

Mariann Slíz

The Translation of Personal Names in Latin, German, and Czech Charters in Medieval Hungary*

1. The aim of the study

As translation conventions change over time and vary according to language and name type, a translational approach to the personal names found in the medieval charters of Hungary can lead to new findings in both historical onomastics and translation studies. For this reason, the study will examine Latin, German and Czech charters written in medieval Hungary, concentrating on two main questions: on the hypothetical differences in strategies applied in the translation of personal names according to the target language, and on the change of translation strategies over time.

2. Multilinguality in Medieval Hungary

Medieval Hungary was a multinational and therefore multilingual country. Naturally, the question of multilingualism is inevitable, especially connected to scribes. Cultural bilingualism can be expected in the case of Latin. Hungarian, German and Czech, however, may have been the scribes' mother tongue. While the majority of the scribes must have been Hungarian, several German scribes were probably born in a mostly German-populated Hungarian city, or could have come from Bavarian or Austrian parts of the Holy Roman Empire. The scribes who wrote in Czech may have been born in a Northern Hungarian city which had a considerable Western Slavic population or could have come from abroad, e.g. several were employed by the Hungarian King and Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund of Luxemburg in the royal chancellery in the first half of the 15th century. However, foreign-born scribes would have had to have learnt Hungarian, too, as they needed to interpret the documents for the concerned parties in their respective mother tongues, which could have been Hungarian even in an ethnically mixed city. (For further information cf. MOLLAY 1982, BALÁZS 1989: 102, SZENDE 2011.)

3. The sources of the study

The Latin sources of the investigation are represented by my own corpus of 20,000 name entries collected from 14th-century deeds (SLÍZ 2011, 2017),

* This paper was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.



JÁNOS N. FODOR's name dictionary from the 15th–16th centuries (2010), the tithe collection of Bács, Bodrog and Csöngrád counties from 1522 and the urbarium of the Veszprém diocese from 1524. Data on German names was found in the collection of charters from the German–Hungarian populated city of Sopron (SoprT.), while Czech names were taken from the small collection of Czech deeds written in Hungary published by ISTVÁN KNEZSA in 1952.

German and Czech charters written in Hungary are still on the periphery of Hungarian historical onomastic studies. The typical language of documents was undoubtedly Latin from the beginning of Hungarian document writing, i.e. the very beginning of the 11th century. The first German deeds can only be found from the first half of the 14th century, and a small number of Czech deeds were written in the 15th–16th centuries. Due to the relatively narrow time-frame and the smaller number of non-Latin documents these can only be used to compare the translation strategies of the different target languages. The study of how translation strategies changed over time can only be built upon Latin charters.

4. On the methodology of the survey

Translation strategies are compared through the use of ALBERT PÉTER VERMES's model (2005). This is comprised of four operations: 1. transference, that is leaving the name unchanged; 2. substitution with the conventional target language equivalent of the name (e.g. Hung. *László* > Lat. *Ladislaus*) or the adjustment of the name form to the target language (e.g. Hung. *Farkas* > Lat. *Farkasius*), 3. literal translation (e.g. Hung. *Vörös* > Lat. *Rufus* ‘red’); 4. modification, the most pronounced change, e.g. leaving out a part of the name, adding a new element to the name, or replacing the name with another name, a common noun or a paraphrase (e.g. Germ. *Heilige Elisabeth von Thüringen* > Hung. *Árpád-házi Szent Erzsébet* ‘Saint Elisabeth of the House of Árpád’).

The study is based on the names of people who were presumably Hungarian, or at least had Hungarian variants of their names, which were used in documents. Data-selection from German and Czech charters is rather complicated, as cases in which the same person is named by a Hungarian name variant in one document and by a German or Czech variant in another are considerably rare. Lacking evidence of this kind, the study can only be based upon the Hungarian orthography of the data, Hungarian name order, or a name variant that is proven to be Hungarian, or names of Hungarian origin.

5. The survey on Latin charters

5.1. Given names

In these charters, names of Latin origin were substituted with the Latin variant of the name. Transference was less typical (1357: *Petew*, AO. 6: 597; 1358: *Donch*, AO. 7: 129). Contrary to this, the translation of given names of non-Latin origin was carried out through transference (German: *Gerolth*, 1336, AO. 3: 250; Slavic: *Bogizlo*, 1355, AO. 6: 366; Hungarian: *Kakas*, 1358, AO. 7: 115) or through Latinization, that is substitution (Slavic: *Berizlaus*, 1329, AO. 2: 431; Hungarian: *Farcasius*, 1349, AO. 5: 290; German: *Luthardus*, 1355, AO. 6: 262). The variability of translation operations gradually decreased until the beginning of the 16th century, when the substitution of given names became the dominant translation operation.

