

# Hydronyms of Ethnic Origin in the Körös River Area

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## Abstract

The subject of my study is the presentation of hydronyms of ethnic origin from a morphological approach. By processing the river hydronyms of the Körös region, which covers an area of more than 27,000 square kilometers, we can get an overview of the name-creating activities of the population of the studied area. From the history of Hungarian hydronym research, I mention the main registers, databases, and processings that contain ethnonyms, presenting the chronological and sociological diversity and variety of the region. In the lexical–morphological structure of two-part hydronyms, the most common are the extensional name parts that express the peculiarity (e.g., size, shape, color, temperature, age, condition, smell, taste, speed, sound, ethnic name). The role of ethnic names in hydronyms is determinative in inferring the occurrence of certain ethnic elements. Since the name itself identifies, the function of a place name is then the distinction from the environment, the separation from it. This method is also valid in hydronymy. As a result of this, we find such place names as Csehi, Oroszi, Tóti, Olaszi, and hydronyms such as Beseny-ér, Bosnyák-patak, Cseh-ér, Czigányi csermely, Kun-ér, Orosz-ér, Rác-patak, etc.

**Keywords:** onomastics, hydronyms, ethnonyms, localization, denomination

## Introduction

Place names play a significant role in the history of the Hungarian language, since the earlier and the present water names as scattered forms in a foreign language environment give an image of the written state of the Hungarian language, and their development sheds light on the changes in the language as a whole. For this reason, a systematic examination of the nomenclature allows general conclusions to be drawn through the monographic processing of the area's nomenclature.

In this paper, I will examine the names of the small and large rivers of the Körös area in the light of the linguistic contacts of the peoples living or once living alongside them. The aim of the research is to show how naming has worked from the beginning up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, according to the occurrence of the following peoples: Pecheneg, Bosnian, Roma, Czech, Greek, Cuman, Hungarian, Moravian, Italian, Russian, Rhacians, Romanian, Szekler and Tatar. The structure of the paper is divided into three major sections: (a) a presentation of the territory and the associated literature on the water names; (b) a classification of the water names containing ethnonyms by territorial occurrence; (c) a summary and conclusions.

## Hydronyms in the study area

### Introducing the region

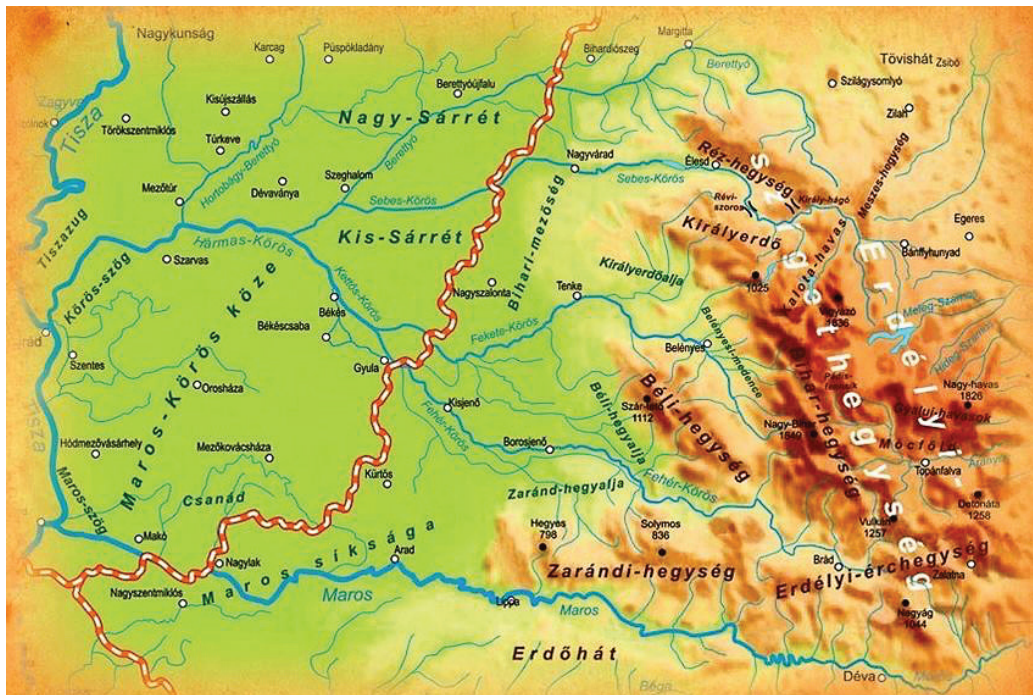
The Körösök catchment area was chosen because of its large geographical area, which gives it a very rich nomenclature and a diverse population of different ethnicities. My PhD dissertation (*Name Taxonomic Analysis of the Körös Rivers Basin*), which analyses more than two thousand river names, provides the linguistic community with important conclusions that give a credible picture of the changes in the linguistic state reflected in the hydronyms. From this corpus, the present research paper will systematize only the vernacular water names in this paper. The river water names of the 27,000 square kilometres of the area under study provide a reliable overall picture of the naming activity of the inhabitants of the region, which is essentially clustered around the Hungarian and Romanian languages.

