

SURNAMES OF ETHNONYMIC ORIGIN IN THE HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE

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Surnames of ethnonymic origin in the Hungarian language¹

Abstract: Surnames originating from ethnonyms form a characteristic part of the Hungarian surname stock, in comparison with surname corpuses of other European nations. Among the 10 most frequent surnames in Hungary, 3 are of this type: *Tóth* (= Slavic, Slovak), *Horvát* (= Croat), *Német* (= German). These names make up at most 0.5% of the surname stock, yet their proportion could be estimated at about 7–8%. An analysis is presented here of the composition of the stock of these Hungarian surnames; the background and motivations for their creation; a historical perspective on the changes in their category; and the characteristics of their geographical distribution.

Keywords: ethnonym, family name, etymology, name geography, Hungarian.

Names of ethnonymic origin in the pool of Hungarian surnames

Names of ethnonymic origin are a characteristic and significant subgroup of the Hungarian family name stock. The few dozen names of this type within the historic pool of surnames make up at most about 0.5% of the stock of at least 10.5 thousand different surnames (Farkas and Lánicz 2009: 12), yet their overall frequency is far greater. According to research findings regarding the stock of Hungarian surnames, this subgroup represented 6.7% of family name stock between 1526 and 1772 and could be estimated a similar 7–8% today (cf. Hajdú 1994. 2: 18, Hajdú 2010). The pool of surnames of ethnonymic origin has expanded over the last few centuries by several neologisms, but these could barely add to the overall frequency of the subgroup, being very rare themselves.

In my presentation I shall touch upon the following questions concerning this surname type: 1. the composition of the stock of these surnames in the Hungarian language; 2. the background and motivations for their creation; 3. the changes in this category of names from a historical perspective; 4. the questions of their name geography.

First of all, we shall look at the composition of the stock of these surnames. On a recent list of the most frequent surnames for the 10-million population of Hungary, several ethnonymic surnames are among the top ten, besides the generally more typical nicknames or occupational surnames:

¹ This paper was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Table 1. The most frequent 10 surnames in Hungary²

Position	Surname	Meaning	Persons	%
1	<i>Nagy</i>	big	241,928	2.38
2	<i>Kovács</i>	smith	223,808	2.20
3	Tóth	Slavic, Slovak	222,228	2.19
4	<i>Szabó</i>	tailor	216,377	2.13
5	Horváth	Croat	203,765	2.01
6	<i>Kis</i>	small	167,673	1.65
7	<i>Varga</i>	shoemaker	140,709	1.38
8	<i>Molnár</i>	milller	109,233	1.07
9	Németh	German	97,584	0.96
10	<i>Balogh</i>	left-handed, bad	97,309	0.96

In the group of surnames with over 1,000 bearers (1,230 different names), we find 20 surnames of ethnomic and etymologically Hungarian origin:

Table 2. The most frequent surnames of ethnomic and etymologically Hungarian origin in Hungary

Position	Surname	Meaning	Persons	%
3	<i>Tóth</i>	Slavic, Slovak	222,228	2.19
5	<i>Horváth</i>	Croat	203,765	2.01
9	<i>Németh</i>	German	97,584	0.96
18	<i>Oláh</i>	Romanian	38,570	0.38
20	<i>Rácz</i>	Serb	36,001	0.35
28	<i>Török</i>	Ottoman, Turkish	27,374	0.27
39	<i>Magyar</i>	Hungarian, Magyar	21,240	0.21
62	<i>Orosz</i>	Rusyn, Russian	16,259	0.16
71	<i>Lengyel</i>	Polish	14,232	0.14
78	<i>Székely</i>	Sekler	12,319	0.12
104	<i>Kun</i>	Cuman	10,306	0.10
112	<i>Cseh</i>	Bohemian, Czech	9,665	0.10
152	<i>Szász</i>	Saxon	7,555	0.07
198	<i>Polák</i>	Polish	5,887	0.06
270	<i>Bajor</i>	Bavarian	4,578	0.05
488	<i>Olasz</i>	Italian	2,561	0.03
507	<i>Tatár</i>	Tartar	2,432	0.02

² In the tables, "Position" refers to the absolute position in the surname stock in Hungary. The "Surnames" are given with their most widely used spelling, while the figures concerning the "Persons" refer to the frequencies of all the spelling variants. "Meaning" refers to the historical and present-day meaning of the ethnonym in question. The "%" refers to the proportion of the name bearers in relation to the whole population of Hungary. The data in the tables refer to the Hungarian population registry database of 2007 (see also in Hajdú 2010).

