

# Personal Names Originating from Literature or Motion Picture in the Hungarian Name Stock – A Historical Survey<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The paper introduces a special segment of the real Hungarian name stock: personal names originating from literature or films. The 13th-15th centuries can be regarded as the first period of this phenomenon when some members of the higher classes named their children after the heroes of chivalric literature, e.g. *Tristan*, *Roland*. These names never became frequent, and disappeared after the 15th century. The second period in the history of names of literary origin was the 19th century, the time of Romanticism in Hungarian literature, when writers focused on the history of Hungary. Additionally, this was the period of the birth of Hungarian novels. Due to this, new literary names were created in large amounts; some of them became a part of the real first name stock and have become popular. There are some family names that also originated from or became frequent thanks to a novel (e.g. *Kárpáthy*, *Szentirmay*). They became a part of the family name stock through official name changes. The third period started in the second half of the 20th century: nowadays these fictional names are mostly traceable to films. The paper reveals the sociocultural-historical background of the spread of these names in these different periods.

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As in many languages of the world, personal names originating from literature, mythology or films appear in the Hungarian personal name stock as well. This is not a new phenomenon, contrary to what most Hungarians may think on the basis of the relatively large amount of newly accepted, but rarely used given names, such as *Anakin* or *Gandalf*. The first period in which this kind of name giving appeared in Hungary was in fact rather a long time ago, throughout the 12th-15th centuries. The adoption of these names was related to the appearance and bloom of chivalric culture in medieval Hungary. The sources of these names may have been made known in Hungary by queens of French or German origin and knights and ladies of their entourage, by the French or Western-educated clergy and by Walloon or German settlers. The data I will mention comes from the corpus of Ágnes Kurcz (1988) and Klára Korompay (1978), along with my own corpus which has been built upon deeds from the 14th century and in its present state contains about 20,000 names.<sup>2</sup>

Names originating from literature arose from two kinds of sources in the Middle Ages: from the Breton cycle of legends (the Arthurian Cycle, *Tristan and Isolde* and *The Song of Roland*) on the one hand, and from romances, legends and stories deriving from the antiquity (e.g. the Trojan Cycle and the Alexander Romance) on the other hand. The

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<sup>2</sup> The first part of the database containing approximately 14,000 names was published as a dictionary of names (Slíz 2011a). The publication of the second part is in progress.

members of the latter type were mediated by Latin authors respected in the Middle Ages. For instance, the 13th-century Hungarian historiographer Master P (called Anonymus in secondary literature) indicated in the foreword of his *Gesta Hungarorum* ('The Deeds of the Hungarians') that he had compiled a Trojan Romance during his academic years (for more details see e.g. Moór 1937, Korompay 2011, 2012, Slíz 2012).

These names are of enormous importance for both scholars of literature and history, since hardly any other traces of the existence of chivalric literature in Hungary are known, except for some remarks from medieval historiographers and for the South Slavic Trojan and Alexander Romances, which can be traced back to an assumed Hungarian version (cf. Hadrovics 1955, 1960). It is crucial to investigate these names with the correct methodology to conduct a successful analysis. Since one or two appearances of these names may only be the consequence of linguistic and cultural contacts and not evidence of chivalric literature existing in Hungary, these kinds of names must be examined together. For this reason, name pairs have been of the utmost importance in this investigation: while the presence of a *Roland* on the family tree can simply be due to fashion or to linguistic and cultural contact, its occurrence along with *Olivér* within one family proves that the name giving parents knew the romance.

The majority of the name bearers were highborn, since the romances were connected to the high culture of medieval Hungary. These names cannot be regarded as frequent ones, as the upper classes were only a small part of society. Even among them (and the whole population) the most frequent names came from the Bible or were given after saints. For the sake of comparison, the most popular male name, *János* ('John') appears over a thousand times in my corpus, while the most frequent name of literary origin, *Roland* appears only 28 times among 20,000 items, and some of these literary names occur only once or twice.

The most popular names originating from chivalric literature among men were – as mentioned before – *Roland* and his friend's name, *Olivér*. *Roland* occurred 66 times and *Olivér* 42 times in the sources until the 14th century, while they occurred 38 times and 16 times, respectively, in the 14th century according to Klára Korompay's corpus (1978). There may have been another name from this story which was used by both sexes: *Elephant* or *Alivant*, albeit in Endre Tóth's opinion (2006) it originates from the German personal name *Helfant* and not from the name of Roland's horn.