5.2. Bynames and family names

Turning now to bynames and family names, it should be noted that these are treated as one category. Family names were emerging during the centuries under examination, which makes separating the representatives of these two name types difficult. It is also essential to note that an examination of the translation of patronymic and toponymic bynames and family names concentrates on the whole name structure and not on the translation of the patronym or toponym they contain. For example, the Hungarian name *Szaniszlófi* is comprised of a given name *Szaniszló* ‘Stanislaus’ and the -fi patronymic suffix. The latin phrase *filius Zanizlo* is the literal translation of this structure, while the patronymic given name was left unchanged by transference.

The typical operation for the translation of patronymic bynames and family names during the 14th–15th centuries was literal translation: the patronym was connected to the given name by a Latin word referring to some kind of kinship, e.g. *filius* ‘son of’, *nepos* ‘grandson’ etc. Less typically, patronyms in the genitive case also appeared in the sources without Latin common words (1354: *Nicolao Marsili*, AO. 6: 226; 1478: *Stephano Valentini*, N. FODOR 2010: 292). By the beginning of the 16th century, the use of Latin common words became rare and the Hungarian variant of the patronym became more common than the Latin variant, e.g. 1520: *Johannis Zanÿzloffy* (*Szaniszló* ‘Stanislaus’ patronym + -fi patronymic suffix; N. FODOR 2010: 210), 1522: *Nicolaus Marthon* (*Márton* ‘Martin’ patronym + Ø patronymic suffix; SZABÓ 1954: 31, Gare settlement); 1524: *Lucas Lewryncze* (*Lőrinc* ‘Laurence’ patronym + -e patronymic suffix; VeszprUrb. 62). In other words, transference superseded literal translation over time.



Toponymic bynames and family names were also used in Latin charters through literal translation for a long time: the toponym was connected to the given name with the Latin *de* ‘from’ preposition (1357: *de Hagmas*, AO. 6: 568; instead of *Hagmasi* ‘Hagymás settlement name + -i suffix’). However, transference also marginalised literal translation in this name type by the beginning of the 16th century.

Bynames and family names of different semantic types, which originated from common words, were, initially, treated uniformly in Latin translations. They were connected to the given names with the Latin *dictus* ‘called’. This operation can be regarded as modification. The name used in spoken language was replaced by a phrase, which was not the literal translation of the name. Nevertheless, *dictus* was sometimes omitted even in the earliest period and it disappeared by the beginning of the 16th century. This means that transference, which was a less typical operation in the 13th–14th centuries, became more common by then.

Of course, whether bynames and family names originating from common words were translated into Latin or were left unchanged inside the Latin phrase (*dictus* + the name) must also be studied. No consequentiality can be observed in the language of the recorded bynames or family names from the 14th century in the examined data. Translation strategies varied by semantic category. For instance, bynames or family names referring to internal characteristics or appearance were only recorded in Latin more often than in Hungarian if they belonged to the basic vocabulary of Latin. Contrary to this, ethnonymic bynames or family names and those that referred to social standing were recorded in Hungarian approximately as many times as Latin. Unlike these, names referring to plants, animals, and natural phenomena were nearly never changed. However, this diversity came to an end by the 16th century: later documents contain family names only in their original Hungarian forms (1524: *Gregorius F e y e r* ‘white’, VeszprUrb. 106; 1524: *Demetrius E r s e k* ‘archbishop’, VeszprUrb. 101). Concluding with the terms of the applied translation models, transference and literal translation can be said to have been equally used in the 14th century, while transference gradually became the norm in the recording of this name type by the 16th century.

As seen above, in the case of given names the chosen operation depended upon the origin of the name. The same question offers itself in the case of bynames and family names: which factors influenced their translation before the 16th century? The logical assumption is that the scribes – due to their lack of appropriate knowledge of Latin – were not able to translate the names which were left in Hungarian is only reasonable in the case of names that originated from rare, peripheral common words (e.g. 1347: *Jacobus dictus F y t u s* ‘snub-

nosed', AO. 5: 106). Transference in many cases must have been motivated by untranslatability, when the meaning of the Hungarian word could not be expressed with one Latin word. Sometimes transference may have been chosen because two synonymous Hungarian words could be translated with the same Latin word, such as *vörös* and *piros* with the Latin *rufus* 'red', or the Hungarian synonyms *kopasz* and *tar* with the Latin *calvus* 'bald'. Literal translation would abolish the difference between these two words, leading to the loss of the name's identifying potential. Nevertheless, this explanation cannot be applied generally, as the following example demonstrates: the Latin *sartor* 'tailor' was usually used to translate the Hungarian *Szabó*, but at times it is used for its synonym, the word *nyírő* (cf. N. FODOR 2010: 174, 265, 208).

