

WHICH ONE OUT OF THE FOUR? THE ORIGIN OF FAMILY NAMES IN THE LIGHT OF COGNITIVE SEMANTICS

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Abstract

The article deals with the question of how historical proper names can be examined in the framework of cognitive semantics, and whether the theories of this field of study are compatible with those of traditional onomastics. To illustrate the complexity of the question the author focuses on the development of Hungarian family names. Distinctive name components functioned as the basis for later family names. These components can be divided into four groups: (i) names with filius ('son of'), (ii) de ('from') + place name, (iii) names with dictus ('known as'), (iv) patronymics (de genere) ('from the kindred called'). Onomastics claims that a distinctive name component becomes a true family name when it becomes steady, for example, when Kovács ('smith') is not a smith by profession any more, when all members of a family bear the same distinctive name, etc. By adopting the framework of cognitive semantics, one must accept that naming is a cognitive act: out of the attributes of a person to be named the most characteristic feature is chosen to form a name. When the feature ceases to refer to reality (a person called Kovács is not a smith any longer), the relationship between that feature and the person identified by it also dissolves and the distinctive name component becomes a family name. The paper examines what factors are responsible for this change in the case of the four name types and detects why of the wide choice of possible name forms one particular distinctive name becomes a family name. The author claims that both traditional and cognitive considerations, although their approaches and methods are different, reach the same conclusion. Furthermore, in the framework of cognitive semantics, many problems disregarded by traditional onomastics can be easily explained.

1. Introduction

1.1. One of the fundamental research fields in historical name studies is the process of the origination and establishment of family names and the period in which such processes took place. Researching the history of family names is unfeasible without studying concrete data and sources (e.g. deeds, censuses, etc.). In doing so, name studies rely heavily on history, especially on cultural history, settlement history and genealogy (see e.g. Fallenbüchl 1991; Fehértói 1975, 1994; Székely 1970). In my view, such traditional research methods can be meaningfully supplemented by another field of linguistics, namely cognitive semantics, which, at first glance, appears to be far from name studies. With the help of cognitive semantics (Langacker 1987, 2008), a novel approach to the issues raised above opens up. At the same time, however, this novel approach certainly cannot function without data or the support of related disciplines. In the present study, the rejection of well-established methods or research tools is by no means advocated: the main goal is to highlight the possible uses of this new branch of science in name studies research.

1.2. The data I have used for the present research come from deeds contained in the Collection of Documents from the Age of the Angevins (AnjOkm) and the Collection of Deeds of

the Count Károlyi Family of Nagy-Károly Vol. 1 (KárOkI) written in Latin. Thus, my research extends only to written records, more precisely to records of the first half of the 14th century. This is because by that **period** the use of distinguishing elements had become an established practice in Hungarian as well. It is noteworthy, nonetheless, that apart from some unique cases, real family names were practically non-existent, for a person was identified by the use of diverse distinguishing elements not only when being referred to in various deeds but also when being successively referred to in the text of the same deed. Consequently, this historical age is perfectly suitable for studying the methods and reasons of naming.

