

Mushrooms in Romanian toponymy, vocabulary and literature

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Abstract The main purpose of this paper was to identify the main mushroom names and their derivatives in the case of the cities, rivers, landforms, and in the popular vocabulary and literature, all kinds of aphorisms, quotes and riddles, but especially in the Romanian traditions and habits. In order to do this, an intensive bibliographical research was conducted. Thirteen cities, three rivers, three protected area and one landform that have such names were identified. Regarding the occurrence of the names related to mushrooms in Romanian onomastics, several cases were also identified. Furthermore, some works of art from literature were identified and offered as an example, both from prose as well as from poetry. Quotes, cogitations and riddles were also present alongside Romanian traditions and habits.

Key words

mushrooms, toponymy, Romania

Proving the strong connection between humans and nature, mushrooms have left their "spores" in the Romanian history, tradition and culture. This fact is proved by the apparition of mushroom names in the Romanian toponymy, vocabulary and literature. The richness of mushroom names and their derivatives is present both in the case of the cities, rivers, landforms, as well as in literature through poems, fiction, aphorisms and riddles, but especially in the Romanian traditions and culture.

All these aspects prove the close relation between humans and nature, in general, and the connection between Romanian people and forests, in particular. Moreover, they highlight the fact that the harvesting and the cooking/preparing the mushrooms has deep roots in the history of the Romanian people. It is known that these activities date back to the first human activities from this area, together with hunting, and represent among the few food choices in hard times.

The present paper intends to present this strong connection by highlighting the main mushroom names and their derivatives in the Romanian toponymy, vocabulary and literature.

Material and Method

The main method used was represented by a bibliographic research and documentation. In this regard, several materials were used, such as databases containing personal names, river names, city names and so on, together with phone books, Romanian literature works (prose and poems), Natura 2000 habitats, species and sites catalogue and many more.

Results

Regarding the existence of mushroom names or their derivatives in the Romanian toponymy, vocabulary and literature, their identification was realized based on different categories as follows.

Toponymy

In the case of the names of localities, rivers and other places, the following ones were identified.

Localities

We have identified 13 localities for which their names are linked to the mushrooms: **Bureteşti, Bureţeşti** (Argeş County), **Ciuperca, Ciuperceni, Ciupercenii de Olteţ, Ciupercenii Vechi, Ciupercenii Noi, Gheaba, Ghebari, Gheboieni** (Dâmboviţa County), **Gălbiori, Hribeni** (Bistriţa-Năsăud County), **Pitărceşti** (Alba County).

The main names are referring to mushroom harvesting activities (**Bureteşti, Ciuperceni, Ghebari, Pitărceşti, Hribeni**) and their origins come most surely from the description of their inhabitant's main activity.

According to the information available on www.carpati.org, in 1968 the villages **Ciupercenii de Sus, Ciupercenii de Jos, Vaianu, Visoii, Patici** and **Fomeşti** were united under the name of **Ciuperceni**.

The following graphic (Figure 1) presents the influence of main mushrooms on some Romanian localities and whose distribution is given most likely by the spread of mushrooms in those areas.

