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IMAGINARY PLACES IN ROMANIAN – BALKAN FAIRYTALES. MYTHICAL ANALOGIES

Abstract: *Our study is focused on the linguistic - mythological analysis of names of the imaginary places from the Romanian fairytales, based on the indestructible connection between idea – as the result of thinking – and word. The approach starts from the premises that the double "game" that generates names of imaginary places forms part of the mental representation of the archaic world from which we can extract for certain some definitive features. Our approach also identifies some mythical analogies in the popular culture of the Balkan space because the generated imaginary toponyms become linguistic reflections of some mythical elements preserved in the fairytales of different communities. From the common background of representations of the Balkan peoples' imagination, we synthesize some examples regarding: the sacredness of the individual space; excessive protection of their own space; the village seen as organized space; the mythical image of the land forms; common beliefs on life after death. The comparative analysis of some imaginary places' names from the linguistic – mythological perspective can definitely prove the fact that there are many mythical analogies in the Balkan popular culture. We believe that there are at least two reasons for which this approach must be done: on the one hand, we refer to the existence of a rich mythological substrate in the Romanian popular creations, which is insufficiently valorized, and on the other hand, these studies could deepen the knowledge of spiritual life of the peoples from the Balkan space.*

Keywords: *popular culture, Balkan space, toponimy, imaginary, linguistics, mythology.*

In the chapter entitled "To be debated – Romanian mythology" of the study published based on an investigation (Oprişan 411-532), I. Oprişan brings together relevant opinions of famous personalities regarding a delicate subject, which seems to be constantly present: the Romanian mythology. The expressed points of view emphasize the need of a new systematization of the mythological material or, however, drafting new research studies and works dedicated to the archaic mentalities. There are at least two reasons for which this approach must be done: on one hand we refer to the existence of a rich mythological substrate in the Romanian popular creations, which is insufficiently valorized, and on the other hand, these studies could deepen the knowledge of the spiritual life of the Romanian people.

In fact, it seems that the language facts analysis from the popular creations and, implicitly, of the linguistic community's mythology is a difficult approach, caused by the interdisciplinary approach, which is absolutely necessary for this type of research. For this purpose we observe the opinion of Ivan Evseev, who considers that the mythological substrate can be excluded from the linguistic comments; consequently, the Romanian vocabulary entails also a mythological component, which completes the words' analysis. Regarding the toponyms, the researcher considers that they:"… provide a rich material that completes 'the world's image', reflected in the archaic and traditional cultures" (Evseev 17).

Taking into consideration the reference to the "archaic and traditional cultures" from the quoted phrase, we believe that the author generally refers to the European space, and especially to the Romanian space. Although the geographical space becomes less significant if we take into consideration the opinion of the linguist Petre Gheorghe Bârlea. In his study "Good Ana. Linguistics and mythology", the author underlines the fact that the mythological reminiscences existent in the

linguistic structures of the toponyms or anthroponyms from the popular productions "are relevant to all the world's mythological poetic systems" *(Bârlea 75)*, the model of the imagined world with the same essential mechanism based on the dualism of the mythical thinking.

Studying the imaginary toponymy, the reference to the reality is not enough. In this case, it is necessary to understand that "delicate specific" (Wunenburger 22) that balances the "nature's exteriority and the psychic's interiority" (Wunenburger 15) and that generates minor differences in the mechanism of creating names of the imaginary places. This mechanism can be summarized in some recurrent linguistic formulas:

- Joining a common, real name and an imaginary character (situation that provides the greatest number of imaginary places), such as: *the Green King's yard.*

- Joining a common real name and another space (generally, the locative prepositional constructions) such as: *the boundary between the black world and the white world.*

- Concrete, real name associated with a static or dynamic quality, which reveals mythical mentalities kept at symbolic level. In this segment we find the most real toponyms, such as *Good Fountain.*

- Finally, the concrete and real names, followed by extraordinary descriptions, such as: *house, big as the nut, all of pure gold decorated with expensive stones*, draw the attention upon the main way of transmitting the myths from one generation to the other, the orality being directly and immediately connected to the imaginary.

The linguistic analysis of the quoted examples becomes less significant without a mythological research of the component terms of the phrases, the names of the imaginary places and of the characters, being more than simple acts of language. Therefore it is necessary a new working perspective, the mythological perspective.