2. Distinguishing elements as reference points

2.1. Naming itself is a cognitive act, and it is highly dependent on how language users perceive the world around them. During the act of naming, one of the numerous features of the entity to be named will be foregrounded (profiled), and the entity in question will be named after this feature: among the many characteristics abstracted as entities in a conceptual matrix, one is foregrounded against the others. The naming of persons is effected in the same way. The meaning of the Hungarian noun *ember* ('person') is composed of several cognitive domains (such as PLACE OF RESIDENCE, FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS, APPEARANCE and INNER QUALITIES). By the act of naming, one of these qualities, usually the most easily accessible one, i.e. the one the person's most salient feature belongs to, will be activated and will act as a reference point for the target, and facilitate the identification of the given person in the present context (for the reference point, see e.g. Langacker 1999: 171–202; Tolcsvai Nagy 2005b: 43–70). For example, if somebody is limping, s/he, through this quality, will be quite salient in a 'non-limping' population. (To stay with this example, a person's limping can be considered as a salient quality while all his other, less conspicuous qualities remain in the background.) That said, it is understandable why this person will be named *Limpy*. This way of thinking explains secular naming practices in pre-Christian times. Ecclesiastical naming practices, however, cannot be accounted for in the same fashion since ecclesiastical names were not given on the basis of the meaning of the actual names in question. The development of **distinguishing elements**, considered as the precursors of family names, must have taken place similarly to the process of secular naming, thus such naming practices can also be studied with the help of cognitive semantics. (The term in bold type above comes from András Mező (1970: 78)'s terminology: in the present context, I deem the use of this term more appropriate than the use of Katalin Fehértói (1969: 5)'s term of **distinguishing name** for the reason that the latter term is a narrower category and excludes names containing *filius* and *de* + place name constructions, both referred to in the present study.)

2.2. The most common types of distinguishing elements are names using *filius* (1334: *Johannes filius Etheruh* ('Johannes son of Etheruh'), AnjOkm. 3: 126), *de* + place name (1326: *Ladizlaus de Farkasd*, ('Ladizlaus from Farkasd') AnjOkm. 2: 269), *de genere* (1315: *Myske de genere Ratholth*, ('Myske from the kindred of the Ratholth') AnjOkm. 1: 377) and names containing *dictus* (1323: *Nicolaus dictus Rex*, 'Nicolaus known as King' AnjOkm. 2: 64) (see e.g. Benkő 1949). Here, too, the reason for naming is the actual perceived quality of the person that was easily noticeable by those who effected the naming: in the first example, family relationship seemed the most important; in the second, the most essential feature was the property or the place of origin; in the third, the clan; and in the fourth, some other quality (e.g. appearance or inner quality, occupation). The main question, quite seldom addressed

by name studies to date, is why one given element (or, in the majority of cases, several given elements) has (have) emerged to become the most important (given the fact that in the case of certain persons different people found diverse qualities to be the most salient). In my view, the selection was primarily influenced by pragmatic and other, extra-linguistic factors.

2.2.1. One of the most influential of these factors was social standing. For noblemen, proving their nobility and securing an uninterrupted line of inheritance and succession were of primary importance as these issues ensured their privileges, raised them above the level of the featureless masses of ordinary people, furthermore, the acquisition of various dignities and offices was a highly desirable objective for them. It follows from the above that it was the cognitive domains of FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS, PROPERTY, CLAN OR NOBILITY TITLES that most often became active in the naming of such persons. This is especially observable in the case of titles of nobility countrywide (Palatine, Lord Chief Justice, Master of the Treasury, Voivode of Transylvania, etc.) as (during the periods of stable royal power) there existed only one of each of these positions, and the power attached to them extended to the entire, or a huge part of the country with everybody knowing the people who filled these positions by their names. Thus, their title of nobility became their most salient feature out of all the features in their character matrix, e.g. 1340: *Thomas woyvoda Transsilvanus et comes de Zonuk* ('Thomas the Voivode of Transylvania and the head of Szolnok county', AnjOkm. 4: 4). In sum, it can be stated that out of the three above types of distinguishing elements, names including *filius* and *de* + place name were the most characteristic names of noblemen.