5.3. Conclusions regarding translation in Latin charters

Reviewing the results from Latin documents, a trend of unification can be detected in the translation of all personal name types between the 14th and the 16th centuries. The various operations used in the 14th century gave way to substitution in the case of given names, and to transference in the case of bynames or family names by the 16th century. The cause of this unification can, most probably, be found in the changes of the Hungarian personal name system and personal name stock. As for given names, those of Latin origin, that is, the elements of the common European given name stock became predominant by the 16th century and these could easily be substituted with their Latin originals. The system of family names had nearly completely emerged by the 16th century and scribes may have perceived the difference between these and bynames. Namely, since bynames expressed certain characteristics of those named, they generally could be translated literally. Unlike them, family names – being hereditary – could only function as the expression of a connection to a family if they were left unchanged.

6. The survey of German charters

In German documents, given names were mostly used through substitution with German variants (e.g. 1423: *Jorg en Rozgon*, SoprT. I/2: 240; a German form of 'George'), and rarely through transference (e.g. 1432: *Racz M i c l o s*, SoprT. I/3: 42; the Hungarian form of 'Nicholas').

The translation of bynames and family names draws a more colourful picture. Toponymical names were translated through transference (e.g. 1423: *R o s g o n i Johansen*, SoprT. I/2: 248; a Hungarian structure *Rozgony* place name + -i suffix: 'of Rozgony') and literal translation (e.g. *Jörigen v o n R o z g o n*, SoprT. I/2: 248; a German structure: 'of Rozgony') in approximately equal proportions. Only three examples of patronymic bynames or family names can



be found in the data. Two of these were translated through transference, and one through literal translation. In the case of other semantic types, whether names were originally German or were translated into German cannot be discerned, except in the case of a well-known person or family. Consequently, transference unsurprisingly seems to play an overwhelming role in this category.

Alongside the study of how different name types were translated, name order is also worth examining. The collected data indicates that the strategy was determined by the translation of bynames or family names. When these were translated through transference, the Hungarian name order was dominant (e.g. 1440: *Farkas Lasslabs*, SoprT. I/3: 193, family name + given name), while the Indo-European name order can be observed when literal translation was used (e.g. 1434: *Laszlo von Gemeren*, SoprT. I/3: 72).

7. The survey of Czech charters

Continuing with the overview of Czech charters, the substitution of given names is also a typical strategy in these. However, while in the case of Latin this operation was generally completed with the standard Latin variant of the name, translation into Czech could often be implemented through more than one variant, e.g. Hung. ‘László’: *Ladislawem* (1460, KNIEZSA 1952: 15), *Waczlaw* (1479, KNIEZSA 1952: 30), *Llaczek* (1479, KNIEZSA 1952: 32), *Laczlawom* (1480, KNIEZSA 1952: 34). Similarly to Latin and German, some rare examples of transference can be found in Czech: *Sebestyanem* (1460, KNIEZSA 1952: 15; Hungarian form of *Sebastian*).

The translation of bynames and family names shows greater diversity in Czech. Only one patronymic family name can be found in the collected data but the number of toponymic ones is relatively high. The most frequent operation among these is literal translation (e.g. 1460: *Sebestyanem z Rozgany*, KNIEZSA 1952: 15, a Czech structure: ‘of Rozgony’; 1467: *Franka Oczkowskeho*, KNIEZSA 1952: 20, Czech: ‘of Ocskó’) but transference (e.g. 1459: *Benky*, KNIEZSA 1952: 13, Hungarian: ‘of Benk’) and substitution (e.g. 1459: *Erdahata*, KNIEZSA 1952: 13, Czech: ‘of Erdöhát’) can also be found. The other semantic groups were represented by only a few examples of transference (e.g. 1472: *Lukacz Kardoss*, KNIEZSA 1952: 24, ‘sworded’).

As for name order, Czech documents do not seem to be as systematic as German ones. The Indo-European name order is usually used in the case of the literal translation of bynames or family names. Meanwhile, transference and substitution were combined with either the Hungarian or Indo-European name order, although the latter seems to be slightly more frequent.



8. Conclusion

Comparing the results of the study of translation strategies in the various languages, the following conclusion can be drawn: the strategies reflect great diversity and scribes chose between them based on both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. These were the name type; differences between the name stocks, vocabulary, and grammar of the source and the target language; the scribe's knowledge of the language; or the intention to maintain the identifying function of the name.

