

Byzantine Influence on the Name-giving Practises of the Hungarian Árpád Dynasty

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1. The aim of my paper is to investigate whether Byzantine effects can be detected on the name-giving of the Hungarian Árpád Dynasty.¹ The answer is motivated by several well known facts: firstly, the impact of the Byzantine Church and its culture on Hungary; secondly, the reflection of this impact in the Hungarian historical personal name stock; and thirdly, the political and dynastic connections between the Árpáds and the Byzantine dynasties. These three factors show the complexity of this topic as well. Namely, the word *effect* can be understood linguistically: are there any personal names of Greek origin among the names of the dynasty? It can be understood in a cultural-religious way as well: are there any names of Byzantine saints among the names of the dynasty? Additionally, we can also seek after names which entered the Árpáds's name stock via dynastic ties, independent of their linguistic origin. These points of view, as we will see, cannot be separated from each other in several cases.

The word *Byzantine* needs an explanation, too. Due to the characteristics of the investigated period and the dynastic connections, I interpret it as widely as it can be. I take into account here the marriage between Béla III and Agnes Châtillon of Antioch because it was arranged by the brides's brother-in-law, Emperor Manuel I. I also count here the marriage of King Andrew II with Yolanda, the daughter of the Latin Emperor Peter II and the marriage between Béla IV and Mary, the daughter of Emperor Theodoros Laskaris of Nicaea.

Meanwhile, the concept *Árpád Dynasty* is treated in a restricted way. Since we cannot detect the traces of dynastically motivated name-giving before

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embracing Christianity in the family, I will concentrate only on the members of the dynasty beginning with Grand Prince Géza and his brother Michael. In the statistics, I will not rank the wives and the children of the daughters because they were the members of other dynasties via their fathers. However, I do count those Christian names, which are known for some rulers, besides their actually used names: namely *Magnus* and *István* for Grand Prince Géza and also *Magnus* for King Géza I.

2. Let us start our survey with names of Greek origin. The foreign cultural and linguistic influence on Hungary in the Age of the Árpáds can be discovered in the personal name stock as well. Among names of foreign origin we can find Turkish, Slavic, German, French, Latin and Greek ones. First of all, I wish to make it clear that the origin of a name which had wandered across several languages before it entered into Hungarian is classed according to the intermediate language. Christian names were transferred by the Church. Due to this, in the case of several names which can be traced back to Greek, we cannot decide whether they were transferred by Latin or were taken over from Greek directly. Moreover, since most of these names were also used in the neighbouring countries, we have to take their roles into consideration as well. For this reason, it is advisable to make a mixed Greek–Latin category for this kind of name. In the case of some names in the name stock of the Árpáds we do not have clear etimologies, only some fairly different opinions. For these names, I formed a category named controversial.

2.1. Surveying the names of men in the Árpád Dynasty according to their origin, we can find the following rates: one name is of Hungarian origin (*Árpád*), two names are of Turkish origin (*Álmos* and *Géza*), two names are of Slavic origin (*Bonuzlo* and *László* [‘Ladislaus’]), three names are of German origin (*Imre* [‘Emeric’], *Lampert* and *Otto*), eight names are of Greek–Latin origin (*Alexios*, *András* [‘Andrew’], *Dávid* [‘David’], *Magnus*, *Mihály* [‘Michael’], *Salamon* [‘Solomon’], *István* [‘Stephen’] and *Vazul* [‘Basil’]), and three names are the members of the category of controversial origin (*Béla*, *Kálmán* and *Levente*). In terms of the group with Greek–Latin origins, *András*, *Dávid*, *Magnus* and *Salamon* are of Latin origin beyond doubt; *István* reflects some German influence, *Mihály* could have been transferred through Latin or Eastern Slavic as well;² *Vazul* could have come from Greek or Eastern Slavic; and only *Alexios* is undoubtedly of Greek origin.

² Cf. recently: Rudolf Szentgyörgyi, “A Tihanyi alapítólevél személynevei II. Az alapítólevél hágionimái” [Personal names in the Deed of Foundation of Tihany Abbey II. Hagionyms], *Névtani Értesítő*, 35, 2013, p. 173–174.

