

THE ROLE OF THE TYPE OF SOURCES IN HISTORICAL FAMILY NAME STUDIES

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Abstract: The question of when family names emerged in Hungary is a controversial topic in Hungarian name studies. One factor usually considered in the investigations is the structure of personal names. In my paper, I demonstrate that it cannot be used as evidence because the structure of names depends not only on the period under investigation but also on the source types. For this reason, I introduce three contemporary sources of different types from the first third of the 16th century: conscriptions, collections of fiscal accounts, and deeds on estate issues. I show that the structures of names in them are distinct due to the different purposes of these documents: while one element of the names of the first group seem to be already family names, they can be considered only antecedents of family names in the third group judging only by their structure.

Keywords: Hungarian historical family names, methodology, sources, formal criteria.

The main question of the paper¹

The question of when family names emerged in Hungary is a controversial topic in Hungarian name studies. There are several different views about it; of the dates proposed, the two that are farthest from each other are the 13th (Melich 1943: 271) and the 18th centuries (Mező 1970: 28). One reason for this difference is a terminological problem. The word *emergence* implies a long process and some of the experts take into account the beginning of such a process, while others its end. On the other hand, the term *family name* has yet to be provided a unitary interpretation. Nevertheless, a consensus has been reached that only heritable elements can be regarded as family names, but some opinions formulated before this consensus regarded non-heritable elements as family names as well. An additional problem is that it will be a great challenge to prove that a distinguishing element is heritable, if we do not have several sources about more than one generation of the given family.

Sometimes, besides inheritance, formal criteria also appear in secondary literature. For example, Katalin Fehértóti (1969: 33) regarded elements coming from place names as family names only when they occurred with the Hungarian suffix *-i* (e.g. *Budai* < *Buda* + *-i*),

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excluding elements of the same origin with the Latin preposition *de* (e.g. *de Buda*). She also used a formal point of view on the topic of elements connected to given names with *dictus* (e.g. 1343: *Nicolaum dictum Zeuke* [Nicholas called Blond], AO. 4: 302). In her opinion, Latin forms (e.g. *rufus* ‘red’, *magnus* ‘big/great’) were used more frequently than their Hungarian equivalents (*vörös/piros, nagy*), because the former were only momentary markers of the name-bearers and referred to their real attributes. Contrary to this, Hungarian forms “were used when the element was more attached to the person, they became more constant and hereditary further on”² (Fehértói 1969: 9). The problem is that she did not confirm her statement by any evidence, although the constancy of a distinguishing element can be proven by comparing data referring to the same person. In the following, I intend to discuss if it is useful to use formal criteria, like the number and order of the elements, or language in historical personal name studies. My paper is based on data from the territory of historical Hungary from the 14th and the 16th centuries and the conclusion may be relevant not only for Hungarian but for other languages as well.

Experiment 1: Comparison of name structures in 14th-century deeds and 16th-century conscriptions

The results of historical sciences basically depend on what kinds of sources are available to them. While Hungarian historical personal name studies can rely on several types of sources for the 11th–13th centuries, we have only one type of source for most of the 14th century with respect to secular society: deeds dealing with legal affairs or affairs of ownership. (In the following, I will mention them briefly as deeds for the sake of simplicity, although it is noteworthy that there are several other types of deeds.) After this period, we can turn again to other types of sources, for example conscriptions of taxpayers. These texts contain numerous personal names; we only have to label these names and can promptly make calculations on them, while collecting data from deeds involves much harder and longer work. For this reason, historical name studies with respect to the periods after the 14th century have been based mostly on conscriptions. As an experiment, let us make a comparison between the formal features of data collected from 14th-century deeds, on the one hand, and 16th-century conscriptions, on the other.

