

GEOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH OF HISTORICAL PERSONAL NAMES FOUND IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

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Abstract: The spectacular results achieved by European research in the field of “geography of family names” have heavily influenced investigations in Hungarian onomastics. We have begun to create a database of historical personal names a few years ago. The corpus of personal names from the Carpathian Basin is based on the national censuses of 1715 and 1720, which can offer the most complete, overall picture of ethnic conditions in Hungary during the early part of the 18th century. The personal names of different languages appear independent of external influences, reflecting natural language contact occurring over centuries. The main goal of this study is to introduce the possibilities contained within the field of Hungarian geolinguistic research of personal names.

Keywords: surnames, name geography, name analysis, ethnicity, Carpathian Basin.

1. In the past two decades, the potential application of geolinguistic research findings has increasingly received greater attention in the fields of dialectology – combined with aspects of sociolinguistics (see e.g. Labov et al. 2006) – and onomastics (see e.g. Heuser et al. 2011). First and foremost, this growing attention to geolinguistic techniques stems from the fact that computer-driven technology has come to play a significant role in the cartographic visualisation of existent spatial connections between certain linguistic data groups, thereby enabling a greater level of ease in the completion and management of large databases.

Hungarian researchers have already achieved considerable results in the building of databases linking place-names and their relevant geographical information. The purpose of the Hungarian Digital Toponym Registry currently being prepared at the University of Debrecen is to create an overall place-name catalogue of the whole Carpathian Basin (<http://mnytud.arts.unideb.hu/mdh/>).

In Europe, contemporary research of family names places great emphasis on the importance of digital atlases, sources that render information about the spatial extension of names and allonyms, their localization and dialectal differences (e.g. Hellfritzsch 2006: 21–36, 2007: 44–59; Kohlheim and Kohlheim 2007: 60–73). Surname geography in Europe is primarily synchronic in nature (cf. Fodor and Lánicz 2011: 175–178); in some instances, however, there do exist past examples of historical data processing. One such case is the digital data store of the British census of 1881, in which data can be searched

by family names, name parts and other features (religion, nationality). The British 19th Century Surname Atlas (Archer 2003) is based on this census and consists of more than 400 thousand surnames (Brendler, S. 2006, Viereck 2011: 22). In reference to Anglo-Saxon countries, the program for surname geography in the United States is also worth mentioning. American Hamrick Software (<http://www.hamrick.com/names/>) includes four sources: name data from the national censuses of 1850, 1880, 1920 and telephone book entries for 1990. In the French surname atlas, family names appear according to four different periods (1891–1915, 1916–1940, 1941–1965, 1966–1990) (<http://www.geopatronymie.com>).

2. These spectacular achievements in the research of surname geography not only indicate what tasks in the Hungarian research of names still remain undone, but they also provide us with a series of methods in the processing of our own collected material.

Work on the geography of names in Hungary also began by examining the synchronic corpus of names still extant today. Utilising the central database of population records containing the total number of inhabitants in Hungary, Ferenc Vörös initiated preparatory work for the present synchronic atlas of family names in 2009 (Vörös 2010). Meanwhile, our research group at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest has focused its attention on the compilation of a database of historical family names.

In order to start these historical examinations, a homogeneous corpus was needed that would best represent the regional distribution of surnames. The first country-wide census of 1715 (Figure 1) is the earliest record to suit this purpose for the following reasons: (1) it comprises two-thirds of the area known as historical Hungary (yet unfortunately does not include the regions of Transylvania, Banat and Croatia); (2) it is a representative survey of the resident population of the country. It contains names of roughly 166 thousand tax-paying individuals. (The population of Hungary was about 4 million at this time.) (3) As far as time is concerned, it falls the closest to the period when natural family names developed in the Carpathian Basin. (This process occurred in the 14–15th century.) (4) It is an untouched corpus of names predating the second part of the 19th century, an era typified by the rise of movements urging the changing – or “Hungarianisation” – of names.

