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Deprecatory Ethnonyms: The Case of *Bozgor*

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Abstract. In this study, we wish to debate upon some aspects regarding the lexical and semantic implications of ethnonyms. We aim to analyse the origin and semantics of one of two lexemes used by Romanians to refer to Hungarians: *bozgor.* Besides a meta-analysis of the term (its emergence, meaning), we also refer to archaic usages and meanings (*buzguroi, bozga, bozga, bâzga*, etc.). We discard previous theories regarding the meaning and origin of the lexeme. *Bozgor* is a word that is considered an instance of verbal abuse, mockery, or insult, which displays a significant amount of collectively formed, pejorative connotation. Our hypothesis is that it comes from the Hungarian *bodza*, in its archaic form and meaning ('border forest'). *Bozgor* in its earlier versions came to designate, through semantic extension, 'inhabitant of the border forest', 'Hungarian'. The associative meanings which led to the emergence of its present pejorative status (as an ethnic slur) appeared later. The roots we analyse in the article all share a common denominator of meaning and all have led to a large number of words related to the semantic field of forest both in Romanian and in Hungarian.

Keywords: *bozgor*, ethnic slur, etymology, meaning, Romanian, Hungarian

1. *Bozgor* as an ethnic slur

Negative stereotypes about other ethnic groups or ethnic prejudices are imaginary scenarios about the "other", materialized in a cliché, which, out of convenience is applied to a person or a group of people in an erratic way. Our constant strives to order and to structure the surrounding reality into categories, classes accentuate and foster this type of representation of differences. The causes and origins of these representations, recorded in numerous forms of expression (everyday life, folklore, literature, history, art, media, etc.), as well as prejudices and stereotypical forms of relationship between neighbouring ethnic groups, are varied and go beyond the scopes of this study. What we aim here is to present some aspects of Romanians' hetero-stereotypes or hetero-images related to Hungarians.

In the collective memory of Romanians, Hungarians are represented in various ways and under numerous denominations, most of which are ethnic slurs (cf. Adam-Vlasin 2017, Adam 2015). Following a previous study on the ethnic slur *boanghen*, we attempt to approach one of the most widespread dysphemic ethnic names used by Romanians to label Hungarians, i.e. *bozgor*. Due to the fact that the term spread as a slur for Hungarians, especially in the last decades of the communist era, it is possible that it was fostered by communist nationalism promoted by Ceauşescu, which contributed largely to the emergence and proliferation of negative stereotypical representations (though the official propaganda kept highlighting the common goals of all friendly socialist states). The harmful influence of negative stereotypes, of prejudices and superstitions about the other, the negative perception about others and otherness may conduce people to inappropriate behaviour and catalyze intolerant mentality towards proximal ethnic groups. In the spirit of mutual, inter-ethnic tolerance and aiming to reduce the amount of hate speech impregnated with racism, xenophobia, chauvinism towards the other, we wish to take a look at the semantics and origin of the ethnic slur *bozgor* in order to make speakers aware of the semantic and pragmatic implications of this linguistic unit. Ethnic slurs always bring about face threatening and face loss, therefore their usage should be reduced as much as possible. Romanin (2022) discusses the reflection of the features of the "we"–"other" dichotomy in the Balkan model of the world. The author gives a brief review of the historical, cultural, and geopolitical specificities of the Balkan-Carpathian region which influenced the local peoples' ideas about strangers; some traditional mythological beliefs of the Balkanians related to the conceptual field of "otherness" are also presented. He concludes that the prototypical Balkan alien is someone who *speaks differently* and *behaves differently*.

2. Theories regarding the meaning of bozgor

In the *Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian Language* (hereinafter referred to as DEX), the meaning of *bozgor* is that of Hungarian.[1] It is also suggested that it is used in a pejorative, derogatory way,[2] and the meaning of the word is assumed (probably wrongly, DEX suggests) to be in Hungarian 'person without a country', 'stateless'. In Hungarian, it is supposed to come from Slavic or Romanian.[3] The idea that the ethnic slur *bozgor* stands for 'Hungarian' and that it should be linked to the Hungarian word for 'stateless', 'person without a homeland', or it is used as an insult to the Hungarians in Romania, is reinforced but not explained by Herling and Ghenţulescu (2020: 61).

1 According to DOOM 3 (2021).
2 Cf. Volceanov 2007.
3 https://dexonline.ro/definitie/bozgor.

The etymology, the meaning but also the pejorative aspect of *bozgor* are still a matter of debate among specialists. However, numerous theories have emerged, and most of them seem to be rather speculations or folk etymologies.

Brubaker (2006: 307) derives the name *bozgor* from the Moldavian Csángó dialectal pronunciation of *bocskor* meaning 'sandal', 'kind of moccasin', 'Opinca-opanak', or traditional peasant shoe worn in Southeastern Europe. The explanation is not logical, as the aforementioned type of shoe was usually worn by Romanian peasants and not by Hungarians, therefore *bozgor* as a denominator of a piece of clothing would not work as an exonym given by Romanians to Hungarians. This etymology is based on the sheer phonological similarity of the two terms.

The Hungarian linguist Sándor Szilágyi N. (2003: 713–717) suggests that *bozgor* is a combination of the Hungarian slur *ba(s)zd meg* ('f* you') and the Romanian word for *Hungarian*, namely *ungur*. Szilágyi hitherto admits that his intention was to help people acknowledge the idea of conflicts arising from misunderstandings. And if people understand this, it might be easier to get them abandon ethnic slurs, and thus words like 'Oláhs' and 'Bozgor' would become obsolete archaisms, he argues. There are at least two arguments against this otherwise appealing theory:

1. there is no explanation for the phonetic changes and the shift from *b*d meg* +*or to bozgor* (syncope and apocope in *b*d* and aphaeresis in *meg* and the contraction of *ungur* to the suffix *-or)*. The word was not listed in any of the dictionaries up to the 2000s, which does not mean that it did not exist; rather, it means that it was not widely used, or it had another form. However, so many changes are not very likely to occur within one single linguistic item over a timespan of a century;[4]

2. the f* word is mentioned only once in Romanian publications, under the form of *bassama* in Şăineanu (1929: 56), unequivocally using the *Vous* pronoun in the inflection of the verb (in the past, *Vous* pronouns and *Vous*-pronoun-related conjugations were far more widespread in Hungarian language, even in familiar and non-formal contexts; the *Tu* pronoun forms started to spread only in the late second half of the twentieth century. Szilágyi's explanation, however, would be validated only on the Tu pronominal usage.

Tánczos (2012: 130) simply mentions the fact that the Csángó community faces the slur *bozgor*[5] when Romanians do not understand them. This clearly

4 Given that in an 1895 study entitled *Poreclele la români* [Nicknames given by Romanians] Ion-Aureliu Candrea states that *boanghen* is the only nickname given by Romanians from all historic regions to Hungarians, and the first official attestation of the word in a dictionary is in 2007 (Volceanov).

5 Bozgor = homeless, stateless. The Romanians mocked us saying: you are bozgor, for being Hungarian. If they get mad at us, they even call us bozgor. They call us that because they do not understand the Hungarian language, and then they say: you speak bozgor (see Tánczos 2012).

shows that *bozgor* is not only an exonym, i.e. an external ethnonym, but also a glottonym, the name of the language which "sounds bad".[6]

Szilágyi (2003) also discards the other explanation, according to which *bozgor* is a nickname of Slavic origin – *bez* 'without(i)' and *gora* 'mountain', or *gorod* 'city' –, andtherefore *bozgor* would mean 'without mountains/cities'. He states that this explanation is illogical because it does not consider the nature of linguistic processes, as a good ethnic slur should be witty and playful, and not so nonsensical as 'mountainless' or 'townless'. The explanation sounds reasonable provided that *bozgor* was meant to be an ethnic slur from the very beginning, which might not be the case. Very often ethnic names turn into ethnic slurs after a period of time (always due to external, historical factors).[7] Nevertheless, we also discard this etymology, as it is not linguistically verifiable (*gorod* has given in Romanian *-grad*, not *-gor*, as in *bozgor*).

