

# Duel of Germanists: The debate between Elemér Moór, Elemér Schwartz and Walter Steinhauser about the population history of Burgenland

László Dávid Törő\* 

University of Debrecen, Hungary

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper I focus my attention on the debate between three renowned Germanists of the interwar period: Elemér Moór, Elemér Schwartz and Walter Steinhauser. Their discussion of the population history of Burgenland can serve as a case study of knowledge production. This was a discourse in which the relationship between science and politics or the boundary between scholarship and diletantism were often tested. Relying on both published material (their books and papers) and unpublished sources (correspondence, commission reports) I analyse the different standpoints of the three scholars and show the development of their rivalry. At the end of my paper, I will draw some lessons concerning the history of historical writing.

## KEYWORDS

historiography, nationalism, borderland, Burgenland

## INTRODUCTION

The region known as Burgenland was transferred to Austria in 1921. After the First World War the country was compensated with a territory which had previously been a part of Hungary.

\* Corresponding author. E-mail: t.laszlo.d@gmail.com

Since the „birth” of the region, the historical right of Austria has been contested by Hungarian historians. Austrian historical writing, by contrast, was eager to integrate Burgenland into its new national histories. What follows is a comparative case study of the way in which three outstanding Germanist scholars participated in these debates. Elemér Moór (1891–1974) was a teacher at the German Department of the Teachers’ Training College in Szeged (1929–1945). Elemér Schwartz (1890–1962) lectured in German linguistics and ethnography as a full professor at the University of Budapest from 1936. Walter Steinhauser (1885–1980) was a full professor of German studies at the University of Vienna. Naturally, in the interwar period these three scholars were not the only ones to research the population history of Burgenland and Western Hungary. However, they stand out in this discourse because they openly polemicised with each other over almost two decades. Although two of them lived in Hungary, it was not their nationality that defined their standpoint in questions of population history. The three scholars held markedly different opinions about the methods and sources of population history and linguistics. Their debate touched upon questions like the relationship between politics and scholarship, the role of historical writing and the problem of interdisciplinarity. Hungarian and Austrian historians cooperated with Germanists and often participated in their debates. For this reason, the historiographical analysis of this debate can serve as a good case study of knowledge production in the fields of both history and linguistics. My approach is slightly different from previous studies discussing this debate so far,<sup>1</sup> because my main research field is historiography and not linguistics or population history. This means that I will concentrate on reconstructing and evaluating the discourse. My aim is to place these scholars in the context of a wider discourse of knowledge production and as source materials I will rely on their published writings and some of their unpublished letters.

## THE BACKGROUND OF THE DEBATE AND THE FIRST PUBLICATIONS

Both Elemér Moór and Elemér Schwartz were born in places that were annexed by Austria in 1921. Moór was born in Hárspatak (Limbach im Burgenland) and Schwartz in Vasvörösvár (Rotenturm an der Pinka). Schwartz served as a cistercian monk and taught at the Szent Imre Gimnázium in Buda (1916–1935). He had been involved with the history of Western Hungary since he was a university student: as a result, among the three scholars it was he who first published about this topic.<sup>2</sup> Schwartz published his findings in several journals and magazines during the 1920’s, but he did not yet publish a book in this period. As for his reasons he wrote as follows to Jenő Házi (archivist, historian of Sopron) in 1926: „Since I was a university student, I have been preoccupied with the language and history of Western Hungary. My next [research topics] are the German toponyms and especially those that were originally Hungarian but transformed into German on the lips of German people. Since I cannot publish the findings of my scientific research and because of this others with more fortunate situations come before me, I can help myself only by holding lectures and writing magazine articles.”<sup>3</sup> Schwartz

<sup>1</sup>See for example: Seedoch (2001); Vörös (2015).

<sup>2</sup>Jankó (2021), pp. 206–207.

<sup>3</sup>Elemér Schwartz to Jenő Házi, 13th February, 1926. Sopron Archives of the Győr-Moson-Sopron County (Hereafter cited as Manuscript collection of Jenő Házi). Manuscript collection of Jenő Házi, Other Correspondence, Box 16.



submitted several articles to Austrian and Hungarian journals and magazines alike. These writings had a polemical tone, which can be illustrated with his article on the origins of the name Burgenland. In this article Schwartz inventories Austrians with a views which tried to emphasize the German character of Burgenland<sup>4</sup> and then asked where the name Burgenland came from. He stated that this name was only a new construction and the area to which it refers, „was never an autonomous, independent territory [...] but part of a greater political entity.”<sup>5</sup> He concluded that the constructed nature of the name Burgenland supported the Hungarian historical claims to this region.