Given names can be combined with four types of distinguishing elements in the name structures of 14th-century deeds: 1) with the given name of a relative (mainly with the father’s name, with or without the Latin *filius* ‘son of’, e.g. 1349: *Michael filius Pauli* [‘Michael son of Paul’, AO. 5: 314]); 2) with a place name (with or without the Latin preposition *de* ‘from’, e.g. 1348: *Georgius de Fugach* [‘George from Fugach’, AO. 5: 221]); 3) with an element referring to other features of the person or circumstances in which s/he is involved (with or without the Latin *dictus* ‘called’, e.g. 1347: *Johannes dictus Nyilas* [‘John called Archer’, AO. 5: 113]); 4) with the name of the clan the person belonged to (with the Latin *de genere* ‘from the clan’, e.g. 1347: *Achyntus [...] de genere Pese* [‘Achyntus [...] from the clan Pese’, AO. 5: 98]). Beside the structures containing only one distinguishing element, there are structures with several combinations of such

² „akkor használhatták, amikor az elem már jobban hozzátapadt a személyhez, állandóbbá vált, a későbbiekben öröklődött is”

element in my corpus, which comprises more than 15.000 data items from 14th-century deeds. These combinations are as follows:

- **filius + filius**: pl. 1348: *Georgius filius Ladislai filii Abram* (AO. 5: 224)
- **filius + filius + filius**: pl. 1334: *Johannes filius Salamonis filii Ekch filii Elek* (AO. 3: 88)
- **filius + de**: pl. 1348: *Paulus filius Johannis de Luka* (AO. 5: 225)
- **filius + filius + de**: pl. 1348: *Ladislaus filius Thome filii Ders de Zuha* (AO. 5: 252)
- **filius + de genere**: pl. 1347: *Thomas filius Aladarii de genere Peech* (AO. 5: 44)
- **filius + filius + de genere**: pl. 1304: *demetrio filio Ladyzlai filij Kustan de genere papa* (AO. 1: 86)
- **filius + dictus**: pl. 1347: *contra Nicolaum filium Johannis dictus Cynege* [‘Titmouse’] (AO. 5: 79)
- **dictus + filius + filius**: pl. 1332: *Petrus dictus Zeuke* [‘Blond’] *filius Nicolai filii Jacobi* (AO. 2: 631)
- **dictus + filius + filius + filius**: pl. 1324: *Johannes dictus Lengen* [‘Polish’] *filius magistri Stephani filii Michaelis filii Wbul* (AO. 2: 171)
- **dictus + de**: pl. 1343: *Dominicus dictus Santus* [‘Saint’] *de Egerzegh* (AO. 4: 312)
- **dictus + de genere**: pl. 1327: *comitis Stephani dicti Purch* [‘Cartilage’, ‘Crackling’?] *de genere Ratolt* (AO. 2: 339);
- **de + de genere**: pl. 1339: *Endre de Bors de genere Sartyuanueze* (AO. 1: 497–8)
- **filius + de + de genere**: pl. 1321: *Comes Ladizlaus filius Alexandri de Manaky de genere Bogathrodwan* (AO. 1: 617)
- **filius + filius + de + de genere**: pl. 1318: *Johanne filio Pauli filij Lukus de Banky de genere hunt pazman* (AO. 1: 456–7)
- **filius + filius + filius + de genere**: pl. *Johannes Nicolaus Stephanus et Emericus filii Emerici, filii Pauli filii Kompolthy de genere Aba* (AO. 5: 510)
- **filius + filius + filius + de genere + de**: pl. 1336: *magister Beke filius Thome filii Benedicti filii Iwanka de genere Sudan de Velyke* (AO. 3: 246)
- **dictus + filius + de genere**: pl. 1338: *nobili viro magistro Stephano dicto Pagan* [‘Pagan’] *filio Francisci de genere Hunthpaznan* (AO. 3: 470)
- **filius + dictus + de**: pl. 1337: *Nicolaus filius Michaelis dicti Wkleleu* [‘Sparrer’] *de Byky* (AO. 3: 351)
- **filius + filius + dictus + de**: pl. 1337: *magister Dionisius dictus Magar* [‘Hungarian’] *filius Simonis filii Chalk de Rhedey* (AO. 3: 373)

Naturally, we can find these combinations in other orders too. Moreover, the same person could have been named not only by different combinations of elements, but also without a distinguishing element.

Despite this extraordinary variety of forms in the 14th century, structures in 16th-century conscriptions mostly consisted of only two elements: at the beginning there was the Latin equivalent of the given name and it was followed by the distinguishing element in Hungarian, without any Latin complements, e.g. *Laurencius Anthal* [‘Laurence Anthony’], *Thomas Zalay* [‘Thomas of Zala’], *Paulus Kys* [‘Paul Small/Short’] (VeszprUrb.