Due to historical circumstances, the census could not be completed; in

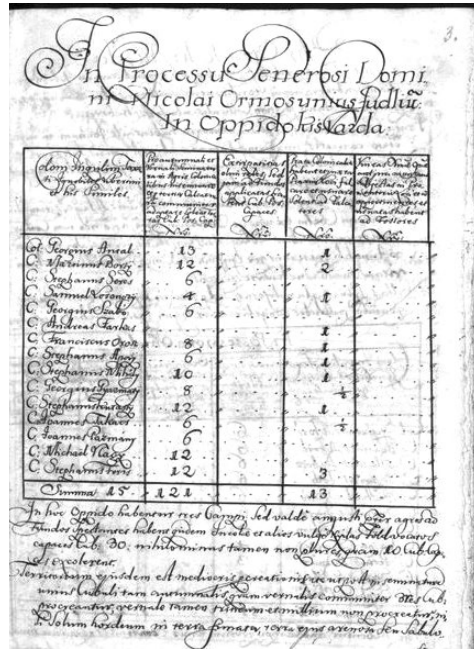


Figure 1. The first country-wide census (Conscriptio Regnicolaris) in 1715

spite of this fact, this record provides the most comprehensive picture of Hungary in the early part of the 18th century.

The second part of the database consists of the results of the census of 1720. It is important to mention that this census was conducted five years later in order to correct mistakes made in the course of the previous census. Although landless peasants and widows were not included, the 1720 census still contains about 178 thousand people. The two censuses yield a total of 344 thousand names, an amount of data that provides a significant basis for the analysis of anthroponyms in the 18th century.

3. Research into the geography of historical family names suddenly renders the main territory occupied by the Hungarian language quite visible, in relation to a genuine geographical location containing the names of families who actually lived in this region at one point in time. The main advantage of creating the Atlas of Historical Surnames of the Carpathian Basin is that the organic “unity” of personal names is represented on maps, thereby indicating the way name-systems of different languages influenced one another, resulting in an evolving history of names.

Let us now examine the kind of research that can be conducted when using the Atlas of Historical Surnames in the Carpathian Basin. A few relevant aspects concerning analytical methods of the historical geography of personal names have been outlined below:

Phonetic studies

As part of a linguistic system, personal names bear **phonetic features**. We can gain some data on the dialectal status of the Hungarian language in the 18th century by examining phonetic variants in family names. For example, the distribution of the name *Fazekas* (‘potter’) shows that the variant *Fazikas* is specific only to the Eastern part of the country, while *Fazakas* ~ *Fazokas* is found in the West.

Usage of phonetic data, however, has its limitations: census-recorders frequently originated from other counties and, therefore, used their own dialects when registering local personal names. The influence recorders had on name forms is demonstrable in the case of foreign names, too. Hungarian census-reorders distorted names that were either unknown in meaning or sounded strange to them. In some cases, these names were changed to similar Hungarian name forms. Since the two earliest censuses were taken within five years of one another, many tax-payers appear in both censuses, thereby allowing us to examine methods used by census officers. The following examples show differences between Romanian and Hungarian name forms from the Kővár district (Țara Chioarului) (e.g. 1715: *Baráth Jónocz* ~ 1720: *Joannes Brád, Bláz* ~ *Balás, Rusz Mihály* ~ *Michale Orosz, Barla Vaszily* ~ *Ladislaus Birla, Drobus Daniel* ~ *Daniel Darabos; Trepedje Vaszalie* ~ *Ladislaus Trippe, Pavel Lukka* ~ *Lucas Paul* stb.).

This circumstance naturally makes it far more difficult to determine the etymon of names with due accuracy.

Morphological studies

The historical database of family names is suitable for displaying morphological occurrences on a map. Certain functional words such as the diminutive suffix (e.g. *-csa/*

cse, *-ka/ke*, *-ó/ő*), the multifunctional derivative *-i* (1. adjectival suffix 'from'; 2. diminutive suffix; 3. possessive suffix) and the geographical peculiarities of definite etymological allomorphs (e. g. *Ihász* ~ *Juhász* 'shepherd') can be investigated by this method. In the case of the German Surname Atlas (DFA 2005), similar analyses emerged: quantitative and qualitative divergences of vowels (e.g. *Schütz* ~ *Schütze*, *Köhler* ~ *Kähler*: Udolf 2006: 48–53), forms of family names with an affix or suffix (e.g. southern German diminutive suffix *-le*: Udolf 2006: 54, or the ending *-er* ~ *-ert*: Kempf and Nowak 2011) etc. While it cannot be refuted that – in comparison with the German database – this corpus of family names is more restricted from the point of view of analytical possibilities, morphological examination still remains of great importance. Morphological techniques enable us, for example, to research other names as well, not simply Hungarian names. The database of historical anthroponyms from the Carpathian Basin also provides assistance in the investigation of how Romanian suffixes (e. g. *-ilă* or *-ean*) spread throughout the region.