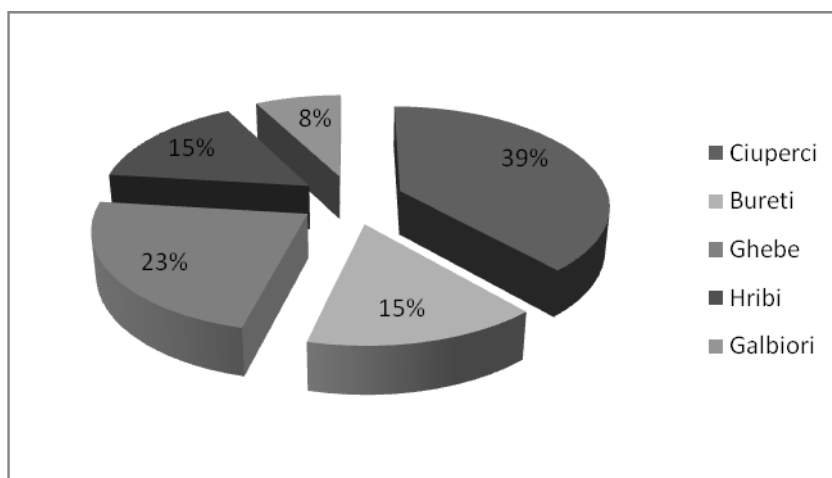


Fig. 1 The prevalence of the main mushrooms that give the name of some Romanian localities

If we take into consideration the main historical regions from Romania, the most names of the localities are found in Muntenia (4), followed by Oltenia (3), Moldavia (2) Transylvania and Dobrogea, each with one city.

Furthermore, if we analyze the distribution of the mushroom names and their derivatives at the county level, the correlation between them and the historic region is observed (Figure 2). As such, in Muntenia, two out of the four names originate from Honey fungus (*Armillaria mellea* (Vahl) P.Kumm.). In Moldavia, among the two names of the localities, one originates from the word mushroom while the second one, Ghebari, from Vrancea County, which is situated at the border between Moldavia and Muntenia takes its name also from Honey fungus. In Oltenia, the names for all

the three localities originate also from the word mushroom. Chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius* Fr) gives the name for some localities from Transylvania (Alba County) and Dobrogea (Constanța County).

Rivers

If the name of many rivers from our country is strongly related with the name of different tree species, such as 6 rivers with the name of Salcia (related to Genus *Salix* L.), 4 Plopul, 1 Plopu and 1 Plopi (related to Genus *Populus* L.), 13 Aluniș, 4 Alunișu, as well as Alun, Aluna, Alunul, Alunul Mare and Alunul Mic (related to *Corylus avellana* L.), the situation is different in the case of the mushrooms. They are almost inexistent, with some exceptions: **Iuți**, **Crăița** and **Gomboș**.

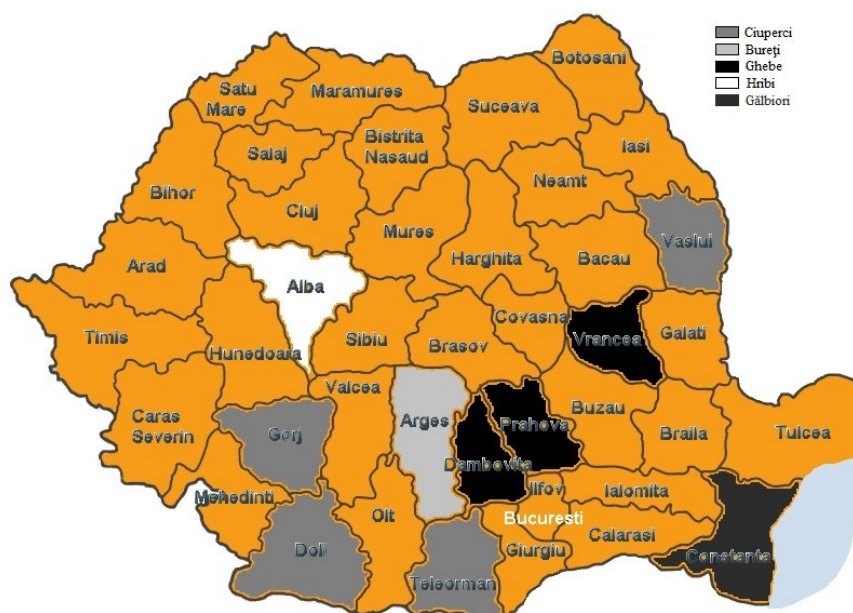


Fig. 2. The distribution of the localities with names related to mushrooms

Other names

Other mushroom names can be found in the case of certain protected areas, as well as in the name of some landforms (hills), such as:

Creasta Cocoşului (Rooster's Ridge, commonly known as clustered coral – *Ramaria botrytis* (Pers.) Richen) is a national **protected area** that belongs to IUCN Category IV (mixt natural reservation) situated in Maramureş County, on the administrative territory of Deseşti village.