At first it might seem surprising that Schwartz was a regular author of a local history journal in Burgenland called *Mitteilungen des Burgenländischen Heimatschutzvereins*. To understand why he was able to publish in this journal despite his Hungarian nationalist way of thinking, we need to take into consideration that at the time there were several different journals focussing on the local history of Burgenland. From 1927 on, two journals competed with each other. The journal *Burgenland* had close ties to the regional government and oriented towards German nationalism. In contrast to the *Burgenland*, the *Mitteilungen* was published by the *Burgenländische Heimatschutzverein*, a civil society. In the volumes of *Mitteilungen* nationalism was less present, instead we may observe a critique towards industrialism and the mystification of nature.<sup>6</sup> Burgenland was financed by the regional authorities, whereas *Mitteilungen* relied mainly on donations and membership fees.<sup>7</sup> Besides Schwartz, among the authors of *Mitteilungen* we find art historian Endre Csatkai or school teacher Ivan Jovanovich. The historical writings of Csatkai and Jovanovich can be described as antiquarian and not nationalist. There were several debates between the authors of *Burgenland* and *Mitteilungen*: the former often criticised the latter for not being critical enough towards Hungarian nationalism. The debate ended with the merging of the two journals in 1932 into a new nationalist periodical, the *Burgenländische Heimatblätter*. This „merging” in fact signaled something like the defeat of the *Mitteilungen* and the strenghtening of German nationalism in Burgenland. Hungarian historians and Germanists were familiar with the difference between the two journals. Schwartz evaluated this debate in the journal *Ethnographia* in 1929. According to him, the *Heimatschutzverein* „did not study the history and the people of Burgenland because it wanted to support its claim on the territory, but solely for the sake of the homeland.” His opinion about Burgenland was far worse: „Against this periodical [the *Mitteilungen* – L. D. T.] some strangers and those natives who, even before the annexation, opposed the ancient homeland [Hungary – L. D. T.], grounded a new journal called *Burgenland*.”<sup>8</sup>

His articles in the *Mitteilungen* say a lot about Schwartz’s views on population history. We can find articles with a rather neutral tone: for example, when explaining the origins of the German name Eisenstant (in Hungarian: Kismarton), he maintained that „Eis” did not refer to

<sup>4</sup>For more on this Austrian discourse regarding Burgenland, see Törő (2020).

<sup>5</sup>Schwartz (1927), p. 484.

<sup>6</sup>Krenn (2014), pp. 221–235.

<sup>7</sup>Seedoch (1981), pp. 266–267.

<sup>8</sup>Schwartz (1929) pp. 180–181.



an iron mine near the city, but rather meant that Eisenstadt was fortified in the middle ages (and its walls were iron strong).<sup>9</sup> There were also articles that openly challenged the regional leadership of Burgenland. In 1929 Pötschendorf (Pócsfalu) was officially renamed to Rosendorf, because many people found the original German and Hungarian name funny. Schwartz opposed the name change because he thought that the toponyms are the „supporting pillars of a homeland” and the original name Pócsfalu referred to a swamp in the middle ages and this „ancient” knowledge should not vanish.<sup>10</sup> In an other article written about the goals of toponym research he claimed that it should be a general rule that people should refrain from adopting „foreign” names because it is „unhealthy”. It is best when a settlement keeps the original form of its name, since ancient forms of toponyms can tell „secrets” about a nation.<sup>11</sup>