Hereinafter we shall stop on some similarities – to call them that way – generated by the specific way of thinking and feeling of the human being, and that can be organized in a mythological coordinates system, specific to the Balkan space. Lazăr Şăineanu, a reference name in the Romanian linguistics and ethnopsychology, names these similarities "*mythical analogies*"[2] (Şăineanu 17) underlying, in his reference study, the anthropological relevance of the fairytales, over which overlaps the ethnological factor[3] (Şăineanu 27).

We do not intend to approach mythology in its structural and quantitative integrality to find those common features of the mythical thinking, specific to the Balkan space' inhabitants. We shall stop only upon some mythological fragments that are "archived" in the language of the Romanian fairytales, real "treaties of popular philosophy" (Evseev 6), more exactly, expressing some names of imaginary places. The mythological analysis shall be based on concrete examples, extracted from well defined index of names of imaginary places. The approach that we suggest shall be consolidated as we

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[2] L. Şăineanu, 1978, *Romanian fairytales. Compared to the classical ancient legends and the fairytales of the neighboring peoples and of all Roman peoples,* p. 17. The authors believes that such mythic analogies, that finds ″remarkable and outstanding″ come to light also in fairytales of some peoples that didn't have contact one with the other, consequently, these thinking similarities are bigger when we talk about neighboring peoples. *Ibidem*, p. 27: "The anthropological background of the fairytales entails a very restricted number of essential types, which each ethnical group changes endlessly (so results the multitude of forms of expression for the names of places). *Each people colors with their own tone the original story, which is reflected especially in the influence of the different religious ideas*".

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 27: "The anthropological background of the fairytales entails a very restricted number of essential types, which each ethnical group changes endlessly (so results the multitude of forms of expression for the names of places). *Each people colors with their own tone the original story, which is reflected especially in the influence of the different religious ideas*".

decrypt some ideas, type-images, materialized in cultural codes that reflect a specific mentality of the Balkan area, which Antoaneta Olteanu names it "Balkan mythology"[4] (Olteanu 33).

Taking into account the Slavic origin of the word *fairytale*[5], with the primitive meaning, the one of "product of the imagination", proper meaning of the Romanian language, we observe that it is kept also in the other Balkan languages, with all the linguistic forms: *basm (fairytale)* in Romanian, *prikazka* in Bulgarian, *pripoviedka* in Serbo Croatian, *pravliţa* in Slovak, *basna* or *basma* in Serb. The greeks language has also the old form, μυθος, but also the modern one, παραμυθια, a form that is similar to the Romanians from Macedonia, *părămith,* meanwhile the Albanians call it *prală* (parable) (Şăineanu 139-140).

1. A first aspect that we can observe regarding similarities of the imaginary places is the sacredness of the individual space. Starting from the observation of Mircea Eliade, that "accommodation in a territory is equivalent to the foundation of a new world" (Eliade 46) we can state that the existence of all the houses, from the most sublime to the most modest one, is related to the symbolism of the center. Regardless the size and material value, the house reflects the world from its beginning. In the collective imaginary, each house "entails a sacred aspect" (Eliade 51) and tends to be placed very close or even in the center of the world.

Taking into account the great number of examples selected from our core of texts – 70 names of places with the basic term *house* or synonyms of it – we believe that creation of these names of places is strictly related to the relevance of the primordial creation. Of course that the great frequency of the lexemes that create the lexical semantic paradigm of these imaginary places, especially of the enclosed spaces or the "inhabited places" (Bârlea 85), that we observed also in the linguistic analysis of the imaginary toponyms, does not represent the only indication for certain preferences in selecting the terms that form these names. The imaginary intelligence must be connected to the concept of the primitive man regarding the existence of the place where they will be living, a place that they want as close as possible or even in the *"Center of the World"*.

The names of the imaginary places created with the terms *cottage (bordei)* or *chalet (colibă)* belong, exclusively, to the mythical characters of the other land. For such terrestrial places there are frequently used structures that entail the basic term *cell (chilie)*, such as the following examples:

The emperor's cell (chilia împăratului) (CPA, 70; IPÎ, 329);

The empress's cell (*chilia împărătesei*) (CZ, 54; DT, 90).