Lexical studies

The regional aspects of each name are examined for the purpose of revealing facts pertaining to their external story: the spread of a family name originating from a place-name, for example, could indirectly refer to migration paths in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, the presence of an ethnonym in a specific area indicates interethnic relations, thereby designating the propagation path of names. The attached map shows the name *Horvát* 'Croatian', the fifth most frequent surname in Hungary today (2012), as well as the first in Slovakia (2003). Originally appearing in the Transdanubian Region, it eventually came to cover the entire country (Figure 2.).

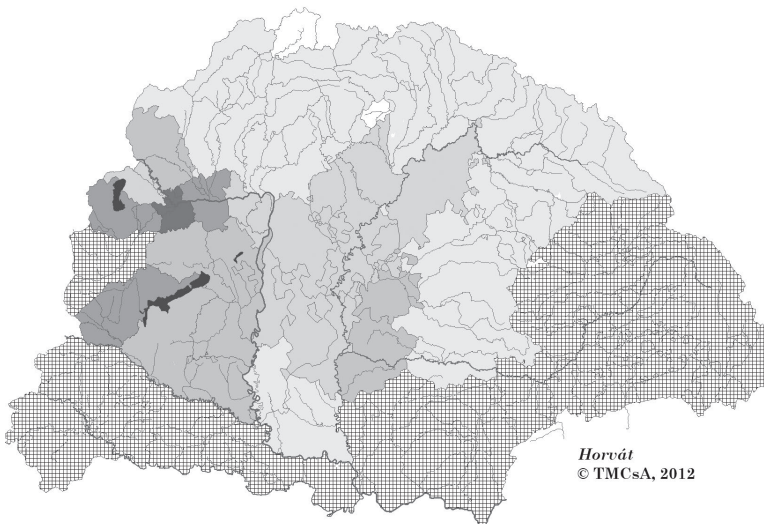


Figure 2. The spatial distribution of the name *Horvát* 'Croatian' (1715)
(Higher frequency of the name shown in the darker colour.)

The map for the name *Kaszab* ‘butcher’ shows that it originated from Ottoman Turkish (EWUng. 708), a fact underscored by its presence in the area occupied by the Turkish Empire in the 16–17th century (Figure 3).

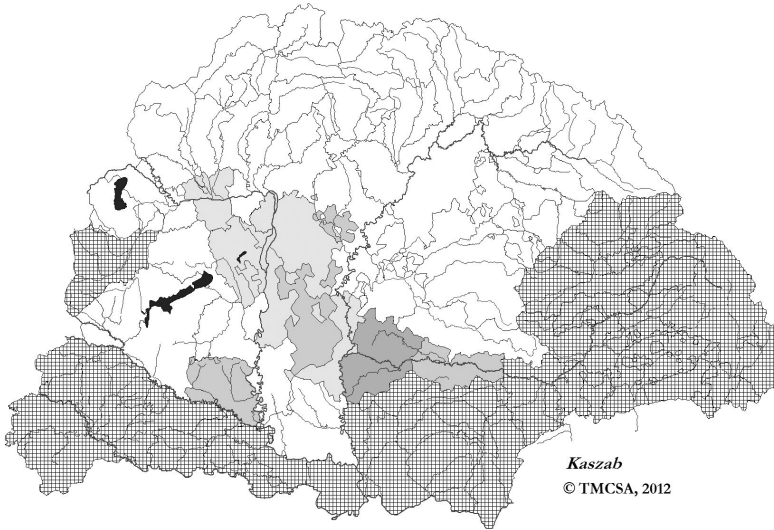


Figure 3. The spatial distribution of the name *Kaszab* ‘butcher’ (1715)

