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Names of Man-made Places and Natural Landscape Objects*

1. Toponyms can be categorized based on a number of aspects: a) names can be distinguished based on whether they denote man-made or natural objects; b) macro- and microtoponyms can be distinguished based on their sizes and how widely they are known; c) finally, names can be categorized by the types of places (hydronyms, oronyms, etc.). This essay offers an overview of the main linguistic and typological differences between the names of man-made and those of natural landscape objects; besides these two main types, I also cover the differing characteristics of macro- and microtoponyms within the group of names of natural landscape objects. The corpus used for presenting the characteristics of these two categories consists primarily of medieval Hungarian toponyms from the era of the Árpád dynasty (1000–1301).

2. There is a fundamental socio-onomastic difference between the two groups due to the fact that in the formation and usage of names for man-made places, in addition to linguistic-communicational needs, social motives also play an important role. Most of the ancient names within this group are settlement names. In contrast, names for natural landscape objects mostly emerge from linguistic-communicational needs, therefore, deliberateness and social factors are far less relevant to their emergence (HOFFMANN 2007: 101, RESZEGI 2011: 13–14). Members of this type include the names of rivers, topographic formations, topographic regions, etc. Because of their socio-onomastic differences, these two groups of names have typological differences as well.

3. One of the most striking differences between the two groups is based on the motivation for name-giving. With settlements being created by human activity, the motives behind the creation and the history of a particular settlement may well be manifested in its name as well.

3.1. Thus, in the case of man-made places, possessive relationships being expressed in names, are one of the typical features because in an essentially oral culture, names and naming were possibly one of the important means of expressing possession (HOFFMANN 2007: 104). The fact of possession, although it does also emerge in names for natural landscape objects, is far less typical.

Names of natural places formed from anthroponyms without formants[1] are rare and vague, even though this is one of the typical ways in which Hungarian settlement names are created (e.g. *Sarold* oikonym: 1343: *Sarold,* Gy. 3: 537, 559 < *Sarold* personal name). Moreover, in some cases when names of natural places are homonymic with an anthroponym we can assume that they are cases of multiple metonymy (e.g. anthroponym > oikonym > name of a landscape unit, e.g. *Miskó* oronym – *Miskó* personal name, cf. GYŐRFFY 2004: 131, RESZEGI 2006: 165, 2016: 243). A more frequent method of name-giving for a landscape unit is that of compounding an anthroponym and a geographical common word (e.g. *Encse-bérc,* 1293: *Encheberch* < *Encse* personal name + *bérc* 'hill' + *-e* possessive ending, ÁÚO. 12: 543). Even this kind of name-formation, however, is more frequent among settlement names. Besides, we also have to take into consideration that when discussing the names of hills, mountains, and other landscape units, establishing possessive relationships is not as unequivocal as in the case of settlement names: larger hills, for example, considering their sizes and their kind, are not likely to have been in the possession of a single person in their entirety.[2] Consequently, the types of names denoting natural landscape objects should be used in investigations of ownership histories with a high degree of circumspection.

3.2. References to the inhabitants of a place are yet another feature typical of settlement names only. The settlement *Lovász* ('horseman') is an estate which originally belonged to horsemen in the service of the king, *Szakácsi* ('cook' + *-i* topoformant) was probably inhabited by royal cooks, while the name forms *Németi* ('German' + *-i* formant), *Csehi* ('Czech' + *-i*), *Olaszi* ('Italian' + *-i*) may possibly refer to the ethnic groups inhabiting the respective settlements at the time when their names were formed (TÓTH 2001: 149). Words denoting professions and ethnonyms are not characteristically included in names of natural landscape objects. Therefore, this group of names is far less suitable for the purposes of research on demographic history and the history of professions than settlement names.

The different motives behind the formation of names explain why there are many who believe that names of man-made places carry significant information about history, finances and intellectual culture, while no meaningful linguistic or historical conclusions are likely to be drawn from the study of names of

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[1] Some Hungarian noun suffixies are used to creat place-names as well, these are referred to as formants in this paper.