The hydronym of *Körösök* itself includes the names of the major *Körös* branches, namely the *Sebes*, *Fekete*, *Fehér*, *Kettős* and *Hármas-Körös*. It is probable that the *Hármas-Körös* in Hungary is simply referred to as *Körös*, but the three larger branches in Romania are also identified separately by this name by its users within a certain region. The total length of the rivers known as the *Körösök* is 741.3 km, and 200 km after the branches originating in Transylvania join, they flow into the Tisza, in Hungary. The Berettyó-Körös region is one of the south-eastern central plateaus of the Great Plain, largely in the northern part of Békés County in Hungary and the southern part of Hajdú-Bihar County. It has a small strip in the south-eastern part of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County and its eastern part is in the south-western part of Bihor County and the north-western part of Arad County, the latter two located in Romania. It covers an area of 4361 km<sup>2</sup> in Hungary, on the plain between the Hortobágy–Berettyó, Berettyó and Körösök. Its most important settlements are Gyula, Békés and Berettyóújfalu in Hungary, and Nagyvárad (Romanian: Oradea; German: Grossvardein), Nagyszalonta (Romanian: Salonta; German: Grossalontha) and Margitta (Romanian: Marghita; German: Margarethen) on the Romanian side.

The Körösvidék (Romanian: Crişana; German: Kreischgebiet) is a geographical and historical region in Romania, but in old Hungarian sources the name Körösország (Körös country) is found as a popular name for the Körös region of the former Bihar County, largely in the Partium area. The illustrative map below shows the extent of the Körösök catchment area.

### Map 1

The water catchment area of the Körösök



Source: <https://www.korosoknaturpark.hu/a-korosok-volgye-terseg/>

### Onomastic studies

The history of Hungarian water names research spans several centuries. Because of their linguistic bridging role, water names are best suited to shed light on the ethnic history of the given area. And major rivers are not only a bridge between languages in time but also in space, as they provide an excellent opportunity for linguistic contact between the peoples living alongside them (Hoffmann, 2009, pp. 210–211). As Lajos Kiss puts it, the names of such major rivers are in reality international property (2000, p. 7). This extremely complex and colourful topic is continued by Rita Póczos, who summarises

the development of the oldest layer of water names in the Carpathian Basin, complemented by the history of recent international research (2010, p. 83), and Erzsébet Győrffy, in her monograph published in 2011, which provides an excellent summary of the history of Hungarian water names research and theoretical issues of water names research.

In the early period of classification work, the collection and classification of water names was not separated by sharp boundaries from the research aspects of other place-name types. In addition to the extensive works of Attila T. Szabó (1944), Lajos Lőrincze (1947, 1949), Mihály Hajdú (1999 and 2002), Miklós Hints (1995, pp. 45–46) and István Hoffmann (2003) summarised the results of Hungarian place-name research.