Studies about the systematisation of surnames

When grouping surnames according to naming motivation, our main goal is to reveal how the surname has developed. The bequeathing of a name is most often directly related to some peculiarity or characteristic attribute possessed by the person being named. In such cases, it can be stated that the (part of a) name involved has a peculiarity-marking function. Given the basic theorem that name-giving is mainly determined by extralinguistic factors (elements of reality), it is most appropriate to delimit peculiarity-marking categories cognitively on the basis of the relationship between the name-bearer and a segment or constituent of reality. Linguistic meaning is closely related to cognition, that is, the way we perceive the world around us (Kiefer 2007: 19). With reference to this relationship, five elements of reality can be discerned (Fodor 2008: 295–296, 2010: 72–81, 145):

- (1) **the individual attribute of the person named** (e.g. *Beteg* ‘sick’, *Kövér* ‘fat, overweight’, *Szép* ‘nice’, *Bátor* ‘brave’, *Jó* ‘good’; usual phrases: *Hallgass* ‘keep quiet!’, *Talán* ‘perhaps’)
- (2) **the named person’s relationship with another person or group of persons**
 - a) family relationship (e.g. *Antal* ‘Anthony’, *Csete*, *Bedő*, *Pető*, *Pálfi* ‘Paul’s son’)
 - b) relationship denoting connection to person of higher status (e.g. *Báró* ‘baron’, *Érsek* ‘archbishop’, *Király* ‘king’)
 - c) relationship to ethnic group (e.g. *Német* ‘German’, *Rácz* ‘Serbian’)

(3) the social role, status of the person named

- a) occupation (e.g. *Ács* ‘carpenter’, *Juhász* ‘shepherd’, *Varga* ‘shoemaker’)
- b) honour, position, office (e.g. *Bíró* ‘judge’, *Esküdt* ‘juror’, *Kapitány* ‘captain’)
- c) social status (e.g. *Polgár* ‘citizen’, *Pór* ‘pauper’, *Szabad* ‘freeman’)
- d) financial condition (e.g. *Pénzes* ‘rich’, *Szegény* ‘poor’)

(4) the person as related to a place (e.g. *Erdélyi* ‘Transylvanian’; *Baranyi* ‘from county Baranya’; *Dombi* ‘from the mound’, *Mező* ‘field’, *Vég* ‘end (of village)’)

(5) connection to a thing or event

- a) person named in relation to a concrete thing (e.g. *Kupa* ‘cup’, *Vas* ‘iron’) – possession (*Ijás* ‘who has a bow’, *Kertes* ‘who has a garden’)
- b) person’s connection to an event (e.g. *Paplövő* ‘priest shooter’, *Jóljárt* ‘had luck’).

In the final stage of the research project, the regional representation of every type of family name will be possible. It is known that certain types of names are structured territorially: on the borders of the Hungarian language area, for instance, family names deriving from place-names are far fewer than those stemming from patronyms. (See also German research of naming motivation, e.g. Kunze 2004.)

Name analysis and the etymon of surnames

In this final point, I would like to mention the possibility of investigating the origins of surnames. Since most early censuses contain the names of tax-payers, the method of name-analysis enables us to reconstruct what languages were being spoken – as well as the borders and territories formed by these languages – in the Hungarian Kingdom at the beginning of the 18th century. “Due to political reasons, this method ... has been used and abused for decades,” (e.g. in Yugoslavia between the two World Wars Hungarian-speaking individuals with Serb-like names were forced to study in Serbian at schools; the process of “reslovakisation” in Czechoslovakia following World War II also deserves mention). Several examples of historical research concerning the “name-analysis” method can be found in the last hundred years alone (Szabó 1937; Maksay 1940; Jakó 1940, Bélay 1943 etc., see also Orosz 2003). While the main purpose of these works (most of which were published between the two World Wars) was to determine the language origin of names, it cannot be refuted that these results were also used to assign a community’s ethnic origins. In the interest of objectivity, even those names were judged to be uncertain whose origins could be definitely traced. These included the following categories: family names stemming from place names, ethnonyms and names of occupations bearing the same form in several languages (e.g. Hungarian *Kovács* ~ Slovak *Kováč* ‘blacksmith’, Hung. *Takács* ~ Slov. *Tkáč* ‘weaver’), as well as some family names originating from first names (Szabó 1937: 5).