[2] In expressing possessive relationship, there are proportional differences between the subtypes of toponyms for natural landscape objects: for example, there is a relatively large number of fishponds which were named after the former owner of fishing rights, while in the case of rivers, names given for this reason are rare, and the genitive structures possibly indicate that the waterway ran through the estate of the person in question (GYŐRFFY–RESZEGI 2003: 201).

natural landscape objects (BENKŐ 2003: 7). A comparison between further typological characteristics of the two groups of names, however, reveals that such opinions should be reviewed from a number of aspects.

4. With regards to name-giving methods, there are significant differences between the names of landscape objects and those of man-made places.

4.1. In the earliest chronological layer of names denoting natural landscape objects, the proportion of loan toponyms is much higher than within early settlement names (HOFFMANN 2007: 101). In the county of Bihar, which was the largest county of medieval Hungary, beside Hungarians, significant populations of Romanian and Slavic ethnicity also have to be reckoned with, yet, hardly more than one twentieth of settlement names consists of loan toponyms (cf. RÁCZ 2005: 173–174, 222). The proportion of loan toponyms is considerably higher within the class of hydronyms where more than one fifth of medieval names can possibly be loan words (GYŐRFFY 2004: 143).

Toponyms of foreign origin make it possible to draw cautious conclusions about those who created and used these names, that is, the language of the people who once inhabited the area, and, indirectly, possibly about ethnic groups. But, we also have to take into account some factors related to name borrowing. It is well-known that Hungarians arriving in the Carpathian Basin applied the already existing names used by the inhabitants living in the area. In a lot of cases Hungarian name usage is reflected in the name form, generally speaking it means that loan names are modified in accordance with the features of the language into which they are adopted. The *Zsarnó hegye* (1321: *Zarnohygy,* Gy. 1: 153) name form is possibly such an example of a Slavic primary name (*Žarnov* < 'millstone') compounded with a Hungarian geographical common word. The vocalized *-ó* (originating in Slavic *-ov*) at the end of the name also demonstrates Hungarian name usage. Nevertheless, examining the present-day onomastic corpus, it also turns out that names are often loaned into the adopting language with quite minimal phonological or morphological changes, and, with those who recorded the documents at the time being unable, and perhaps even unwilling to indicate such changes, there are many cases in which no sign of loaning exists (PÓCZOS 2008: 205, cf. KENYHERCZ 2014). The issue is further complicated by the fact that with Hungarian- and Slavic-speaking communities living side-by-side for longer periods of time, the emergence of an active bilinguality has to be reckoned with (SÁNDOR 1998: 7).

When dealing with names of foreign origin, it is important to keep in mind that based on the etymology of a single name, it is impossible to establish whether it was used, for example, by a Slavic or a Hungarian speaker, or even a bilingual community, that is, there is no way of knowing whether any particular instance is or is not a name form which was adopted into the Hungarian language. All

that can be said with certainty is that the language of the community from which the name originated was Slavic. This also implies that there must have been a Slavic population living in the area in question before the name appeared in any charter. Information from the charter, however, reflects how the name was used in later eras. Thus, the linguistic form of the name allows for conclusions not on the language of name-givers, but on the language of name-users (cf. HOFFMANN 2007: 122).

4.2. Names of natural landscape objects are frequently formed from geographical common nouns without using formants; amongst settlement names, in contrast, examples for such onomastic structures are rare (HOFFMANN 2007: 101). Names created from geographical common nouns without any formants are mostly microtoponyms because names created in this fashion can usually fulfil their function only within a limited group of name users, that is, a name like *Hegy* 'hill' or *Patak* 'brook' will be suitable for the purposes of various communicational situations only within a limited area. This, of course, also implies that any name homonymic to a geographical common noun in question can only be used for a single object, even if there are multiple similar objects, and other units of the landscape will be given different names. In a village in the county of Veszprém, Rigács, for example, the elevation within the settlement is known simply as *Domb* ('hill'), while elevations located around the settlement have two-constituent names: *Kopasz-domb* ('bare hill'), *Kis-szöllő-domb* ('little' + 'vineyard' + 'hill'), *Marton-hegy* (*Marton* anthroponym), *Ülő-domb* ('sitting' + 'hill'), *Szöllőhegy* ('vineyard' + 'mountain') (VeMFN. 1: 29–30). In addition, this method of name formation is not too conscious, that is, these names are not given, but they simply become names.[3]

