Deflection of proper names in Romanian

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Proper names can differ from common nouns with respect to inflection. In some languages, proper names and common nouns exhibit distinct case paradigms, as in Sinyar (Boyeldieu 2019). In other languages, proper names display a smaller case paradigm than common nouns, as in German, which underwent deflection in the seventeenth century (Nübling 2012; Ackermann 2018). Deflection contributes to the onymic schema constancy, according to which the shape of proper names is preserved in order to enable their recognition and processing (Nübling 2005: 50–51).

While deflection of proper names has been studied in German historical linguistics, it has not received much attention in Romance linguistics. This paper provides an account of deflection of personal names and place names in Romanian. First, personal are inflected differently from place names and human common nouns. More specifically, personal names block the suffixed definite article in the nominative-accusative (*Ion* 'John') and take the proprial article *lui* for the dative-genitive (*lui Ion* 'of/to John') while place names and human common nouns take the suffixed definite article in the nominative-accusative (*Bucureşti-ul* 'Bucharest', *băiat-ul* 'the boy') and dative-genitive (*Bucureşti-ului* 'of/to Bucharest', *băiat-ului* 'of/to the boy'). Second, foreign place names avoid inflection. For example, the city name *San Franciso* is not inflected in the nominative-accusative and dative-genitive. Compare *centrul Bucureştiului* 'the centre of Bucharest' (with the suffixed definite article) to *centrul San Francisco* 'the centre of San Francisco' (without the suffixed definite article). In summary, it will be shown that in Romanian, deflection is unleashed by factors such as proper name class and foreignness.

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