555	<i>Görög</i>	Greek	2,248	0.02
956	<i>Czigány</i>	Gypsy	1,326	0.01
1100	<i>Móré</i>	Romanian, Gypsy	1,121	0.01

In the pool of Hungarian surnames of etymologically foreign origin, we find the following names of Slavic, German or uncertain provenance, with more than 1,000 bearers:

Table 3a. The most frequent surnames of ethnonymic and etymologically Slavic origin in Hungary

Position	Surname	Meaning	Persons	%
198	<i>Polák</i>	Polish	5,887	0.06
872–873	<i>Rusznýák</i>	Rusyn	1,476	0.01
1050	<i>Szlávik</i>	Slavic	1,186	0.01
1117–1120	<i>Uhrin</i>	Hungarian, Magyar	1,096	0.01

Table 3b. The most frequent surnames of ethnonymic and etymologically German origin in Hungary

Position	Surname	Meaning	Persons	%
270	<i>Bayer</i>	Bavarian	4,578	0.05
406	<i>Frank</i>	Frank	3,101	0.03
947	<i>Unger</i>	Hungarian, Magyar	1,342	0.01
978	<i>Böhm</i>	Bohemian, Czech	1,283	0.01

Table 3c. The most frequent surnames of ethnonymic and etymologically Romanian/Gypsy/Hungarian origin in Hungary

Position	Surname	Meaning	Persons	%
1100	<i>Móré</i>	Romanian, Gypsy	1,121	0.01

The stock of surnames of Hungarian vs. foreign origin is usually fairly easy to separate on the basis of the original ethnonyms. However, some of the surnames earlier considered etymologically Hungarian can in fact be of foreign origin (cf. also Hajdú 2010). The occurrence of *Polák* (= Polish) and most cases of *Bajor* (= Bavarian) could have entered the Hungarian language already as surnames rather than ethnonyms, from Slavic languages or from German, respectively. As for the name *Móré* (= Romanian, Gypsy), it can be of Hungarian, Romanian or Gypsy origin. It is probably no coincidence that these three names rank at the top of their non-Hungarian lists, as they can come from a variety of donor languages.

With these, it can be impossible to separate cases of Hungarian vs. foreign origin, yet with some of them, small differences in spelling and/or pronunciation can reveal their source. For example, with surnames that come from the ethnonyms meaning ‘German’, *Németh* in Hungarian and *Nemec* in Slavic languages, the last consonant can be telling, as can the vowels, in distinguishing the versions of ‘Bavarian’, with *Bajor* being the Hungarian and *Beyer*, *Bayer*, etc. the German varieties (Farkas and Slíz 2011: 64).

There are, however, other sources of information for revealing the exact etymology of some of the surnames. One of these consists of chronological considerations: with *Ruszin*, *Rusznýák*, denoting Rusyns, the corresponding ethnonyms can be found in Hungarian, but are relative latecomers, appearing only in the 18th century. Another source of revealing information is linguistic geography: *Ruszin*, *Rusznýák* and *Polák* appeared in the early 18th century in the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom, typically in the northern and north-eastern regions of the country with significant Slavic populations, which points to the Slavic origin of these surnames. (In detail see Fodor 2011: 103–105, 2012: 180.)

Finally, it is to be noted that among both the surnames of Slavic and those of German origin we find the names denoting ‘Hungarian’ in these languages: *Unger/Ungár/Ungar* for the German and *Uhrin/Ugrin* for the Slavic group (Hajdú 2010: 486, 487–488). There are examples of the ethnonym ‘Hungarian, Magyar’ in other languages among surnames, but significantly less frequently (e.g., the Romanian ethnonym *Ungor/Ungur* is borne as a surname by only 435 individuals in present-day Hungary). As we can see, the Hungarian ethnonym denoting ‘Hungarian, Magyar’, i.e. *Magyar*, is among the more frequent surnames. In certain regions this could well have had the function, for other Hungarian speakers living there, of telling people apart from a local group of non-Hungarian origin.

Surnames of ethnonymic origin can be considered a significant subgroup especially in comparison with data from other European countries, where we quite often do not find a single ethnonymic surname, even among the 50 most frequent surnames (cf. Caffarelli 2005), as opposed to 7 in the top 50, 5 in the top 20, or 3 in the top 10 in Hungary (see above). This type of surname seems to be much less frequent in Europe as a whole, and even in Central Europe alone, than in Hungary. In comparison with Germany (cf. Szilágyi-Kósa 2011), in the top 200 surnames (taking spelling variants separately), we only find *Böhm*, *Beyer/Bayer*, *Hesse*, and two names with possibly other etymologies, *Frank(e)* and *Pohl* (Kohlheim and Kohlheim 2005: 51–52). However, we can see here how cultural boundaries crosscut national ones. This type of surname is significantly more frequent in the name stock of German origin in Hungary. The top list is also understandably different from the one in Germany, especially as regards the status of *Bayer* and *Unger*:

Table 4. The most frequent surnames of ethnonymic and etymologically German origin in Hungary vs. Germany³

Surname	Meaning	Persons in Hungary	Position in Hungary	Position in Germany
<i>Beyer, Bayer...</i>	Bavarian	4,578	5	102, 166, ...
<i>Frank(e)</i>	Frank (etc.)	3,101	12	56, 64, ...
<i>Unger</i>	Hungarian, Magyar	1,342	48	...
<i>Böhm</i>	Bohemian, Czech	1,283	51	66, ...