Similarities between the translation strategies of the three target languages seem to be more remarkable than differences. This cannot be accidental or only due to the limited number of possibilities, or language contact. It is also traceable to the common European tradition and the shared origins of document writing. However, there is a conspicuous difference between Latin and non-Latin documents: while the Hungarian name order is extremely rare in Latin texts, it is not unique in the charters of the other two languages. Moreover, it is more common in the case of some name types in German deeds. In my opinion, the explanation for this difference lies in medieval prestige and the domains in which the different languages where used. While Latin document writing, which had a longstanding tradition in Europe and Hungary, remained the main language of bureaucracy for centuries, the use of German and especially Czech was confined in space, time, and society. This is well exemplified by the fact that although German started to play an increasingly considerable role in the internal affairs of mostly German-populated cities in Hungary from the 14th century onwards, these still used Latin in statewide official cases or in correspondence (cf. SOLYMOI 2006: 165, SZENDE 2011: 22). As a result, the spoken variants of names could be reflected more pronouncedly in non-Latin documents, which did not have a longstanding tradition and were used in more familiar circles.

References

- AO. = *Anjoukori okmánytár*. [Collection of documents form the Angevin Age.] Vol. 1–6. Edited by NAGY, IMRE. Budapest, 1878–1891. Vol. 7. Edited by TASNÁDI NAGY, GYULA. Budapest, MTA, 1920.
- BALÁZS, JÁNOS 1989. *A latin a Duna-tájon*. [Latin in the Danube Area.] In: BALÁZS, JÁNOS ed. *Nyelvünk a Duna-tájon*. Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó. 95–140.
- N. FODOR, JÁNOS 2010. *A Felső-Tisza-vidék késő középkori személyneveinek szótára (1401–1526)*. [Dictionary of late medieval personal names from the



- Upper Tisza Region.] Magyar Nyelvtudományi Értekezések 3. Budapest, ELTE BTK Magyar Nyelvtudományi és Finnugor Intézet.
- KNIEZSA, ISTVÁN 1952. *Középkori cseh oklevelek*. [Medieval Czech charters.] Magyarországi szláv nyelvemlékek 1. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó.
- MOLLAY, KÁROLY 1982. *Német–magyar nyelvi érintkezések a XVI. század végéig*. [German–Hungarian linguistic contacts until the end of the 16th century.] Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó.
- SLÍZ, MARIANN 2011. *Anjou-kori személynévtár (1301–1342)*. [Dictionary of personal names from the Angevin Age (1301–1342).] Budapest, História-antik.
- SLÍZ, MARIANN 2017. *Anjou-kori személynévtár (1343–1359)*. [Dictionary of personal names from the Angevin Age (1301–1342).] Budapest, Magyar Nyelvtudományi Társaság.
- SOLYOMOSI, LÁSZLÓ 2006. *Oklevélstan*. [Diplomatics.] In: BERTÉNYI, IVÁN ed. *A történelem segédtudományai*. A Történettudomány Kézikönyve 1. Budapest, Osiris Kiadó. 153–168.
- SoprT. = HÁZI, JENŐ ed. 1921–1943. *Sopron szabad királyi város története*. [The history of the royal city of Sopron.] Vol. I/1–7, II/1–6. Sopron, Székely és Tsa.
- SZABÓ, ISTVÁN 1954. *Bács, Bodrog és Csongrád megye dézsmalajstromai 1522-ből*. [Tithe collections from Bács, Bodrog and Csongrád counties in 1522.] A Magyar Nyelvtudományi Társaság Kiadványai 86. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó.
- SZENDE, KATALIN 2011. *Nyelvében él a polgár? Többnyelvűség a késő-középkori Magyarország városaiban*. [Language makes the city dweller? Multilinguality in the cities of late medieval Hungary.] *Aetas* 26/3: 5–26.
- VERMES, ALBERT PÉTER 2005. *Proper names in translation: A relevance-theoretic analysis*. Debrecen, Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó.
- VeszprUrb. = KREDICS, LÁSZLÓ–SOLYOMOSI, LÁSZLÓ 1993. *A veszprémi püspökség 1524. évi urbáriuma*. [The urbarium of the Veszprém bishopric from 1524.] Új Történelmi Tár 4. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó.

Abstract

The fact that German and Czech charters were also written in late medieval Hungary beside the majority of documents written in Latin provides an opportunity for the comparison of strategies used for the translation of personal names in these three languages in the investigated period. Intending to outline the cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts of such an investigation, the paper also demonstrates the multilingual background of scriptors in medieval Hungary. The survey is based on the model for the system of translation



procedures created by Albert Péter Vermes. The investigation covers given names, bynames and family names as well, and uses only those name data which supposedly belonged to Hungarian bearers, or at least have a Hungarian variant, too. The results of the survey show that the translation strategies used by multilingual scriptors depended on the types of sources, the social standing of the name bearer, the name type, the motivational type of the given byname or family name, the differences between the lexicon and onomasticon of the source language and the target language, and the scriptor's command of the source and the target language. However, it can be stated that far more similarities than differences can be detected among the translation strategies used in the documents written in the three investigated languages.

Keywords: translation of personal names, given names, bynames, family names, medieval Hungary, German, Czech and Latin deeds