Other protected areas that have similar names are ROSCI0039 **Ciuperceni-Desa** (Dolj County) and ROSCI0089 **Gutâi-Creasta Cocoşului** (Maramureş County – north of Romania) (Mănoiu and Brînzan 2013).

Dealul Ciuperca (Mushroom Hill), also known as Oradea Hill, is located in the proximity of the city of Oradea (Bihor County).

Onomastics

Regarding local names and names derived from mushrooms, according to different authors we find that names such as Bureţe, Bureţea were formed from forest mushrooms (ro. bureţii pădurii). A Voicu **Bureţea**, from Braşov (Revista Istorică IX, 1923, page 104. He most probably belongs to the Bureţe, Bureţea from Scheii Braşovului clan. See Sterie Stinghe, *Documente privitoare la trecutul romînilor din Schei*-Documents regarding the history of Romanians from Schei vol. III, Braşov, 1902) and a Gheorghe **Bureţa**, from Oltenia (Oltenia Archives, IX, page 198) are mentioned. The same thing applies in the case of the family name „Ciupercă” (Mushroom) (Giurescu 1975). In Romania, the **Ciupercă** (Mushroom) family name is widespread. More exactly, there are approximately 2793 people that have this name (<http://www.name-statistics.org/ro/numef.php?numedefamilie=Ciuperca>). For example, there is an Ioan **Ciupercă**, author of a History Schoolbook for the XI grade, a Dan **Ciupercă**, author of “Astrology in the new era. Astrology manual” (1996), a Livia **Ciupercă**, teacher and literary

historic (born in 1947), but also a local political baron Silvian **Ciupercă**, President of County Council Ialomiţa.

There are also family names derived from the word *mushroom*: Cornel **Ciupercescu**, theater and movie actor, born on 22 February 1945, Mihail **Ciupercescu**, contemporary poet or Arcadie **Ciupercovici** (n. 14 April 1823, Câmpulung Moldovenesc - d. 5 March 1902, Cernăuţi), a Romanian orthodox cleric who became archbishop of Cernăuţi and metropolitan of Bucovina and Dalmatia (1896-1902). He was the son of Nicolae **Ciupercă**, a priest from Câmpulung Moldovenesc.

The word *mushroom* in Russian is called *grib* and it is also found in our country as a family name. As such, there are 38 people that have the family name **Grib**. On the other hand, translation from Hungarian or German for the word *mushroom* do not constitute family name in our country.

Amongst the Romanian family name, there are also some derivatives from different types of mushrooms. As such, **Ghebuţă** is a name that can be found at approximately 57 people that are currently living in Romania

(<http://www.name-statistics.org/ro/numef.php?numedefamilie=ghebuta>)

Ciuperceanu is the name 38 Romanians, while **Văcălie** (*Trametes* spp.) (as our colleague from the Silviculture Department from *Transilvania* University of Braşov) is the name of 95 people

(<http://www.name-statistics.org/ro/numef.php?numedefamilie=vacalie>).

Iască is also a common name found in the case of 19 Romanians

(<http://www.name-statistics.org/ro/numef.php?numedefamilie=iasca>).

The prevalence of main mushroom names in the case of Romanian family names is given in Figure 3.