Table 1. *Synopsis of theories regarding the meaning and etymology of* bozgor

Source	Meaning/etymology
DEX	Hungarian, pejorative, derogatory term, etymology probably wrongly 'man without a country', 'stateless'
Herling and Ghenţulescu (2020)	'Hungarian', an insult, it should be linked to the Hungarian word for 'stateless', 'man without a homeland'
Tánczos (2012)	language which 'sounds bad', Csángó dialect
Brubaker (2006)	from the Moldavian Csángó dialectal pronunciation of *bocskor* meaning 'sandal', 'kind of moccasin', 'Opinca-opanak'
Szilágyi N. (2003)	a combination of the Hungarian slur 'f* you' and 'ungur' 'Hungarian'

3. Other etymological pathways

Another pathway that could be followed and verified would be the verb *a boscorodi*, meaning 'to mutter an incantation', 'to speak like a witch'. Ioniță (2002) acknowledges that the nickname *bozgor*, attributed to the Hungarians, is not listed in the dictionaries. He concludes that the Romanians misunderstood the speech of Hungarians, which is why he thinks that *bozgor* comes from *a boscorodi* 'to speak

6 As *bozgor, bangyin, madárnyelv, lónyelv / bozgor, bangyin, language of birds, language of horses* are all pejorative glottonyms used by Romanians to refer to Hungarian language (Iancu 2021: 162). Very often, the language used by the others is perceived as "foreign-speaking", "bad-speaking/-sounding" or "nonsense-speaking".

7 *Oláh*/Romanian was not an ethnic slur at the beginning.

nonsense, to grumble', a contrast word with the consonant group -sc-, which became -zg in *bozgor*.[8] Therefore, *bozgor* would come from *boscorodi*, 'to grumble, mutter', as the Hungarian language is incomprehensible for Romanian speakers.

Based on the idea that Hungarians were called *baskir, baskor, basquort* in many Arabic and Persian written sources in the ninth century (including, among others, variants of the ethnic name of the Bashkirs (i.e. *bāshjird, bashjird, bājghird*), the idea that *bozgor* might spring from *bashkir* has emerged.[9] Among these old sources: Al-Masudi (Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Ali al-Mas'udi), Al-Istakhri (Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Farisi al Istakhri), Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Abd ar-Rahim al-Garnati l-Andaluzi, but also the Arab scholar and geographer Ibn Said al-Magribi (Ali ibn Musa ibn Said al-Maghribi) (1213–1286), author of *Kitab bast al- ard fi 't -t ul wa-'l-'ard / The Map of the Length and Breadth of the Earth*, who divides the inhabitants of Hungary into two peoples, namely: 1. Bashkiri (Bashghird), who are presented as Turkic-speaking Muslims settled south of the Danube, and 2. Hungarians (Hunqar). The Arab historian and geographer Abu-l-Fida al-Hamawi (1273–1331), in his work *Takvim al-buldan / Sketch of Countries*, writes that the Bashkiri of Hungary lived on the banks of the Danube, in the vicinity of the Germanic people.[10] Nevertheless, this etymology is considered an unscientific version or folk etymology by Romanin (2022: 114); however, it reflects the way Romanians' conceptual picture of the world represents Hungarians as "aliens", "strangers from outside Europe", "people from the vast plains of Central Asia".

N. A. Baskakov (1984), in his article *On the Origin of The Ethnonym Bashkir* states that the origin of the ethnonym Bashkirs must be associated with the ancient history of the tribes that participated in the formation of both the Bashkir and the Bulgar peoples. The overwhelming majority of ethnographers and linguists admit that the Bashkirs, whose nationality was formed from the Kypchak tribe under the significant influence of the Bulgar and Ugric substrates, certainly were in close genetic ties with the Hunno-Bulgar tribe of the Ogurs ~ Ugurs ~ Ugrians, known in the east of the Turkic steppe under the name Oguz (oγur ~ oγuz – the same name, phonetically different according to the law of rotacism-zetacism). In other words, the ethnonyms Bashkirs and Magyars had a common origin. The identity of the ethnonyms badžγyrt and madžγur ~ madžγar is also confirmed by later studies of this problem, considers the scientist.

8 Bogrea (1926) makes an analysis of *Boscorodesc* (Sl. Bozkorodity, attested in medieval chronicles).

9 Especially on some forums and platforms that are not dedicated to scientific debate, participants tend to reiterate this idea for the sole purpose of demonstrating that *bozgor* is not a slur but an ethnonym.

10 For further information regarding the subject, see the writings of the following Hungarians researchers: Ármin Vámbéry, András Róna-Tas, Tibor Tóth, Gyula Németh, Zoltán Gombocz, István Vásáry, Gyula László, etc.

The Turkish scientist Osman Karatay, in his *Macarlar. Kökler Ve Türkler / Hungarians. Roots and Turks*, (2020) demonstrates that in Turkey, Hungarians were called *bashkir/bashkur* for a very long time, and the name *Macar* emerged late. The researcher highlights that it is almost hardly possible to encounter the ethnic name *Magyar/Macar* in the east of Volga in the early medieval texts. The name does not appear even long after Hungarians – who denominate themselves 'Magyars' – have migrated to the Carpathian Basin. On the contrary, the word *Bashkir*, which is believed to be the equivalent word for referring to the same group, has been frequently used. It is also usually used for referring to peoples in Central Europe. This *synonymous* usage of the names Magyar and *Bashkir* has long attracted attention and gave birth to many studies. The word *Onogur*, which stems from the ethnonym *Hungar*, used by outsiders for the Magyars, was used in some previous sources synonymously with the name *Bulgar* to the west of Volga, whereas the *Bashkirs* in the east never had such a name. Bulgars and Bashkirs in the Volga basin were carefully separated from each other.

An argument for the acceptance of this synonymy between the lexeme *Hungarian* and *bashkor, bashkir* might be a genetic research and study published in *Scientific Reports* (Post et. al 2019), which has concluded that a group of Bashkirs are the closest kin to the Hungarian Árpád dynasty. However, if *bozgor* (ethnic slur) had come from *bashkir* (ethnonym), it would have been a loan word, borrowed by Romanians and Turkish people alike, would have been listed in dictionaries, and would have yielded derivatives. It would not simply have emerged in the second half of the 20th century almost *ex nihilo* as an ethnic slur. Pejoration might have taken place, but the word itself would have entered at least some dictionaries. What is more, the ethnonym *bashkir* applied to Hungarians might be explained by the fact that Turks have always substantiated the Asian origin of Hungarians, and the lexeme *bozkir* means 'steppe' in present-day Turkish as well, therefore this exonym could mean 'people of the steppe', 'people coming from the steppe'.

According to *A magyar nyelv szótára* / *Dictionary of the Hungarian language* (1862), the Hungarian verbs *bozog, bozsog* are synonyms of *mozog*, meaning 'move'. The same series of synonym (*bozsog, mozog, mocorog, nyüzsög*) are listed by Sántha (2004) and in George Barițiu's *Dicționariu ungurescu–romanescu* [Romanian–Hungarian Dictionary] (1869), where he states that *bozog* means *se mişcă* 'move'. Though this etymon (*bozgor* = *bozog/move* + suffix *-or*) is rather unlikely, the amount of meaning it suggests 'those who are on the move all the time' reminds us of another ethnonym for Hungarians, used a lot in Moldova, *csángó/csángál*, *csatangol*, i.e. 'wander', 'loiter'.