³ Considering here the spelling variants separately in the case of Germany, and considering them together in the case Hungary; the data given here are based on Kohlheim and Kohlheim (2005: 51–52) and Hajdú (2010).

The origin and background of this type of surname

Surnames are a source of information on their social and linguistic context. Toponyms of ethnonymic origin first of all contain reference to the actual origin of a given community (cf. Rácz 2005), while surnames of ethnonymic origin are based on some kind of connection between the person who first bore the name and a given ethnic group. This connection, however, may or may not have been that of descent. Often these names do indeed refer to ethnic background or language use, but they could also refer to moving in/from regions where the given ethnic group lived, owning properties in such a region, having lived in such a region, or having had peaceful (trading, service) or conflicting (war, captivity) contact with the given group. Also, they could point out some kind of similarity (of behaviour, dress etc.) between the bearer of the name and members of the given group; that is, when retracing the origin of the individual examples of these surnames, apart from description, we find metaphoric and metonymic naming practices as well. As for artificial name-giving (that is, surname change or due to illicit descent), apart from these realistic motivations, we need to consider the possibility of conventional name-giving as well.

When listing the above-mentioned realistic motivations, we could rely partly on theoretical considerations, partly on written sources, but also on synchronic data, since the origin of today's nicknames is very similar to the precursors of family names. We come across names of ethnonymic origin in every name type based on reference to personal characteristics. (In detail, see Farkas and Slíz 2011.)

The rich associative potential of ethnonyms is well shown by the fact that most of them have taken on other, non-ethnonymic meanings in time. E.g.: *görög* (= Greek, but also merchant), *oláh* (= Roman, but also shepherd), *orosz* (= Russian, but also Greek Orthodox by religion). These regularly seem to be relatively late developments compared to the history of Hungarian surnames in general (from the 14th century onwards), with the first examples dating from as late as the 16th–18th century (Benkő ed. 1993–1995. 1: 476; 2: 1057–1058, 1069), but in some cases such processes can explain the origin of certain surnames. The underlying processes include similar metaphoric or metonymic thinking, historic experience or ethnostereotyping as those seen with name-giving. For example, the ethnonym *tatár* (= Tartar) took on the meaning of 'godless' in 1713 and, in the 20th century, *Tatár* could have been given as a nickname to an aggressive, violent individual (Benkő ed. 1993–1995. 2: 1489; Gergely 1977: 165).

Historically, the appearance and spreading of surnames of ethnonymic origin presupposed some kind of contact between the two ethnic groups. This tells us about the history and social context of the given language community, but has left its trace on the linguistic-geographical scope of a given surname as well. In artificial name-giving, however, the pool of potential ethnonyms to use could extend beyond the otherwise temporal and geographical horizon of the community at the time (in detail see later).

The stock of surnames of ethnonymic origin in Hungary could also be expanded by the arrival of families belonging to non-Hungarian nationalities with originally foreign surnames, whose name use eventually adapted to the dominant Hungarian context. This is well shown also by data registered as, for example, *Horváth alias Ellencsics*, *Enzbruder alias Német* (*Horvát[h]* = Croat, *Német[h]* = German; Varga 2006: 111–116). The frequency of

this type of surname may well have been influenced by the fact that in some ethnic groups in close contact with Hungarians (like Romanians or Serbs), surnames as such became widespread later than among Hungarians and thus their name use in Hungary could have been greatly influenced by the Hungarian environment (Farkas 2009: 365–366). As a result of immigration waves (e.g., groups fleeing from the Ottomans and those settling in after the Ottomans left), a particularly great number of surnames referring to a given ethnic group may have appeared in a certain region. (For the example of south-eastern Transylvania, see Takács 1983, Bárdi and Hermann 1999.) As for later Magyarization of names, it added mainly to the diversity of the surname stock, but not to the absolute number of surnames of ethnonymic origin actually used.

The changes in the stock of ethnonyms and surnames of ethnonymic origin

The pool of ethnonyms and their referential values have undergone significant changes over the centuries (cf. Benkő ed. 1993–1995, Rácz 2010: 408) and today's stock bears witness to centuries of ever-changing stages. Behind these changes there is a set of extralinguistic factors of ethnic and cultural history (which, however, is beyond the scope of this particular paper).

