

Szentkultusz és személynévadás Magyarországon [Cult of Saints and Naming in Hungary]. By Mariann Slíz.

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The fact that naming customs may provide valuable information on the cult of saints, requiring multi- and interdisciplinary approaches, is not new. Relating the changes in the cult of certain saints to the naming habits in Hungary in a given period, however, demands a different method. Mariann Slíz's monograph presents the outcomes of an experiment testing whether we can examine on the macro level in the spatial, temporal, and social dimensions the relationship of a saint's cult and the personal names related to it (including family names derived from it) based on existing databases, starting from the Middle Ages to the present day. Already at first sight, the enterprise seems challenging, but after reading the author's well-considered, problem-sensitive and critical presentation of points of view and methods, we become even more aware of the limitations and difficulties of a research project about the complete Hungarian history of names, and we understand why this is the first comprehensive monograph on the topic.

The book consists of two major parts: the first presenting its aims, sources, and methods, and the second applying them to case studies of three groups of saints the author has compiled according to certain principles (pp. 17–18): those of the Árpád dynasty (Stephen, Emeric, Ladislaus; Elizabeth, and Margaret), the knight-saints (Martin, George, and Demetrius), and the three female saints of the *virgines capitales* (Catherine, Barbara, and Dorothy), who also had a steady position among the fourteen helper saints. The saints were selected primarily based on the sources available, meaning that research into the relations between the cults of saints and naming customs is necessarily limited.

Naming customs cannot be directly related the popularity of a given saint, as they may be due to several different reasons which, in some cases, are intertwined. As Slíz points out, it is worth choosing a period when there is a change in the history of a saint's cult or a religious order (p. 49). Although there are several works

dealing with medieval name occurrences, most of them cannot be applied for examining changes in the frequency of a name over a certain period, and it is even more difficult in the case of female names since there the sources have far fewer of them than of male names. Naming customs were also influenced—although not in every case—by the Reformation (the Protestants refused the intermediary role of saints and preferred names from the Old Testament), the Catholic renewal, as well as the Ottoman rule in Hungary. Cultural and political-ideological issues would affect the popularity of the cult of saints and would indirectly influence the frequency of names (pp. 52–54).

One of the great merits of Slíz's analysis is that she relies on studies related to the cult of saints in order to provide a background for the case studies for a clearer interpretation of their figures. Her perspectives and results help to refine previous statements in scholarship. To cite just one example: while Gábor Klaniczay a few years ago already pointed out a 'rivalry' between the cults of the Hungarian holy knight-king Ladislaus and the most popular international knight saint George in the fourteenth century, Slíz provides a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon in showing that although both names started from the same position in the thirteenth century, Ladislaus gained a much more important position among the landlords influenced by chivalric culture and by the royal house who supported the dynastic saints (p. 112).

Each case study has the same structure, starting from the cult of the saint and the frequency of their names and their variants in medieval Hungary, moving to the early modern period and to the present day in order to find out what could have motivated these changes. Slíz also considers two less self-evident areas, namely the family names derived from names and the female counterparts of male names. She shows with numerous examples that the changes in the intensity of a certain saint's veneration could in fact affect the popularity of their name both in positive and negative ways. The author presents the various ways agents popularized certain saints (or, indirectly their names associated with a broader notion), ranging from composing sermons to establishing bus companies named after them. In complex cases when there is more than one cult in the background of naming customs (Stephen, Elizabeth, and Margaret) resulting in 'strong' cults, Slíz manages to dissociate them—at least as far as it is possible—by looking at their history. The case studies reveal (particularly in the cases of Stephen, Ladislaus, Elizabeth, and Catherine) that when a saint's name is well-established in the name stock, it may become more independent of the cult. This, in turn, could result in the longevity of the name's popularity, influenced by social, cultural, or linguistic factors rather than the current state of the cult. This was the case with the name Catherine, the popularity of which could be ascribed to the Alexandrian martyr, to the efforts of the Árpáadian

and Angevin rulers of Hungary as reflected in their naming customs, and to a much lesser extent, to the Sieneese *mantellata* canonized in 1461. The name remained in fashion throughout the centuries, while the names Barbara and Dorothy fell victim to fashions: the two saints' cults emerged swiftly in the fourteenth century but decreased relatively quickly by the sixteenth century. Treating together the three *virgines capitales*, Slíz successfully demonstrates that even if the legends of certain saints share a number of common elements, the popularity of their names are far from being equal (pp. 135–145).

The book offers a thorough methodological introduction and an innovative approach to the application of naming habits in the study of the cult of saints and beyond for researchers of various disciplines. Its numerous new results based on the largest pool of data available makes it a mandatory reading for those who deal with any of the saints treated in the book. Hopefully, it will open the way for further research of a similar character, a prerequisite of which is a database in compliance with the author's observations in the first part of the book.