The gazetteers were created thanks to the systematic collection of place names in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These works included the lexification of place-name material in the synchronic language state and in historical sources. János Lipszky set himself the goal of producing a 1:470 000 scale map of Hungary consisting of a detailed map (*Mappa Generalis*, 1806), a name index (*Repertorium*, 1808) and an overview map (*Tabula Generalis*, 1810)—it is commendable that the name index includes major water names among its macrotoponyms. Also, a product of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is the multi-volume work by Dezső Csánki (1890–1913) on the historical geography of the Hunyadi era, which, with its interdisciplinary character, is linked to a number of other disciplines. Frigyes Pesty, a historian and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, collected a huge amount of place names in 68 volumes between 1862 and 1867 with the help of the Austrian administration of autocracy, using a questionnaire system, which probably provides the last overview of place names in the Carpathian Basin (Kiss M., 2009). The Bihar County, which is relevant for the Körösök, has appeared in two volumes published by István Hoffmann and Tamás Kis, and the Hungarian Linguistic Directory Programme will continue to publish the Pesty manuscripts in print from 2023, first Máramaros, and soon the Kővár region and Central Szolnok will be published.

In his work entitled *Geographical Dictionary of Hungary* (1851), Fényes Elek published names of towns, villages, steppes and waters. Another equally important linguist, Szabó T. Attila has long been associated internationally with the *Database of Transylvanian Historical Place Names*, which is rich in original archival and historical publications, and in the most varied contemporary genres (estate and service censuses: urbaria and inventories; wills, class letters, registers of deeds and objects, records of interrogations, exchange and sale documents, receipts, registers of expenses, public letters, legal documents, princely decrees, church visitation, etc, legislative, town council, chair minutes, registers of births, letters of serfs, account books of the various guilds,

correspondence, court records, family archives, chronicles, diaries, meditations, missals). The data thus cover not only the official language, but also the various dialects in Transylvania, including the language of the leading men, craftsmen, farmers, innkeepers, etc., people of various ranks and classes who were tried or interrogated as witnesses. The material of the *Database of Transylvanian Historical Place Names* is the result of more than half a century of archival research by the author and contains more than a million records of an extraordinarily wide variety of languages.

It is always worth reviewing the geographical names, because they often have a high informational value compared to the strictly enumerated names in the data archives, although we will see that the two modes of communication in the early country descriptions are by no means mutually exclusive. András Vályi's three-volume local history work, namely the *Description of the Hungarian Country* (1796–1799) is the first alphabetical gazetteer of localities published in Hungarian, listing more than 12,500 settlements and describing their most important economic and demographic data. Among the geographic works, the second volume of János Hunfalvy's series on the history of geography and country studies, entitled *Describing the Natural Conditions of the Hungarian Empire* (1863), described the entire catchment area of the Körös in detail. The author also makes use of a considerable number of settlement names not shown on the maps to identify water names, so that new water names or rather occasional water names and water name circumscriptions are created for many hydronyms. With this in mind, I have compared the water names of Hunfalvy with other relevant data in the processing and only included them in the analysis if the name had no variant from other sources and appeared only in Hunfalvy. Lajos Haán (1870) presented the history of Békés County in his monograph entitled *The History of Békés County*, based on data from 1715, with a claim to authenticity. Although some ethno-etymological interpretations can be found in the description, the value of the work is indisputable. The turn of the century saw the publication of the Samu Borovszky series of scholarly publications (26 in all), namely *The Counties and Cities of Hungary*, the sixth book of which included a mountain and hydrographic section in the description of Bihar County by József Korbély. A particular advantage of such geographic works is that they provide a wealth of water names, but the water names are not only listed but also presented, thus in many cases eliminating misunderstandings which might not be avoided by the mere occurrence of a name.

The first dictionary containing only proper nouns denoting water was the two-volume glossary of Tivadar Ortvay (1882) entitled *The Old Hydrography of Hungary Until the End of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century*, in which he attempted to reconstruct the hydrography of Árpád-era

Hungary on the basis of processing articles of the contemporary water names. Ortway did not give the reading or the present-day colloquial form for the title of each vocabulary article, but highlighted one of the forms of the alphabet. This was followed by the occurrences of the name: the spelling, the year and subject of the document, and then the references in the literature. This rich collection of names includes many variants of the Körös, such as: *Chrysimis, Cris, Crisus, Crisyius, Crys, Gerasus, Gilfil, Gilpit, Grasia, Grisius, Grissia, Keres, keurus, Kewres, Iris, Iriusius, Krisus, Iriss, Kyrus, Grissia, Sebea-Köröat, Crisus Albus, Feyer keres, Feyrkyrus*, etc.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the appearance of place-name dictionaries describing the initial state of the Hungarian language, which mainly recorded the place-name material of macrotoponyms, larger bodies of water and settlements. The base of Old Hungarian place-name research is currently at the Department of Hungarian Linguistics of the University of Debrecen. The research group has targeted a hitherto neglected place-name type, the microtoponyms, and launched a project to process the completed volumes of Györfy György's *The Historical Geography of Árpád-period Hungary 1–4*. (1963–1998) in accordance with the requirements of modern data repositories. One of the series is entitled *Historical Data on Place Names From the Early Old Hungarian Period*, and this publication is presented together with the corresponding place names of the individual counties, which the researchers have made even more illustrative by publishing name maps. Among the sources of the Early Hungarian place-name dictionary 1000–1350, Györfy's *Historical Geography* has a special place, and has been an authoritative source for researchers of Hungarian language history for decades.