The meaning of some ethnonyms has been expanded; e.g. *sváb* (= one German ethnic group → ethnic German living in Hungary). That of others has shrunk, e.g. *tót* (= member of the Slavic ethnic groups living in Hungary in general → Slovak), *olasz* (= member of an ethnic group speaking a Romance language → Italian). Some ethnonyms have vanished, others have been born. Some of the new ones specifically took the place of earlier ones, e.g. *tót* was replaced by *szlovák* and *oláh* was replaced by *román* during the 19th–20th centuries, in line with the wish and self-identification of these ethnic groups. The new ethnonyms made their way into the surname-giving practice, given naturally as well as artificially, but of course they are much less frequent than their earlier equivalents. (For example, for Slavic/Slovak: *Tóth* 222 thousand persons, *Szlovák* 778 persons; for Serb: *Rácz* 36 thousand persons, *Szerb*: 108 persons – according to the Hungarian population registry database of 2007.) Several different factors should be taken into account in the study of the likely original meaning and motivation of these kinds of surnames (see, e.g. Farkas and Slíz 2011, Fodor 2012, Vörös 2013: 141–152).

The range of Hungarian surnames of ethnonymic origin has had additions from yet other sources (Farkas 2010: 71). Lexical changes may have been brought about by the spontaneous Magyarization of foreign surnames and the official surname changes of the 19th and 20th centuries. This is how names of ethnic groups that had disappeared long before the stock of Hungarian surnames came to be or ones beyond the natural name-giving horizon of Hungarians made their way into the surname stock; cf. *Avar* (= Avar), *Gót* (= Goth), *Hun* (= Hun) for the former and *Belga* (= Belgian), *Skót* (= Scottish), *Svéd* (= Swedish) for the latter. In the historical surname stock, the ethnonyms became surnames without affixation, while during the Magyarization process we also find morphological neologisms such as *Csehfy* (= Czech + son of); *Kunfi*, *Kunos*, *Kunosi* (= Cuman + *-fi/-s/-si*).

Within the group of surnames taken as a result of official name changes, surnames of ethnonymic origin are significantly less frequent than in the surname stock in general.

Although the surnames given up were most often of foreign origin, their ethnic-linguistic background was rarely reflected in the choice of a surname of ethnonymic origin, e.g. *Giánotti* > *Olasz* (= Italian). The choice was predominantly motivated by the initials, sound and meaning of the original surname (it was based on naming fashions) and only very rarely by a realistically descriptive consideration (Farkas 2009: 369–371). Besides, the regulation of surname choice in 20th century Hungary became restrictive relative to taking otherwise frequent surnames and this could especially affect many of the surnames of ethnonymic origin because of their frequency.

As for the characteristics of the stock of artificially given surnames, let us look at the name changes that occurred in the decades of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy:

Table 5. Surnames of ethnonymic origin in the stock of surnames in present-day Hungary vs. the stock of adopted surnames of the official surname changes in Hungary in the era of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy⁴

	Hungarian surname stock today (N = 10,162,610 persons)				Non-Jewish surname changers (N = 18,723 persons)				Jewish surname changers (N = 13,981 persons)			
	No.	Name	Meaning	%	No.	Meaning	=	%	No.	Name	Meaning	%
1	3	<i>Tóth</i>	Slavic, Slovak	2.19	18	<i>Horváth</i>	Croat	0.57	3	<i>Székely</i>	Sekler	1.91
2	5	<i>Horváth</i>	Croat	2.01	19	<i>Székely</i>	Sekler	0.56	23–24	<i>Horváth</i>	Croat	0.77
3	9	<i>Németh</i>	German	0.96	23	<i>Magyar</i>	Hungarian	0.48	45	<i>Lengyel</i>	Polish	0.49
4	18	<i>Oláh</i>	Romanian	0.38	91–97	<i>Török</i>	Ottoman, Turkish	0.22	53–55	<i>Török</i>	Ottoman, Turkish	0.42
5	20	<i>Rácz</i>	Serb	0.35	107–111	<i>Szász</i>	Saxon	0.20	60–61	<i>Rácz</i>	Serb	0.39
6	28	<i>Török</i>	Ottoman, Turkish	0.27	151–158	<i>Németh</i>	German	0.14	62–66	<i>Szász</i>	Saxon	0.38
7	39	<i>Magyar</i>	Hungarian, Magyar	0.21	151–158	<i>Tóth</i>	Slovak, Slavic	0.14	93–98	<i>Németh</i>	German	0.24
8	62	<i>Orosz</i>	Rusyn, Russian	0.16	168–178	<i>Lengyel</i>	Polish	0.13	121–125	<i>Bolgár</i>	Bulgarian	0.19
9	71	<i>Lengyel</i>	Polish	0.14	318–335	<i>Bajor</i>	Bavarian	0.07	135–142	<i>Magyar</i>	Hungarian, Magyar	0.16
10	78	<i>Székely</i>	Sekler	0.12	336–352	<i>Orosz</i>	Russian, Rusyn	0.06	135–142	<i>Kun</i>	Cuman	0.16