Of course that these uses of the quoted names must be understood as symbolic, exclusive places, although the basic term names a *"small place"*. From the same perspective, it is interesting to observe the use of the diminutive for expressing the name of the place:

The little cell of the emperor (chiliuţa împăratului) (FF, 97; CZ, 50).

The hypocoristic diminutive justifies the "idyllic perception of a finished world, of a serene universe, organized around a parental home" (Bârlea 98).

The fact that using the diminutive is never pejorative is emphasized also by the fact that it is related with *nest (cuib)* or *hatchery (cuibar)* and especially with *lodge (căsuţă)*, key elements that we find in the structure of names of places from the other land, but with the same meaning of "protective place".

The houses, chalets, palaces, symbols of the constant habitat (Bârlea 9) are built only in good and clean areas, either chosen at the end of the road, or where certain favorable signs occurred. A detalied analysis of the selection conditions for a good place to build a house is made by Ion Taloş, in

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[4] A. Olteanu, 2004, *Homo balcanicus. Features of the Balkan mentality,* p. 33. In the chapter entitled "For a Balkan mythology" from the quoted paper, the author enumerates some "*particularities that meet a common background*", stating: "*mythical patronal characters* "*spirits of the house*", etc. The demonstration is supported by concrete examples of mythological sequences regarding "*the illnesses' representation*".

[5] Acc. to *DER*, 2002, n. *fairytale* (s.v. *basm)*. Acc. to B. P. Hasdeu, 1972, *E.M.R. Dictionary of historical and popular language of the Romanians*, n. *fairytale* (s.v. *basm)*.

his paper "Manole the Craftsman. Contribution to the study of an European folkloric subject"[6] (Taloş 102-105).

In order to understand these selections in expressing names, we have to know the method of interpreting the imaginary in the Romanian culture, generally, and in the fairytale's culture, especially, which locates great spaces, yards and palaces in the worlds from other parallel dimensions; this reveals an untouchable ideal of the archaic man. This is how we explain the fact that we identified a single example that locates the *emperor's house* (P, 361; ZZO, 279) on earth, meanwhile the great enclosed spaces, mainly the *palace* are found in a large number on the *other land*[7] (Bârlea 9).

Furthermore, the spatial reference point that is always constant is the *house*, in fairytales it is often used the adverb of place *home*, the same substitute for any type of house, modest or sublime. We observe the opinion of Vasile Tudor Creţu upon this subject, who, writing about the traditional family life and its ceremonies, supports the polyvalency of the "house" concept for the society's core: "**home** (author's emphasis), for Romanians means the existence in a **spatial, dedicated and tridimensional** (author's emphasis) reality" (Creţu 49).

2. Another aspect that we focus on is the excessive concern of the Balkans on protecting their own space. A valuable observation of this aspect is presented by Antoaneta Olteanu in her book *Homo balcanicus. Features of the Balkan mentality.* Talking about building the house of the Balkan man, the author mentions the concern upon defending it, an opinion that can be proved by analyzing some examples of the Romanian fairytales: "... building the house – strong and stable fortress that protects the man from the uncertainties of the exterior world" (Olteanu 58).

The great occurrence of the names of imaginary places from the Romanian fairytales formed by the basic term *citadel (cetate)* must be related especially with the main role of these buildings, the role of protecting the inhabitants; first of all protecting them from certain spirits and later on from those of the conquerors:

> It is very likely that fortifications of the inhabited spaces and of the citizens were, at the beginning, magical fortifications; these fortifications – trenches, labyrinths, protection walls, etc – were meant to avoid the invasion of demons and deaths' souls, more than the people's attack. (Eliade 43)

Regardless the nature of the exterior demonic or human threats, the citadels' walls were a mean of protection of an enclosed space, organized inside according to all the rules of building the core, a space that had to be protected at any cost. It is true that analyzing some examples selected from the lexical semantic paradigm of the enclosed imaginary places we observe that the names of the places that entail the term *citadel (cetate)* are followed by short paragraphs that express the need of protection of such places:

The Red emperor's citadel [cetatea împăratului Roşu (DS, 366)];
The Green emperor's citadel [cetatea împăratului Verde (MG, 269)];
The brave emperor's citadel [cetatea împăratului cel viteaz (BIF, 215; FC, 299)];
Auraş emperor's citadel [cetatea lui Auraş împărat (VMA, 77)];
The imperial citadel [cetatea împărătească (BIF, 223; CI, 190)].