5. Elements within the two categories are significantly different from each other also with respect to their structures.

5.1. Amongst the names of natural landscape objects, two-constituent structures with geographical common nouns as the final constituent are far more frequent than amongst the names of man-made places. This is firstly due to the fact that within the category of names for natural landscape objects, there is a high proportion of names formed by compounding a descriptive function constituent and a geographical common noun. For example, more than one third of medieval hydronyms were created in this manner (GYŐRFFY 2004: 143). One possible explanation for the prevalence of formation by compounding may be that names of natural landscape objects are closer to the adjectival word structures used as appellatives (*Fekete-hegy* 'black mountain', *Köves-halom* 'pebble hill', *Szólát hegye* < 'the hill of a person named *Szólát*'). Names formed

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[3] These name forms are what RICHARD COATES distinguishes as evolved names rather than bestowed names (2017: 532).

in this manner are far less common amongst those of man-made places. In the county of Bihar, for example, barely more than one sixth of all settlement names had such a structure (RÁCZ 2005: 150), the same proportion was one fifth amongst medieval names for castles (KOVÁCS 2017). In addition, toponyms loaned from other languages as names of natural landscape objects also often had a geographical common noun added as a final constituent. The frequency of this structure is presumably not equal within the subcategories of names for landscape objects. Shedding more light on this issue would, however, require comparative analysis of the name types.

5.2. The proportion of onomastic structures with adjectives of quality is quite high amongst settlement names as well. In these cases, however, the initial adjectival constituent is not compounded with a geographical common word, but rather compounded to an already existing settlement name with a differentiating function. That is, the name *Kishecse* (*kis* 'small' + *Hecse* oikonym) does not indicate that the settlement is small in the absolute sense, but marks the settlement as the smallest one of several settlements with similar names. Such comparative systems can be interpreted particularly well in the case of pairs of names. For example, the initial constituents in the name pairs *Kishecse – Nagyhecse* (< *nagy* 'big'), *Kisapáti – Nagyapáti* can really be understood within the contexts of their correlative relationships. These differentiated settlement names are pieces of evidence for historical processes in which villages, for reasons of ownership or demographical changes, were divided into several new villages. The same phenomenon lies behind settlement names with initial constituents like *al- ~ alsó* 'lower', *fel- ~ felső* 'upper' and *közép* 'middle' (cf. TÓTH 2001: 168–169, 2008: 31–40, BÖLCSKEI 2010: 155–163).

Although names of natural places also might be divided up into several parts, data documenting such processes are very rare from the Carpathian Basin of the medieval era, yet, cf. *Duna* 'Danube': *Holt-Duna* 'backwater' + 'Danube' ([1322 u.]: *Hold duna,* Gy. 1: 710), *Kis-Duna* 'little' (+1202: *Minorem Danubium,* Gy. 2: 208, 285), *Lassú-Duna* 'slow' (1192/1374/1425: *Losiuduna,* Gy. 1: 201, 236–237), *Nagy-Duna* 'big' (+1202/[1221]: *Magni Danubii,* Gy. 2: 256). In more recent times, however, processes in which an existing name is used to create new name forms denoting places spatially connected to each other have also become characteristic of microtoponyms.

6. The two groups of names also have significant differences in the frequency of synonymous forms.[4]

6.1. Based on the data available, the proportion of entities with multiple names was generally much lower in medieval times than it is in the present

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[4] In this paper names refering the same object are considered as a synonymous name pair.

day toponymic corpus. (Within the present day onomastic corpus of Baranya county, for example, the proportion of places with two or more names is 36%, while in the Old Hungarian era in the county of Abaúj, the metric for multiple names is barely above 10%, PÓCZOS 2008: 183–184.) This may be result from charter-writing practices of the time: in the documents they composed, scriveners often included only one of the names with identical referents, as toponyms appearing in charters precisely identified their denotata even without the lists of their variants (cf. PÓCZOS 2008: 183).