With respect to *Vazul*, its etymon is the Greek *basileios* ‘king’, which became a personal name in Greek³ and entered into the Eastern and Southern Slavic name stock. The Hungarian form *Vazul* is a result of a misreading in the Modern Age; it could have been pronounced as *Vászol* or *Vaszil*.⁴ This form can be derived both from Greek and Slavic phonetically. What may support the Greek origin is that the family of Saint Stephen’s mother was baptized by the Eastern Church and King Stephen conducted a balanced foreign policy between the Holy Roman Empire and Byzantium⁵ and his son’s wife was a Byzantine princess, according to the legend of Saint Margaret.⁶ However, missionary work could have taken place through Slavic interpretation because Hungarians did not speak Greek but several of them could have been bilingual in Hungarian and Slavic.⁷ Additionally, *Vazul*’s family connections also support a Slavic origin since his sister-in-law was a Rurikid princess. Moreover, we must not leave out of consideration the fact that the time in which *Vazul* got his Christian name was the period of Vladimir the Great’s reign in Kiev and his baptismal name was also *Vaszilij*.⁸

2.2. As for the names of women in the Árpád Dynasty, they show a more simple picture: there are five names of German origin (*Adelheid*, *Gertrúd*, *Hedvig*, *Kunigunda* and *Odola*), ten names of Greek–Latin origin (*Anna*, *Konstancia* [‘Constance’], *Erzsébet* [‘Elisabeth’], *Euphémia* [‘Euphémie’], *Ilona* [‘Helen’], *Katalin* [‘Katherine’], *Margit* [‘Margaret’], *Mária* [‘Mary’], *Piroska* and *Zsófia* [‘Sophie’]) and one which is disputed (*Jolanta* [‘Yolanda’]). *Anna*, *Erzsébet*, *Mária* and *Piroska* are undoubtedly of Latin origin, *Ilona* can

³ See János Ladó – Ágnes Bíró, *Magyar utónévkönyv* [Dictionary of Hungarian Given Names], Budapest, Vince Kiadó, 1998, *Bazil* and *Vazul*.

⁴ Cf. 1031: *Vazul*, 1046/12–14th century: *Wazul*, 1086: *Wazil* etc. In: Katalin Fehértói, *Árpád-kori személynévtár (1000–1301)* [Dictionary of Personal Names in the Age of the Árpáds (1000–1301)], Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2004, *Vazil*, *Vazul*, *Vasil*.

⁵ Cf. László Komáromi, “A bizánci kultúra egyes elemei és közvetítő tényezői a középkori Magyarországon” [Some Elements and Mediums of the Byzantine Culture in Medieval Hungary], *Iustum Aequum Salutare*, III, 2007, 1, p. 215–228.

⁶ L. Komáromi, “A bizánci kultúra egyes elemei...” art. cit., p. 218.

⁷ György Györffy, *István király és műve* [King Stephen and his Work], Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó, 1983², p. 47–48; Rudolf Szentgyörgyi, “A Tihanyi alapítólevél görög helynevei” [Greek Place Names in the Deed of Foundation of the Abbey of Tihany], *Magyar Nyelv*, 103, 2010, p. 305.

⁸ Fjodor Uspenskij, “The Advent of Christianity and Dynastic Name-giving in Scandinavia and Rus” In: Ildar Garipdzanov – Oleksiy Tolochko (eds.), *Early Christianity on the Way from the Varangians to the Greeks*, Kiev, 2011, p. 115.

be of Latin or of Slavic origin, *Katalin* of German or of Italian origin, *Margit* and *Zsófia* could have come from Latin or Greek. *Euphémia* and *Konstancia* are likely to be from Greek. To sum up our first survey, it seems more likely that a Byzantine influence may be found among women's names.

3. Continuing with the influence of the Eastern cults of saints, it should be noted that the idea of Christianizing Hungarians had appeared in Byzantium before the settlement of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin and also was planned by Emperor Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos. Several leaders of the Hungarians were baptized by Byzantine priests such as Gyula of Transylvania and his family, including Gyula's daughter Sarolta, who became Saint Stephen's mother. We know of some Greek monasteries too, for instance Szávaszentdemeter, Dunapentele or Veszprémvölgy.⁹ Churches were also dedicated to Byzantine saints such as Saint Demetrius, Saint George, Saint Nicholas, Saints Cosma and Damian, Saint Katherine of Alexandria or Saint Margaret of Antioch. Some of these saints were also venerated in the West but their feasts in Hungary were mostly held according to the Eastern calendar.¹⁰ Their names entered into the Hungarian place name stock (for example *Szávaszentdemeter* ['Sava' + 'Saint' + 'Demetrius'] or *Törökszentmiklós* ['Turkish' + 'Saint' + 'Nicholas']) since one way of naming settlements was to name them after the patron saint of their church. The names of Eastern saints also had a major share in the personal name stock in the Age of the Árpáds and in the Angevin Age as well: *George* and *Nicholas* were among the most popular men's names, while *Demetrius*, *Cosma* and *Damian* can be ranked among the names given with an average frequency.¹¹