Table 2. *Synopsis of other possible etymologies we have analysed*

Sources	Form	Meaning
Ioniță (2002)	*a boscorodi*	'to grumble', 'to mutter', 'to speak like a witch' (as the Hungarian language is incomprehensible for Romanian speakers)
Medieval Muslim sources, Turkish and Russian sources (Baskakov 1984, Karatay 2020)	*Bashkir*	'people of the steppe'
The form is listed by Sántha (2004) and George Barițiu (1869), though the link with bozgor is not present.	*bozog, bozsog, mozog*	'move', 'those who are on the move all the time'

4. A new hypothesis: Ro. *Bozgor* and Hu. *Bodza* and their old forms and meanings

In Scriban's 1921 volume *Etimologii/Etymologies*, an archaic lexeme emerges – *buzguroi* –, which designates 'a monster to scare children'. Scriban considers it of Hungarian origin, similar to *mozgor* 'kind of little bear'. In another volume, the same author explains *buzguroi* as a dialectal term specific to Moldova and meaning 'fairy-tale monster', springing from the Hungarian *borzongatni* 'to frighten' (Scriban 1923: 277).

DEX provides two definitions of *buzguroi.* The first set of definition for *buzguroi* confirms it as a regional term for 'big rat' and as a figurative meaning for 'a person who wakes up early'. This first set of definitions is based on Coteanu (2010). The second entry defines *buzgurói* and *gugurói* as synonyms (having as their etymons *borz*, *boarza*, and *gogoriță*), designating 'a monster that scares children'. This second definition in DEX is based on Scriban (1939). This latter suggests the alternative version of *buzguroi* as *borz*, *boarză*, defined as an adjective of Hungarian origin (*borz*, *bursuc* 'badger', but also *borzogatni / a înfiora*, meaning 'frightful (monster)', 'shaggy', 'very ugly (person)' and 'gadfly'. The contamination of *buzguroi, borz* and *borzas, borzos* is mentioned in DEX as well, which also quotes the name of the Cumani leader, Borz, as one of the most well-known referents of *borz.*[11]

Also, DEX lists *bâzgán bâzgar, bâzgor, bâzgorie, bâzguroi, buzguroi* as designating 'the name of a monster'. Seche–Seche (2002) mention, on the same note, the series of synonyms *bâzgar, bărzăun, bândar, bonzar, bânzar, bongar,*

11 BORZ n. cuman, după N. Iorga, citînd Borzul şef cuman la 1211 [BORZ n. Cuman, after N. Iorga, citing Borzul as Cuman chief in 1211].

bongoi, bozgoi. They question the onomatopoeic status of *bărzăun* 'humble-bee', 'hornet', stating that the first thing that calls into question the conditioning link between the form and the meaning of the onomatopoeic word is onomatopoeic synonymy: the existence of numerous onomatopoeic synonyms, sometimes different or slightly different from each other from a formal point of view, shows that they can have the same meaning associated with several forms (Seche–Seche 1958: 185–186). This, of course, would not be possible if the sounds of the onomatopoeic word were strictly determined by its meaning.

Buzguroi appears to be linked to the forms *bozga, bazga*, which have long been used as proper names as well (Bazga, Bozga, Bozgă, Bozgan, Buzga, Buzgan, Buzgar, Buzgariu, Buzgaru, Buzgău, Buzgure, Buzgurescu, Bozga leading through metathesis to Bogza).[12] According to DEX, *bazga* covers the following meanings:

– Basga, Bazga, Bozgan, Băzgan – dating back to 1780 as family names; Băzguleştii as a toponym;

– Bazgă under the form of Bîzgan as a nickname meaning 'bumpkin', 'redneck' in the Oltenia region (cf. Constantinescu 1963);

– Bazgă (approximate meaning, deduced from context) 1. flame. 2 (fig.) the fire of hell;

– Bazgă under the form of *bâzgă* as a nickname for Transylvanians.

Today, *Bazga* is the name of a village in the region inhabited by Csángós, near Bacău. Iorgu Iordan (1983: 77) emphasizes that Bozga as a proper name is derived from *bozgoi* through back formation, by eliminating the last syllable, which seems to be an augmenting suffix. The meaning of *bozgoi,* he states, is similar to *bărzăun*, defined by DEX as 'humble-bee'. *Bazga* is further listed under the variant *bâzgar*, with a long series of synonyms according to DEX (*bărzăun, gărgăun. bâzgăun băzgăun, bâzălău, bondar*, etc.) All these forms mean a 'large buzzing insect with a venomous needle, genus of large, shiny black, yellow-striped wasps (*Vespa crabro*)' on the one hand or 'humble-bee' and 'an extremely conceited person' on the other.

Therefore, we can conclude that there is a semantic and etymological connection between *bazga* as a nickname of the people of Transylvania, *bâzgan* as a nickname for 'churl', *bărzăun* as a 'jobless and homeless person',[13] and *buzguroi* as a 'mythological figure referring to a very scary person or monster'.

12 Bârlea (1909) lists the following proper names based on bozga: Bosga, Bozga, Bozgoiu, Bozgou, Bozgo, Bozgan (in a document dating from 1782 and in the journal *Neamul Românesc*, 1909 (IV(106–107)); Iorga (1906: 287) quotes a private letter from Hunedoara from 1715 where Buzgure is listed as a proper name.
Bozga is also an old Hungarian family name (cf. https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Kempelen-kempelen-bela-magyar-nemes-csaladok-1/2-kotet-19FA/bozga-2E4E/?list=eyJxdWVyeSI6ICJib3pnYSJ9).
Murádin (2014) lists the following Hungarian family names of Romanian origin: Bándár ~ Bondár (< Bonder), Bongyán (< Bondean Bozga (< Bozga).

13 https://dexonline.ro/text/barzaun.

In *Dicționarul limbii române* [Dictionary of Romanian language] (1910), we can find the following lexemes that are linked to our research:

– *bosorcoi* meaning 'ghost', synonym with *buzguroi*;

– *Bozga* (*Bozga* + *an*), *bosgan,* and *bosga* synonyms with *bărzăun* 'humble-bee';

– *Bozgonete* (*bozgoane*, variant of *boscoană*) 'charms of all kinds' + suffix;

– *Buzgure*, possibly a translation of the Hungarian *buzgó* 'zealous' + the suffix -ur;

– *Borzaş*, a translation of the Hungarian words 'borz', 'borzas' meaning 'tousled';

– *Burzău*, synonym with *bărzăun*, connected semantically to *borzoi* and *bârzoia* 'to be puffed up'.[14]

In *Dicționarul limbii române* [Dictionary of Romanian language] (1913), we can find the following lexemes that are linked to our research:

– *Bâjbâi* 'to produce the characteristic sound of bees when they fly, to buzz' linked to bozgoiu, a verb that means 'to utter (from the mouth) inarticulate or poorly articulated sounds, to mumble, to grumble';

– *Bângoiu* synonym of *bongoiu, bânzar, bărzăun, bondar, bonzar, bânzoiu* (used in Moldova, Bucovina) and *bânzoiu, bonda* (used in 'Ungaria', i.e. the Hungary of those times, presently Romania's Transylvanian region), meaning 'humble-bee' but also 'hideous man'.[15]

– *bânzoi*, *bânzăi*, *bondar* 'humble-bee'.

In Puşcariu–Rădulescu-Pogoneanu (1911), *bâzgăun* is listed as a synonym of *gărgăun* 'hornet' and as a fusion of *gărgăun* and *bărzăun* (or perhaps *bâzgoiu, bozgoiu*).