45). (The clan name had been extinct by that century because clans had disintegrated, although families that ensued from the same clan kept their collective origin in mind.) These structures of two elements were fairly like contemporary Hungarian full names, apart from the Latin order of elements (i.e. the order of elements in contemporary Hungarian names: family name + given name) and the Latin equivalents of given names. Comparing structures of the 14th and 16th centuries with reference to form, we can easily draw the conclusion that elements connected to given names were not considered family names in the 14th century, because they were variable. However, 16th-century structures already contained family names because they were composed of only two elements, without Latin complements.

Experiment 2: Comparison of name structures of 14th-century deeds and conscriptions of papal tithe payers (1332–1337)

We can provide a more complex picture of structures in the 14th century, if we compare data from deeds to structures from conscriptions of papal tithe payers between 1332 and 1337 (PT.). The latest documents contain numerous names of clergymen. Most given names in these documents were combined with the preposition *de* and a place name. In spite of their likeness to the type with *de* mentioned before, these structures cannot be regarded as distinguishing elements but only as simple circumscriptions, since they did not signal the place where the name-bearer came from but the name of the settlement where he served. Considering this, we cannot find distinguishing elements in the majority of data. Despite this result, it would be a mistake to conclude that family names emerged later in the ranks of clergymen than in the secular world since people become members of the church later than members of a family. The rather few structures with *filius* or *dictus* occurring in these conscriptions prove that clergymen could have been named by distinguishing elements too: *Petrus filius Habrahe* [‘Peter son of Abraham’] (PT. 173), *Cosmas Rufus* [‘Cosma Red’] (PT. 272) etc. The lack of distinguishing elements in their structures was the consequence of the fact that their most important feature was not their family but their ecclesiastical function. This conclusion is reinforced by the cases when a clergyman’s name was mentioned in connection with his allodial affairs; e.g. *discretus vir dominus Ladislaus filius Thome filii Ders de Zuha, nunc prepositus ecclesie Sancti Georgii martiris de Strigonio* [‘reverend father Ladislaus son of Thomas son of Ders from Szuha now provost of Saint George’s Church in Esztergom’] (1348, AO. 5: 252). Data like this also contain distinguishing elements just like secular people’s names. It leads us to realize that one of the factors that have an influence on the written structures of names is the name-bearer’s social status, and another is the type of our sources.

Experiment 3: Comparison of name structures of three different types of sources from the 16th century

We are more fortunate with respect to the 16th century, as several types of sources are available for researchers. In the following, I will compare structures of names in three groups of documents which were written in the same period but with different aims.

Deeds dealing with legal affairs or affairs of ownership

The first type is represented by a part of János N. Fodor's corpus compiled from deeds from northeast Hungary between 1500 and 1526 (Fodor 2010a). It contains 94 names of noblemen alongside the following structures:

1. *de* + place name (37.2%), e.g. *Johannes de Thorda* ['John from Torda'] (1523)
2. place name (19.1%), e.g. *Andrea Bathori* ['Andrew Báthori'] (1523)
3. circumscription (18.1%), e.g. *Sebastiani et Johannis de Wjfalws filiorum condam Domine Dorothee filie olim Andree de Ibran* ['of Sebastian and John from Újfalva sons of the late lady Dorothy, daughter of the late Andrew from Ibrány'] (1520)
4. other feature (7.4%), e.g. *Michaelis ffarkas* ['of Michael Wolf'] (1515)
5. other feature + *de* (7.4%), e.g. *Johannis Wjthez de Kallo* ['of John Valiant from Kálló'] (1525)
6. patronym + *de* (5.3%), e.g. *Ladislau Gede de Ewzedfalwa* ['Ladislau Gede from Ószedfalva'] (1523)
7. place name + *de* + place name (5.3%), e.g. *Ladislao perkedj de Bolth* ['to Ladislau Perkedj from Bolt'] (1525)

As we can see, three Latin complements from the 14th-century structures (*filius, dictus* and *de genere*) had vanished by the 16th century. However, *de* was still in use, although its function had been slightly modified, as it could connect a place name to a structure which already contained an element similarly originating from a place name (group 7). It seems that the first of these two elements (*perkedj*) was already a family name, while the latter (*de Bolth*) referred to the estate of the name-bearer.

