued, however, to call him *Iancu* which, as we have seen, was another form of *Ioan* (John). Etymologically speaking, *Iancu* derives from the Romanian name *Ioan*, which gained the Slavic suffix *-co*, changed by Romanians into *-cu*. In fact, several Latin documents indicate the presence in Transylvania and Maramureș of the form *Ioanco*, shortened to *Ianco*. There is also sufficient evidence to claim that another form of the name found in all documents, namely, *Iancula*, was pronounced *Ianculea* in Romanian and came from the same *Iancu*, completed with the Romanian masculine article *-lea*. No direct testimony indicated that the name Iancu was given to the hero of Belgrade exclusively by the Balkan Slavs or by the Greeks. On the contrary, it is very clear that the Balkan peoples took the form *Ianco* and its other versions from the Transylvanian soldiers who had always accompanied the man whose *cursus honorum* saw him become Ban of Severin, Comes of Timiș, Voivode of Transylvania, Governor of Hungary, and captain-general of the kingdom. The presence at that time of the name *Iancu* in Transylvania and Hungary is clear evidence in this respect, and so is the fact that the character himself sometimes used the name of Iancu. (Gündisch, 1975: 25) Equally compelling is the testimony of his contemporary, Ransanus, who clearly stated that in the language of the people John Hunyadi was called *Ianco*. The same writer—as discussed above—also added that the Italians themselves also called him *Ianco*. Besides, John Hunyadi's antecessors and contemporaries whom the sources mention as bearing the name Iancu—as shown by the previously mentioned testimonies—had never visited the Balkans, the lands of the Serbs, and therefore had not received their names there. Beyond the fact that the name *Iancu/Iancul/Ioancu* might have originally had a Slavic ring to it, it did

circulate in Romanian and among the Romanians of Transylvania well before the time of John Huyadi, probably dating back to the period of Romanian-Slavic cohabitation, as is the case with so many other Romanian names.

Of course, we can assume that many Romanians, especially those of the social elite, also called our hero by the name of *Ioan* (John), just like the Hungarians called him *János*, and the Saxons *Johann*. It seems that the cultured form *Ioan* was not actually used as such by 15th-century Romanians, as the documents of that time only mention the Latin versions *Ioannes* or *Iohannes*. On the other hand, as we have seen, the form *Iancu* appears quite frequently. Edifying in this respect are the texts belonging to many Byzantine authors, who massively use the form *Ianco* (*Iango*), and only seldom that of *Ioannes*. This is the clearest proof of the fact that the great anti-Ottoman fighter bore an official name, John, with its derivatives, and a popular, familiar one, given to him by his own people (just like his brother bore the separate name *Ivașcu*), namely, *Iancu*. The mechanism whereby—as it has been recently claimed (Rusu, 1999: 15) —an “onomastic transfer” of the form *Iancu* occurred with the Serbs, the Greeks, and the Turks, with an intermediate stage in the Hungarian *János*, defies all comprehension. No matter how limited our “linguistic knowledge,” it makes a lot more sense to consider that the popular form of *Iancu* or *Ianco*, whose presence in the Hungary of that time is mentioned by Petrus Ransanus, was actually the model for the nearly identical Balkan forms, rather than the Hungarian form *János*. Furthermore, even if John Hunyadi had never called himself *Iancu*, the use of this name is perfectly justified, since collective memory also remembers him by this name. King Matthias himself never called himself, in any document, by the name “Corvinus,” but this is no reason not to call him that way.

Therefore, we can only conclude that the master of the Hunedoara estate, called John in official and in Catholic circles, was called *Iancu* by the people, especially in the local Romanian and Balkan Orthodox environments. Of course, this form was also used in non-Orthodox circles (see the Italian example discussed earlier), as the form *Iancu* (alongside that of *Ioan-János*) also appears in Croat and Turkish documents. The use of the name *Iancu* by the Osmanli and the Byzantine Turks, (Mureșan, 2008: 341–342) as well as the legend found in Ottoman sources from the second half of the 15th century, which presents John Huyadi as a founder of Byzantium, (Yerasimos, 1992: 213–217) have a relevance of their own in this respect, especially when it comes to the alleged “kinship” between Matthias Corvinus, Mehmed II, and Djem.²³

²³ In a report to Pope Innocent VIII dated 30 January 1489, papal legate Angelo Pecchinoli quoted a speech by king Matthias, who allegedly said: the sultan himself *ad me sua manu ad hic scripsisset, tum quod mater sua per suos oratores hoc idem a me postulasset, tum etiam quia ille mihi iure sanguinis est coniunctus, nam soror avie mee casu a Turchis rapta nupsit avo sitius Turchi, ex qua postea isti nati sunt* (Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, Cod. Lat. X-175 (=3622), f. 133r). We know that Bonfinis, 1941: 94–95, 243–244 spoke about the alleged Greek imperial