Micul dicționar academic edited by Ion Coteanu (2010) defines *bărzăun* (with the variants *barzaon, bârzăune, bărnăuz, bârdă, băndăon, bândaon, băndăoi, bândăon, bondar, bâțan, bâzgan, bânzar, bonzar, bonzăroiu, bombar, bumbar, bundar, bunzar, bongar, bongoiu, bozgoiu*) as 'a species of hymenopteran, with a thick, hairy body, living in small colonies, which honeycombs in the ground and produces a very characteristic sound with a cord from its respiratory organ', but also as 'man of nothing', 'vagabond', 'thug', 'scoundrel', and 'man without any occupation'. This 2010 dictionary lists a pejorative meaning of this lexeme, signalled much earlier by Iorgu Iordan, who states in his dictionary of Romanian family names (1983: 56) that the proper name *Bărdăune*, based on *Bărzăune*, carries the meaning 'tramp', 'scoundrel', 'vagabond'.

Teaha Teofil (1959) in his *Glosar regional Oradea* [Regional Glossary Oradea Region] lists *bongău, bozgâriu, bozgoiu, bongoi*, but also the verbs *bongâie, a bongani, a bornoi, a bîzîi* meaning 'buzzing'.

14 It might be connected with the Hungarian word *berzenkedik* 'fidgeting, ruffling its feathers'.

15 în Ungaria... se zice bânzoiu unui om care are o căutătură inholbată şi fioroasă, care vorbeşte arțăgos, îndesat şi [este] nesimpatic [in Hungary... they say *banzoiu* to a man who has a lumpy and fierce look, who speaks stilted, stout and [is] antipathetic.] *Dicționarul limbii române* (1913: 488).

Buzguroi, which in our view is a form of *bozgor*, has the variants *bâzgar, bozgar, buzgor, buzgur, bâzgăroi, băzgăun, bărzăun, bozgoi, bozgon, bazga, bozga, which* are synonyms found in different sources, some of them being clearly allotted a Hungarian etymology, most often linking the form to etymons like 'borz' (Ro. *bursuc*, En. badger), 'borzolni' (Ro. *burzului*, En. dishevel). As nicknames for Transylvanians and/or Hungarians from Transylvania, these lexemes fit into the context of hetero-images Romanians have nurtured over the centuries about Hungarians (see Bogrea 1925): not very tall and rather well-built and ill-tempered, angry, haughty, but also withdrawn, isolated.

Cruceană, Ion (1961) seems to confirm our findings in his *Glosar regional – Regiunea Argeş* [Regional Glossary – Argeş Region], where he provides a semantic description for *bâzgan*, which echoes our hypothesis that *bâzgan, buzgan, buzguroi*, and all the other versions which precede *bozgor* carry the meaning 'man from the mountain areas', 'man from the mountain forests'.[16]

Stati (2011) mentions in his *Dictionary* the forms *bozgoroi* meaning 'phantom' (Ro. *nălucă*), *borza* meaning 'imaginary being', 'creature', *borsocae* meaning 'ghost', and *bongăzoi* meaning 'man bearing gifts', which approaches his definition of *bongăzoi* to Cruceană's definition of *bâzgan* or *buzguroi* – 'man who brings goods'.

What is more, Stati's entries and their semantic features suggest that there could be a link between *bozgoroi, borza, borsocae* (*bosorcaie* from Hungarian *boszorkány* 'witch', 'sorceress'), and *bongăzoi*. A variant which carries the meanings 'phantom', 'spirit', 'spectre', 'devil', 'monster', 'shadow', and 'mirage' has been spotted in Şăineanu (1891: 430) as *băzdăganie*, which is listed by DEX under the form *bâzdâganie* (from Old Slavic *bezdyhanĭnŭ*).

Taking into account the semantic and phonological issues that are involved in this series of synonyms, we assume that they all spring from a probably very old word which survived mainly in toponyms, anthroponyms, and in the names of mythological figures. Given the fact that the names were not given *ex nihilo* and each and every name had had a meaning by the time it was introduced in the language, we assume that the semantic aspects are difficult to determine not because we deal with semantic voids but rather because words undergo formal and semantic shifts which are not always attested in written sources.

We assume that the etymon of *buzguroi, bâzguroi, bâzgă, bazgă, bozgoi, bongoi*, which fostered the spread of *bozgor*, also used as *buzgor*, must have been a root, most probably *boz, *bos, *bas, or *baz,[17] which fathered the emergence of words

16 Bîzgan = om de la munte, care vine la şes cu diverse bunuri pentru a le schimba pe cereale [bîzgan = man from the mountain, who comes to the plateau with various goods to exchange for grain].

17 This method is fruitful in Vasile Bogrea's opinion as well, who writes in his *Etimologii. Articole mărunte / Etymologies. Short Articles* (1926: 332) that in order to find the etymons of Romanian words of probable Hungarian origin, it is very useful to start from reconstructed radicals,

like *bursuc* (from Hungarian *borz*), but also *bărzăun*, designating the name of an insect living in the woods.[18]

We have analysed the Hungarian words which are based on the roots *boz and *bos and which belong to the area of language usage that Hungarians and Romanians have shared over the centuries. What is striking is the high number of words that are based on this root and which (once subjected to a semantic feature analysis) display a common denominator of meaning [+ connected with the woods, forest].[19]

We can list a long series of very old words meaning 'forest' or 'grove' such as *bozót, bozont, borzont, bokor, baksa, bongor, bongoros, bungur, bunguros* (Kriza 1926, Sántha 2004[20]), *boz, bozja, bozza, bodza, boza* (Czuczor–Fogarasi 1862, Zolnai 1906),[21] *bojza* (Németh 1990: 160), and *buzja* (Kiss 2012). It is obvious that these Hungarian common nouns have turned into proper nouns as well,[22] especially toponyms, and a lot of Romanian toponyms outside or at the border of the Carpathians do have a Hungarian etymon (e.g. *Băile Buziaş Buzjásfürdő*, meaning 'place where Sambucus trees grow'; cf. Kiss 2012: 52).

Bozga is part of the Hungarian word-stock, too, as a toponym but also a common noun meaning 'dry twigs', 'sedge', 'branch', 'wood'. Szinnyei (1893) identifies *bozga* as a Hungarian word attested in 1839 meaning 'dry twig', 'heather'. *Bozlán* means 'branch with leaves broken off and dried on the ground' (Tinta könyvkiadó 2012), while *bozont* carries the archaic meaning of 'thick forest', 'scrub'.[23]

Considering what Ştef (2021: 58)[24] has added to the semantic associations of one of the synonyms of *bărzăun*, i.e. *bonzar*, also used as *bunzar*, namely that it is used as a nickname for the people living in Bârsana and Săliştea de Sus,[25] we have

otherwise in the spirit of the Hungarian language.

18 Jerney (1851) mentions the village name Bazga in Moldova, stating that the name does not mean anything at the time he writes. Nevertheless, he mentions that the word itself could be found in the Cumani culture, quoting a letter dated 1423 and signed by Sigismund, the monarch of Hungary, in which he makes reference to a Cumani site, namely the place or lodging of Buzgan.

19 The root *boz in the sense of wood, mountainous and wooden area is testified by toponyms like Bozânta Mare [Bozinta Mare, Bozănta-Mare] Nagybozinta, Óbozinta, Újbozonta, Oláhbozinta, Oláhbozonta; Bozytha, Bozincha, Buzytha, Bozontha, Bozonta, Bosonta, Bozinta Bóz, Bózfalva, Bózgyalakuta, Bodzafalva, Bozeni, Székelybós, Bós, Bozeş, Bózes, Bozos; Bosendorf, Bogesch, Boziaş Borzás, Bozyas, Magyarborzás, Borzás, Buzias, Buzău, Bodzavásár – many of them being situated in areas which once belonged to the *indago*, *gyepű* regions. Cf. arcanum.com/en/online-kiadvanyok/ErdelyHelysegnevTar-erdely-bansag-es-partium-torteneti-es-kozigazgatasi-helysegnevtara-1/telepulesek-1C9/b-29A/boz-486/.

20 https://szekelymagyar.transindex.ro/.