As opposed to the members of the nobility, the majority of common people had no property, they did not belong to a clan or did not bear high titles and even their fathers' identity was less important and less worthy of attention. Therefore, when they were named, it was mostly the cognitive domains of APPEARANCE, INNER QUALITIES, PLACE OF RESIDENCE OR OCCUPATION that became active. If, for instance, somebody moved from their place of birth to another settlement, obviously in the eyes of those already living in the latter settlement, the most striking feature of the person in question was the settlement they came from: this distinguished them from the others to a much greater extent than their father's (or other relatives') name or their occupation. Another obvious possibility was to distinguish between two persons with the same name living at the same settlement on the basis of their occupations: thus one of them would be called *John Smith* while the other *John Taylor*. These two alternatives, nonetheless, were most likely to have been preceded by a third possibility: naming on the basis of appearance and physical features. If somebody had a feature which was different from the prototypical (e.g. a bigger nose, ear, or mouth, or just one hand, leg, eye, etc.), this was always more conspicuous than their occupation or the settlement they were from. Certainly, it was so because one had to talk to the person in question and get to know them to a certain extent in order to learn about their occupation and origin. Physical features, however, can be perceived at first glance. On the basis of the above arguments, it may be concluded that among common persons names with *dictus* were typical (the same conclusion was reached by e.g. Fehértói 1970: 155; Kurcz 1988: 76; Engel 2003a: 583–584).

2.2.2. The actual naming of a person is also affected by his role in a given matter. If he is the issuer of the deed, his prominent feature is in the domain of NOBILITY as this reserves him the right to issue deeds, and so any other features he may have are only of secondary importance.

Whether a given person plays a primary or a secondary role in a given matter will mostly affect the quantity of elements in his name. Primary actors, for the sake of unambiguous distinction, are described more precisely, through the use of more reference points. If, however, a person is only referred to in a secondary role, e.g. as the owner of the land adjacent to the property described (practically as a reference point facilitating the identification of the property), then only one distinguishing element is used. Due to a lack of data (the given person is referred to only in one deed, or not as a primary actor), it is, as a rule, impossible to pinpoint the reason why one of these elements is finally selected.

2.2.3. The aim articulated in a given deed also influences the emergence of reference points. For instance, in a property transaction (inheritance, purchase, sale) naturally the domains of PROPERTY and FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS will be in focus. This perspective was so powerful that even the names of countrywide-known noblemen were extended by distinguishing elements of *filius* and/or *de* + name of property: 1333: *in persona magnifici viri Thome voyuode Transsilvani filii Farkasii* ('in the name of dignified Thomas the Voivode of Transylvania son of Farkas', AnjOkm. 3: 44); similarly Pál Garai features „only” as *Pauli magistri tawarnicorum domine regine* ('Paulus the Master of the Treasury of the Queen' 1336, AnjOkm. 3: 296) in a list of noblemen, whereas with reference to a property issue, he is mentioned as: 1336: *magnifici viri magistri Pauli de Gara magistri tawarnicorum et iudicis curie domine regine* ('dignified master Paulus from Gara the Master of the Treasury and the Queen's Lord Chief Justice', AnjOkm. 3: 278).

2.2.4. When it comes to selecting name elements an especially important aspect is what image the primary actor, oftentimes the applicant, of the deed wishes to convey of himself. The most outstanding examples of this are provided by clan names. The element *de genere* is less common in names from the beginning of the 14th century on as, at that time, the clan system was rapidly disintegrating, and with the Angevins a new circle of barons had evolved by being granted nobility, and thus new families entered the rank of noblemen. Furthermore, even certain members of castle serfs managed to be granted nobility as well (for more detail, see e.g. Engel 2003b: 317, Zsoldos 1999: 168–181). The reason for which the clan name still featured in certain names is that the noblemen concerned considered their belonging to the given clan an important characteristic feature in the given situation. Some wished to highlight their long-established nobility as opposed to the new circle of nobility that was granted the title not much long before. In a deed dating back to 1306, the sons of Comes András mortgaged a quarter of both of their two properties: *Andreas et Johannes filij Comitiss Andree, de generatione Osl* ('Andreas and Johannes, sons of Comes Andreas of the kindred of Osl', AnjOkm. 1: 110). Through this act, the brothers signalled that even if they were having financial problems, they came from a noble lineage. In a deed of 1308, a widow, in her own name and in the name of her two under-aged sons, assigned the filial quarter to her daughter of age: *nobilis domina, Barbara nomine, filia Nicolai fratris Batyz de genere Negol, relicta Thome filij Pauli de genere Geur* ('noble lady known as Barbara the daughter of Nicolaus, brother of Batyz from the kindred of Negol, widow of Thomas son of Paulus from the kindred of Győr', AnjOkm. 1: 142). In this case, referring twice to the fact that she belonged to a clan was in fact an act of defence: a lonely widow might well have been the target of greedy relatives and neighbours wanting to do her out of her property: that could have been the reason why she stressed her right to the land. During the time of the Provisorium (1301–1307), the element *de*