Elemér Moór approached this question from another point of view in 1929. He published a long article in *Ungarische Jahrbücher*, a journal of the Hungarian Institute in Berlin. In contrast to Schwartz, Moór originally researched the toponyms of the Tisza region and did not begin to write about Burgenland until some time later. In 1929 he set out to test the credibility of a popular theory among contemporary German and Austrian historians, namely the view that the history of German population in Western Hungary goes back to the period of Charles the Great and that Germans survived even the Hungarian conquest of the Carpatian Basin, thus there is a more than 1000 years long German ethnic continuity in the territory now called Burgenland. Moór aimed his critique against Austrian historians, but he debated the methods of Schwartz, too. According to Moór, Schwartz tried to decide the origins of toponyms using solely formal-linguistic arguments, which is not enough: population history and source-criticism (philology) should also be utilized in the research.<sup>12</sup> Regarding the problem of source-criticism, Moór explained that the German or Hungarian toponyms found in the sources authentically reflected the ethnic background of the population of a certain settlement. Austrian and German historians often cited this text by Elemér Moór and saw it as far more scientific and objective than the works of Elemér Schwartz. What were the causes for a more accepting Austrian reception in the case of Moór? In his paper of 1929, Moór argued that one can neither refute, nor prove the theory about Franko-German population continuity. According to him, the Hungarian conquest in the 10th century did not wipe out the entire German population in South-Burgenland, because Germans there could hide out in the forests and mountains.<sup>13</sup> Therefore it can be true (but it cannot be proved or refuted to 100%) that in some parts of Burgenland we can speak of a Franko-German population continuity. Austrian politicians, historians and geographers often relied on this population continuity theory to underscore the historical right of Austria to Burgenland.<sup>14</sup> Therefore it is not surprising that they welcomed Moór’s paper. This, however, did not mean that Austrian scholars did not criticise him at all.

Walter Steinhauser reviewed Moór’s paper in a lengthy article written for the *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, which was one of the leading journals of

<sup>9</sup>Schwartz (1928) pp. 64–65.

<sup>10</sup>Schwartz (1929/1930a), pp. 30–31.

<sup>11</sup>Schwartz (1929/1930b), pp. 34–38. Translations of German texts are the work of the author.

<sup>12</sup>Moór (1929a), p. 43; Moór (1929b).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. 58.

<sup>14</sup>Tóth (2020); Murber (2021).



Austrian historical writing at that time. Steinhauser did not accept the methodology of Moór and he was very critical of the authenticity of Hungarian toponyms appearing in medieval written sources, as he thought that the Hungarian authors of these charters often used Hungarian name forms even when writing about a German settlement. According to him, writers of these charters did not use Hungarian name forms because they were nationalists, but they tried to give names to settlements that sounded familiar to their ears. That's why Steinhauser criticised method followed by Moór, who used toponyms in written documents as authentic sources to determine the ethnic proportions in a certain region. Studying charters alone will not decide how „ancient” the German population is in a given territory.<sup>15</sup> The debate over the population history of Burgenland became much more heated after Elemér Schwartz published a book about the subject in 1932.

## „BATTLE FOR THE GERMAN TOPONYMS OF WESTERN HUNGARY”

Elemér Schwartz had close ties to the Hungarian historical profession. He had good connections to the *Hungarian Historical Association* (Magyar Történelmi Társulat). Schwartz published articles in the journal of the Association (*Századok* – Centuries) and he also participated as lecturer in one of the annual assemblies of the association organised in Sopron in 1932.<sup>16</sup> This assembly in Sopron had a demonstrative character against Austrian nationalism, and it is worth noting that it was a tradition of the Association to hold assemblies in multi-ethnic border regions.<sup>17</sup> As nation states felt that their borders had become insecure and threatened by multicultural border territories, the the related states tended to make more intense attempts at nationalisation in such areas.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to Elemér Moór, Schwartz thus enjoyed the support of the leading figures of Hungarian historical writing like Sándor Domanovszky (chief editor of *Századok*). Schwartz's book about the German toponyms of Western Hungary was published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which gave it prestige.

In the introduction of his book, Schwartz explained his background and standpoint in these debates and his relationship to Germanic studies. „This love of the homeland determined my scientific career, it called me to the world of Germanistics, it made me love the ethno-linguistic studies and it has awakened a thought in me: it would be worth getting to know my western homeland in **every aspect**. It was around the end of the Great War that I travelled from village to village in Western Hungary. The beauty of the nature amazed me and the romantic associations behind medieval castles and the tales about them that I heard here and there filled my soul with pride.”<sup>19</sup> Although Schwartz referred to the Germans living in Western Hungary as „our people” (thus he identified himself both as an ethnic German and a Hungarian nationalist), he thought it important to fight off Austrian claims on the territory, although not on the battlefield, but rather with weapons of „reason”. This fight was motivated by a sense of loss for him, as he wrote that

<sup>15</sup>Steinhauser (1931), p. 294.

<sup>16</sup>Katona (2012).