The differences can be specified as follows: the relative frequency of the most common surname, the second most common surname, etc.; the positional and proportional differences between specific surnames (e.g. *Székely*); the name choices of Jewish vs. non-Jewish surname changers; the stock of surnames on the most popular surname lists (where 6 surnames of the top 10 are to be found in all three categories: *Horváth*, *Németh*,

⁴ The data are based on the Hungarian population registry database of 2007 (see also in Hajdú 2010) and an electronic surname database of official name changes of the period (DOSC. 1867–1918).

Török, Magyar, Lengyel, Székely; indicated in bold characters above). It is also noteworthy which ethnonymic surnames were especially popular (e.g. *Székely* = Sekler) and decidedly unpopular (e.g. *Tóth* = Slovak, *Oláh* = Romanian) at the time among the petitioners of the name changes. These processes, however, apart from the meaning of a given ethnonym, may have been greatly influenced by a completely different factor: the most characteristic motivation of surname choice at the time, i.e. the attempt to keep the given initial of the original surname. It also could decrease the number of surnames like *Oláh* (= Romanian), *Orosz* (= Russian), *Olasz* (= Italian) etc., because of their relatively rare initial.

The geography of surnames of ethnonymic origin⁵

The linguistic geography of this type of surnames is certainly worthy of study in itself. First let us make an overview according to a west vs. east division and compare the make-up of the surname stock in Burgenland (easternmost land of Austria), Hungary and Transylvania (north-western part of Romania):

Table 6a. Surnames of ethnonymic origin in the Hungarian surname stock of three different areas with Hungarian population⁶

	Burgenland (Austria)			Hungary			Transylvania (Romania)		
	No.	Surname	Meaning	No.	Surname	Meaning	No.	Surname	Meaning
1	1	<i>Horváth</i>	Croat	3	<i>Tóth</i>	Slavic, Slovak	5	<i>Székely</i>	Sekler
2	3	<i>Németh</i>	German	5	<i>Horváth</i>	Croat	6	<i>Szász</i>	Saxon
3	5	<i>Tóth</i>	Slavic, Slovak	9	<i>Németh</i>	German	8	<i>Tóth</i>	Slavic, Slovak

That is, we find 3 surnames of ethnonymic origin among the top 10, but the individual names and the frequency of their occurrence show remarkable differences. We look at the name stock in Hungary and Transylvania more closely:

Table 6b. Surnames of ethnonymic origin in the Hungarian surname stock in Hungary and Transylvania/Romania

	Hungary (N = 10,162,610 persons)				Transylvania/Romania (N = 45,189 persons)			
	No.	Name	Meaning	%	No.	Name	Meaning	%
1	3	<i>Tóth</i>	Slavic, Slovak	2.19	5	<i>Székely</i>	Sekler	0.92
2	5	<i>Horváth</i>	Croat	2.01	6	<i>Szász</i>	Saxon	0.91
3	9	<i>Németh</i>	German	0.96	8	<i>Tóth</i>	Slavic, Slovak	0.83
4	18	<i>Oláh</i>	Romanian	0.38	35	<i>Török</i>	Ottoman, Turkish	0.48
5	20	<i>Rácz</i>	Serb	0.35	46–47	<i>Horváth</i>	Croat	0.38

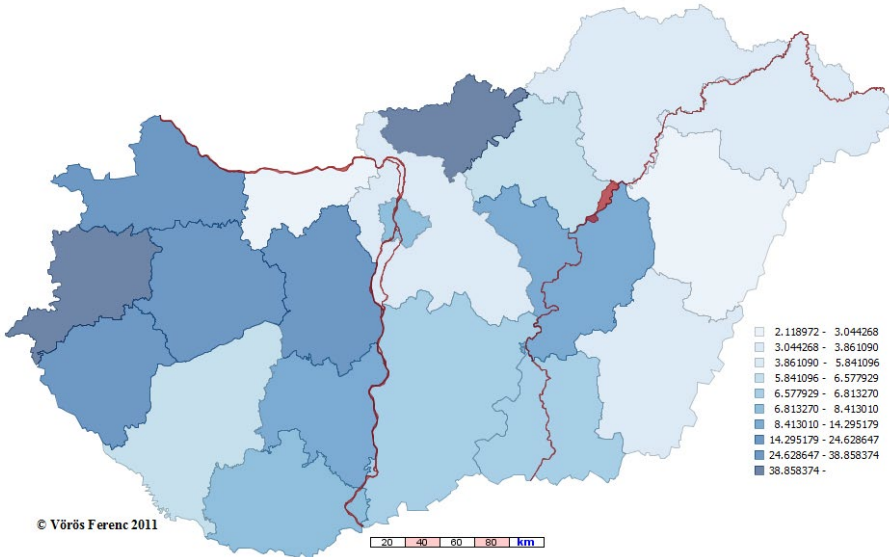
⁵ The maps of present-day Hungarian surname geography are presented here by the courtesy of F. Vörös (cf. DHS. 2009, MCHS. 2011), and the maps of surname geography in 1715 are presented by the courtesy of J. N. Fodor (cf. DHHS. 1715). Unfortunately, the latter case our source (the census of 1715) lacks data for Transylvania altogether.