The first of the citadels is under threat that it "will burn all of it during the day of Whitsun, at midday-cross and thousands of innocent souls shall perish in fire" (DS, 366). In others they are

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[6] Ion Taloş, 1973, *Manole the Craftsman. Contribution to the study of an European folkloric subject,* pp. 102-105. In the chapter entitled "Legends of the buildings" of the quoted paper, the author describes the mandatory conditions for a place to be considered favorable for building a house, as the European peoples' legends present, mainly the Romanian ones. Many of the elements of this "*magic*" – as the author names it – are conserved until the present time.

[7] Acc. to *Survey*, 2006, p. 9. The group of folklore collectors and processors that inventoried a material of 1245 names of places from 267 texts, carried out a statistics that they believe it is "*provisory and in constant movement*", where the *palace* is situated on a privileged place compared to the *house*, which has a second place in the hierarchy of the occurrences. Acc. also to P. Gh. Bârlea, 2006, p. 86.

looking for a brave man, able to "stab the button of the top of the citadel" (MG, 269) and in this way to eliminate the curse from this place. Another quoted example suggests – by selecting the name of the adjective – the skill of the master in protecting their own territory, which emphasizes the citadel as a place of braveness. The quoted structures can signify faraway places, even isolated places, where you can not dare to go because even "the horses die of fatigue" (VMA, 77). Therefore, these are strategically situated places that diminish the strength of the enemy. Finally, the last quoted example brings an additional detail regarding this type of space, but which is focused on the same concern for protection, because here even "Prince Charming came down to lock the doors" (BIF, 223; CI, 190).

3. It is relevant for our approach also the popular common belief of the Balkan peoples that each house, regardless their size, is situated in an organized collectivity, the village, which is seen as a society where people live together: "For most people their village is the center of the world, the axis of the Sky or Earth" (Taloş 28).

Analyzing the constant similarities of the Balkan mentality, Antoaneta Olteanu, in her reference work, "Homo balcanicus. Features of the Balkan mentality", quotes Nicolae Iorga's opinion that has a unitary cultural perspective of the southeastern Europe: "Romanian villages, Serbian villages, Bulgarian villages, villages from Thrace, except the lands near the sea (…) are identical: the same streets, the same alignment of houses, the same sizes …" (Iorga 3-7).

The idea of building existential spaces in accordance with some rituals can be found at many Balkan peoples, as Marianne Mesnil and Assia Popova observe in the book entitled "Beyond the Danube. Balkan ethnology studies". The study refers to "the philosophic idealization of the Romanian village" (Mesnil, Popova 82) of Lucian Blaga, who suggests the formula of *the idea-village*. In the same paper, are mentioned the typical features of the Romanian village, seen as the synonym of "a state of mind", as Lucian Blaga believed: "For its own consciousness, the village is situated in the center of the world and it is extended in the myth" (Blaga 176).

We shall underline this aspect with examples from the Romanian fairytales, starting from the same symbolism of the center. The large imaginary places that belong to the paradigm of "lands" are set up according to the same principle of inclusion. With only two entries in the names inventory, the place called *the emperor's village [satul împăratului* (FC, 300; CNE, 97)] represents an existential place built according to the rituals, being afterwards assimilated by the entire cosmos. The fairytale does not refer to the way in which the place is built, meaning "starting from a cross (...) it is searched a natural intersection" (Eliade 44) but even the idea of village includes a way of existence based on a certain economic or cultural life style. We observe how the tendency of focusing on a restricted space, for its protection, is materialized again by selecting the genitive. The fact that both examples are quoted from literary fairytales[8], makes us believe that selecting the basic term, *village,* for creating this name of imaginary place is not a feature of the popular imaginary; the authors of fairytales are trying to keep in a certain way the popular model. Of course that it is not excluded the fact that the choice of the key element of the structure refer to an exterior space of reduced dimensions in the hierarchy of the lands that belong to the paradigm[9].