The Archangel Michael is also traditionally grouped among the Eastern saints since his veneration started in Byzantium in the 6th century.¹² His name was the only one among the Eastern saints' names which occurred in the man's name stock of the Árpáds. It might be regarded as a Byzantine influence but we have to consider that Michael, Grand Prince Géza's brother was

⁹ See e.g. Gyula Moravcsik, *Bizánc és a magyarság* [Byzantium and the Hungarians], Budapest, Lucidus Kiadó, 2003 (1st edition: 1953), p. 54-61; Gy. Györfy, *István király és műve, op. cit.*, p. 46-49; R. Szentgyörgyi, "A Tihanyi alapítólevél görög helynevei", art. cit., p. 304.

¹⁰ L. Komáromi, "A bizánci kultúra egyes elemei..." art. cit., p. 219.

¹¹ Katalin Fehértói, "Árpád-kori községi eredetű személynéveinkről" [On personal names derived from common nouns in the Arpadian Age], *Magyar Nyelvőr*, 121, 1997, p. 73; Mariann Slíz, *Személynévadás az Anjou-korban* [Naming in the Angevin Age], Budapest, Históriaantik, 2011, p. 94, chart 22.

¹² R. Szentgyörgyi, "A Tihanyi alapítólevél személynévei II. Az alapítólevél hagionimái", art. cit., p. 173.

also baptized by Bruno of Sankt Gallen along with his brother¹³ and by this time the saint had had a great veneration in the West too. In my opinion, we might only be able to speak of an indirect Byzantine influence in this case. Looking over the Christian names of the leaders of the South-Eastern area of Europe in this age, we may note that two names, *István* and *Mihály* were chosen by several of them. The former was born by Gyula of Transylvania and his son, and Grand Prince Géza and likewise his son, while Tsar Boris of Bulgaria became *Mihail*¹⁴ after embracing Christianity. The explanation for this phenomenon could be that they were all intended to be evangelizers of their people and their name expressed this programme: Michael was the leader of the Angelic Host and triumphant over Satan thus and symbolically pagans, while Stephen was the first martyr of Christianity. It shows that the Eastern and the Western Christian Church could have had the same strategy to Christianize Hungarians and other peoples in the region. However, the choice of Géza and his brother may also have been thanks to the fact that *Michael* was a popular name in Byzantium: this name could have been an apt device to signal that turning to the West did not mean turning against the East.

We might also suspect a Byzantine influence in the name choice of King Andrew I since Saint Andrew the Apostle was highly venerated in the East but it might also have been a Slavic dynastic effect. As is known, after his escape from Hungary, Andrew married Anastasia, the daughter of Yaroslav the Wise, Grand Prince of Kiev and Saint Andrew was regarded as the patron saint of the Rus.¹⁵

In terms of the women saints originating from the East, we consider Saint Helen of Constantinople, Saint Margaret of Antioch and Saint Katherine of Alexandria among the most popular ones. Their names were also frequent in the Hungarian population¹⁶ and occurred in the name stock of the Árpáds as

¹³ Gyula Kristó, *Magyarország története 895–1301* [History of Hungary 895–1301], Budapest, 1998, p. 84–85.

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. János Angi – Attila Bárány – István Orosz – Imre Papp – László Pószán, *Európa a korai középkorban (3–11. század)* [Europe in the Early Middle Ages], Debrecen, Multiplex Media – Debrecen U. P., 1997, p. 392.

¹⁵ According to a legend (the origin of which may be traced back to the Kievan court) Saint Andrew's missionary work reached the surroundings of Kiev. Cf. Márta Font, *Árpád-házi királyok és Rurikida fejedelmek* [Kings of the Árpáds and Great Princes of the Rurikids], Szeged, Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, p. 130–131.