Within the historical onomastic corpus, multiple names are even less characteristic of natural landscape objects than they are of settlement names. Pieces of data indicating multiple names denoting the same river or landscape unit can only be found in a negligible number, yet, cf. 1317: fluvius *Aranys,* quod alio nomine *Mezespatak* appellatur 'Golden river, also known by the name Lime brook' (Gy. 1: 40), +1269: *Popmal* seu *Pyspukmal* (Gy. 4: 585, 634, 682). The communicational function of names provides an explanation for this fact: the creation of synonymous forms is not beneficial for communicational situations (HOFFMANN 2007: 102). Changes of ownership, for example, are often reflected in the names of settlements and estates, but usually do not entail the creation of new names for the landscape units. Even if multiple names were actually formed, there is still no written evidence of them left behind. (Besides the interests of the person giving the name, another reason why synonymous name forms are mentioned together may be that the place in question is known to two (or even more) communities of name-users under different names, PÓCZOS 2008: 184.)

Even though the communicational determinant presented here also exists for man-made places, still, the proportion of settlements with multiple names is much higher, in spite of the fact that such names may theoretically lead to communicational difficulties. This means that in the case of settlement names, social and psychological factors, overriding communicational requirements, have to be reckoned with. The creation of a new name is usually motivated by the interests of its creator. There are some cases in which evidence suggests that a change in the person of the owner induced the creation of newer names in addition to already existing ones. The estate originally known under the name *Tömörkény* was donated by King Stephen V to Comes Parabuch, and the King simultaneously decreed that the former name has to be abolished, and the area has to be called by Parabuch's name: 1266/1300: nomina earundem terrarum Temerken [Fulgudus et Wonuz] mandamus penitus aboleri, et Parabuch nomine singulas ordinamus et statuimus appellari (JAKUBOVICH–PAIS 1929: 121–122, for further examples, see: HOFFMANN 2007: 104–110).

Names derived from those of patron saints, propagated under the direction of the Church, are also deliberate. The very fact that these names have variants used in parallel in a conspicuously high number of instances – cf., e.g. 1441: *Kysfalud* al. nom. *Zenthgywrgh* – is one of the proofs for the case being so. Even patrociny settlement names are often used in alternation with their own synonyms (*Szentmária* 'Saint Mary' ~ *Boldogasszony* 'Our Lady', *Keresztúr* 'Cross' + 'Lord'~ *Szentkereszt* 'holy cross', Tóth 2007: 412–416).

6.2. In names of natural landscape objects – due to communicational requirements – changes of semantic type are also very rare. The lake of Kercsed, after it dried up, got the name *Tóhely* 'lake place'; then again, this latter form remained in use even after water filled the lake basin again (cf. Lőrincze 1947: 20). This example demonstrates that names of natural landscape objects may remain, even if the features they were named for change. Changes occurring in this group are mostly linguistically motivated, and – for example, as a change between markedness and non-markedness – involve the structure of the name only, e.g. *Füzes* (< *fűz* 'willow' + *-s* formant) ~ *Füzesd* (*Füzes* + *-d* formant), *Nyárád* (< *nyár* 'poplar' + *-d* formant) ~ *Nyárágy* (< *nyár* 'poplar' + *-gy* formant) (Tóth 2008: 131–140).

7. In the light of all these observations, it can be established that there are, indeed, significant typological differences between the two name groups, which, however, do not warrant the automatic preclusion of names of natural landscape objects from studies on linguistic history, the history of dialects and the science of history. With due circumspection, keeping their socio-onomastic and typological features in mind, these names can also be included in the scope of historically focused investigations, and can actually shed light on several characteristics of medieval language, which settlement names, having a different socio-onomastic status, are far less suited to reveal.

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Abstract

It is well-known that place-names reflect the circumstances existing in the time of name-giving, and old place-names can convey information about bygone ages, which makes them an important part of both historical linguistic and onomastic studies. However, name-giving customs can be different in different types of places denoted by these names, which can result in linguistic differences between them. It is also known that place-names can be categorised in different ways, e.g. groups of microtoponyms and macrotoponyms can be distinguished, toponyms related to location types can be studied separately, etc. This study evaluates the differences between place-names focusing on the two main categories of toponyms: names of natural places (mountains, rivers, forest, etc.) and names of artificial places (settlements, castles, etc.).

Keywords: place-names, names of natural places, names of artificial places