These repositories have served as the basis for numerous water name processings from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. One of the representatives of the Budapest school, János Melich, presented the ethnic composition of the Carpathian Basin in the *Hungarian Occupation Period by Means of Place-naming* (1925–29), and his (linguistic) historian followers carried on the results of his previous works. One need only think of István Kniezsa's monograph, namely *The Peoples of Hungary in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century* (1938/2000), in which he arrived at far-reaching conclusions mainly through the analysis of place names. In his next major study (*The place-names of Eastern Hungary*, 1943/2001), he processed and classified all the present-day place-names of historical Transylvania and its northern and western border regions appearing in documents up to 1400, stating that of all the peoples that can be identified by place-names (Slavs, Hungarians, Saxons, Romanians), the Romanians were undoubtedly the latest to arrive, which is justified by the fact that only exceptionally are there place-names before 1400 that are of Romanian origin.

Kniezsa's study entitled *Water Names of Slavic Origin in Szeklerland* (1948) described the etymology of water names of Slavic origin. Kniezsa's conclusions on the topic were expanded by Loránd Benkő's comments. In his summarizing study, Deme warned (1948) that although maps often use abbreviations, the researcher cannot arbitrarily shape his name material to his own intentions. It is not enough to quote from a military map, one must also consult Pesty's collection. Lajos Kiss has presented the water names of several regions (Transylvania, Transdanubia) using the same method, in which two aspects meet: the chronological (ancient, medieval, modern) and the aspect of descent stratification (Indo-European, Slavic, Hungarian, German, Turkish) (1997/1999b). Examining the water names of Transylvania, he finds that almost without exception they are either of Hungarian (Northern Transylvania) or Slavic (Southern Transylvania) origin (cf. Kniezsa 1943, 66).

The more recent syntheses of place names, including water names, analyse and organise the historical data based on the multi-level place-name typology model developed by István Hoffmann (1993/2007). The applied model discusses names from two perspectives: one of structural analysis and the other of origin-history analysis. These main categories naturally include additional subcategories, the more detailed presentation of which is presented in the theoretical section. Many of the analyses in the *Hungarian Names Archive Publications* follow this pattern, but also in several studies researchers apply the Hoffmann nomenclatural procedure, especially to the old Hungarian place-name material (Reszegi and Győrffy, 2003; Tóth 2003; Póczos 2003; Kovács 2008; Kocán, 2008ab, 2009; Sebestyén, 2015, 2016, 2017).

The sources of water name collection and the methodological issues of material dissemination were defined by Attila T. Szabó (1934, pp. 160–168), laying the foundations of modern place-name collection not only in Transylvania, but in the entire Hungarian language area. He emphasized that the basic requirement in the method of collection is that we should never collect only the characteristic or interesting place names, but the totality of place names of a certain settlement unit. In the case of rivers, it is more natural to group water names in the catchment area of the river according to the direction of its course. Accordingly, name collections that had detailed descriptions of the historical geography of the whole territory of Hungary have proved to be the most reliable data, as well as works that describe a single major water section.