As for the Arthurian cycle, only a few examples have been found so far for *Artheus* ('Arthur') and *Lancret* ('Lancelot'), and there is only one *Weniwer* ('Guinevere') and *Yven* ('Yvain') (cf. Kurcz 1988: 63). There are more traces of the romance of Tristan and Isolde among personal names; the latter one can be regarded as a relatively fashionable name among women of the upper class in the 14th century (cf. Slíz 2011b: 124-125).

The earliest examples of personal names of literary origin are derived from the Trojan romance. They appeared in Hungary as early as the 12th century (cf. Kurcz 1988: 248). *Paris* and *Hector* were used until the middle of the 14th century (cf. Kurcz 1988: 250), but *Achilles* was preserved for a longer period through the traditions of some families: an example can be found as late as 1412 (see Engel 2003, in the Cseleji branch of the clan Bogátradvány). In addition, two instances of the name *Priamus* can be mentioned. There were also several other names originating from the antiquity: *Dedalus*, *Mercurius*, *Vlixis*, *Medea*, *Hercules*, *Venus*, *Ennea* (*Aeneas*), *Caesar* and *Seneca* (cf. Kurcz 1988: 307-309, Slíz 2012: 267).

The only name undoubtedly traceable to the Alexander romance is *Olimpias*, but even the name of Alexander the Great's mother was scarcely used (cf. Moór 1937: 60). The other characters' names, *Fülöp* ('Philip') and *Sándor* ('Alexander'), and *Ilona* ('Helen') from the Trojan romance were more frequent. *Fülöp* and *Sándor* can be ranked as names of average popularity, while *Ilona* was one of the most fashionable female names in medieval Hungary. The explanation for the difference between the popularity of these three names and of the other ones is that *Fülöp*, *Sándor* and *Ilona* were also popular saints' names.

The majority of names originating from literature did not survive until the 15th century; even the inheritance of names within families could not keep them alive after that period. It was a result of the decline of chivalric culture and the takeover of canonical names. Although many names of literary origin were renewed in the 19th century, there was no direct connection to their previous usage. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that settlement names emerged from *Tristan* (*Terestyénfa* in Vas county), from *Alivant* (*Elefánt*, in Slovakia today), from *Hector* (*Iktár*, in Romania today) and from *Priamus* (*Perjámos*, also in Romania today). Some of the names coming from literature survived as family names (e.g. *Lorántffy* < *Loránt* + *-fi* 'son of', *Terestyén* < *Tristan*). *Ilona*, *Sándor* and *Fülöp* can be mentioned as the only exceptions which have been used permanently, but their continuation may have been the consequence of their religious role. Some other names in question, such as *Roland* (and its alternations *Loránd* and *Lóránt*) or *Olivér* were revived by Romanticism; moreover, *Roland* has been a fairly fashionable name since the last decades of the 20th century: it held the 37th position among new-born boys' names in 2013 (see KEKKH 2014). Most of the other names mentioned previously may also be chosen according to the current laws in Hungary, but are nevertheless fairly scarce and rather atypical.

Between the second half of the 15th century and the end of the 18th century, names stemming from literature were not used in Hungary. Even the Hungarian humanists, who were well-accepted and well-known in the virtual community of European scholars and literarians, and who Latinized their names to signal their scientific commitment and European identity, did not give names of literary origin to their children. Knowing this fact is essential to understanding the indignation of the notable Transylvanian historiographer, István Szamosközy, on the name change of Krisztina Báthory, the niece of the Prince of Transylvania. She was given her new name, *Griseldis* by the Italian doctor Giorgio Blandrata. According to Szamosközy's comment, changing her beautiful name connected to Christ to a name which must have been borne by a whore in a comedy or by Achilles's mistress was a humiliation (Szamosközy 1991: 111-112).

The second period rich in names stemming from literature in the 19th century was due to the Enlightenment and more significantly to Romanticism. The Enlightenment brought mythological names back to life, albeit their usage never became fashionable. For instance, Ferenc Kazinczy, one of the greatest Hungarian poets and linguists of the first half of the 19th century, named two of his daughters *Thalia* (1809-1866) and *Iphigenia* (1817-1890), and one of his sons *Aemilius* (1811-1890) (cf. Vadera 2013: 83), while the archaeologist Ferenc Pulszky named his daughter *Polixena* (1857-1921). Romanticism made literarians turn to historical times across Europe, and as many nations in those times, Hungarians also started to explore their origins and history. Discovering medieval gests and chronicles, forgotten old Hungarian names of princes and kings (like *Árpád*, *Zoltán*, *Gyula*, *Béla*, *Géza*) and fictional