genere in someone's name signalled that s/he belonged to the clan of a powerful lord, since such a name element was a highly decisive feature at the time of war between the lords and claimants to the throne. After King Charles Robert gained power (in 1307), it was rather the "new" barons who used the clan names to show that even if their power was new, their nobility was well-established in an effort to make the members of the long-established nobility accept them as equal in rank.

2.2.5. With reference to the element of *de* + place name, the place of residence might also come into play as an extra-linguistic feature. As the wealthiest nobles had more than one property, the selection of the property to be included in their names as a distinguishing element was also carried out on the basis of prominence: the most salient feature was the property where the nobleman actually lived. (This is convincingly proven by János N. Fodor [2004: 43] with the help of the family names of the Szólátmonostor-based branch of the clan Gutkeled.) The Bazini and Szentgyörgyi families, for instance, lived in Bazin and Szentgyörgy alternately, thus in deeds it was always the actual property where they lived that appeared in their family names (Karácsonyi 1900/2004²: 670). Thus Sebes in 1334 was referred to as *nobiles viri magistri Sebus [et Petrus] filii Abrae de Sancto Georgio* ('noble men Masters Sebus [and Petrus], sons of Abraham from Szentgyörgy' AnjOkm. 3: 74), whereas in 1335 the same person was noted as *magistri Sebus filii comitis Abrae de Bozyn* ('to Master Sebus son of Abraham from Bazin', AnjOkm. 3: 132). This, however, raises a new issue for discussion: it seems that it is not only the activation of a domain that reflects a choice but also the choice of the element to be profiled within the actual domain. Further, the element of the *filius* type also raises the same problem: the person who did the actual naming/was responsible for the actual naming had to make a choice from among the family members of the person to be named. (In the majority of cases, it was the father that was salient, although in some cases a distant relative might have played a more crucial role in the life of the family, e.g. the property was inherited from him, he held a high office, etc.; that is, his role and character in the history of the family was more salient than that of the father. An interesting example for this is provided in Fehértói 1975.)

3. The stability of the reference point

As it is pointed out above, when a person receives a name, several distinguishing elements are combined as a rule. The reason for this, apart from the explanation detailed above, might primarily be that the bearer of the name or the scribe noting down the name did not feel that any one of the elements was stable enough in itself to serve as a reference point. Let us imagine that someone is trying to get to a certain address in an unknown town. They have already asked several people for the way but everybody has explained the route in relation to different reference points. This way one would probably never find one's way to the given address. (This is the kind of situation researchers face when, wishing to identify persons, they are trying to decide whether the person called *Stephanus dictus Fekete* ('Stephanus known as Black') is the same as *Stephanus filius Thur* ('Stephanus son of Thur') referred to in a later deed.) The situation would likewise be hopeless if the person giving directions in the previous example would relate the address in question to a black BMW cruising the area all day long. Thus, a reference point should be constant and stable in order to fulfil its function. Stability, in turn, is a matter of degree, with more and less stable elements forming a continuum. Conceptualisation is always carried out relying on the more stable reference

point, i.e. a less stable entity is typically defined in relation to a more stable entity (compare *the ball is behind the tree with the tree is in front of the ball*).