In line with the above, I have used three main sources to collect the names of the water bodies of the Körösök: geographical descriptions, data bases and dictionaries, and older and more recent maps. Among the geographic works, the works of Hunfalvy, Haán and Borovszky provided a detailed overview of the area under study, which I supplemented

with the relevant parts of the historical geography of the Árpád period by Györffy (1963–1998). I collected relevant water names from HA. 1–3, ETH. volumes 3, 10 and 11, and from the manuscript place-name collection of Frigyes Pesty for Arad, Békés and Bihar counties. In addition to the geographical dictionaries (FNESz. and KMHSz.), I also included Ortvyay's Old Hungarian water names in the research, and Anita Rácz's historical-etymological dictionary of Bihar County (Rácz, 2004). Since most of the catchment is located in Romania, I added all the river names from the present-day database of the cadastral water names register of the Romanian administration (ANAR.), which of course contains data in Romanian, because these names help to navigate on administrative and hydrographic maps (Kiss M. 2013, p. 491).

Initially, landmarks were named only through a natural process, when the people who named them named the stream, mountain or settlement. In a multilingual environment, the groups of people living there adopted the name from each other or developed their own names, but there may also have been parallel place-naming. The study and interpretation of this process is mainly a matter for linguistics. With the worldwide development of infrastructure (in Transylvania from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), public administration and geography increasingly interfered in the naming process: the names of settlements were usually determined by law, which meant that the involvement of specialists in this work was rather marginalised, giving way to the newly established, current political power. In contrast to the variability of oral nomenclature, the names recorded on maps show a somewhat greater constancy, so that diachronic changes in names can be well traced by comparing several maps, which differ in time. The use of language and names on maps has led to the highlighting and canonisation of some of the names, even with the invention of new ones, to the atrophy of other varieties. Thus, when considering the linguistic character of a map nomenclature, several aspects must be taken into account: the official and/or used language of the reader or of the area depicted; the purpose of the map (orientation in a particular place); the type of name or text (water name, place name, explanatory text, etc.). When the map editor has to choose between the local official name or another local (minority) name, or the traditional name (exonym) of the reader's language for the geographical element in question, he or she is forced to highlight one of them. In Transylvania, the rearrangements of power (German, Hungarian and then Romanian) were soon followed by the transcription of geographical names, which had always been seen as a means of self-justification of power. Domestic, but especially foreign maps often had difficulty (and often did not intend to) to follow the changes, which meant that cartographic data also preserved the mentality of the period (cf. Bartos-Elekes, 2005, p. 4; Pásztor 2011, p. 133), e.g. *Nagyfalu* > *Nuşfalău*, *Fül-ér* > *Fuler*.



The interpretation of the water names in the sources was aided by monolingual and bilingual dictionaries; among the monolingual ones I used the Hungarian (CsnSz., CsnE., Murádin, ÁSznt., AnjSznt.) and Romanian (DOR., IORGU), family and first name dictionaries and interpretative dictionaries (ÉKsz.2, ÉrtSz., TESz.; DER., DEX.) and the ÚMTsz., and from bilingual dictionaries Béla Kelemen's Romanian–Hungarian dictionary for translation.

## **Systematic analysis of water-names containing etnonyms based on geographical occurrences**

### ***Categories of the systematic analysis***

In the rest of the paper, we will review the main models for naming and naming analysis. All naming acts are semantically conscious, so there is no such thing as an absolutely unmotivated name. While in natural naming, it is mostly the specificity of the denotation that is expressed, in artificial naming there are many more naming acts in which the need to adapt to naming models plays a role. At the time of their creation, all names are descriptive, and the motifs and semantic categories on which the naming is based appear in direct or indirect form (Hoffmann 1993/2007, p. 54). Accordingly, water names containing personal names convey various information about the people who live there. These names can be very diverse, but we cannot distinguish precisely from the surnames whether the stream is named after the owner, the person whose property it flows through, or the person who only received it as a lease.

From a structural point of view, lexical–morphological analysis can be used to divide water names into parts of names, which can be further subdivided into smaller units, the lemmas, i.e. the lexemes and subordinate morphemes. Lexical–morphological variations may differ not only from language to language, but also when a language is characterised by a variety of regional or divergent naming conventions. The first stage of name tracing is always to identify the elements that make up a name, and only then to assign them partial functions, continuing with the investigation of their historical, genesis and variation characteristics. These three phases can, however, of course only be separated theoretically in research, since the identification of the lexeme is provided by the function and the naming system (Györffy, 2004, p. 129).

The analysis of the water names of the Körös is methodologically presented according to the Hoffmann model. This procedure, starting from the lexeme categories, separates unipartite and bipartite names; unipartite names are divided into marked and unmarked groups, and bipartite names are divided into main and extension members.