<sup>17</sup>Várdy (1985), p. 23.

<sup>18</sup>Ablonczy (2020), p. 170.

<sup>19</sup>Schwartz (1932), p. 6. Highlight in the original.



Burgenland was „cut off” from the „body of the Hungarian state.”<sup>20</sup> The book listed the toponyms of this contested territory and explained their linguistic and sometimes ethnic origins, while fiercely debating both the arguments of Moór and Steinhauser – it seems that Schwartz regarded them as his two main opponents. It is characteristic of this book that the author traced back most German toponyms to ancient Hungarian name forms. Though we can find some cases where he accepted the German origins of a toponym, he refuted every theory about possible Slavic origins.<sup>21</sup> He added geographical descriptions to his book, which were filled with romantic, sentimental expressions. Catholicism also played an important role in his interpretation. According to Schwartz, in this territory we can observe a growing cult of Hungarian saints especially in those periods of history when Hungarian national „flame” was being „suppressed,” thus the cult of saints was an act of resistance of Hungarians against foreign influences.<sup>22</sup>

The book received a positive review in *Századok*, written by Jenő Házi. Házi called Schwartz’s approach „impartial” in contrast to those of Moór and Steinhauser, who – according to the reviewer – represented the same „orientation” in this question, i.e. they placed their scholarship in service of Austrian/German political aims. Impartiality did not mean an emotionless approach – Házi emphasized that the very love that Schwartz felt for his homeland helped him to proceed with his scholarly work. Although Házi made some critical remarks about the incomplete basis of sources that Schwartz relied on, he did not want to elaborate his critique, so as not to make it easier for the Austrians to dismiss the results of the book: „it would be a pity to give them a chance to attack precisely on the grounds of historical data, when such mass quantity is not in their hands, but in ours.”<sup>23</sup> Házi was referring here to the fact that after 1921 most of the city and county archives remained in Hungary.

Reception was entirely different on the other side of the border. Regional authorities banned the book in Burgenland and the journal *Burgenländische Heimatblätter* published a harsh critique by Hans Karner, a local historian dealing with population history. Karner cooperated with his colleagues in Vienna, which is proven by the fact that Steinhauser in his articles sometimes thanked for his help with toponyms in Burgenland. Karner thought that the „real” scholars were Moór and Steinhauser, while Schwartz did not reach their level in his works. He criticised Schwartz for neglecting the role of the Slavic population and for his „lack of objectivity.” Karner also underlined that Schwartz did not use the word „Burgenland” in his book.<sup>24</sup> His book review in fact amounted to a reply to Jenő Házi and his critique in *Századok*. Karner agreed with Házi that Schwartz did not utilize enough sources, but disputed his opinion that Austrian historical writing served only propagandistic aims. Unfortunately, in Hungary it had not been understood that what really mattered to „them” (i.e. the people of Burgenland) was not an „ancient idea of state”, but the „ethnic background” – concluded Karner.<sup>25</sup> Historians in Vienna also learned about the debate regarding the book. The regional authorities of Burgenland sent a letter to archivist and historian Lothar Gross to draw his attention to Schwartz’s work of

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, p. 69.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, p. 150.

<sup>23</sup>Házi (1932), p. 191.

<sup>24</sup>Karner (1932), p. 109.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. p. 110.



„The Office of the Regional Government in Burgenland will respectfully attempt to take special interest in this seemingly tendentious and political book. A scholarly revision of this volume is already in progress.”<sup>26</sup> As it turned out, the „scholarly revision” of the book meant the critique written by Hans Karner. Regional authorities sent a copy of the review to Lothar Gross.<sup>27</sup> Walter Steinhauser also wrote a critique, this time for a German journal. Steinhauser was empathetic towards the emotions of Schwartz: the Austrian Germanist thought that it was understandable that Schwartz felt pain, because the new state borders in fact separated him from his childhood „dreamland”.<sup>28</sup> But Steinhauser added that Schwartz’s „political bias” (his anti-Austrian standpoint) could not be tolerated and he should understand that the creation of Burgenland was the will of the people living there. Steinhauser also criticised Schwartz for neglecting Slavic toponyms.<sup>29</sup>