Nowadays, historians mostly rely on regular censuses taken in the 19–20th centuries for studying language borders; however, censuses from the beginning of 18th century can be used to demonstrate earlier ethnic patterns. Due to the increased risk posed by inaccuracy, usage of this method is constantly being challenged in Hungary and its neighbouring countries. Hungarian historians have attempted to prove the applicability of this method

with the help of resources including both the names and the admission of self-identity or first language of individuals (Demeter and Bagdi 2007: 241).

According to Demeter and Bagdi (2007), the results of their investigation revealed that name analysis can be used in order to identify nationality/ethnicity, when conducted on the basis of sufficient data. However, it cannot be used for the purpose of determining how an individual identified himself/herself. In other words, these researchers are of the opinion that possible mistakes can be eliminated if an extended data set is used.

What can we definitely conclude in relation to family names? First of all, we have to identify the etymon of surnames in order to pinpoint the ratio of different languages within the corpus under investigation. Next, we must identify ethnicities with the help of first names. This, however, is not always possible because census-recorders changed first names to Latin forms, rendering individuals neutral with respect to ethnicity. Yet there are many examples in the census of 1715 which show that census-takers only wrote the names of Hungarians according to Latin forms, while other names (mainly those of Romanians) were left in their original forms.

Finally, I would like to present the importance of historical personal names based on names from the Kővár district (in Latin: *Districtus Kőváriensis*, in Romanian: *Țara Chioarului*, in Hungarian: *Kővárvidék*). At the beginning of the 17th century, the Kővár district was south of Baia Mare, located between the counties of Szatmár, Máramaros, Középszolnok. From the beginning of the 18th century, 77 settlements were included in this district. Today, this area is divided amongst the counties of Maramureș, Satu Mare and Sălaj in Romania. Census-takers from the northern part of Hungary registered 545 tax-payers in the first census of 1715.

The etymological examination of the family names in the district resulted in a large proportion of names of Romanian origin: approximately two thirds of the names recorded belong to this category; 21.65% of the names are Hungarian and the rest (14.13%) are either of uncertain or other (Slavs and German) origin (Figure 4.).

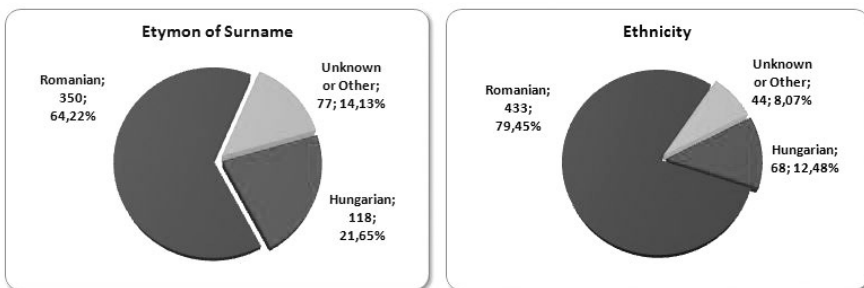


Figure 4. Etymon of surname and ethnic patterns in the Kővár district (Țara Chioarului) in 1715

The following examination takes the linguistic form of first names into consideration. In the conscription of 1715, many cases combine Hungarian family names with Romanian Christian/first names. These individuals – verified as mainly Greek Catholics on the basis of later sources – should be considered Romanians. According to this data, almost half of

the first names appearing alongside Hungarian family names reflect Romanian naming; the proportion of Romanian ethnicity increases in comparison to Hungarian ethnicity (e.g. *Suket Kosztin, Katók Dán, Gyárfás Iwon, Orosz Alexa, Korsos Iwon, Deák Jonucz, Baráth Jónocz, Balla Waszi, Csurke Lup, Horgas Waszil, Gyertya Theodor, Deák Jonucz, Baráth Jónocz, Kertész Tóder, Orosz Vaszi* etc.). While the Hungarian family name usually represents the previous stage of ethnicity, the first name represents the “recent” state of self-identity.

In this instance, the figure shows that the complex examination of full names can reap different results from those attained by the ratio of etymons of family names. Study of this corpus makes it possible to separate Hungarian settlements from Romanian ones (Table 1). Fortunately, the information pertaining to language usage and religious denomination found in the census taken in Central-Szolnok County in 1787 allows us to reconstruct the ethnic patterns of this district (Miskolczy and Varga E. 2013).