3.1. If none of the elements are stable enough, then it seems logical to activate several elements at the same time.

3.1.1. This is what happened in the following case: **1334:** *Paulus quondam banus de Machow iudex curie domine regine* ('Paulus former Ban of Macsó, the Queen's Lord Chief Justice', AnjOkm. 3: 117). Pál Garai, whom I have already referred to above, when finding himself in a position higher than his former position of Ban, he still noted his earlier position for a certain period of time as his new position was not considered to be known well enough and thus stable enough by the scribe drawing up the deed (the differences between contemporary and present-day conditions are illustrated by the fact that by that time Garai had been acting for about two years as the Queen's Lord Chief Justice – Karácsonyi 1900/2004²: 438–439).

3.1.2. The bearer of the following name – *magister Thomas filius Petri magni castellani de Chokakw et de Geztus* ('Master Thomas son of Petrus the Great, Castellan of Csókakő and Gesztes', 1335; AnjOkm. 3: 174) – made a significant career under the Angevin kings: in 1335, however, he still held the position of Castellan, which was merely of average importance. Also, similarly to many barons elevated under the reign of King Charles Robert, he was a member of the lesser nobility only (Karácsonyi 1900/2004²: 408–412). Consequently, he had no position, ancestors or property of higher importance which could have unambiguously defined his identity, therefore in his case several reference points were necessary.

3.1.3. Women – if their names ever made it into documents – were, at that time, usually officially named in relation to their male family members. Reviewing contemporary practice, it appears that in order to do this, two reference points were deemed necessary and sufficient: the names of the father and the husband. If, nevertheless, the widow remarried and if her new marriage was relatively recent (or in other words, it was not stable enough to be used as a reference point) at the time of issuing the deed, the deed contained the names of both the late and the current husband: **1308:** *nobili domina [...] Katha Relicta magistri petri de Ogya filia comitis Buken cognata comitis Abree [...] de Sancto Georgio* ('noble lady Kata widow of Master Petrus from Ogya, daughter of comes Buken relative of Comes Andreas', AnjOkm. 1: 151–152).

An intricate and surprising item different from contemporary everyday practice is the following: **1333:** *Sebastianus frater relicte Ruberti* ('Sebastian brother of Robert's widow', KárOkl. 82). This circumscription reflects that the person drawing up the deed identified a man by mentioning a female relative of his. Based on the above, one must conclude that the woman in question, for some reason, must have played such a prominent role in the family (presumably having authority over several significant pieces of property as a widow) that she served as a reference point in the naming of her brother. Strangely though, she was not considered important enough to have her own name noted. Instead, in the usual fashion, she is referred to in relation to her late husband.

3.2. Another solution to the problem of not having appropriately stable reference points is to switch reference points. This, as a rule, does not mean that instead of one cognitive domain another was highlighted, it rather means that within a given domain one, more

easily accessible element got profiled instead of another. As several examples show, if a nobleman was donated a property more significant than his other properties, the name of this later acquired property was used as a new distinguishing element (see e.g. Mikesy 1959: 83; Székely 1970: 205), as, from that time on, from among all his properties, this property was the most conspicuous and salient.

4. From distinguishing elements to family names

So far it has been shown that in the initial stage of the development of family names, distinguishing elements were added to the one-element names used earlier. The distinguishing elements, however, were not used consistently in all of the deeds. This raises another question, namely: when did these elements become real family names?

4.1. As far as the exact date of the appearance of Hungarian family names is concerned, researchers hold very diverse opinions. According to János Melich (1943: 271), for instance, family names are already existent in the 13th century, whereas Sándor Mikesy (1959: 82) dates the establishment of a regularly inherited Hungarian name system to the beginning of the 16th century, and András Mező (1970: 28) to the 17th-18th centuries. These significant differences are partly explained by the fact that the development of family names was quite a long process.