Schwartz was aware that his book caused much debate in Austria, so he decided to write a small booklet to respond to the critique. The title of his booklet was telling: „Battle for the German toponyms of Western Hungary”. I wish to emphasize two aspects of this text. It is interesting to observe Schwartz’s self-representation: his narrative about his own standpoint described a naive scholar who only slowly and gradually discovered the contested nature and national importance of the German toponyms. According to him, he gradually realised that his task was to uncover the hidden, ancient Hungarian origins of settlements with German names.<sup>30</sup> Thus it was not his political bias that motivated his research, but a search for origins. It is also remarkable how Schwartz borrowed arguments and rhetoric from other disciplines to defend his scholarship. He lamented that Hans Karner had not written his review according the principle of „sine ira et studio”, thus no scholar should even bother with his critique.<sup>31</sup> Schwartz argued that he was familiar with all the areas of Western Hungary, which made his position even more legitimate. In his opinion, the fact that he used more than 500 footnotes and followed a „historical method” rules out that he had any political bias whatsoever.<sup>32</sup>

## AN „APOLITICAL” COMMENT FROM ELEMÉR MOÓR

Elemér Moór commented on the debate that was centered around Schwartz in 1934. His writings represent a new colour in this discussion, since he repeatedly denied that toponym research had anything to do with politics and current national conflicts. Moór was chief editor of a journal in Szeged called „*Népünk és Nyelvünk* [Our People and Our Language]”. He attacked Schwartz in his journal, but he also criticised the book review by Jenő Házi. „It is remarkable that Jenő Házi, despite being a historian, totally succumbed to the advertising that promotes the

<sup>26</sup>Paul Eitler to Lothar Gross, 3rd March, 1932. Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), Wien. SB Nachlass Lothar Gross 6–5. (Hereafter cited as Nachlass Lothar Gross)

<sup>27</sup>Paul Eitler to Lothar Gross, 7th January, 1933. Nachlass Lothar Gross.

<sup>28</sup>Steinhauser (1933), p. 288.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. p. 291.

<sup>30</sup>Schwartz (1933), pp. 3–4.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. pp. 10–14.



kind of politics and patriotism like that of Schwartz, and because of this, Házi – to use to his own words – does not want to expose the historical errors in Schwartz’s book so as not to make it easier for Austrians to wage an attack against it. This by no means represents a standpoint of higher scholarly standard and is also a little too naive. Austrians follow the *Századok* anyway, and we can imagine what they will think about the book and the spirit of Hungarian scholarship after such a concealment [of errors].<sup>33</sup> Elemér Schwartz envisioned the conquest of the Carpathian Basin by the Hungarians as a *tabula rasa*, an event that resulted in the flight or extermination of the (German and Slavic) population in Western Hungary. In contrast to his opinion, Moór thought that it was „stupid” to think that the Hungarians killed their own potential servants in the area. Moór cited the negative review written by Hans Karner and repeated Karner’s arguments against Schwartz, for example, that he underestimated the importance of the Slavic population in name-givings.<sup>34</sup> It is also important to note that Moór’s criticism was especially harsh and personal. Many of his sentences were downright sarcastic and offensive sentences: „Schwartz’s book is so bad that the Germans can’t even put into words how bad it is, because no matter how bad it is described, it’s even worse.” Or: „[...] bibliography in Schwartz’s book serves only as a parade and plays a filling role.”<sup>35</sup> According to his concluding words, the book is „a collection of dilettant linguistic idiotisms.”<sup>36</sup> Schwartz published his reply in the journal *Egyetemes Philológiai Közlöny*. In his opinion, Moór’s review article lacks the „etiquette of scholarship.”<sup>37</sup> Schwartz tried to classify Moór as a foreign/alien author, who belongs to the camp of Hans Karner, because – according to Schwartz – he was only able to repeat Karner’s arguments. This debate became even more grotesque when Moór replied to this reply: Moór offered 10 Pengő [local currency] for every toponym-analysis which can be substantiated with sources. He added to his proposal that maybe this did not fit with the etiquette of scholarship, but at least it was „straightforward talk.”<sup>38</sup>

Of course, the debate was followed closely by Jenő Házi. He sent a letter to Moór proposing to clear things up, who then replied to him, and so the two men engaged in correspondence. I will quote some parts from Moór’s reply because it illustrates how his view on the Burgenland question (he blamed the creation of Burgenland on French politics and not on Austrians) influenced his opinion about contemporary Austrian scholarship. „You have a tendency to attribute political meaning to the question of toponyms, which is also an illusion. [...] The peace dictate of Trianon played Western Hungary into the hands of the Austrians only because the French hoped that they could drive a wedge between Austrians, Germans and Hungarians. It was only due to the wisdom of our foreign policy actors that this was not successful. However, even from your point of view I cannot understand what good it would do to the Austrians if I repeatedly showed that Schwartz mistakenly perceived Slavic or Magyar toponyms as German. Or is it a problem that Schwartz works with the help of advertisement and patriotic clichés, whereas I don’t? I also cannot see why the Hungarian cause would suffer if I placed the errors

<sup>33</sup>Moór (1934a) p. 38.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid. p. 44.