names from these works, which they considered historical, became fashionable. The other source of names of literary origin in this period was Romantic novels and other literary works of Hungarian writers and poets. Many of them turned to the history of Hungary, and gave historical names to, or created historical-like given names for, their characters. Given names of positive characters in Romantic novels, which took place in their contemporary times or in imaginary worlds, also became popular, such as *Tímea*, made by Mór Jókai or *Tünde*, created by Mihály Vörösmarty from the word *tündér* 'fairy'. Some of these names, unlike medieval names of literary origin, became fashionable relatively quickly, not only in the upper classes but in the middle class as well. Many of them are common or highly popular in Hungary even nowadays. For instance, *Dalma* and *Enikő* (created by Vörösmarty) or *Kincső* (created by Jókai) were among the 100 most common names of new-born girls in 2013, while *Csilla* (created by András Dugonics) held the position of 39th most common female name in the country (see KEKKH 2014).

This difference between the two periods can be explained by various cultural and historical factors. Firstly, in the Middle Ages there was only a narrow stratum of society that had the opportunity to get acquainted with the source literary works in the courts of kings and aristocrats. Conversely, during the 19th century a middle class was forming, which gradually became stronger and wider. Beside a part of the aristocracy and of the nobility committed to the cause of the nation, the educated citizenry served as the audience of newly established papers and literary journals. Correlating with the widening stratum of readers, publishing and distributing books developed at a quick pace, as did national theatres, literary salons and literary societies. These media were the transmitters of fictional names to the relatively young middle class, which was partly allogenic but assimilated and which was more open to new influences than the society of the previous centuries. In addition, these names stemming from 19th-century literature were pronouncedly Hungarian, many of them were connected to the assumed or real national history. It made them highly appreciated in the climate of nationalism, especially during and after the revolution and war of independence in 1848-1849. Bearers of these names and their creators became symbols and heroes of national history and memory. For instance, *Etelka* was created by Dugonics as the name of a heroine of his novel, which takes place at the time of the Hungarian settlement in the Carpathian Basin. The name was formed from *Etele*, another form of *Attila*, the Hun prince's name. The reason why this name served as the source of *Etelka* is that Huns were regarded as the ancestors of Hungarians on the basis of a medieval historiographic tradition.

The spread of some names was accelerated by famous name bearers. For instance, *Zoltán*, an Old Hungarian name of Turkic origin, known from the gest of Anonymous became popular due to the fact that the greatest Hungarian poet, Sándor Petőfi gave it to his son. After Petőfi's leading role in the revolution and his disappearance in the last days of the war of independence in a lost battle, he became the symbol of freedom and the subject of national legends. In addition, his son, who was born during the war, became the 'orphan of the nation'. The other cause of the popularity of this name was Jókai's novel, *Kárpáthy Zoltán*, since its main character (Zoltán Kárpáthy) became a symbol of the nationalistic, brave and honest aristocrat. Since many of these names were strongly connected to Hungarian national history, they also became signs of ethnicity and thus they were preferred also by Jews assimilating into the nation in the second half of the 19th century (cf. e.g. Hajdú 2003: 550,

Fenyves 2009: 148). In the 20th century, they became popular among Hungarian minorities in the Carpathian Basin due to the fact that they cannot be translated into another language.

The 19th century was also the classic period of family name changes in Hungary. Artificial names created by people for themselves can be regarded as the impressions of the name style of the given era. In the 19th century, Romanticism made an impact on family names as well, since many of the newly created names were inspired to suggest their bearers' noble origins from an ancient bloodline. Old Hungarian given names newly discovered in gests and chronicles, especially in the gest of Anonymous and the Illuminated Chronicle served as perfect tools of this expression. Names from the Hun-Hungarian tradition or the names of the leaders of the Hungarian tribes at the time of the Hungarian settlement in the Carpathian Basin became family names on their own or with a name formant: *Etele*, *Csaba*, *Álmos*, *Árpád*, *Árpádfi*, *Böngérfi*, etc. (cf. e.g. Juhász 2009: 98-99). Since a misbelief had emerged by the 19th century, according to which family names deriving from place names with the formant *-i* and especially with its written variant *-y* are the signals of nobility, many artificial family names were created in this style (see e.g. Farkas 2012). For instance, *Kárpáthy* ('Carpathians' + *-i*) appeared in the first part of the 19th century in the documents of family name changes, but it became the most popular artificial family name in the history of family name changes in Hungary partly due to Jókai's novel and character mentioned before, Zoltán Kárpáthy.<sup>3</sup> While this family name had an antecedent in the real name stock, another family name of literary origin, *Szentirmai* was the creation of Jókai's mind completely. It follows the real family name type place name + *-i* formant, but the assumed place name cannot exist, since it should have stemmed from the name of a church named after Saint Irma. The problem is that a saint called *Irma* cannot be found in any martyrologies. As this name belongs to a romantically noble and heroic character, a nationalistic aristocrat in Jókai's novel mentioned before, it proved to be a perfect device to suggest nobility and ancient origins of the name bearer. As a result of family name changes and the inheritance of the newly adopted name, 511 bearers of *Szentirmai* (with all of its written variations and combinations) and 124 bearers of *Szentirmai* lived in Hungary in 2007 (according to the official register of population).