The larger units dealing with one-part and two-part names are divided according to the following divisions: common noun, proper noun (personal name, place name), adjective-like word, number noun, word structure.

The two-part water names constitute the largest part of the names of the Körösök catchment, which is due to the fact that in the course of time the names, initially single-part, were often supplemented with a hydrographic base for a more precise denotation. This addition is the result of the situation that the vernacular origin of the water name has become obscured over time, or the foreign name has been supplemented by a geographical noun of internal origin. In addition to these two basic characteristics, other factors may of course have played a role in the forming and spread of the two-part water names. One needs only think of maps, where the two guiding principles of cartographers are accuracy and authenticity, i.e. the use of geographical common nouns that do not cause problems of identification in the perceptual thinking of the name users. This is the reason why extinct common nouns such as *séd, jó, sár, aszó*, etc. cannot appear on maps, they appear at most merged into the body of the name or more or less modified, e.g. *Székelyó, Hájó ~ Hejő, Hidegség*.

In the lexical–morphological structure of the extensional member of the water names, unmarked adjectival prefixes are the most frequently appearing elements. Among the categories of noun parts expressing specificity, the following categories contain the characteristic features of the watercourse that could have been the basis of the name (e.g. size, shape, colour, temperature, age, condition, smell, taste, speed, sound). The role of the vernaculars in water names is decisive in inferring the occurrence of certain folk elements. Since a name identifies, the function of a place name is nothing other than to distinguish it from its environment, to set it apart from it. If we apply this thesis to place-names of ethnonymic origin, we can see that the population of a village named after a particular ethnic group is distinct from the ethnic group that names it, i.e. the settlement is separated from the rest as an island of people (Kniezsa, 1938, p. 406). In this case, the accommodation of the ethnic group belonging to the minority within the same settlement is in the same part of the settlement, in the case of the Roma mostly on the edge of the village. The stream named after them is also located near the locality, usually on its periphery or among its peripheral water bodies, which is clearly shown on detailed maps, such as the map sections of the second and third military surveys or the sufficiently detailed manuscript maps before the water regulation (e.g. the relevant maps of Huszár).

## Hydronyms containing etnonyms

### Slavic

Throughout history, there have been many migrations and expansions due to changes in political, economic or climatic factors. The Slavs probably settled in the forested zones of Transylvania in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, mainly on the borders of the mountains and forests, possibly along major waterways from Kalotaszeg through Hajdú-Bihar to Békés County, where later water names of Slavic origin can be found (Kniezsa, 1948, p. 22). The names of the villages of Csehi, Oroszi, Tóti and of the larger rivers of Slavic origin in the Sebes-Körös catchment area (Bisztra, Dragán, Kalota) also point to early Slavic settlement in Kolozs and Bihar counties. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the whole length of the Berettyó and Ér rivers was Hungarian territory, the valley of the Fekete-Körös was as far as Belényes, and the Sebes-Körös has scattered Slavic traces in its source, which did not play a culture-forming role. The presence of other Slavic elements is attested by the Bosnian stream (Bihar County), a tributary of the Berettyó on the left bank. Whether the water name was actually motivated by Bosnian or Croatian ethnic groups cannot be conclusively determined, because the Bosnians in Hungary were not Muslim but Catholic and considered themselves Croats.

On the right bank of the Hármaskörös, the name of the Czech ethnic group of the Western Slavs is preserved in the name of the *Cseh-ér* water. In this region, this name could even denote a Slovak ethnic element, unlike in the western part of the country, where ethnic groups of German nationality were called so (FNESz. Csehbánya, Cséhtelek). Also related to the Czech language and ethnic element is the ethnonym Boemi, which denotes the peoples living in the medieval Czech–Moravian areas and whose Hungarian equivalent is the lexeme Czech and Marót (Rácz, 2010, p. 400). The latter ethnonym appears as a personal name in the course of history in the form *Marót* or *Ménmarót*. In reality, however, (Mén)Marót was not an existing person, as *marót* is the old Hungarian name of the Moravian people, but it is also evidence of the historical fact that part of Hungary was once under Moravian rule (Györffy, 1959, p. 45). *Marótlaki-patak* is a water name of this kind in Cluj County, not a vernacular but a settlement name.