21 https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-a-magyar-nyelv-szotara-czuczorfogarasi-55BEC/b-57DFC/boz-595A2/?list=eyJxdWVyeSI6ICJib3oifQ.

22 https://szabo.adatbank.ro/b.php?x__=1.

23 https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-a-magyar-nyelv-ertelmezo-szotara-1BE8B/b-1EF8E/bozont-219D7/?list=eyJxdWVyeSI6ICJCb3pvbnQifQ.

24 In a dictionary which lists the vocabulary items of people from the Maramureş region.

25 *Bonzari, poreclă pentru locuitorii din Bârsana* [nickname for the inhabitants of Bârsana].

attempted to find the connections between *bonzar* (we assume to be a synonym of *bozgor*) and *bârsan*, inhabitant of the Bârsa region / *Ţara Bârsei*. What connects *bărzăun, bonzar, bunzar* to *bârsa, borza, barca(ság)*? What can explain this link between a word used in Maramureş (northern Romania) and the central region of the country? What affective meanings can be associated with *bărzăun*, and what semantic atoms have survived in the language use of the northern people who are not in direct geographical contact with or in the proximity of the *Bârsans*, as Maramureş does not adjoin the Bârsa region? What connects *borz(a)* to *bârs(a)* and *to boz(ga)*, *bunzar, bonzar*, or *bărzăun*?

The explanation might lie in the old history of the two regions, the fact that they were equally part of the *indago* region right after the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin. Let us take a look at the etymology of *borza*, also used as *bodza*, as the early Hungarian name of present-day *Ţara Bârsei* was *Borzaföld* / *Land of Borza*. Gombocz (1908: 20) enumerates a long list of forms for *bodza: boz, boza, hozza, borza, barza, bozda, bojza, horzag, borzang, borzing, borsuk*, and *borzfa*, each form being a word of old Turkic origin, as he states, referring not only to *Sambuculus* but also to *Taxus baccata*,[26] a species of evergreens much more common in *Barcaság* / *Ţara Bârsei* in the times of the Hungarians' movement to Pannonia than today. Likewise, Vörös (2008) makes a long list including the versions *bodza*, *buzfa*, *bozzanak, Borzag, Borzang, botcza, barza, bojza, borzeg, borzing, bazza, bocca, bójza, bojzik, bojzing, borzáng, borzég, burzá, baddza, bojza, bozza, borzék, bozia, bozÿa, bossÿa, borzing, barzafa, bocfa, bodzfa, bódzfa, bocfa, bóczfa, bócfa, bójzafa, borzafa, boszfa, bozafa, bozdafa, bozzafa*, etc. Therefore, we consider that one of the early versions of the lexeme *bodza* inspired the name of the river and region called *Barcaság* in Hungarian, *Ţara Bârsei* in Romanian.

What is more, *bodza* contributed to another toponym in Romania, the region and town of Buzău, in Hungarian *Bodza(vásár)*, and the names of smaller villages, such as *Bodzaforduló* (*Întorsura Buzăului*), *Bodzavám* (*Vama Buzăului*), *Szitabodza* (*Sita Buzăului*). The name of the river which gave its name to the town, *Buzău*, *Bodza*, is considered to be of Greek origin by Romanians but of Turkic origin by Hungarians. The alternative forms *bodza, borza* have both been attested: *Bodzamező, Magyarborzás* (Henkey, 2002). The forms *boz, boza* were borrowed by Romanians as well, as shown by Constantin Giurăscu (1942), who makes a presentation of a map dated 1700 made by Constantin Cantacuzino, which displays the mountains called *Montes Bozei* (*Munţii Buzăului*).

There is a physical, geographical connection between the neighbouring regions Ţara Bârsei and Buzău, namely that the River Buzău (which gave its name to the town, to many villages, and the county itself) originates in Ţara Bârsei, being the only river stream which flows out of the region, crossing the Carpathians towards

26 *Tiszafa* in Hungarian, also called *boklyó, bacca* (cf. *Erdészeti Lapok* 1889. (28(4)). Bacca and Bachca are entries in Codex Cumanicus, with the meaning garden.

Moldova. The names of both may stem from a common root, *bodza*, which we are trying to analyse against the background of finding the etymology of *bozgor*. Marienescu (1909: 6) highlights that the old Romanian names of the River (and region) *Buzău* were *Bozau, Bosau*, and the names of the region *Bârsa* was *Borza, Burza, Boza, Bosa*.

Hungarian language displays a large number of words of Turkic origin. Ármin Vámbéry, one of the leading Turkologists, considers that *bozót, bozontos* are also of Turkic origin in Hungarian (1914: 142). Péter Juhász in his *Erdély vízneveinek rétegei és népeinek betelepülése* [The Layers of the Hydronyms of Transylvania and the Settlement of Its Peoples] states that the early name of *Barcaság*, i.e. *Borzaföld*, is based on the name of a river, *Bursa* (cf. the forms *borza* in Gombocz 1908 and *burza* in Vörös 2008), which is of Turkic origin (Juhász 2020: 32). The first certified attestation of the word is from 1211,[27] when the variant *Bursa* is used, which is, according to Zsolt Székely (2011), of Kipçhak (i.e. Turkic) origin, and not a Slavic one.[28]

Kiss (2006: 3–19) shows that the first traces of Hungarian settlers in *Barcaság* date back to the 11th century, and the name *Bursa* (first attested in 1211) is considered to be of old Turkic origin by many (Rásonyi 1979: 147, László & Rásonyi 2004: 276, Szentpétery 1923: 84, Kniezsa 1943: 32), who discard the Slavic origin due to phonetic reasons. Țara Bârsei neighbours Buzău County and incorporates a region called in Hungarian *Erdővidék* 'Land of Forests'. Linguistically, these regions share the fact that many of their toponyms are related to 'forest' or 'border forest' (Hu. *határerdő, gyepűerdő*). The Hungarian name Barcaság is based on *borza, burza* turned *barca* and the suffix *-ság* (the original meaning of *-ság/-ség* is 'hill, mound', which leads through extension of meaning to 'mass of', 'bunch of' (cf. Kiss–Gerstner–Hegedűs 2013)). This would suggest that Barcaság as a name could have meant *gyepűerdő, határerdő*, i.e. 'woodland', 'forest area on the edge of a border', or 'mountain/hill covered with border forest'. Therefore, the lexeme, borza, burza (which led to Hu. *Barca-*, Ro. *Bârsa*) might have meant not only 'Sambuculus-covered areas' but also 'forest-covered mountainous border areas'.

The region called today *Țara Bârsei* by Romanians and *Barcaság* (*Borzaföld*) by Hungarians was part of the *indago / gyepű* in Hungarian, which designated a strip of land, of natural landmarks suitable for defining the border, constituted

27 Cf. Degen (1915) the name Barcaság had 11 variants in the Middle Ages: 1211 – terra Borza; 1216 – terra quae Borza nuncupatur; 1218 – terra de Burza; 1222 – Bursa; 1222 – Terra Burza (in the charter in which Endre II reintroduced the Barony to the Teutonic Knights); 1223 – terra, quae dicitur Boza; 1223 – terra Boze; (1224 – with the Pope, thus also 1225, 1226); 1231 – Terra Börze (in papal charter); 1232 – Terra Burze (King Béla's diploma); 1373 – Borza; 1385 – Burcya; 1349 – Terra Barza; 1484 – Terra et distrietus Barcza; 1240–1385 – the Latin name for the region is Burcia.