⁶ The data are based on the works of L. Vincze (Burgenland; Vincze 2011: 73–74), L. Murádin (Transylvania; Murádin 2005: 39–75) and M. Hajdú (Hungary, Hajdú 2010: 529–535).

6	28	<i>Török</i>	Ottoman, Turkish	0.27	56	<i>Oláh</i>	Romanian	0.31
7	39	<i>Magyar</i>	Hungarian, Magyar	0.21	68	<i>Németh</i>	German	0.25
8	62	<i>Orosz</i>	Rusyn, Russian	0.16	72–73	<i>Rác</i>	Serb	0.24
9	71	<i>Lengyel</i>	Polish	0.14	104	<i>Orosz</i>	Rusyn, Russian	0.16
10	78	<i>Székely</i>	Sekler	0.12	146–151	<i>Kun</i>	Cuman	0.10

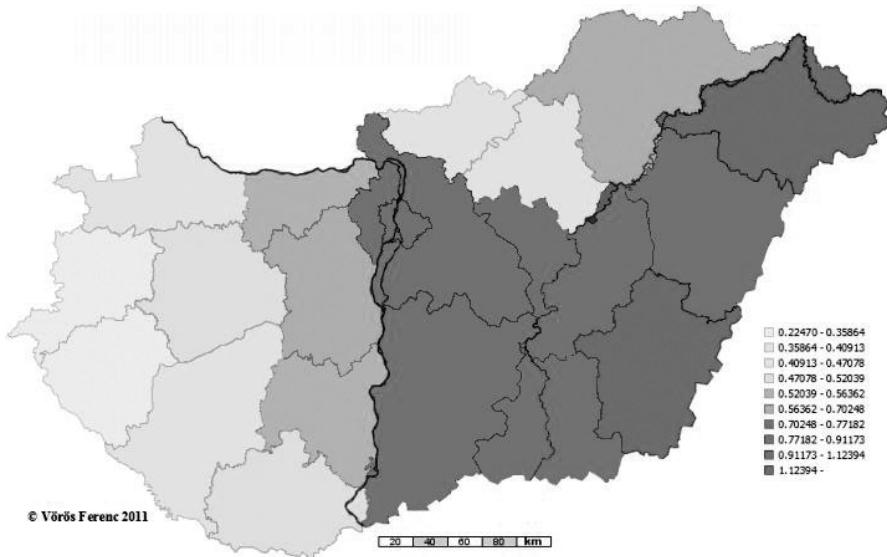
As we can see, the names themselves are practically the same on both lists, yet their order and frequency are different. The differences towards the top of the lists are characteristic. In Transylvania the names of two locally significant ethnic groups, the Seklers (a Hungarian ethnic group living in Transylvania) and the Saxons (a German ethnic group, typical of Transylvania) are the most frequent occurrences. In Hungary, these two names come up much less frequently (*Székely* being No. 10 and *Szász* No. 13 on the list), while the two most frequent surnames of ethnonymic origin in Hungary, *Tóth* and especially *Horváth* (both referring to certain Slavic ethnic groups), are much less frequent in Transylvania (No. 3 and 5, while the difference between the two areas is more salient in the proportion of the names: 2.19% vs. 0.83%, 2.01% vs. 0.38).

The difference between the geography of the surnames *Németh* (= German) and *Szász* (= Saxon) can also be seen in the linguistic geographical maps of Hungary today; the colours show their relative proportions in the different counties. (While in absolute numbers, even the highest occurrence of *Szász* is lower than the lowest occurrence of *Németh*.)