Traditionally, a name element is termed a real family name when it has been established on a permanent basis. This certainly does not refer to its written form or orthography – these two aspects being dependent on the person noting down the name – but to the fact that the same distinguishing element is used to identify a person, thus it appears as a family name. The other important criterion is the hereditary nature of name elements, which, for lack of other data, can be inferred from the same element appearing in the names of siblings (see e.g. Hajdú 2003: 737–738). Working from early records, nonetheless, it is almost impossible to establish lines of inheritance. It is not sufficient evidence, for instance, if in the names of both the father and the son the same property name features since as long as the family possesses the given property, the possibility of using the circumscription of *de* + place name is afforded. The case with names of occupations is similar. Since very often occupation goes from father to son, it is impossible to decide whether a given element acts as an occasional marker or if the element is already inherited. This kind of uncertainty has given rise to diverse opinions among researchers. On the basis of formal criteria, Katalin Fehértói (1969: 33), for instance, does not consider the *de* + place name construction a family name. In her view, only names featuring the *de* + place name construction spelt in the Hungarian way (i.e. *-i* place name suffix spelt in Hungarian) are acceptable as real family names. János N. Fodor (2004: 31) takes a more cautious approach claiming that “It is not too probable that these elements could ‘as a rule’ be considered family names, but it is undoubted that there might be family names behind them” (translation by the author).

The documents consulted for this research do not yield sufficient data neither in terms of quantity nor in terms of quality to take sides in this issue. The present analysis encompasses a mere 40 years of data, which is insufficient for observing long-term changes. As my research extends to the entire territory of former Hungary, most of the persons or families surface only once in the data collected. This makes research into the question of inheritance even more difficult. Despite the difficulties outlined above, on the basis of the available

data, it can be observed that the use of distinguishing elements shows a very diverse pattern even in the case of one single person. Therefore, in my interpretation, in this age, it is only with reference to a few cases that one can talk about family names (e.g. in connection with the Drugeth's, who come from France and whose names always appear in the same form in the sources, without any Latin elements: that is why it can be assumed that they bore an established family name of French origin). Due to the difficulties outlined above, in the rest of the study, I do not wish to establish date limits but my aim is to set up the criteria for a distinguishing element to be regarded as a family name.

4.1.1. In connection with proper names, Langacker (1991: 59) notes that they are the unique names of single entities and are thus a priori grounded. (This is what Bulgakov noted forty years before Langacker, when he explained that proper names function like demonstrative pronouns or like a gesture of pointing at a person; in Hungarian: 1992: 449.) If, however, in a conversation there is reference to several persons with the same name, the identifying function of names may be suspended. In such cases, consequently, names function rather like common names, therefore distinguishing elements and circumscriptions are necessary to unambiguously identify the person one wishes to talk about (Langacker 1991: 58–60). Katalin J. Soltész expressed a similar idea as early as in 1979: “if one hears the name *John*, one might think about John Public, John Smith or even John the Apostle [...]; without such additions or without any context or speech situation, *John* or any other name in fact is merely a potential name” (1979: 46; translation and highlights by the author). Thus, an epistemically grounded proper name in such cases requires grounding the same way as a common name does (for grounding, see Langacker 1987: 126–128).

This issue was raised at quite an early stage in connection with the development of family names. According to Gábor Szarvas (1885: 418), the need for the development of two-element names came about as a result of the decreased diversification of the pool of names: several people bore the same name, which caused confusion in everyday life. János Melich (1943), however, rejected this theory and claimed that it was rather for legal reasons and to ensure the line of succession and inheritance that family names evolved. This argumentation was then picked up and extended in social, economic and cultural historical considerations by Loránd Benkő (1949). Sándor Mikesy (1959), on the other hand, regarded the development of family names as a joint consequence of the practice of drawing up deeds and the effects of Western civilisation. These opinions can, in fact, be perfectly reconciled and traced back to one single cause: the proper name acting as a reference point. As we have seen above, a reference point can only be something that is easily accessible and more salient than its target. If, nonetheless, in a village every second man is called *John* and every third male is called *Michael*, then these names will not be salient in their conceptual surroundings. This will then give rise to situations where persons with the same name are mistaken for each other, which results in heritage, tax payment, etc. related complications. In order to avoid such confusions, the reference point must be strengthened and supported with the help of another reference point. It is at this stage that the effects of Western civilisation come into play: this new reference point is prototypically a distinguishing element that can either be metonymic (referring to one of the given person's characteristics, family affiliation or lineage, place of residence or property) or, less often, metaphorical (the conceptualisation of the person as a target domain with the help of a familiar plant, animal, etc. as a source domain) (for the similar origins of English family names, see e.g. Matthews 1966, Reaney 1967; for German family names, Geuenich 1995). If one accepts that a name is a reference