<sup>36</sup>Moór (1934b), p. 111.

<sup>37</sup>Schwartz (1934), p. 122.

<sup>38</sup>Moór (1934c), p. 225.





and methods of linguists in the right context? That the Academy supported the publishing of Schwartz's book is the problem of the Academy. [...]

You also write that you do not wish to interfere in my fight „with the linguists”. But this must be only a theoretical standpoint of yours, since you – it seems – did not recognise that you, in fact, deeply interfered with these things when you criticised my work relying on Schwartz's opinion. [...] It is really not my fault that you did not learn about the linguistic and orthographical criteria of charters.”<sup>39</sup>

Házi mentioned this ongoing debate with Moór in a letter written to Schwartz. Despite the condescending and offensive tone that Moór employed towards Házi (as we have seen in the letter above), Házi wrote about this correspondence in a modest tone: „I have read the article in question by Elemér Moór in the journal *Népünk és Nyelvünk* and because I was also mentioned in it, I wrote a letter to him and I received a response, but because his answer was not sufficient and convincing, I responded to him again three days ago, although he left my letter unanswered. I can see this as right because I don't think that correspondence is the right form to clear up such an extensive controversy.”<sup>40</sup> Later Moór did write a letter to Házi full of kind and warm words, as if nothing has happened between the two scholars. Nevertheless, this letter also contained several critical remarks about his main enemy, Schwartz.<sup>41</sup>

## THE DEBATE EVOLVES INTO A DUEL BETWEEN MOÓR AND STEINHAUSER

By the second half of the 1930's Schwartz was no longer participating directly in these debates. Although he promised that he would write a second part to his book in which he would deal with population history, this volume was never finished. It is possible that his professorship from 1936 onwards absorbed all of his energy, but it cannot be ruled out that he had been discouraged by harsh criticism. The duel between Moór and Steinhauser, however, continued and even expanded.

Elemér Moór published a book in German about the medieval history of toponyms in Western Hungary.<sup>42</sup> In his introduction he warned against using solely linguistic methods and stressed that one should also rely on historical arguments. Moór tried to establish a boundary between professional scholars (himself, Karner and Steinhauser) and dilettants (Schwartz). One result of this imaginary boundary between dilettants and scholars was that he focused mainly on the arguments of Steinhauser, as he did not regard Schwartz as a scholar. Moór criticised one of Steinhauser's theories in particular, namely the one whereby mediaeval Hungarian charter writers systematically changed German toponyms into Hungarian ones. Moór emphasized that in fact Hungarian notaries did not rewrite German names – indeed, they even retained Slavic toponyms in their original forms.<sup>43</sup> It is worth noting that with this

<sup>39</sup>Elemér Moór to Jenő Házi, 26th March, 1934. Manuscript collection of Jenő Házi, Other correspondence, Box 14.

<sup>40</sup>Jenő Házi to Elemér Schwartz, 2nd of August, 1934. Manuscript collection of Jenő Házi, Other correspondence, Box 16.

<sup>41</sup>Elemér Moór to Jenő Házi, 18th December, 1935. Manuscript collection of Jenő Házi, Other correspondence, Box 14.

<sup>42</sup>Moór (1936).