Of course, in this case both forms are equally legitimate and can be used in keeping with the tradition of each culture, nation, or denomination. Especially since the name *Iancu* is but a version of John. It is unrealistic, counterproductive, and confusing to issue nowadays “directives” concerning the name of a historical character. Besides, the insinuation that Romanian historiography adopted the name *Iancu* under pressure from the communist-nationalist regime, or using alleged “instruments” of the same regime, such as historians David Prodan, Francisc Pall, Mihail P. Dan, Ștefan Pascu, or Camil Mureșanu is malicious, defamatory, and completely unfounded. According to factors such as time, place, and historiographical trend, Romanian historiography has used both forms, *Ioan* and *Iancu*. The best example in this respect is that of Nicolae Densușianu, who, in 1890, called the father of King Matthias *Ionî* or *Ianculî*, (Hurmuzaki, 1890: I/2, p. 463) at a time when the communist regime was still in the remote future. The name *Iancu* naturally became dominant within a collective memory rooted in the popular mentality of the Middle Ages, of a time when the hero was known as such to the people.²⁴ It was natural for the Romanians, on Orthodox people living in the Byzantine-Slavic cultural sphere, to call him in the same manner as the other peoples of the Byzantine denomination and of Greek or Slavonic culture. Over a nearly century of historiography, the great Romanian authors, from A. D. Xenopol to Francisc Pall and Camil Mureșanu, alternately called our character *Iancu* or *Ioan*, believing in the legitimacy of both names. We are fully aware of the fact that the names of historical characters are hardly a “game,” (Rusu, 1999: 22) being instead a very serious historical matter. This matter, however, must be approached in light of the sources, free from bias and in no way seeking to minimize and condemn the work of our predecessors. Quite often, irony comes to be presented as a “critical analysis” and goes rather well with the general public, especially when performed in a declamatory, superficial, and emphatic manner. Also, criticizing the forerunners—some of them of exceptional scholars, of unparalleled intellectual honesty and thoroughness—has become for some people a way of making a name for themselves. Fortunately enough, such schemes cannot go on forever.

origin of Matthias’ grandmother, Iancu’s mother: *imperatorio sanguine promansasse credita est*. The alleged blood ties between the Hunyadis and the family of the Ottoman sultans, in the context of the political relations between the king and these sovereigns, are alluded to in the direct correspondence of 1480–1484 between Matthias and the Sublime Porte (se Fraknói, 1893, no. 259, p. 381; no. 263, p. 387; vol. II. no. 43, p. 68; no. 48–49, p. 76–82; no. 247, p. 388).

²⁴ Sources indicate that John Hunyadi actually became a popular hero, leading large Christian forces in battle. He was actually called “the last great European crusader,” precisely because of the Christian fervor animating the masses under his command. Therefore, the name given to him by the people accompanying him—far from being an ironic jab—was quite significant, even if we avoid the exaggerations regarding the “role of the masses” and the “role of personalities” in history associated with most communist regimes.

Therefore, we believe that the conclusion stated by David Prodan in 1956 is still valid: “We know for a fact only that his name was first mentioned in 1409. That year, ‘for dedicated service at the right time and at the right place,’ King Sigismund gave the royal fortress of Hunedoara and the surrounding estate to his courtier (knight) Voicu, the son of Serba (Șerb or Șerban), to his brothers Mogoș and Radul, to his cousin Radul and to his son Ioan, who is none other than John Hunyadi, whose popular name, kept in folk poetry and in chronicles, was Iancu. According to contemporary Latin documents, Voicu had two sons names Ioan (in Latin *Joannes*), which would make little sense in the absence of some way of distinguishing between the two. Even the authors of documents felt the need to do that: they called the younger brother *Joannes junior*. The same distinction had to have been made by their soldiers and by those who knew them, for the two brothers always fought together. Of course, one was called Iancu, as tradition shows, and the other was called Ioan. In Latin, however, both translate as *Joannes*.” (Prodan, 1991: 259) Nothing could be clearer than this and nothing could be farther removed from gratuitous nationalism or from the “communist social command.” In fact, in 1956 it would have been rather difficult to express Romanian nationalist views, as that was the time of the proletcult, when only the values of the “great brother in the East” were promoted, when the names of Stalin and of the Soviet Union were still chanted in the streets. There can be absolutely no talk of “communist nationalism” in 1956, when Romanian names and the names of some voivodes were only just beginning to be timidly whispered, after the “invasion” of Soviet and Russian internationalism.

All of the testimonies investigated so far indicate that the two *Ioannes*, with identical names only in the Latin chancellery documents or official chronicles, bore the distinct names of *Iancu* and *Ivașcu* in the local Transylvanian environment and among their soldiers. Consequently, the Romanian form *Iancu de Hunedoara* is not made up, being instead absolutely legitimate and in full agreement with the sources of that time.

Șerbu (Șerban), Voicu, Mogoș, Radul or *Ladislaul*, another *Radul, Ioan* or *Iancu*, another *Ioan* or *Ivașcu, Matia Corvin, Ioan Corvin* are some of the names used in a family that gained fame in the history of Central and Southeastern Europe, indicating the multiple identities embraced by these individuals. To call them by several different names—but based on solid evidence—, as the sources suggest we should do, is an act of honesty, a recognition of the ethnic and denominational diversity of that time, as well as an obligation to a world that sought to defend the values of European civilization by preserving its own identities.

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