point and that a reference point must always be stable, then it logically follows that a distinguishing element can only be regarded as a family name if the name element has become permanent or, in other words, established. This then perfectly matches the traditional point of view.

4.1.2. Let us examine the three constructions through three examples (I do not consider the *de genere* construction a separate type as it behaves in the same way as the construction with *de* + place name; and, furthermore, clan names did not become family names):

<i>Johannes</i>	<i>filius</i>	<i>Etheruh</i>	(AnjOkm. 3: 126)
<i>Ladizlaus</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>Farkasd</i>	(AnjOkm. 2: 269)
<i>Egidius</i>	<i>dictus</i>	<i>rufus</i>	(AnjOkm. 1: 122)
target		source	

Earlier I claimed that distinguishing elements served as reference points in the conceptualisation of the target, i.e. the person they served to identify. In the above examples, Johannes, Ladizlaus and Egidius, in which cases the son is defined in relation to his father, the (land) owner to his property, a person to a range of colours, respectively. If in reality the actual relation ceases, because one of the entities between which the relation could previously be observed disappears, for example, Ladizlaus loses his property, this person should not be called *Ladizlaus de Farkasd* any more. However, if he is still called *Ladizlaus de Farkasd* as a result of conventionalisation, this clearly indicates that behind the Latin structure *de F.* there is a Hungarian family name. This is exactly what happened to the Bacsikai Family researched by János N. Fodor (2004: 36): sometime between 1346 and 1360 the family left the settlement of Bacska, and in 1379 they renounced Bacska for the benefit of another branch of the family, and yet in their name, the element *de Bachka* continued to appear. It is clear that the structure previously used to identify a person by characterizing them does not describe or characterise them any longer, but instead, it identifies them, thus fulfilling one of the basic typicality conditions of being a name. The element previously used for grounding has lost its original function and has ended up as part of the name. (This is perfectly well proven by the fact that if someone knows several persons with the same two-element name [e.g. *Farkasdi László*], then in a conversation they will need another distinguishing element for the unambiguous identification of the one person concerned.)

4.1.3. The process described above brings about another change. As long as it is possible to add different distinguishing elements to a name, the cognitive act of naming is continually reproduced: behind a name, the active problem-solving process executed by the person or community performing the naming is visible all the time. But as soon as the name element becomes a family name, the role of the person(s) performing the naming disappears.

4.2. Answering the question in the way detailed above (i.e. when did distinguishing elements become real family names), logically a second question follows: What influences which of the different varieties of names will finally become a family name? The more sophisticated circumscriptions can immediately be excluded since they are the products of written culture. They are unsuitable to be used orally, which presents an insurmountable

obstacle to them becoming family names. Thus, the three basic types (*filius*, *de* + place name, *dictus*) detailed above remain. The answer once again lies with reference points. A reference point, as it has been shown above, should be constant and stable in order to fulfil its function. The more stable an element functioning as a reference point is, the more likely it is to become a family name.