On the left side of the Hármaskörös, the eastern Slavic character of the *Orosz-ér* can be found in Békés County, near Gyomaendrőd. The mass settlement of the Ukrainian-speaking Rusyns, Ruthenians or Ruznyaks into the territory of Hungary may have started around 1320, but the Hungarians, like with all Eastern Slavs who called themselves by the ethnonym Rus-, used Russian ethnonyms to refer to them (Rácz, 2010, p. 405).

Immigration from the Balkans (Rhacians, Romanians, Croats), which increased in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, peaked in the period following the Battle of Mohács. Rhacians “a person speaking a southern Slavic language, residing mainly in Serbia or originating from there” (TESz.) became common as an ethnonym for Serbs fleeing from the Turks (Rácz, 2010, p. 396). These two ethnyonyms could function as synonyms for a while in the Old Hungarian period, then the Serbian ethnonym became exclusive. The prefix of the water name *Rác-patak* (Cluj County), a left branch of the Sebes-Körös, probably denotes a South Slavic ethnicity, because the suffix of the Hungarian surname form would have been accompanied by a possession signal.

### **Hungarian**

In the Hungarian water names of the Körös rivers, the Hungarian ethnic name prefix occurs only once (*Magyar-patak*) in Kolozs County, in the vicinity of Nagykalota, where out of the total of 19 water names, 8 are of Romanian origin, the rest are Hungarian. It is likely that Romanian population also lived in this area, because we also have a Romanian data for the same name, *Valye Unguruluj* (ETH. 10/C, p. 798).

### **Cuman**

In the territory of Transylvania and Hungary, several Turkic ethnic names have also left their mark in our water names. It is known about the Cumans that they were a tribal union consisting of Turkic-speaking peoples: Kipchaks, Yellow Uighurs, Asian Cumans. After the unsuccessful outcome of their alliance with Béla IV, they scattered across the Hungarian Plain, and assimilated into the Hungarians within a short time. The memory of this event was preserved by many of our place names, for example, among the Körös water names, the *Kun-ér* near Karcag in the Nagykunság region. In the territory of Transylvania, we can count on the presence of Turkic-speaking peoples since the time of the Huns.

### **Pecheneg**

The name of a people belonging to this language family is preserved by the *Besenyi-ér* located east of the confluence of the Berettyó and the Hármás-Körös, and the *Beseny-ér* hydronym flowing north of Érdiőszeg on the right side of the Ér. The Pecheneg who joined the Hungarians, in accordance with the nomadic fighting style, also formed leading teams in battle, alongside the Szeklers (Györffy, 1941, p. 41). In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, they still played a border guard role, but as a people group considered to be dangerous, they were also caught up in the resettlement of the country to all areas. We can find such place names

in almost every county, usually forming an island in the sea of Hungarian population. In Transylvania, they could only have lived in larger numbers at the bend of the Olt River, while in Bihar County, a total of seven place names can be associated with this ethnic element, where the Pecheneg who gathered around Várad were completely assimilated into the Hungarians by the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Rácz, 2004, p. 201).

### **Szekler**

One of the most controversial ethnic groups in the history of Hungary, the Szeklers, are a people with a unique legal status (border guarding), according to Benkő (1998a, p. 139; 1991/2003, p. 109), who played the role of vanguard and rearguard in battles during the Old Hungarian period. Later, when there was a greater need for border guards in the eastern part of the country, they began their migration in the direction of Baranya–Bihar–Telegdiszék. In the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries, we find the most evidence of Szekler settlement primarily in Bihar County (Györffy, 1959, p. 74), and in terms of hydronyms, the names *Székelyjő* (now *Henc pataka*) and *Székely pataka* in Kolozs County can be mentioned.

### **Roma**

Both in Hungary and in Transylvania, the Roma people, who migrated to Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, are still a living minority. Such hydronyms referring to this ethnicity occur in the upper catchment area of the Körös rivers, in singular or plural forms, along the Sebes-Körös and Berettyó: *Cigány-ér* (on the border of Tépe and Kaba, a right tributary of the Berettyó), *Cigányok pataka* (on the border of Szilágynagyfalu, a left tributary of the Berettyó), *Czigány-ér* (in the northwest of Szeghalom, a left tributary of the Sebes-Körös) and *Czigányi csermely* (one of the headwaters of the Sebes-Körös). I did not find any name data from the valleys of the Fehér, Kettős and Hármas-Körös, that contained *cigány* (Roma) name element.