28 https://www.academia.edu/1103723/Gondolatok_a_sz%C3%A9kely_k%C3%A9rd%C3%A9s_marg%C3%B3j%C3%A1ra.

by impassable forests, mountains, and swamps. Țara Bârsei was part of this indago strip that Hungarians marched through during the conquest. At the turn of the millennium, around the Arpadian conquest, Țara Bârsei was therefore a *gyepű* land, an *indago*, a border which protected the newly occupied country. Linguistically, the referent *indago* or *gyepű* was tightly linked to the semantic components 'mountainous area', 'forested area', 'isolated area', 'difficult to pass'. Attila Szabó T's *Erdélyi Magyar Szótörténeti Tár IV* provides linguistic chunks which prove that *gyepű* has always been used with the sense of 'border', while *bangó* and a lot of words have been built upon the root *bo-, bu-, ba-* with the meaning of 'wood'.[29] The term *gyepű* itself carries the following meanings (Czirbusz 1919: 13): 'border forests' (Hu. *határerdő*), river borders (*vlaga*), and 'ban' led borders (*Banat* in Romanian, *Bánság* in Hungarian).

Bărbulescu (1936: 13) highlights that in a Romanian text written in Maramureş in 1342, the male name *Borzan* represents, in fact, *Bârsan*, a piece of information which sustains our hypothesis regarding the perfect synonymy between the lexeme *borza* (or *bodza, borza, burza, borzang*, and all the other forms that have been recorded in Hungarian) and *bârsa*, the Romanian name for *Barcaság*.

The semantic connection between the words we are analysing and the idea of 'forest', 'border forest' is confirmed by some entries in Stati (2011): *apărătură* meaning 'protection', 'border' and *pădure* 'woods' are perfect synonyms, designating therefore 'forest'. The lexeme *bârsan* is defined in Stati (2011) as *cel care păzeşte hotarul* 'the one who is the guardian of borders'. The associative meaning of 'monster', 'scary person' also emerges in *bârsă*, defined as *ființă închipuită* 'imaginary being', 'unearthly creature'.

It is still to be analysed whether there is a connection with the Hungarian word *börzsöny*, which means 'a mountainous area' (attested in the 13th century as Bersen), with *bérc*, which means 'peak' or 'mountain' and with *bercel*, which means 'shrubby, wooden area' (Kristó–Makk–Szegfű 1973), or with *borda*, an old, dialectal word for 'mountain', 'height'.[30] In Czuczor–Fogarasi (1862: 777) we find

29 It would be interesting to analyse the way in which the words *gyepű/indago* and *gyepűelve* / the region beyond the *indago* have penetrated and fostered word creation into Romanian, as did *Erdély* through its early forms *Erdewelwe*, *Erdőelve* or *Erdeel*, *Erdőel*, as quoted by Pascu (s. a.: 480). *Prisaca* is the Romanian name for *indago*, *gyepű* (see Drăganu 1938: *priseci* (ung. *gyepű*, lat. *indagines, ardău păzitor de pădure, nu poate fi derivat în mod inexcepționabil decât, direct ori indirect (prin limba maternă) din ung. ardó < erdő < erdő-ovó „custos silvarum", slujbaş care făcea parte din sistemul de întărituri, aşa numitele gyepű (rom. priseei, lat. indagines) făcute la hotare {vég} de către regii arpadieni ai Ungariei* 'priseci' (ung. *gyepű*, Lat. *indagines*, forest keeper; it can only be derived, directly or indirectly (through the mother tongue), from the Hungarian *ardó < erdő < erdő-ovó "custos silvarum",* a servant who was part of the system of fortifications, the so-called *gyepű* (Rom. *priseci*, Lat. *indagines*) made on the borders {*vég*} by the Arpadian kings of Hungary]. We believe that *prisaca*, the Romanian word for 'border forest', comes from the German lexeme *Preuswald* 'border forest', most probably after 1211, when the Hungarian king brought the Teutonic Knights into Țara Bârsei.

30 https://www.c3.hu/~magyarnyelv/01-3/kissl.htm.

boz- as a root from which the words *bozót, bozótos, bozont, bozontos, boslan* came and which all mean 'wood'. August Scriban (1923) in his *Lista ungurizmelor limbii româneşti / List of Romanian Words of Hungarian Origin* also mentions *berc, bârc* meaning *pădure deasă* 'dense forest', springing from Hungarian *berek* 'grove'. The semantic contamination between 'mountain' and 'forest', which seems to emerge from these examples, is present in the Romanian language as well, as Şăineanu (1887: 161–162) demonstrates how *codru, pădure* 'forest' used to mean in the Middle Ages *munte* 'mountain', whereas *baltă* 'swampy area' and 'wetland' used to mean *pădure* 'forest'.

Therefore, we can conclude that *bozgor* is part of a series of synonyms which display several meanings such as 'monster or creature/people of the woods', 'Transylvanian', 'person from Bârsa/Barcaság', 'badger, i.e. animal of the woods', 'humble/bee, i.e. insect which lives only in the woods', 'man who comes down the mountain', 'scoundrel, unworthy person', 'homeless'. The series contains lexemes which refer to geographical names such as Ţara Bârsei and Buzău, which originate in the Hungarian *bodza*, presently used solely with the meaning 'elder'.

All in all, these words related to *bozgor* share the semantic feature of 'connected with the forest' or 'connected with the mountains covered by forests'. All these words have been allotted a Hungarian origin, which we thus assume is the lexeme *bodza*, also known as *borza, burza* (cf. Kelemen 1942: 293–294). *Bodza/borza* have been considered of Turkic origin – creatures living in the forests have always been perceived as scary –, but also of Slavic origin, a debate which has not been concluded yet. The data do not clearly evince whether the Hungarian word originally had a *-u* or an *-o* sound (Bába 2008). Kniezsa (1935) finds that *bodza* functioned in the old Hungarian language as a kind of *nomen collectivum*, being a perfect synonym of *bozót* in the sense of 'forest'.

The root of *bodza* used to be a Hungarian anthroponym in very old texts, as we find in Jakubovich and Pais in their 1929 *Ó-magyar olvasókönyv* [Old Hungarian Texts] (*Boza* attested in 1237, *Buze* attested in 1418, most often featuring in contexts related to forests).[31]

Based on the semantics of the words we have analysed so far (*buzguroi, bazga, bozga, bărzăun, bonzar, bunzar, bongoi, bozgoi, boza, bodza, burza, burza, Bârsa, Barcaság, Buzău*, etc.) and given the fact that they all seem to be connected with the semantic feature 'forest' or forested mountain' and the lexeme *bodza* and the roots *boz-, baz-, buz-*, we hypothesise that the solutions for the probable etymology of *bodza*, which thus led to the creation of *bozgor* (with all its previously mentioned variants), might be one of the following:

1. A Turkic root which might have led to the emergence of the Romanian *bazga, bâzga, buzgure, buzguroi, bozgor*, and all the other versions, probably

31 Such as "In silva Zeles […], villa Bozais [Boza]" (Jakubovich & Pais 1929).

through old Hungarian mediation.[32] This root might be the Proto-Turkic *bük having the following meanings: 'wood', 'forest', 'hill', 'meadow', 'valley between mountains', which gave later in Ottoman Turkish: bük 'thicket at the waterside' or Russian: 1. лес, 2. холм, 3. луг, 4. долина, между гор / 1. forest, 2. hill, 3. meadow, 4. valley between mountains;[33]

2. A Slavic word for tree. It could be 'pine tree', as, according to Bényei (2012: 82), the lexeme *bor* is a dialectal term for pine in Russian, perhaps Proto-Slavic *borъ. бор (though Hungarian toponyms of Slavic origin can be found mainly in the northern and southern parts of the Carpathian Basin, not necessarily in the regions we have subjected to analysis to spot the etymon of *bozgor*). An argument could be that in Hungarian there are several words for a species of pine called Juniperus: *borsika, bors, borsfa, borsfenyő*, and *boróka*, all of Slavic origin, based on bor(s)-. What is more, in Seklerland, the pine tree is also called *bojt* and the pine forest *bojtos*.[34] Also, there is a phonetic similarity between boz-*, buz-* (Hu. *bodza, borza, burza, bursa* and Ro. *bozga, bozgor, bâzga, buzguroi*) and the archaic versions of the Hungarian *lucfenyő* 'spruce', namely *búsfenyő, bucsfenyő* (cf. Vörös 2008). It could also be a Slavic word which equally meant Sambucus or elder (Hu. *bodza*) and beech (Hu. *bükk*) in the past, as these species could be found together with pine trees in the *indago* regions of Țara Bârsei.