Table 1. Changes in ethnic proportions in Kővár distric (Țara Chioarului) according to three conscriptions (1715, 1787, 1839) (details)

	Name of Settlement		Conscriptio Regnicolaris 1715						Central-Szolnok 1787	Fényes 1839				
	in 1715	now	Tax-payers	Etymon of Surname					Ethnicity	Language			Ethnicity	
				Rom	Hun	Ger	Slav	Unkn.		Rom	Hun	Other		
1	<i>Hoszú Falva</i>	Satulung	12	6	6				Hun-Rom	144	80	16	Hun-Rom	
2	<i>Also Fentös</i>	Finteușu Mic	5	3			2	Rom	200				Rom	
3	<i>Pribekfalva</i>	Pribilești	9	6			3	Rom	216				Rom	
4	<i>Magos Falva</i>	Mogoșești	10	8	1		1	Rom	250				Rom	
5	<i>Pusztá Hideg-K.</i>	Hideaga	6	6				Rom	81	5			Rom	
6	<i>Szkalos Falva</i>	Săcălășeni	2	1	1			Rom	440				Rom	
7	<i>Berkesz Pataka</i>	Berchezoaia	5	3	2			Rom	260				Rom	
8	<i>Remete</i>	Remetea Chioar.	10	6	3	1		Rom-Hun	730	6	13		Rom	
9	<i>Felső Fentös</i>	Finteușu Mare	12	4	2	1	1	4	Rom-Hun	478				Rom
10	<i>Kolczér</i>	Colțirea	12	8	2		1	1	Rom	248	28		Hun-Rom	
11	<i>Kovasz</i>	Coaș	21	15			2	4	Rom	718				Rom
12	<i>Hagymas-Lápos</i>	Lăpușel	9		5			4	Hun-Rom	299	87			Hun-Rom
13	<i>Koltokatalin</i>	Cătălina	15	2	10		1	2	Hun-Rom	27	309			Hun-Rom
14	<i>Torok-Falva</i>	Buciumi	12	7	2		1	2	Rom	389		8		Rom
15	<i>Kiss Bozonta</i>	Bozânta Mică	8	4	4				Rom	247	2			Rom

16	Ó Bozonta	Bozânta Mare	8		3	2	2	1	Rom	217		5	Rom
17	Szuszar	Săsar	7	3	3			1	Rom	326		6	Rom
18	Kiss Tot Falu	Tăuții-Măgherăuș	8		6			2	Hun	146	55	23	Hun
	[...]												
71	Berkesz	Berchez	10		7			3	Hun	21	296	16	Hun-Rom
72	Nagy Néres	Mireșu Mare	6	3	2			1	Rom	828	13		Rom
73	Gyökerez	Remeți pe Someș	3	2	1				Rom	333	4	6	Rom
74	Pusztafentyös	Posta	2		2				Rom	163			
75	Dan Falva	Dăneștii Chioarului	2	2					Rom	130	6		Rom
76	Lukacs Falva	Lucăcești	2	1			1		Rom	219	1		Rom
77	Csula	Ciula	3	2	1				Rom	263			Rom

At the beginning of the 18th century, there were only five villages displaying a Hungarian majority: Hosszúfalva (Satulung), Hagymászlapos (Lăpușel), Koltókatalin (Cătălina and Coltău), Kistótfalu – later Misztmogyorós (Tăuții-Măgherăuș) and Magyarberkesz (Berchez). Hungarians who lived sporadically in other settlements were most exposed to the effects of assimilation. The name *Erdélyan Jancsy* illustrates this: in this case, the name-bearer had a Hungarian nickname (*Jancsi* < *János* ‘John’ + *-csi* diminutive suffix) and a mixed family name with Hungarian stem and Romanian suffix (< Hung. *Erdély* ‘Transylvania’ + Rom. *-ean* ‘from’) in a Romanian village.

Conclusion

The etymological research of surnames in the Middle Ages shows the distribution of the language origin of material from that period, which may contribute to the historical-demographical reconstruction of ethnic patterns. Later on (from the 16–17th centuries), however, this relationship is not always very clear. Unfortunately, in periods predating the regular censuses of the end of 18th century – at which time data regarding nationalities or languages spoken was also included –, there is only one chance to extract information concerning the ethnicities of a region: the names appearing in different documents provide the basis for the reconstruction of ethnic patterns.

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