¹⁶ Cf. Jolán Berrár, *Női neveink 1400-ig* [Female Names until 1400], A Magyar Nyelvtudományi Társaság Kiadványai 80. [Issues of the Society of Hungarian Linguistics 80.], Budapest, 1952; Mihály Hajdú, "Adalék nőneveink korai divatjához" [Data on Early Trends in our Female

well. This fact makes us consider that names of women in the dynasty were influenced by cults of saints more than men's names. It can be proven if we survey the effect of cults of Western and universal saints on the naming practices of the dynasty as well. The result shows the same picture: among the names of the Árpáds, with the exception of *István*, we cannot find names of saints which were exceedingly frequent (*Benedek, János, Péter, Pál* etc.). However, there are two names of women saints in the dynasty which were also popular among the people: *Anna* and *Erzsébet*.

Examining together the linguistic origin of names and the effects of cults of saints on name-giving makes us realize that these two factors do not always correlate. As we can see, *Mihály* is of Latin or of Slavic origin but it can reflect either a Western or an Eastern cultural influence, while *Konstancia* is of Greek origin but we cannot find a significant cult of a saint behind this name in Hungary. For this reason, as a next step it is worth exploring how dynastic connections work as a factor of name-giving in the ruling family.

4. We know at least nine marriages between the Árpáds and the different Byzantine dynasties (ten if we include Saint Emeric's assumed Byzantine wife). There were six husbands and three wives from the Árpád Dynasty. The wives cannot be taken into consideration in this survey, and there were only four marriages among the six remaining cases in which children were born: the marriages of Béla III, of his brother, Prince Géza, of Andrew II, and of Béla IV.

Among their sons' names, we find only one which was popular in Byzantine dynasties: *Alexios*. Its bearer's father, Prince Géza married a Byzantine princess and after his many efforts to seize the Hungarian throne from his brother, Béla III, he settled down in Byzantium.¹⁷ His son's name indicates that he gave up his dreams about becoming a Hungarian king and so does the fact that he changed his name in Byzantium. His new name *Ioannes* did not occur in the Árpád Dynasty but was a frequent one in the Byzantine ruling families. Unlike him, Boris, who claimed to be the son of King Koloman and also tried many times to seize the Hungarian throne, did not abandon his demand for the throne. He married a Byzantine princess as well but gave his sons the names *Konstantinos Kalamanos* and *Stephanos*: the first name was after King Koloman, while the second was the most frequent name for men in the Árpád Dynasty and the name of a family saint.

Names], In: *Studia in honorem P. Fábrián, E. Rácz, I. Szathmári oblata a collegis et discipulis*, Budapest, ELTE BTK Mai Magyar Nyelvi Tanszék, 1988, p. 61-65; M. Slíz, *Személynévadás az Anjou-korban, op. cit.*, p. 125, chart 51.

¹⁷ Gy. Kristó, *Magyarország története 895-1301, op. cit.*, p. 178.

As for the sons of Béla III, they all were given names from the dynasty (*Imre, András, Salamon, István*). However, his two daughters' names may have been influenced by dynastic connections (unfortunately, we do not know the third girl's name). The first girl may have been given the name *Margit* due to her mother's Antiochian origin. Béla's daughter was born in 1175 but the first data for the name *Margit* in Hungary is from 1152.¹⁸ It means that the name had been known in Hungary before the naming of the princess but the fact that the rest of the data can be found in documents written after 1175 suggests that the real popularity of the name started only after the princess was given her name. The dissemination of Saint Margaret's cult in Hungary was in all likelihood thanks to Béla's Antiochian wife and their son Andrew II who brought a relic of the saint's head with him from his crusade back to Hungary.¹⁹ The case of *Konstancia* is more simple since we have no data from before 1288 for this name, besides the names of the ruling family.²⁰ Consequently, the appearance of this name on the family tree must have been due to the dynastic connection: Béla's wife gave their daughter her own mother's name since her mother was Constance of Antioch.