Cooper (2010) has shown that the early Slavs called *beech* (Fagus) and *elder* (Sambuculus) with the same word *baz-* or *buz-*, as Indo-European speakers used to treat the two genera (Fagus and Sambucus) as referents of a single term.[35]

32 The solutions have been selected from a database which collects roots of words of Turkic etymology. https://starlingdb.org/cgi-bin/response.cgi?root=config&morpho=0&basename=%5Cdata%5Calt%5Cturcet&first=341.

33 Though other roots might also be considered: Proto-Turkic **bAŕ* meaning: 'stranger, foreign', Proto-Turkic **bAŕɨk* (read bazk, bazg) meaning: 1. 'thick, stout'; 2. 'a stubby man'; Proto-Turkic **bAŋɨk* meaning 'unclear silhouette', ** boš* meaning 'free, empty', Proto-Turkic **bögür* meaning 'mountain slope'.

34 https://szekelymagyar.transindex.ro/?betu=j.

35 Cooper (2010) states, "The elder is Sambucus, in Russian buzina or sambuk, especially the common elder S. nigra, buzina čërnaja. Sambuk is a bookish borrowing from Latin sambūcus with the same sense (Vasmer 1976–80: s.v. sambuk), while buzina, or in dialect buz(a), boz (see Dal' 1912–1914: s.v. buzina), has cognates in other Slavonic languages, including Ukrainian boz (genitive bozu, bzu), buzyna, Bulgarian bъz, Serbo-Croat baz, baz(d)a, zova (< bzova), Slovene bez, bezeg, Czech bez (genitive bezu, bza, bzu), bezinka, Slovak baza, bazina, Polish bez (genitive bzu), Lower Sorbian bez, baz, and Upper Sorbian bóz 'lilac'. The word is considered to be related to Latin fāgus 'beech', Greek fēgós, Doric Greek fāgós 'oak', Old Icelandic bók, Old High German buohha 'beech', Gothic bōka 'letter', which are traced, in view of Kurdish bûz 'elm', Icelandic beyki 'beech forest', beykir 'cooper', back to a stem with a diphthong, Indo-European *bhāug'- : *bheug'- : *bhāg'- : *bhug'-; cf. also Lithuanian bukas 'elder', borrowed from Belarusian buk 'beech' (see Vasmer 1976–80, Černyx 1994: s.v. buzina). The Common Slavonic was *bъzъ < *bŭzo. In Russian, one would expect b(o)zina (cf. dialectal boz alongside

According to Bényei (2012: 62), the toponym *Büked* is based on the common names *boz, boza,* or *bozda*, which proves the polisemy of *bodza* in Hungarian as well, meaning *beech tree* but also *elder tree* (or, as we have seen in Kniezsa (1935), *bodza* carries the meaning 'forest').[36]

We believe that the primary meaning of the word built upon the Turkic root *bük[37] could have been that of 'forest' (especially taking into account the semantics of the name of Transylvania in all languages, i.e. land beyond the forest), through extension of meaning 'people of the forests / forested mountains'. On the other hand, the fact that many tree names have changed the object that they signify over time might explain why a Hungarian lexeme like *bodza* would help the creation of toponyms in the *indago* region. Everyone believes that these names mean *elder*, but in fact they might as well signify 'beech' or 'forest', 'border forest'. We will focus on this issue in a forthcoming study.

Furthermore, words like *bozga, bozgoi, bongoi, bâzgar, buzguroi*, and *bozgor* (etymologically linked to Hu. *borza, bodza, burza, bozga, borzang, bozza, boza, buz, buzya*, etc.) may have carried first the cognitive meaning 'Transylvanian', 'Hungarian', 'people of the border forests', 'people of the (beech/pine) forests in the Bârsa region or *indago* regions (including Bârsa and Buzău)', and later they developed associative meanings like the pejorative meaning the ethnic slur *bozgor* carries today.

All these considerations make us reinterpret the meaning which is allotted to *bazga* in its very first known attestation, namely in Gaster's 1884 *Colinde, cântece populare şi cântece de stea inedited* [Carols, Folk Songs and Original Christmas Songs]. *Bazga* is spotted in a text as *Bazga di foc să va aprinde* 'Bazga will burst into flames'. DEX provides an approximate meaning, inferred from the context, when saying that it means: 1. Flame. 2 (fig.) The fire of hell.[38] Taking into account the common denominator of meaning that connects all the names associated with *bazga* [+ related to the forest], we would say that in this folk song and elsewhere the meaning of *bazga* is 'wood', 'tree', 'forest', 'bush', 'shrub', 'grove'.

This also reinforces the idea that *bazga, bozga, bâzgar, buzguroi, bozgoroi* as versions of *bozgor* most probably had a simple cognitive meaning related to

buz). The occurrence of elder only in the south of Russia and the Caucasus makes one think of an early borrowing into Common Slavonic from an Iranian source."

36 The early forms of 'beech' in Hungarian were buk, later bük, bükk, but the toponyms it has created suggest a wider variation (for instance, Bokon, Bukon, Biken and later Bokon for the mountains called Bakony). http://lazarus.elte.hu/hun/digkonyv/sc/sc16/101-137.pdf.

37 The root is listed in Khabibullina, Z.; Rakhimova, E.; Tulumbayev, V. & Yagafarova, G. (2020) as follows: "the word 'bük' denoting 'forest, grove' is recorded in the Old Turkic Dictionary in the meaning of the 'forest': Ol bük örtätti 'he ordered to set the forest on fire'" (Nadelyaev 1969, p.: 131, i.e. Nadelyaev, V. M. 1969). Drevnetyurkskij slovar [Old Turkic dictionary]. L.: Nauka). The root might also explain Hungarian words like *bükk* 'beech', or toponyms like *Bükszád, Bük, Bükkösd, Bukovinka* > *Beregbükkös, Bukovje* > *Nemes-bükkösd*.

38 https://dexonline.ro/definitie-mda2/bazga.

'people of the border forest / forested mountain', 'people living in the border forests of the *indago*'. It is known that in Romanian mythology, the creatures living in the forests have always been perceived as scary (see *Muma Pădurii, Fata Pădurii, Vâlva Pădurii, Ielele*), therefore the meanings of 'monster', 'ugly person', and 'frightful person' are perfectly plausible associative meanings which might have emerged later.

The meaning of 'homeless' or 'person without a place' is also present and explicable, especially if taking into account the representations steady people of the valleys might have had about the guardians of the *indago*, who were on the move or who perhaps went down every now and then to exchange goods. Affective meanings always depend on the representations people have about the Other, the Foreigner, the Unknown, the Unfamiliar.

