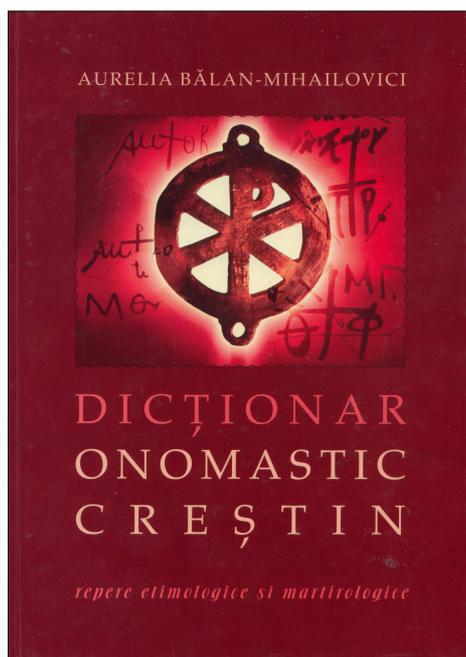


Aurelia Bălan-Mihailovici, *Dicționar onomastic creștin. Repere etimologice și martirologice*, București, Editura Sophia, 2009, 685 p. (Dana Dinu)



The paper brought to your attention represents the review of the 2003 edition published by Editura Minerva of *Dicționar onomastic creștin* by Aurelia Balan-Mihailovici. The author is a researcher and teacher with a wide range of contributions in various fields: linguistics, especially lexicology, lexicography and terminology, history, civilization, culture and theology. Compared to the first edition, there is a boost in the number of pages, due to extending the list of names under the category “names of historic tradition” (p. 10).

This dictionary is the latest lexicographical contribution covering the Romanian anthroponymy, being preceded chronologically by N.A. Constantinescu’s *Dicționar onomastic românesc/Romanian Onomastic Dictionary* published in 1963, by Christian Ionescu’s *Mică enciclopedie onomastică/Little Onomastic Encyclopedia*, in 1975 (with a revised and supplemented edition in 2008, entitled *Dicționar onomastic/Onomastic Dictionary*), and by Iorgu Iordan’s *Dicționar al numelor de familie românești/Dictionary of Romanian Family Names* published in 1983, the latter not mentioned among the selected bibliography consulted by the author (p. 672-673).

The Romanian lexicographic works of this type are not many, but in time there has been accumulated a rich material due to linguists’ concern with the field of onomastics that turned into consistent studies and articles. Within these lines of research, anthroponymy is a privileged domain for studying the history of the Romanian language, because its “highly

conservative character” (p. 10) represents an important potential for documentation regarding the specific Christian component of the Romanian culture and civilization in the European context and, at the same time, contributes to establishing that the Romanian language is a Romance language.

The special concern for those two issues arisen from the study of the Romanian vocabulary is constant in Aurelia Balan-Mihailovic’ dictionary, as she underlines it herself (p. 10). Aurelia Balan-Mihailovici confesses that one of the intentions of her undertake was “to decrypt almost all the names listed in the Traditional Church Calendar” (p. 10); that phrase includes not only the Orthodox tradition but, in the ecumenical spirit of scientists, both great Christian Churches. The chapter *Etymological Landmarks* refers to the component proper of the dictionary, providing the origin and the linguistic meaning of the analysed names. *Martyrological landmarks* represent the prosopographical component of the dictionary, showing the relation between saints’ names and their lives, motivating their exemplary character for Christian life.

The *Index* (p. 674-685) contains approximately 2,000 proper names, but because some of them have phonetic or graphic variations, the dictionary analyses approximately 1,500 name-entries, each item having a variable length description depending on the importance and significance of the name bearer in the Christian calendar, which determines the name frequency, circulation and number of variants.

Thereby, the corpus of names registered in the *Index* is further exceeded by the list of Romanian variants of surnames, family names, hypocoristics or names derived from toponymy, etc. presented in the dictionary. This anthroponymical repertoire consists mainly of four categories. The largest is that of religious names: Biblical names and names of saints and martyrs consecrated by the Church, be they of Hebrew, Greek or Latin origin, and which are found in the common Christian heritage of the two Churches. This category is followed by that of the names created in Romanian, proving the creativity and richness of Romanian anthroponymy. The third category is represented by the Romanian baptismal names taken

from Greek and Roman mythology, and the final category consists of names from Romanian onomastic fund, very common in recent decades.

Items are structured according to a strict lexicographical method, consistent in point of the parameters on which it is considered and, their order, regardless of the large or small space, allotted to the name, depends on their diffusion. Thus, each item is introduced by providing information about the denominative function of the name and about its frequency in Romanian, and, sometimes, in the European onomastic. Then it is presented the religious or historical source, the etymology and the linguistic way of transmission, the chronology and the attestations, the elements of hagiography, significant personalities who bore the name and a list of Romanian variants.

To shortly illustrate the complex structure of an item, I mention the one that explains the name *Ioan, Ioana*, statistically the most common name both in Romania and in the rest of the Christian world. Given the particular importance of this theophoric name which is borne by so many saints in the Christian calendar, its frequency is directly proportional in the entire Christian world and the large number of Romanian variants makes it difficult to be comprehensively recorded. As a result, the author allocated this name the largest space in her dictionary and added a rich hagiography, playing a special attention to the Romanian saints who bore that name.

Due to the multitude and variety of information and also to its structure, the *Christian Onomastic Dictionary* by Aurelia Balan-Mihailovici exceeds the strictly onomastic lexicography domain and assumes the characteristics of a truly encyclopedic dictionary. Thereby it will prove useful, interesting, and accessible to various categories of readers.