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. 5.



volume Moór became a much harsher critic of German and Austrian *völkisch* historical writing than he had been previously.<sup>44</sup>

Moór's book provoked wide-ranging discussion in Austria, Germany and Hungary.<sup>45</sup> Steinhäuser reviewed it for the journal *Burgenländische Heimatblätter*.<sup>46</sup> He treated Moór as a legitimate scholarly opponent (and thus he clearly did not think of him as a dilettant or an enemy), and occasionally he even accepted Moór's arguments. This time the debate centered around the possible distortions of charters by Hungarian notaries. „This [the behaviour of Hungarian notaries in the middle ages – L. D. T.] had nothing to with the chauvinist magyarization attempts of our day, it can be explained simply through population history and social circumstances.”<sup>47</sup> Steinhäuser thought that Hungarian notaries often preferred the Hungarian forms of toponyms since sometimes even the otherwise bilingual German population used these Hungarian forms. He also criticised Moór for neglecting the force behind German „eastern settlement” (*Ostsiedlung*).<sup>48</sup> It is evident that for Steinhäuser the most significant goal was to rediscover original German toponyms that had been „distorted” by the Hungarian state apparatus. His line of reasoning was related to his German *völkisch* orientation, which challenged state-centered nationalism.

Moór replied to Steinhäuser in the same journal. He refuted the theory that notaries „magyarized” toponyms in the charters. What had happened instead? According to Moór, Hungarian authors of charters tried to write down German name forms after someone dictated these to them and this process surely led to some distortions, but not resulted in entirely new – Hungarian – toponyms.<sup>49</sup> A major difference between the two Germanists was related to the way in which they evaluated the historical role of national borders. It is worth quoting Moór in this respect, „In Steinhäuser's point of view, in the Middle Ages Western Hungary and ancient Austria constituted a united ethnic and linguistic territory. Thus, the old state border must have been only a notional line which cannot be regarded as an important boundary. As a result of this approach, Steinhäuser does not acknowledge the significance of certain types of toponyms and dialects for population history. We must regard Steinhäuser's approach as incorrect if we consider that in Germany even today the administrative borders at the same time represent boundaries of dialect. In the Middle Ages, the state border was an important line of separation, which is proven by the fact that the language of [the people of] late medieval Sopron was 100–150 years more archaic when compared to Austrian dialects [...] There are enough historical data to prove that in the Middle Ages people could not cross borders freely.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>44</sup>His main opponent was Austrian historian Ernst Klebel in this respect. Klebel called almost every territory a German „Siedlungsraum” where he could prove the existence of Germans at a given historical time. Moór argued that just because German settlers appeared in a certain territory, that area did not become automatically a German „Siedlungsraum” as Germans often lived together with Hungarian and Slavic peoples. *Ibid.* 319–320. About the historical views of Klebel, see: *Törő* (2022).

<sup>45</sup>Hadrovics (1937); Kniezsa (1937); Kranzmayer (1939).

<sup>46</sup>Steinhäuser (1937).

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.* p. 74.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.* p. 77.

<sup>49</sup>Moór (1938), pp. 38–39.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.* pp. 43–44.



Steinhauser attached an „Afterword” to Moór’s reply in the same volume of the journal. He emphasized that one should take power relations into consideration: during the Middle Ages Hungarian was the dominant language of the state, which meant that the Hungarian language had better positions than German.<sup>51</sup> Steinhauser stressed again that political/state borders did not play a decisive role in population history. „[...] The most significant borders of dialect traversed the border between Austria and Hungary almost everywhere [...]. In this respect political border had little influence on linguistic development. [...] I ask Moór to acknowledge that we are much more educated in this question than he is.”<sup>52</sup> After the *anschluss*, Steinhauser continued to publish on this subject. He sought to prove that German „ethnic identity” was suppressed by the Hungarian state, but this identity became visible in times when much of „Burgenland” was part of Austria: in the period between 1440 and 1647 (when some border cities of Hungary were „pawned off” to Austria)<sup>53</sup> it can be observed that the toponyms increasingly reflected a „certain degree of German identity.”<sup>54</sup>

We saw that important representatives of Hungarian historians (Sándor Domanovszky, Jenő Házi) sided with Elemér Schwartz and condemned Elemér Moór’s standpoint. It is safe to say that the writings of Walter Steinhauser reflected the opinion of some leading Austrian historians and linguists. Steinhauser was appointed as extraordinary university professor at the University of Vienna on 26th January, 1933 (earlier he was „Privatdozent” of German linguistic history). It is enlightening to read the documentation of the university commission that awarded Steinhauser his new title. This commission<sup>55</sup> named Steinhauser’s paper about toponyms of Burgenland (published in 1931 in the *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*) as one of his most significant works. According to the description of Steinhauser’s scientific career, he was interested in both music and foreign languages. For a while he was not sure whether he would become a musicologist or a Germanist. In the commission report this twofold orientation was mentioned as his strength: „His sharp sensitivity towards sound qualities and tones makes him particularly able to research language, especially dialects. [...] Taking into consideration the fact that he combines masterful imagination with critical thinking, which helps him to make use of his wide-ranging knowledge, it is certainly not an overstatement that in present-day Austria or in the whole German Empire we cannot find such a significant researcher of toponyms as he is.”<sup>56</sup> However, in an other context this musical orientation proved to be highly problematic for Steinhauser: after 1945 he was dismissed from his university position. One of the charges against him was that he composed a Nazi march for the youth.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>51</sup>Steinhauser (1938), p. 47.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid. 49.