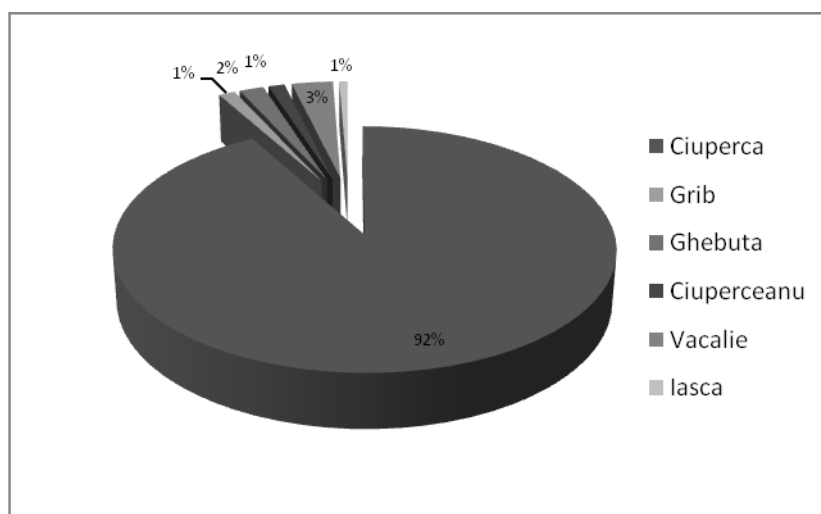


Fig. 3 The prevalence of main mushroom names in the case of Romanian family names

The same situation can be found in Republic of Moldavia, where, according to data from the 2007 phone book, the name of **Burete** is found in **4** cities in which **8** families exist with this name. Similarly, the name **Ciupercă** is present in **69** cities, where **204** families have this name.

Literary works

Concerning the Romanian literature, it can be stated that the mushrooms are present both in the prose and in many poems that belong to many great Romanian authors, and also in certain aphorisms.

As such, Vasile Ghica, in his famous aphorisms says: „Books are like **mushrooms**. Only some of them are... *eatable*.” (Vasile Ghica, Rezervație gri, 2011). If the first example is strongly connected to the literary world, the author continues saying that „*Illusions are more and more similar with forest mushrooms. They all seem edible*.” (Vasile Ghica, În ghearele răsului, 2011).

Mushrooms are well present in **poems** starting with Mihai Eminescu and continuing with Tudor Arghezi, Ion Barbu and Nichita Stănescu.

Our national poet who wrote so much about nature, could not omit the mushrooms (Mihai Eminescu, Psalm 7):

„Creștetul gol poți să-l încerci
Puhav sub pipăit, ca pe **ciuperci**.”
(“The top of the head
Under touch is like mushrooms”)

Nichita Stănescu uses mushrooms as metaphors (Nichita Stănescu, N-am mai muri de foame...):

„N-am mai murit de foame multă vreme.
De când în loc de ochi aveam **ciuperci**”
(“We haven’t died from hunger for too long
Since instead of eyes we had mushrooms”)

Tudor Arghezi, in his well-known style, uses the “rotten” part of mushrooms: (Tudor Arghezi, Și dumneata?):

„Și Dumneata, a cărui gură pute,
Ce fel de viermi și ce fel de **ciuperci**
Hrănești în vorbele stătute,
Cu ce mă îndulcești și mă încerci?”
(„And you, whose mouth smells,
What kind of worms and **mushrooms**
You feed in stale words,
Whit what you sweeten and try me?”)

Ion Barbu mentions in his poem **Riga Crypto și Lapona Enigel** Crypto, the mushroom king, who is the author himself according to Tudor Vianu (1935): (the crude, hairless mushroom) is the "don juan" Ion Barbu ("always young").

„Des cercetat de pădureți
În pat de rîu și-n humă unsă,
Împărățea peste **bureți**
Crai Crypto, inimă ascunsă,

La vecinic tron, de rouă parcă!
Dar printre ei bîrfeau **bureții**
De-o vrăjitoare **mîntărcă**,
De la fîntîna tinereții.
Că-i greu mult soare să îndure
Ciupearca crudă de pădure ”

„Frequently researched by forest men
In river beds and smeared loam,
Among the **mushrooms**
Crypto, hidden heart king was,

On ageless throne, of dew alike!
But talk of **mushrooms** was among
About a **cep** witch,
From the youth fountain.