Yolanda, second wife of King Andrew II was the daughter of the Latin Emperor Peter II. She had only one daughter who was named *Jolanta*, after her and her own mother. Since we have no data for this name before the queen and her daughter in our sources,²¹ this name-giving must have undoubtedly been the result of the dynastic connection. As we could see before, the etymology of the name is less clear. According to a theory it comes from Greek,²² while another theory regards it as a name of French origin.²³ Considering the fact that this name entered into the Hungarian name stock via the name of a queen whose mother was Yolanda of Flanders and whose father was Peter of Courtenay the grandson of King Louis VI of France seems to confirm the French origin of the name.

Among the names of Béla IV's daughters, we can find all three names mentioned (*Margit, Konstancia* and *Jolanta*). Besides them, there is another

¹⁸ K. Fehértói, *Árpád-kori személynévtár (1000–1301)*, op. cit., *Margareta* etc.

¹⁹ Gábor Klaniczay, *Az uralkodók szentsége a középkorban. Magyar dinasztikus szentkultuszok és európai modellek* [Sanctity of the Monarchs in the Middle Ages. Hungarian Dynastic Saint Cults and European Models], Budapest, Balassi Kiadó, p. 212.

²⁰ K. Fehértói, *Árpád-kori személynévtár (1000–1301)*, op. cit., *Constancia, Constantia*.

²¹ K. Fehértói, *Árpád-kori személynévtár (1000–1301)*, op. cit., *Iolenta, Iolanta*.

²² See J. Ladó – Á. Bíró, *Magyar utónévkönyv*, op. cit., *Jolánta*.

²³ See J. Berrár, *Női neveink 1400-ig*, op. cit., p. 44-45.

Eastern saint's name: *Katalin*. What is fairly surprising is that the daughter of Béla IV was the first *Katalin* in the dynasty since the first data for this name from 1181 demonstrates that the name had been known in Hungary at least 50 years before the princess's birth.²⁴ Why this name was chosen exactly in Béla IV's family can be explained with the queen's Eastern origin since she was the daughter of Theodoros Laskaris of Nicaea. The iconographic habit that Saint Katherine was often portrayed together with Saint Margaret could have also motivated the name choice since, as we saw, Katherine had a sister called Margaret.

5. To sum up, it seems that Byzantine influence on the name giving practises of the Hungarian dynasty could not have been significant despite the dense dynastic ties, the constant foreign political relations between the two countries and the Byzantine cultural-religious influences on Hungary. It is not a speciality of the Hungarian–Byzantine relations and we can notice the same phenomenon surveying either Slavic or German influences. The explanation for this is that popular cults of saints or other factors alone cannot affect naming practices because name-giving in a royal dynasty is always a political act. It has mainly internal political significance in the case of sons: it can express identification with the politics of an important predecessor, the demand for the throne, the aim of amplifying legitimacy etc. For this reason, a name reflecting the effect of a foreign language or culture can enter into the boys' name stock only if the father secedes from his family. Consequently, repetition is fairly common among names of men in the dynasties. For instance, the most frequent name of the Árpáds, *István* appears ten times, *László* and *Béla* six times, *András* five times, *Géza* four times, while *Álmos*, *Imre*, *Kálmán*, *Magnus* and *Salamon* two times. Contrary to this, *Erzsébet*, the most popular name for the daughters only occurs five times, *Margit* and *Mária* three times, and there are some names which had two bearers. Contrasting the popularity of male and female names in the dynasty, we can see that there are 22 different names for 50 men and 16 names for 32 women. Dividing the number of name-bearers with the number of names we obtain the frequency rate of names: it will be 2.3 in the case of men and only 2.0 in the case of women. The greater frequency rate of men's names and the greater variation in women's names is the consequence of the fact that daughters' names were less important politically since they could not take the throne. However, they had a great foreign political significance since they made useful alliances for their families by

²⁴ K. Fehértói, *Árpád-kori személynévtár (1000–1301)*, op. cit., *Katarina* etc.

their marriages. Therefore their mother could have had a role in the choice of their name being able to give names to their daughters after the women of their families or after a saint venerated in their home countries, but the naming could have been a gesture towards an ally as well. This conclusion is also confirmed by the names of the children of the Byzantine empresses of Hungarian origin: Piroska's sons were *Alexios*, *Andronikos*, *Isaakios* and *Manuel*, while Margaret, the daughter of Béla III had two children called *Eirene* and *Alexios*. As we see, every one of them was given Byzantine names according to the naming habits of their fathers' families. That is the explanation for the question why the Byzantine impact can be better revealed through women's names in the Árpád Dynasty.