Table 3. *Synopsis of some early forms and synonyms of* bozgor

Sources	Forms, variants, synonyms	Meanings
DEX	*Buzguroi* synonyms: *gugurói, borz, boarza*, and *gogoriță*, meaning 'a monster that scares children'; other synonyms: *bâzgán bâzgar, bâzgor, bâzgorie, bâzguroi*, meaning 'the name of a monster'	1. regional term for 'big rat' and 2. figurative meaning: 'a person who wakes up early'
Dicționarul limbii române [Dictionary of Romanian Language] (1910)	*Buzguroi*, synonym with *bosorcoi,* *Bozga, bosgan, and bosga*, synonym with *bărzăun, burzău*	'ghost' 'humble-bee' 'to be puffed up'
Puşcariu–Rădulescu-Pogoneanu (1911)	*Bâzgăun* with the forms *gărgăun, bărzăun, bâzgoiu, bozgoiu*	'hornet'
Dicționarul limbii române [Dictionary of Romanian Language] (1913)	*Bângoiu* synonym of *bongoiu, bânzar, bărzăun, bondar, bonzar, bânzoiu* (used in Moldova, Bucovina) and *bânzoiu, bondar* (used in Transylvania)	'humble-bee' 'hideous man'
Scriban (1921)	*buzguroi*	'a monster to scare children', Hungarian origin

Sources	**Forms, variants, synonyms**	**Meanings**
Scriban (1923)	*buzguroi*	dialectal term specific to Moldova and meaning ‘fairy-tale monster’, from the Hungarian *borzongatni* ‘to frighten’
Scriban (1939)	*Buzguroi*	alternative version of *borz, boarză*, an adjective of Hungarian origin (*borz, bursuc* ‘badger’, but also *borzogatni* / *a înfiora* meaning ‘frightful (monster)’, ‘shaggy’, ‘very ugly (person)’ and ‘gadfly’
Seche–Seche (1958, 2002)	*Buzguroi* synonyms: *bâzgar, bărzăun, bândar, bonzar, bânzar, bongar, bongoi bozgoi*	‘humble-bee’
Constantinescu (1963), Bârlea (1909), Iorga (1906), Murádin (2014), Iordan (1983), DEX	*Bazga, bozga, bâzgar,* synonyms of *bâzgan, bozgoi, bărzăun* Proper names: *Bazga, Bozga, Bozgă, Bozgan, Buzga, Buzgan, Buzgar, Buzgariu, Buzgaru, Buzgău, Buzgure, Buzgurescu, Bozga, Bogza*	‘humble-bee’ ‘an extremely conceited person’ nickname for Transylvanians, nickname meaning ‘bumpkin’, ‘redneck’ ‘jobless and homeless person’
Teaha (1959)	*bongău, bozgâriu, bozgoiu, bongoi,* but also the verbs *bongâie, a bongani, a bornoi, a bîzîi*	‘buzzing’
Cruceană (1961)	*Bâzgan, buzgan, buzguroi*	‘man from the mountain areas’, ‘man from the mountain forests’ ‘man who brings goods’
Coteanu (2010)	*Bărzăun* *barzaon, bârzăune, bărnăuz, bârdă, bândăon, bândaon, bândăoi, bândăon, bondar, bâțan, bâzgan, bânzar, bonzar, bonzăroiu, bombar, bumbar, bundar, bunzar, bongar, bongoiu, bozgoiu*	‘humble-bee’ ‘man of nothing’, ‘vagabond’, ‘thug’, ‘scoundrel’, and ‘man without any occupation’ (see also Iordan 1983)

Sources	Forms, variants, synonyms	Meanings
Stati (2011)	*Bozgoroi* *Borza* *bongăzoi*	'phantom' 'imaginary being', 'creature' 'man bearing gifts'
Ştef (2021	*bărzăun, bonzar, bunzar*	nickname for the people living in Bârsana and Săliştea de Sus

5. Conclusions

The lexeme *bozgor* was attested in this form in 1934 (for instance, in the newspaper *Új Kelet*, as a proper name, but see also the other occurences), and then a gap followed. It was in use in oral communication in the 1970s–1980s as a pejorative exonym used by Romanians to refer to Hungarians, and it was widely used in the 1990s in similar contexts and situations. However, under this form, it was listed in none of the dictionaries before the 2000s, when it was listed in Volceanov (2007). Parekh, B. (2006) highlights that there are three main characteristics of hate speech: a constant, almost obsessive reference to a certain individual or a community, with the obvious purpose of defamation; the allotment of a set of negative character or behavioral traits, viewed with disgust by other members of society; exclusion of the targeted individual or community.

Bozgor as a dysphemic exonym is a symptom of such disparaging stereotypes in the Romanians' collective unconscious, but both Romanians and Hungarians should acknowledge that such terms belong to typical instances of face attack acts.

In this study, we have attempted to track the origins and semantics of this highly debated and debatable ethnic slur, and we have reached the conclusion that, although it is very difficult to find it in dictionaries, variants of *bozgor* have been listed in the 19th- and 20th-century dictionaries and scientific or non-scientific writings. Earlier versions of *bozgor* include *bâzgor, buzgor, buzguroi bărzăun*, *borză, bârsan, bâzgan*, etc. No matter the associative meanings they carry, these words all share a common denominator of meaning, 'forest' or 'being, creature living in the forest' (the humming bees and badgers also live only in forests, to mention some of the cognitive meanings we have analysed).

Through extension of meaning, this primary meaning has extended quite far to refer to animal names, monsters, mean people, etc. Another common feature shared by many of these versions is that of 'nickname given to Transylvanians', but the pejorative meaning 'scoundrel' or 'homeless' can also be spotted. Therefore, we believe that primarily *bozgor* must have designated 'Hungarian from Transylvania', 'people of TransSylvania', ('land beyond the forest'),

'Hungarians', 'mountaineers', or 'people of the border forests', but the insulting meanings 'monster', 'ghost', 'creature/person that should be avoided', or even 'person without a homeland' have also come to the fore.

Ethnic slurs are linguistic tools of discrimination, stigmatization, and prejudicial thinking, and *bozgor* is not an exception. Language is not immutable; no matter how long it takes for a word to transform, changes still occur. The shift from *bazga, bozga, buzguroi* to *bozgor* is a perfect example of formal and semantic mutability (not to mention that the phonetic shifts *ă/â-u-o* are attested by Haşdeu (1880) as usual phonetic phenomena in Moldova).

We do not agree with Egry (2011: 367), who says that there is no evidence for *bozgor* in the 19th century and its origin can be attributed only to the twentieth century. *Bozgor* spread widely in the second half of the 20th century, restricting or narrowing its meaning only to 'abominable Hungarian', but early and slightly different versions of *bozgor* can be found much earlier (aside from connected family names and toponyms). Ghibânescu (1892) records the form *bozgorodenie*, but his explanation is faulty (*născătoare de Dumnezeu* 'mother of God'), as the lexeme obviously contains the morpheme *vdenie* of Slavic origin, meaning 'sight of', 'vision of'. If we accept the meaning 'monster', 'creature', 'spectre', 'ghost' for *bozgor*, then *bozgorodenie* might stand for 'see a ghost', 'see someone frightening' or even 'necromancy'. This interpretation might be sustained by what Loşonți (2007: 34) shows, namely that *boroscodenie* meaning 'indecent attitude', 'bad speech' is a variant (resulting by metathesis) of *boscorodenie* meaning 'swearing' 'cursing' 'conjuration', 'magic spell', 'incantation'.[39]

Our hypothesis is that we deal with a series of words which stem from the Hungarian *bodza* in its archaic forms, carrying, through metonymic extension, the meaning 'forest' or 'mountain covered with forest'. Semantic contamination between 'forest' and 'mountain', 'forest' and 'names of trees' was also widespread in the Middle Ages. Complex lexical and semantic processes have shaped the form and meaning of *bozgor*. Despite all the theories which state that the meaning of *bozgor* is too opaque, the nuances of 'homeless', 'stateless', 'unknown', 'other', 'frightening', and 'foreigner' are present, underlying the denigrative, belittling, and offensive capacities of the word. *Bozgor* is an ethnic slur, or ethnophaulism (Mullen-Leader 2005), which is used to refer to outgroups in hate speech, and therefore its usage is unrecommended. However, further research in the linguistic aspects of this lexeme is more than welcome to correct or to detail and nuance our findings.

39 In this case, we deal with the contamination with *bosorcă, bosorcoi* from Hu *boszorkány*, a word of Proto-Turkic origin; cf. https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-magyar-etimologiai-szotar-F14D3/b-F1794/boszorkany-F1983/.

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