On the contrary, the name that mentions imperial cities are selected from popular fairytales, representing spaces organized according to certain rules, such as the compliance with the rank, which is the first rule. Because of this, the army, the sign of power and discipline enters in front of the suite in the *imperial city [oraşul împărătesc* (FFS, 151)]. The place's individualization is made with the genitive determiner, followed by the qualifying adjective, so that the space becomes iconic for the character that possesses it, for example:

The Red emperor's city [oraşul împăratului Roşu (PCD, 253)];

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[8] We refer to the fairytales *The girl called Flower from the woods*, by Ioan Slavici and *The insane Călin*, by Mihai Eminescu, from the *Anthology of the Romanian literary fairytale*, 2003, vol. I, pp. 288-307, respectively pp. 72-93.
[9] Actually, the narrator complies with a specific mechanism of the Romanian popular epic poem, of localization of the real and imaginary data, of adjustment to the known universe. It is known that in the popular legends and fairytales the emperors "*put caps on their heads*", "*sit on the bench near the oven*", as any common countryman. Acc. to P. Gh. Bârlea, 2008, p. 47, but there are definitely studies that provide special spaces for this aspect.

The Green emperor's city [oraşul împăratului Verde (TF, 258; TF, 263)].

The first example illustrates the center of the enemy forces' world, similar to the negative features of the Red Emperor, which signify *"the death and the cruel and devastating war"* (Evseev 166), meanwhile the space where the Green Emperor lives is peaceful and hospitable.

Regarding the meanings of the inhabitants, which include in their denomination the term *empire*, we notice two relevant aspects. First of all the name refers to very large and rich spaces without limits. Such a place is:

The Green emperor's empire [împărăţia împăratului Verde (CR, 164; UGP, 229)].

The fairytale brings enough details about this empire. It is "long and broad", so that you need several years to by-pass it and it is formed of several small empires, that not even the emperor knows it. The descriptive aspect is doubled by the perspective of a close connection at the conceptual level, between space and the master's actions, reflected by the exclusive selection of the genitive, because, as Gilbert Durand stated in his famous anthropology study, "the spatial representation is an internalized action" (Durand 406). From this perspective, the name of some empires rather refers to psychological spaces, being the synthesis of the spiritual and action structure of the characters:

The empire of Ionică Prince Charming [împărăţia lui Ionică Făt-Frumos (ICC, 123)];

The empire of Sefer emperor [împărăţia lui Sefer împărat (VMC, 85)];

The empire of Hai-Hai and the daughter of Roş-emperor [împărăţia lui Hai-Hai şi a fetei lui Roş-împărat (HH, 249)].

The first one of the quoted names means the completion of a destiny through love, the second one has the qualities of a hospitable space, and the last one symbolizes the determination in taking decisions regarding the collectivity. The attributes of a good empire are generally, "great and strong" (VMC, 83), but there are circumstances when a favorable space, such as *the Green empire [împărăţia Verde* (FFZ, 23)] undertakes the pain of losing a child: "grief and sadness was all around the Green empire". Actually, in all the analyzed examples we refer to the indestructible connection between man and the space where they live.

A passing space and, at the same time, a space to take decisions, is also the *neighboring empire* (BP, 123), a place situated at crossroads, *"where the road splits in two parts"*. We believe that the name *the empire from the end of the earth* (ICC, 100) is representative for this segment of debated names for two reasons: on the one hand, the idea of limit entails a new opening towards other possible worlds, and on the other hand, suggesting distance, the place becomes a materialization of the human thinking, and becomes what Gilbert Durand named "the operative symbol of the controlled distance" (Durand 406).