The number and complexity of the variations decreased in the data relating to the 14th century, but there were still several combinations. The most name-like of them are the ones without Latin complements (group 2, 4; together: 26.5%). Less name-like combinations are the ones with Latin complements (group 1, 5, 6, 7; together: 55.2%) and circumscriptions are the least name-like (group 3; 18.1%). If we were to build our decision only upon formal criteria, we could state that the structures of names in the 16th century were more name-like than in the 14th century, but family names could still be found only in the minority (26.5%) of structures.

Conscriptions of taxpayers

We have several conscriptions of serfs from the 16th century. These sources differ from deeds in their aim and structure. Conscriptions were made for the use of an upper authority, while deeds usually dealt with the legal affairs or affairs of ownership of certain people. Conscriptions were made only from the scriptors' viewpoint, while the participants in a legal or allodial case could have had some role in the process of preparing a deed. Names of serfs were less numerous in deeds, while they were the typical subjects of conscriptions (although there are some conscriptions of noblemen, too). While family relations and estates are important for a nobleman, these are not essential features of a serf, and thus not important for the authority to note. Moreover, deeds were texts composed according

to strict rules while conscriptions were slightly more than lists of names. All of these differences played a role in the fact that structures of names in conscriptions were simpler and less variable than structures in deeds: they did not contain any Latin complements and were composed of only two elements. Consequently, if we built our assumptions only upon the formal characteristics of structures of names in these two types of sources, we would think that the system of family names had completely been established among serfs by the 16th century, while the process of their emergence was still in progress with the nobility. However, it would contradict the common experience that new customs – especially fashion – usually spread from the upper to the lower classes. At the same time, the few name structures of ecclesiastical noblemen, which also appeared in conscriptions, do not support this theory because these were the same as structures of serfs (e.g. *Anthonium Kys nobilis ecclesie*; *VeszprUrb.* 35), although their social standing was between nobility and serfs. Based on this evidence, we can be sure that the difference between the structures of names in our two types of sources was not only the consequence of the different social status of name-bearers but also of the other differences between the two aforementioned types of sources.

Collections of fiscal accounts

The third type of sources, i.e. collections of fiscal accounts, can be ranked between the other two types. They were made with an unofficial aim: to register the incomes and expenditures of a family's estate. Therefore, their texts are closer to spoken usage than the texts corresponding to the other two kinds of sources. Collections of fiscal accounts of the Kanizsai family were written in Latin in 1520–1522 (Nógrády 2011). The names of noblemen in these documents are without any Latin complements (e.g. *Johannem Banfy* ['John Bánfy'], Nógrády 2011: 21). On the contrary, among the names of serfs, there are given names without any other elements (e.g. *Stephano* ['to Stephen'], Nógrády 2011: 41), structures with Latin complements (e.g. *Johanni Veres de Elbew* ['to John Red from Elbő'], Nógrády 2011: 94) and circumscriptions (*Andree carpentario* ['to Andrew carpenter'], Nógrády 2011: 34) beside structures without Latin complements (*Stephanus Demeter* ['Stephen Demeter'], Nógrády 2011: 56).

Comparing these data to the other types of sources, we can draw the conclusion that structures of names of the given social classes show differences based on the type of the source. As János N. Fodor claimed, the Hungarian form of noblemen's names was used only in unofficial documents, while structures in official documents contained Latin complements (Fodor 2010b: 54). Contrary to the results derived from the other types of sources, the formal analysis of these collections displays that there certainly were family names in the nobility in the 16th century, while their emergence was still in progress in the lower classes.

In addition, we can find a new criterion in fiscal accounts. There are some cases in both social classes where the usually secondary constituent stands instead of the given name: *ad dominum Sechi* ('to master Szécsi', nobleman, Nógrády 2011: 34), *Salay* (serf, Nógrády 2011: 19). They can already be regarded as family names, however, not on formal but on functional grounds, as they fulfil the identifying function of proper names by

themselves. A distinguishing element is not suitable for that because it is fairly variable and its function is only to characterise. For this reason, it can play the role of identification only along with a given name.

Conclusion

Considering these outcomes, it is fairly clear that structures of names strongly depend on our sources. In addition, it is verifiable that formal aspects cannot be used in judging whether an element is a family name or not. Until we can prove it is hereditary, we must not regard it as a family name, despite its modern-like form. At the same time, if we can prove the heredity of an element, we have to consider it a family name, even if it is included in a complicated structure with Latin complements.

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