The third period of adopting fictional names into the real name stock started in the second half of the 20th century. One of its main characteristics is that a new source appeared on the scene: motion picture. Recently most new names of this kind come from cinema (e.g. from the *Lord of the Rings*: *Árven*, *Frodó*; from the Matrix trilogy: *Triniti*; or the Star Wars series: *Anakin*, *Amidala*) or from TV series (e.g. *Izaura* from the Brazilian soap opera *Isaura the Slave Girl*) and a smaller part of them derives from literature (*Otello*, *Rómeó*, *Dezdemóna*, and *Ofélia*, etc. by Shakespeare; *Aramisz* and *Atosz* by Dumas; *Fadett* by George Sand; *Berzsián* by Ervin Lázár; *Bóbita* by Sándor Weöres). As we can see, in many cases it cannot be decided whether the novel or the film made an impact on the name giving parents. A great amount of mythological names can also be found (*Ámor*, *Ariadné*, *Herkules*, *Kasszandra*, *Minerva*, *Orfeusz*; *Damajanti*, *Krisna*; *Freja*, *Odin*; *Ízisz*, *Ozirisz*; etc.), and some classical ones (*Brútusz*, *Cézár*, *Ciceró*, *Dáriusz*, *Kleopátra*, etc.) in the contemporary given name stock, although these names appear extremely rarely in the population.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about the history of the family name Kárpáthy, see Farkas (2007).

According to the current Hungarian laws, given names can be chosen from a list of names available in a dictionary of names (Ladó and Bíró 1998) and on the internet (male names: <http://www.nytud.hu/oszt/nyelvmuvelo/utonevek/osszesffi.pdf>, female names: <http://www.nytud.hu/oszt/nyelvmuvelo/utonevek/osszesnoi.pdf>). If someone would like to give a name that cannot be found in this list, he/she has the right to apply to the Given Name Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. This body consists of onomasticians. Their task is to consider whether these names can be given to new-born babies. According to their guidelines, names regarded as Old Hungarian ones may be accepted only if there is a source for their use from the Middle Ages. Names taken from literature or from a motion picture of a foreign language are accepted only if there are some examples of their usage as given names in other countries. Hungarian fictional names may be given only if they are not disadvantageous for their bearers: for example they do not support names of negative characters or names with ludicrous meanings. (For the principles followed by the Committee, see: <http://www.nytud.hu/oszt/nyelvmuvelo/utonevek/alapelvek.html>). Since 2013, a page has been available on the internet for searching in the whole given name stock according to several different aspects, e.g. the linguistic origin, the original meaning, the frequency, or the sounding of a name (Raátz and Sass 2013).

While names of literary origin were found in the upper classes between the 12th and 15th centuries, and other fictional names were spread by the middle class in the 19th century, nowadays they are more common in the lower classes, especially among Romany people and in the circles of newly rich people (cf. Szivós and Tóth 2013: 131-132). In consequence, they play a role in signalling ethnicity and social standing. Choosing rare names to distinguish children from others by their names has also become one of the most significant motives in name giving in the whole of contemporary Hungarian society. Despite this tendency, names motivated by foreign films or literary works usually come across as ridiculous and may serve as a source of discrimination. At first glance, this could be hard to comprehend, since names of literary origin have become common since the 19th century. The difference, however, is that those names were connected to Hungarian culture, while newly adopted fictional names (such as *Aladdin*, *Otelló*, *Rómeó*, *Aramisz*, *Amidala*, *Gandalf*, or *Boromir*) are evidently connected to foreign cultures. In addition, we do not associate fictional names from 19th century with their original bearers; and what is more, the majority of people do not even know about their fictional origin. Contrary to this, newly accepted fictional names – because they are too close to their source in time and currently they are extremely rare – conjure up their first bearers in films or literary works strongly and promptly, with all of their characteristics.

To sum up, we could see that three periods of accepting fictional names in the real name stock of Hungary have many differences. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that personal names are determined by cultural, social and historical factors. Consequently, the use of fictional names as given names cannot be investigated without reference to these factors.

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