The name of *land (ţară)* derives from the Latin *terra*[10], which appeared in the period of the Romanian feudal states' foundation, and forms part of a number of 31 names of imaginary places, which we believe is a pretty big number to support the idea that the actions initiated by the fairytales heroes take place in a real territory, imagined according to the natural environment. A first observation is determining the basic name, all the quoted names having, without exception, an enclitic article, ensuring the referential connection through the close link between the basic noun and its determiner from the structure. Taking into account the opinion of Constantin Noica "for us determination is affirmation. It is creation" (Noica 19), we can consider the name of imaginary places from our fairytales symbolic creations of a profound mentality regarding the world. Our statement can be seen as an exaggeration by the informed reader. But according to the specific of our research we can demonstrate that the symbolic interpretations reveal mythical elements of an imaginary mechanism, maybe not an original one, but however delicate. A relevant example, for this purpose, is the name of countries ingeniously formed with noun determiners: *the land of copper/ silver/ gold [ţara de aramă/*

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[10] Romanian is the only one from the Roman languages that does not inherit the Latin *terra* with the general meaning of "earth". For this purpose it is used another Latin word, *pavimentum*, "layer", "hard-packed soil", generalized in Romanian through the process of extending the meaning. Nevertheless, as we can observe in our examples, the Latin *terra* was transmitted in Romanian with the meanings of land, political administrative territory, respectively rural settlement: at the country, Burzenland (Ţara Bârsei), The Stone Land (Ţara moţilor). The process is specific for many languages. Acc. To Terra Nova, Inglaterra, etc.

de argint/ de aur (PCD, 250)]. Beyond the reasons regarding the symbolism of metals, we notice that, in the case of the previous quoted examples, the metal's value is connected to the power of the countries' mistresses, the copper/ silver/ gold fairies, therefore in connection with femininity. The names of places become more interesting as their imaginary status is confirmed.

The names of the emperors' countries are formed based on the algorithm that we described in the rows regarding the formation of the structures with the noun "empire". The same algorithm, based on the selection of the genitive determiners, applies also in the case of the names where the space is associated with the chromatic aspect of the emperor, an essential aspect in order to determine the place's typology.

In this segment of names are situated the following examples:

The land of White Beard emperor [ţara împăratului Barbă Albă (R, 433)];

The land of Green emperor [ţara împăratului Verde (CZ, 54; HA, 185)];

The land of Red emperor [ţara împăratului Roşu (CZ, 50; FF, 100; VFF, 338)].

The quoted examples illustrate the names of large, good places formed of many villages. Most of the times the lands are adjacent reason that confirms the constant hostilities between them. The fairytales confirm this location in the imaginary geography: "They travelled until they got out of the Red emperor's land and they arrived to the Green emperor's land, where there are green people, their cattle are green and everything you see is green" (CZ, 50).

As we can observe from the quoted phrase, in every land the natural spaces and the inhabitants assume the color given by the adjective determiner of the structure. The imaginary lands are situated faraway in space and time, an idea provided by the iterative formulas, specific to the fairytale; these lands are usually the last terrestrial spaces before entering to another land, which usually happens crossing a large, difficult water land.

4. Another possible analogy in expressing names of imaginary places focuses on the mythical imagine of the land forms. We can compare the Greek name of an imaginary place, *live and moving mountains*[11], with the name of a Romanian imaginary place, *mountains that knock their heads* (SP 92; VFT, 97), of an imaginary place with the same meaning of protection place.

In the first example, the natural space is imagined as a shield against the enemies, the quoted source mentioning both the role of the mountains that come closer to *"end the enemies tongues"* and the action itself: *"the mountains came one near each other almost at 12 cubits but they didn't joint".* In this case are used two adjective determiners subordinated to the basic term.

The Romanian name formed with the same noun basis, *mountains*, is generated by the relative subordinate clause *that knock their heads*, which suggests both distance and difficulty to enter such a space. Furthermore, the Romanian popular mentality imagines this place that we can catalogue also in the paradigm of the symbolic places, in order to determine the significance of separating the worlds on the paradigmatic axis: the worlds of the living human beings and the world of the evil deads, Hell. It is again used the subordinate clause with locative aspect.

The relevant example in this case is: *the boundary of Hell, where the mountains knock their heads like rams* (LCF, 112).

This selection that occurs in both quoted examples is motivated either by the existence, in the space between mountains, of the great healing water or water that saves men from death, *live water and dead water*, with the same wonderful attributes in the Greek fairytales (Şăineanu 40), or near an unfavorable space, hell.

The small difference that we observe at the linguistic level – and that results from the particular sensitivity of the collectivity that generates the name – disappears at the conceptual level. Although they belong to two different ethnical communities, both names of imaginary places keep the primordial idea of communion with nature for the purpose of life protection.