4.2.1. With this in mind, let us examine the three basic types of distinguishing elements. The paternal name (or the name of any other relative) can be considered (more or less) stable with reference to one single person. But such a name is nowhere near stable from the point of view of the family as this name changes from generation to generation. Most probably this is the explanation for the phenomenon noted by Pál Engel (2003: 583–584), who researched the names of noblemen in the County of Valkó: by the middle of the 15th century the use of this type of name radically declined whereas the proportion of constructions including place names gradually increased. This is because place names are appropriately stable reference points bearing in mind that one and the same property could remain in the ownership of the same family for hundreds of years. Even if the *de* + place name construction does not refer to a nobleman but instead to a person who came from the settlement in question, this reference point can again be termed stable as families (and also their neighbours and acquaintances) remembered their origins for generations. The type with *dictus* is not uniform in this respect: certain qualities associated with appearance and inner qualities (e.g. colour of hair, height, mood, habitual actions, etc.) as well as occupations might have been inherited or handed down from generation to generation, therefore such qualities and occupations can be regarded as stable from the point of view of the family, whereas other qualities cannot.

4.2.2. There also appears an intriguing contradiction if I return to the problem associated with the discussion of the first issue: it is impossible to prove that a construction of *de* + name of property has become a family name until the family in question loses or sells, etc. their property. The same has been said above about the names of occupations: as long as the occupation is handed down from one generation to the other, the inheritance of names cannot be proved. In opposition to this, by involving genealogy in this research, it can be stated that in the case of a name including *filius* as low a number as two generations is enough to establish lineage: if after *filius* it is not the name of the father that is found but the name of a more distant ancestor (e.g. the grandfather), one is certainly dealing with a family name. However, one must be more careful in the case of names containing *dictus*: if the same element is featured in the name of both the father and the son, it can be suspected that the name was handed down. It is likewise impossible to state anything with absolute certainty in the case of hereditary qualities just like as it is in the case of *de* + place name constructions (but who is to decide what can be regarded hereditary and what cannot?). The task, nonetheless, is easier in the case of metaphorical (e.g. 1377: *Petrus dictus Chyrke* [‘Petrus known as Chicken’, Fehértói 1969]) and especially hypocoristic names. Let us take for instance the following example: 1338: *magister Sebus filius Abrae dicti Abychk de Sancto Georgio* (‘Master Sebus son of Abraham known as Abychk from Szentgyörgy’, AnjOkm. 3: 456). In the father’s name, the distinguishing element *Abychk* was formed using the hypocoristic form of the name *Ábrahám*, most probably in order to allow for him to be distinguished from his father (that is from Sebes’ grandfather), who was also called *Ábrahám* (for the family, see Karácsonyi 1900: 665–672). Had this element appeared in the name of Sebes or his siblings, Tamás and Péter, one would then have to regard this name as a family name and not as a

circumscription of hypocoristic origin with a distinctive purpose (data to the contrary, however, are unknown). The conclusion that follows directly from the above is the following: although in order for a name to become a family name a reference point as stable as possible is required, for the determination of whether an element has become a family name or not, it is actually the least stable reference points that are the most suitable.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that neither traditional nor cognitive analyses can be carried out without data obtained from sources, and that neither analysis can achieve much without relying on related disciplines. As we have seen, in the initial stage of the development of family names, in addition to earlier one-element names, distinguishing elements appeared, which were different from deed to deed. Since the aim of naming was to define a person as precisely and unambiguously as possible, the element actually used was always the most salient quality from among all the qualities of that person. Oftentimes, this meant highlighting several elements at the same time. It is presumable that these elements are not equally salient: their conspicuousness is a matter of degree. Indeed, the question of salience will have to be answered by future research into the sequence of such elements.

As regards the question of since when it has been possible to refer to real family names, the same results were obtained by using both methods, even if the theoretical foundations of these methods were different. As opposed to the previous question, the last issue of what influences whether individual types of distinguishing elements will finally become family names, has not yet surfaced in the Hungarian research of historical personal name studies. Raising this issue in itself seems to support the assumption that the framework of cognitive theory may well have a prolific effect on future research in the field.

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