That much soon hard is to endure
By the raw of forest **mushroom**.”

Andrei Oișteanu (2008) also tries to identify the mushroom species that Ion Barbu mentions: „Being a „*riga crypto [gama]*”, „*Crypto the-mushroom-king*” is clearly a **wool** king („Among the **mushrooms**/Crypto, hidden heart king was”). The sun which is „red and big [and] spots of all kind gathers”, is reflected in „the baldness” of the **mushroom’s** hat („in its bald skin reflected was”). In other words, the **mushroom’s** hat was red with spots. Another chromatic and also toxicological element can be found in the ballad: when it is ripen in the sun, **the mushroom** is full of „venom and red oil”. It seems to be a „**burete pestriț**”, (piebald wool), namely with spots. This is a psychotropic mushroom with a white trunk and red hat with white spots (typical for infantile representations), namely the king of hallucinogen **mushrooms: Amanita muscaria** (popular muscariță or the serpent’s hat). The fact that the author’s toxic and depressed state from Germany at the end of the year 1923 is symptomatic for the way in which Ion Barbu has designated himself in the poem as a psychotropic **mushroom** that goes crazy. After a few months, in February 1924, he will leave neurotic towards Romania. On 3d March Eugen Lovinescu meets him in Bucharest “completely decomposed inward.” After a few months (13 August 1924) Barbu will be institutionalized in a mental hospital.”

A more cheerful tune can be found in the poem of **Ioana Voicilă Dobre** (Stropi de dragoste bălaie/ Fair Love Drops):

„După ploaia din ajun, toate strălucesc acum!
O **ciupercă**, albă toată, printre fire verzi înnoată.”
„After the eve’s rain, all are shining now!
A **mushroom**, all white, among green straws is swimming.”

Mushrooms are mentioned even in the lyrics of some song, as is the case of **Pasărea colibri** - Ploaia care va veni/The rain that will come:

„Deasupra florilor noastre **ciuperca** cheamă a pustiu,
Din cer cad păsări albastre și totuși nu-i prea târziu. ”

„Over our flowers, **the mushroom** calls of desert,
Blue birds fall from the sky, and yet it isn't too late. ”

Mushrooms are also present in **prose**, but this parts are harder to identify.

Ana Blandiana realizes a “poetic” description of the mushroom gatherers in the work with the same name (**Culegătorul de ciuperci/The mushroom gatherer**):
„Like humans, **mushrooms** are very hard to differentiate among them. It's almost like an art... to discern the good ones from the bad ones. You advance in the forest, through that green and brown silence which is formed...from the merger of so infinite and so much sounds...that offer together that sense of peace and loneliness which tries to define happiness. You go forward through the humid air, good to lead sensations, through green and sensual brown and suddenly you see a white pasty flickering. "A **mushroom!**" you say (Diogenes said "a human!") and you run towards is. Here comes the question. It isn't said as in the case of flowers, in the famous neo-Greek words of Ienăchiță Văcărescu ("To take it, it is destroyed, to leave it" etc.), but more infinitely direct and insoluble. It is bad or good? It is poisonous or edible? Because this is the entire truth: **mushrooms** aren't divided in bad or good ones but – more clearly, more non-euphemistic, more explicitly – in poisonous and edible. How can you discern them? How can you differentiate them? How not to be wrong? There are atlases and encyclopedias, dictionaries and guides, but the illustrations and theoretical explanations are so schematic compared with the diversity of life!... Should this story be sapiential? Should I write – for the pleasure of those that suspect that I have inclinations more moral than esthetic – a fable? I could admit it maybe if I wouldn't be cold in the gatherer's shadow or if I knew with certainty what Diogenes would have done with the searched human if he would have found him.”