5. The similarities of the Balkan mentality can be observed also at the imaginary structure's level *customs of the sky*. The imaginary toponym expresses rest areas of the soul after death and it is formed with plural, not by accident, but due to the belief that there is a great number of such places.

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[11] L. Şăineanu, 1978, p. 73, states that the name of the place is quoted from the *Odyssey* and presents the entire descriptive extract of the action, mentioning that the quoted name is present also in Albanian.

The basic term of the structure has its origin in the Hungarian word *vám*[12], and the meaning given by the popular mythology is the one of a *"place between the sky and the earth"*, where evils ask customs for the human souls, so that no guilty one slips away and gets to Heaven. The same beliefs can be found – according to Lazăr Şăineanu[13] at modern Greeks, as well as at other Balkan peoples, Bulgarians and Albanians:

> Between sky and earth there are a lot of unseen roads, which the souls pass through towards Heaven. The evils are placed at each crossroads with pillars as if it was a barrier, they placed a fence along the road so that they can stop the passage and they bordered their **customs** (author's emphasis) there. Nobody knows how many **customs** (author's emphasis) are until the sky. (Olinescu 388)

Regardless the precise number of customs, the access to each one of them is made only after passing through some specific tests. Each customs asks customs duty for a certain sin, and one can pass only if they do not have that sin and cleans their soul in a river nearby. After passing through all the customs, the hardest test of the soul is to pass the bridge of Heaven, which is very long, narrow, thick as a nail and sharp as a blade, placed over the darkness of Hell. This bridge shall be passed by those who have a candle in their hand and a coin to give to the one that will help them go further to the gate of Heaven.

Between the numerous levels of Balkan culture and civilization that can prove the unity of this idea in space, we have chosen to approach here the mythical elements preserved in the popular culture, more precisely, in fairytales. We identified some of the multiple examples that can be provided, regarding the common background of representations from the Balkan peoples' imagination that we can summarize in the following way:

- Sacredness of the individual space;
- Excessive protection of their own space;
- The village, seen as an organized space;
- The mythical image of the land forms;
- Common beliefs of life after death;

Of course that the local mythologies still preserve many ideas of this kind, such as the imaginary bridge, being closer to the multiethnic and multicultural relationships. The comparative analysis of all these names of places at the mythological – linguistic level can prove, without any doubts, the fact that there are many mythical analogies in the popular culture of the Balkan space.

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[12] Acc. to *DER*, 2002, *customs (n.)*.
[13] L. Şăineanu, 1978, p. 90: "*As Ancient Greeks placed in the mouth of the dead an oblation for which Caron transported the dead in Hades, the same thing does also the modern Greeks and other Balkan peoples, Bulgarians and Albanians*".

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Acronyms

DER = Ciorănescu, Alexandru. *Etymological Dictionary of the Romanian Language*, Bucureşti: Saeculum I. O, 2002.

BP = *Basmul cu Păpuşică licărea (Fairytale with Shiny Doll)*, in: *Romanian Fairytales*, Gh. Dem Teodorescu, Bucureşti: Vitruviu, 1996.

BIF = *Basmul cu Ion Făt-Frumos (Fairytale with Ion Prince Charming)*, in: *Romanian Fairytales*, Gh. Dem Teodorescu, Bucureşti: Vitruviu, 1996.

CI = *Ciobănaşul cel isteţ sau ţurloaiele blendei (The Smart Swain or the Steppers of the Blende)*, in: *Works*, Petre Ispirescu, vol. I-II. Accurate edition, notes, versions, glossary and bibliography by Aristiţa Avramescu. Introductory study by Corneliu Bărbulescu, Bucureşti: Cartea Românească, 1981.

CR = *Craivisin, fiul vacii (Craivisin, the Son of the Cow)*, in: *The Fairytale with the Sun and the Moon*. Anthology, foreword and bibliography by Iulian Chivu, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1988.

CZ = *Crăiasa Zânelor (The Queen Mab)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul, 1986. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva.

CNE = *Călin Nebunul (The Insane Călin)*, in: *Anthology of the Romanian Literary Fairytale*, Mihai Eminescu, Vol. I-II. Anthology and foreword by Ioan Şerb. Text set out by Aurelia Rusu, Bucureşti: Grai şi Suflet – Cultura Naţională, 2003.