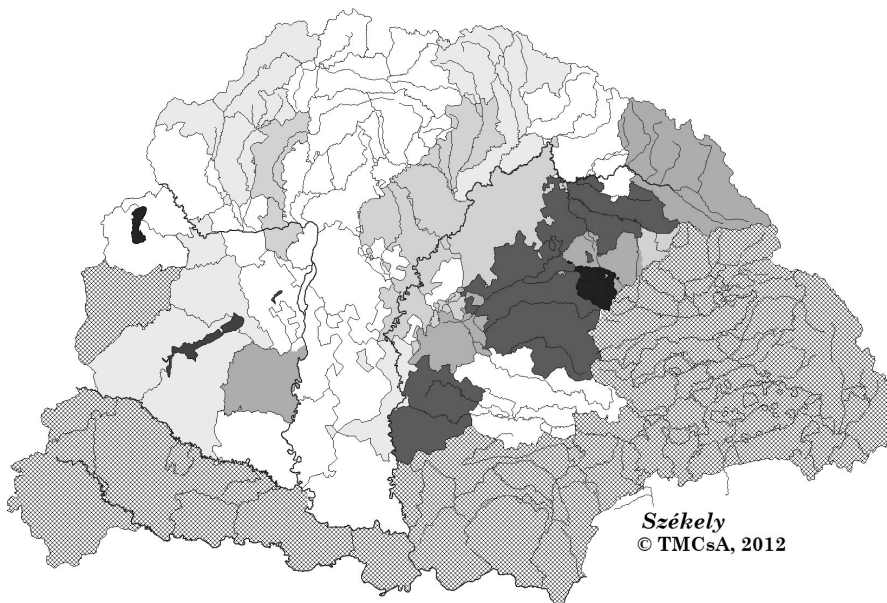
Map 1. The surname geography of *Németh* (= German) in present-day Hungary (N = 97,584 persons)⁷

⁷ See also Vörös (2011: 34–41).

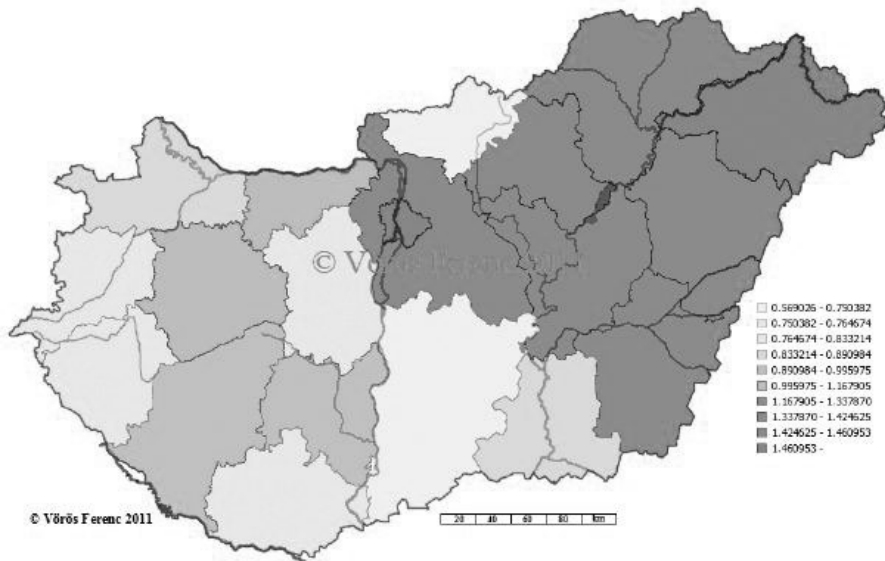


Map 2. The surname geography of *Szász* (= Saxon) in present-day Hungary (N = 7,555 persons)

The linguistic geography of the surname *Székely* (= Sekler) is also noteworthy:



Map 3a. The surname geography of *Székely* (= Sekler) in 1715 in Hungary (N = 93 persons)

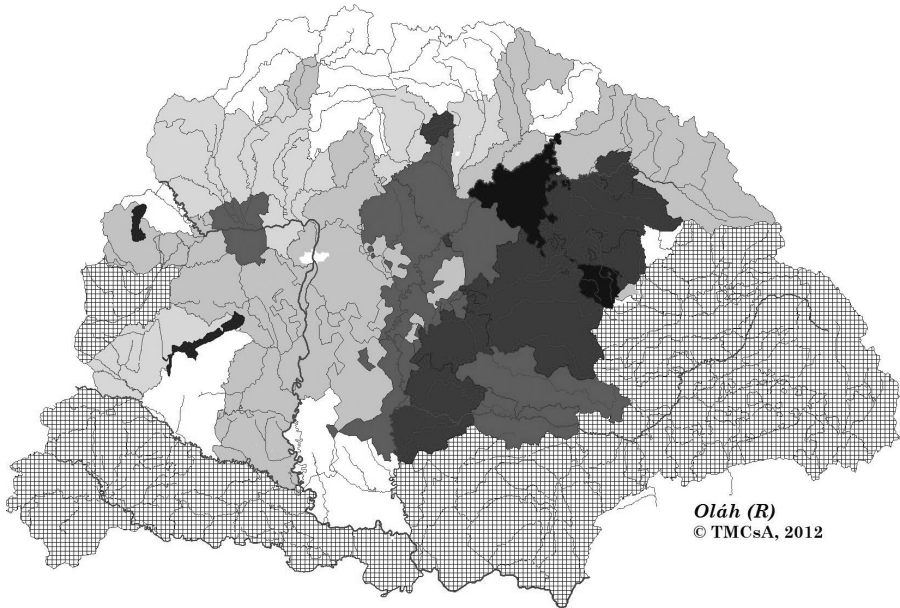


Map 3b. The surname geography of *Székely* (= Sekler) in present-day Hungary (N = 12,578 persons)