Ionel Teodoreanu frequently mentions mushrooms in his novel La Medeleni: „The field smelled of rain, **mushrooms**, of old cellar, of wine...” „Hope your spindle's full of **mushrooms** and cucumber shoes.” „... I have admired the lights of Orăștie and went through the forest **for mushrooms.**”

Quotes, sayings

Mushrooms are also mentioned in Romanian quotes and sayings. Some examples are:

„Sfaturile sunt ca și **ciupercile**, cresc peste tot, dar cele rele îți pot fi fatale.”/ “Advices are like **mushrooms**, they grow everywhere, but the bad ones can be fatal.”

„Grâul nu e ca **ciupercile**: de nu-l semeni, nu răsare.”/ “Wheat is not like **mushrooms**: if you don't sow it, it doesn't grow.”

„Până nu plouă nu se fac **ciupercile.**”/ “Until it rains there are no **mushrooms.**”

„Pagubă-n **ciuperci.**”/ “Loss in **mushrooms.**”

Riddles

Mushrooms are a common theme for many riddles. The followings are just a part of them:

By following these lyrics we must find out what are:

„Umbreluțe colorate
Prin păduri împrăștiate;
Nu sunt bune pentru soare,
Ci pentru...gătit mâncare.

Mănăstire-ntr-un picior,
Ghici, **ciupecă**, ce e?

Pălărie-ntr-un picior,
Ghici, **ciupercă**, ce-i?

Pălărie albă, mare
Cu dantele-adăposteste
Tot ce-i găză în suflare.
Ce păcat că nu pornește
Are un singur picior
Și e bună la cuptor”
(Autor: Mihaela Bălăceanu).

„Colorful umbrellas
Through forest spread;
They are not good for the sun
But for.... cooking food.
Monastery-in-a-foot,
Guess, **mushroom**, what it is?

Hat-in-a-foot,
Guess, **mushroom**, what it is?

White, big hat
With laces it shelters
All that is an insect.
What a pity that it doesn't start
Only one leg it has
And it's good baked”

Another riddle announces that a mushroom is:

„Picioruș cu pălărie
Albă, gri sau cafenie,
Dulce sau otrăvitoare,
Cine-mi spune, ce e oare?

Prin pădure dacă treci
Fii atent și la... **ciuperci.**”

„Little foot with hat
White, grey or brown,
Sweet or poisonous,
Who can tell me what it is?

Through the forest if you pass
Watch the... **mushrooms**.”
(Autor: Emilia Plugaru).

„Frunze n-are,
Nu-i nici floare.
În păduri și pe ogor,
Prin grădini și-n deal la vie
Stă mereu într-un picior.”

„It doesn't has leaves,
It is not a flower.
In forests and on plains,
Through gardens and on hills
It stands always on one foot.”

Another riddle poem, Ciuperca/The Mushroom of Marietei Marancea sounds as follows:

„Pălărie-ntr-un picior,
Mă ridic la întâmplare
În pădure, sub umbrare
Îmi spun țâncii “căciulata”
De-aș vorbi i-aș întreba
“Ce-aveți cu căciula mea?”.
Totdeauna după ploaie
Vin copii la mine droaie.
Vin copii să mă găsească
Mama lor să mă gătească.
Că în cartea de bucate
Mi-au găsit un loc aparte,
Și, de când sunt neînsemnată
De ce grădinița toată
Mă desenează cu har?
Ori pictată, modelată
Nu mai sunt neînsemnată ...
Eu mă cred o răsfațată
Mândră de umbrela mea,
Că sunt de folos cuiva.”

„Hat-on-a-feet,
Randomly I stand
In a forest, under shadows
Kids call me “căciulata”
If I could talk I would ask
“What's your problem with my hat?”.
Always after the rain
Many kids come
Many kids come to find me
Their mother to cook me
As in the cooking book.
A special place they found for me
And, since I am unimportant
Why does the whole kindergarten
Draws me with such grace?
Either draw or modeled
Unimportant I am not....
I think I am spoiled
Proud of my umbrella

That to someone useful I am.”