CPA = *Cei doi copii cu părul de aur (The Two Children with Golden Hair)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul, Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

DS = *Dreptatea şi Strâmbătatea (Justice and Wrongfulness)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul, Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

DT = *Doftorul Toderaş (Doc Toderaş)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

FC = *Floriţa din codru (The Girl Called Flower from the Woods)*, in: *Anthology of the Romanian Literary Fairytale*, Ioan Slavici, Vol. I-II, Anthology and foreword by Ioan Şerb. Text set out by Aurelia Rusu, Bucureşti: Grai şi Suflet – Cultura Naţională, 2003.

FF = *Din fată, fecior (From Girl, a Boy)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

FFS = *Făt-Frumos cu carâta de sticlă (Prince Charming in Glass Carriage)*, in: *Works*, Petre Ispirescu, vol. I-II. Accurate edition, notes, versions, glossary, and bibliography by Aristiţa Avramescu. Introductory study by Corneliu Bărbulescu, Bucureşti: Cartea Românească, 1981.

FFZ = *Făt-Frumos zălogit (Prince Charming Mortgaged)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

HA = *Povestea lui Harap Alb (The Story of Harap-Alb)*, in: *Anthology of the Romanian Literary Fairytale*, Ion Creangă, Vol. I-II. Anthology and foreword by Ioan Şerb. Text set out by Aurelia Rusu, Bucureşti: Grai şi Suflet – Cultura Naţională, 2003.

HH = *Hai-Hai*, in: *Fairytale with the Sun and the Moon*. Anthology, foreword and bibliography by Iulian Chivu, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1988.

ICC = *Ileana Cosânzeana, din cosiţă floarea-i cântă, nouă-mpărăţii ascultă (Ileana Cosânzeana, from Her Pigtail the Flower is Singing, Nine Empires are Listening)*, in: *Fairytale with the Sun and the Moon*. Anthology, foreword and bibliography by Iulian Chivu, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1988.

IPÎ = *Ion Porc-Împărat (Ion Pig - Emperor)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

LCF = *Lupul cu cap de fier (The Wolf with Iron Head)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

MG = *Micu Grămădicu*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*. Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

P = *Psaltirea (Psaltery)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

PCD = *Pasărea cântă, domnii dorm (The Bird is Singing, the Masters are Sleeping)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

R = *Rânduneaua (the Marthlet)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

SP = *Scorpia pământului (the Devil's Saughter)*, in: *Fairytale with the Sun and the Moon*. Anthology, foreword and bibliography by Iulian Chivu, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1988.

TF = *Tata florilor (the Flowers' Father)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

UGP = *Urmă galbină şi Pipăruş Petru (Yellow Hint and Petru Pepper)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1986.

VFF = *Vasilică, Floare-frumoasă (Vasilică, Beautiful Flower)*, in: *Transylvanian Stories*, Ion Pop Reteganul. Accurate edition and introductory study by Vasile Netea, Bucureşti: Minerva. 1986.

VFT = *Voinicul cel fără de tată (the Strong Man without Father)*, in: *Works*, Petre Ispirescu, vol. I-II. Accurate edition, notes, versions, glossary, and bibliography by Aristiţa Avramescu. Introductory study by Corneliu Bărbulescu, Bucureşti: Cartea Românească, 1981.

VMA = *Viteazul cu mâna de aur (the Brave Man with Golden Hand)*, in: *Romanian Fairytales*, Gh. Dem Teodorescu, Bucureşti: Vitruviu, 1996.

VMC = *Voinicul cel cu cartea în mână născut (The Strong Man born with the Book in his Hand)*, in: *Works*, Petre Ispirescu, vol. I-II. Accurate edition, notes, versions, glossary, and bibliography by Aristiţa Avramescu. Introductory study by Corneliu Bărbulescu, Bucureşti: Cartea Românească, 1981.

ZZO = *Zâna Zorilor (The Fairy of the Dawn)*, in: *Anthology of the Romanian Literary Fairytale*, Ioan Slavici, Vol. I-II. Anthology and foreword by Ioan Şerb. Text set out by Aurelia Rusu, Bucureşti: "Grai şi Suflet - Cultura Naţională, 2003.