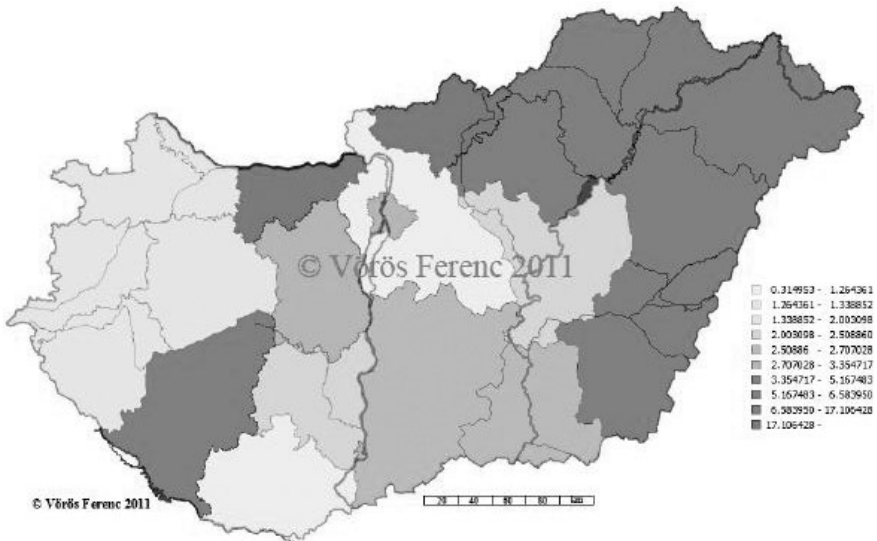
The dominance of the surname *Székely* in the east of Hungary in 1715 and today is explained by its Transylvanian connections. But today its occurrence is the highest in the very middle of the country, namely in Budapest, the capital city. This fact can be explained, in part, by taking into consideration the surname changers of the 19th and 20th century, mostly Jewish and typically living in urban areas, especially in Budapest. Another contributing factor can be attributed to Hungarian immigrants from Transylvania, for whom the capital may have been an important destination. As we have seen earlier, the surname *Székely* must have been frequent among the members of both groups, although for different reasons.

Finally let us take a look at the frequency as a surname of the ethnonym *Oláh*, the old ethnonym used for Romanians in the Hungarian language. As demonstrated by the name geography of surnames of the early 18th century Hungary (following the end of the Ottoman occupation), *Oláh* was a frequent surname in the regions with a mixed Hungarian and Romanian population and their neighbouring regions. The spread of this surname in today's Hungary is similar to the historical one, although some parts of it still call for explanation.

It is to be noted that the ethnonym *román* that had taken the place of *oláh* by the 20th century was first registered in the early 18th century and became dominant in official usage from the mid-19th century on. The surname *Román*, however, is unlikely to have the ethnonym as its origin – what with the ethnonym itself being such a late development – and is more likely to come from a rather rare Christian name as a patronymic. (In detail see Fodor 2012: 182–188.) This neatly explains why it is so much less frequent than *Oláh* (2,132 persons called *Román* in today's Hungary, as opposed to the 38,570 people called *Oláh*; cf. Hajdú 2010).



Map 4a. The surname geography of *Oláh* (= Romanian) in 1715 in Hungary (N = 387 persons)⁸



Map 4b. The surname geography of *Oláh* (= Romanian) in present-day Hungary (N = 38,790 persons)

⁸ See also Fodor (2012: 185–187).

Summary

Surnames of ethnonymic origin are a characteristic subgroup of the Hungarian surname stock, especially in comparison with that of other European peoples. This is a small set of surnames, but many of them are very frequent. The number of the different surnames belonging to this surname category is quite low, yet in terms of their relative occurrence, it is probably the highest and thus it is an especially typical category of the Hungarian surname stock. Behind it we find ethnic and cultural contacts and migration processes from different periods of history. This type of surnames bears witness to the ethnohistory and the history of the Carpathian basin in general, testifying to intensive contacts between ethnic groups at certain points, including their linguistic geographical reflections, changes and the make-up of this subgroup of surnames even today.

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