Habits, traditions

Romanian habits and traditions are specifically connected to cooking for special events and festivities. In Bucovina, the Christmas fast is celebrated with mushroom borsch and minced mushrooms with garlic, while in Oltenia, Easter is celebrated with mushroom soup.

Other

If the literature abounds with mushrooms, the plastic arts aren't far behind. As such, mushrooms appear in the static nature of famous works of art, as it happens in Annetta Coanda Chiracu's, pencil drawing Static nature **with mushrooms** (http://www.tablouri-de-vis.ro/tablouri_in_creion_carbune/annette_coanda_chiracu/natura_statica_cu_ciuperca/).

Burci, I. mentions the popular image of mushrooms in the work *Metafora în toponimie* (The metaphor in toponymy) saying that “the popular imaginary is responsible in many cases for the name of a certain object when many lexemes from different semantic areas were used; for example, the definition of “top in the shape of house roof or as a **mushroom** hat which shelters a place” was offered to the following appellations: acoperiș (roof), căciulă (hat), căciului (big hat), căiță, clop, coptiță, cujmă/cușmă (hat), ghigă, glugă (hood), perdea (curtain), poliță, țanc, țurțui, umbrela (umbrella), vârf (top) etc.” (Burci 2012).

Conclusions

13 localities whose names are correlated with mushrooms were identified, namely: **Burețești**, **Burețești** (Argeș County), **Ciuperca**, **Ciupercești**, **Ciupercești de Olteț**, **Ciupercești Vechi**, **Ciupercești Noi**, **Gheaba**, **Ghebari**, **Gheboieni** (Dâmbovița County), **Gălbiori**, **Hribeni** (Bistrița-Năsăud County), **Pitărcești** (Alba County). 3 more rivers were also identified which can be associated with mushrooms: **Iuți**, **Crăița** and **Gomboș**. Furthermore, 3 protected areas were identified together with the hill from the edge of Oradea city.

Taking into consideration that the names of the localities were given by also the inhabitant's main occupation and by analyzing Figure number 2, we can conclude that in the localities studied from Moldova, Oltenia and a part of Muntenia (Teleorman and Argeș), mushrooms were harvested from the most ancient times. The villagers from these areas were gatherers of different types of mushrooms: honey fungus (*Armillaria* spp.) in Dâmbovița, Prahova and Vrancea, penny bun (*Boletus* spp.) in Alba and chanterelle (*Cantharellus* spp.) in Constanța.

By analyzing the mushroom names from the Romanian vocabulary, the presence of many family names derived from the word *mushroom* were identified. The name **Ciupercă** was the most common (92%),

followed by names such as **Văcălie** (3%), **Ghebuță** (2%), **Grib** (1%), **Ciupercea** (1%) and **Iască** (1%).

Regarding the literary works, many aphorisms were identified, together with poems of famous Romanian poets: Mihai Eminescu, Nichita Stănescu, Tudor Arghezi, Ion Barbu and Ioana Voicilă Dobre. Mushrooms are also present in the works of Ionel Teodoreanu, Ana Blandiana, but also in the writings of Andrei Oișteanu.

The habits and traditions that are connected with mushrooms concern the celebration festivities and different types of foods based on mushrooms that are eaten in certain periods (fasting) or at certain celebrations.

Mushrooms also appear in artworks as is the case of the famous drawing of Anetta Coandă Chiracu, *Natură Statică cu Ciuperci/Static Nature with Mushrooms*, but also in sociological investigations that explain the link between mushrooms, their shape and different names of roofs, hats, umbrellas etc.

All these demonstrate the importance of mushrooms in the life of Romanians and their strong root in the Romanian vocabulary, literature, onomastic and toponymy. Their apparition in literary work of arts or artworks demonstrate the connotations and mystery surrounding these species. But, above all, it demonstrate once again the strong connection of these people with the forest, nature and its products, highlighting the human's place in nature and its connection with all that surrounds him.

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