<sup>53</sup>The evaluation of this period is still subject of much debate among scholars. Were these territories pawned off to Austria or annexed by the country? For new developments regarding this research topic, see: Csermelyi (2018).

<sup>54</sup>Steinhauser (1941), p. 4.

<sup>55</sup>Among its members we find the historian Heinrich von Srbik, who was the dean of the Philosophisches Fakultät at that time. Germanist Max Hermann Jellinek, linguist Paul Kretschmer, germanist Dietrich Kralik, philologist Johannes Mewaldt and anglicist Karl Luick also supported Steinhauser. Kommissionsbericht über den Antrag auf Verleihung des Titels eines a. o. Professors an den Privatdozenten Dr. Walter Steinhauser. Archiv der Republik, Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Personalakten 10/090. Hofkammerarchiv, Wien. pp. 31–33.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid. p. 32.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid. pp. 110–111.



## POSSIBLE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL LESSONS TO BE LEARN FROM THE DUEL

Literature about German Studies as pursued at the University of Vienna emphasizes that even though the works of Steinhauser were contaminated with ideology, they are still read and utilised by present-day scholarship.<sup>58</sup> This is also true in the case of Moór and Schwartz.<sup>59</sup> If we evaluate this debate according to today's standards, it is hard to say who was biased and who wasn't or who counted as a legitimate scholar and who was a „dilettant”. We should instead consider other lessons to be learned from this debate. We can observe the different ways in which emotions, fantasy and rationality were tied together or separated from each other, depending on the person of a scholar. The university commission assessing Steinhauser's career praised both his musical sensitivity and imagination, but also his critical approach. While Schwartz acknowledged his emotional ties to his research subject (and Steinhauser, to a certain degree, was sympathetic to these emotions), Moór criticised his colleagues from a seemingly „apolitical” and rigid critical standpoint. The scientific legitimacy of the works on population history was frequently challenged on both sides of the border. In these polemical situations scholars debated with each other while referring to the „etiquette”, or the supposedly universal standards of scholarship and they sometimes attempted to exclude each other from the community of legitimate scholars. However, it was not only the boundary between scholar and dilettant that was contested, but the disciplinary borders also proved to be fluid and problematic. A good example of this was that Germanists borrowed some elements of the professional rhetoric of historical writing (that one should write „sine ira et studio”), or when historians commented on the polemics between Germanists (see the correspondence between Házi and Moór). National borders of scientific communities were not always stable and clear. However, these national borders were not insignificant, since crossing them was sanctioned. Moór was unpopular in the eyes of some influential Hungarian historians because he had denied that toponym research had political or national connotations, while the militant rhetoric of Schwarz fit better into the nationalist mainstream of historical writing.<sup>60</sup> We can also interpret this debate in a narrower historiographical context: the duel of Germanists can be seen as a preliminary act of the appearance Hungarian *Volksgeschichte* („népiségtörténet”) in the interwar period, since the leading figures of this „school” also researched population history but they criticised Hungarian Germanists in harsh tones. For example, Elemér Mályusz regarded Moór as „alien” and argued for a more militant historical writing while relying on the concept of an ethnic nation.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup>Ranzmaier (2005), p. 144.

<sup>59</sup>Herényi (1999).

<sup>60</sup>It should be mentioned that it was not only his relationship to research, politics and Austrian historical writing that mattered. We have seen that he was unusually harsh and offensive towards his colleagues, which sometimes alienated him from others. A Hungarian historian of population history, István Szabó called Moór a (mentally) „sick” person in his correspondence. Szabó is cited by Vilmos Erős in: Erős (2022), p. 98.

<sup>61</sup>Mályusz (2002).



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