### **Saxon**

The Saxon ethnic name also appears in our water names. The Transylvanian Germans and the Szepes "Zipsers" (German: Zipser) are also called Saxons, whose ancestors settled in these areas of the Hungarian Kingdom from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards. As a result of the great colonization waves in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the first waves of Transylvanian Saxons appeared after 1140, although their forerunners were the already assimilated Bavarians from the time of King Saint Stephen. The Saxons initially bore different names as "Teutons," "Flanders," and then remained in the public eye as "Saxons"

according to the charters. It is possible that the collective names *Flandrensis* and *Saxo* are artificial words of colonization and chancellery origin; the *Flandrensis* could have meant those who lived under Flemish law, while the *Saxon* originally meant miners, and later those who moved east. Since the incoming people were a homogeneous, peasant community, and neither a noble nor a significant military stratum can be shown in any of the waves of immigrants, it is unlikely that the king would have allowed their settlement for the purpose of border protection in Transylvania, which was already well-fortified. It was much more likely that the well-known industrious, good farmers and industrialists of German descent would be of benefit to the whole country.

One of the major tributaries of the Sebes-Körös river, the Sebes or Székelyjő creek, is also known by a third name of German origin, the *Henc* or *Henc creek* (Romanian: *Hențu*). From an etymological point of view, it can be traced back to the German personal name Hans, but the Romanian word *honț* "the nickname for the Transylvanian Saxons" (DER.) is also a possible explanation for the origin. This region does not belong to the larger Saxon settlements, such as the areas around Beszterce, Nagyszeben, Brassó, Meggyes, or Szászváros, so the creek name in Kolozs County may preserve the traces of those early times when Kolozsvár fell under strong Saxon influence for a short period in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Jewish**

The Jewish people lived in relative safety in Hungary in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, and their mass assimilation into the Hungarian nation began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The localization of this ethnic name in our creek names does not show any particular regional characteristics, since it occurs only twice: *Zsidó-patak* (the right tributary of the Sebes-Körös near Élesd), and *Zsidó-ér* (the left branch of the Kettős-Körös in the border area of Csaba, Doboz, and Békéscsaba).

### **Romanian**

The appearance of the Romanians in Transylvania is determined by two dominant views: the continuity and the Balkan origin theories. The continuity theory states that if the neo-latin peoples developed from the Romanization of the indigenous barbarian peoples before the Romans, the Romanian people also emerged from the mixing of the Dacians and Romans, which began in the first century, from 106 AD. The other view is attributed to Theodor Capidan, who identifies four main branches of the Romanian language: Daco-Romanian north of the Danube; Aromanian in Macedonia; Megleno-Romanian

in southern Bulgaria; and the westernmost branch, the Istrian Romanian population group in the Istrian Peninsula. An additional argument for the Romanians' Balkan origin is that although the Albanian influence is strong in all Romanian branches, it is not manifested most prominently in the Aromanian language, in communities living near the Albanians, but in the northernmost branch, namely the Transylvanian and Wallachian branch, within which the effect of the southern Albanian dialect is evident. If the Albanians have never lived north of the southern half of the Balkan Peninsula, the Romanian homeland cannot be located north of the vicinity of Lake Ohrid. An additional piece of evidence in favor of the Balkan origin is that the Romanians belonged to the Ohrid diocese until recent times, despite the existence of closer dioceses in Serbia and Bulgaria. The continuity theory states that the Romanians are descended from the mixing of the Dacians and the Romans, who began to mix with each other in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, after the Roman conquest of the Dacians. This theory suggests that the Romanian language and culture are a mixture of the Latin influences brought by the Romans and the ancient folk culture brought by the Dacians. The Balkan origin theory states that the Romanians lived in the Balkan regions until the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when they migrated to the Great Hungarian Plain due to the Hungarians' settlement. This theory suggests that the Romanian language and culture developed from mixing with the Balkan peoples. The debate between the two theories is still ongoing, and both theories have strengths and weaknesses.

It is wide-known that Anonymus' *Gesta Hungarorum* contains many elements that are characteristic of 13<sup>th</sup> century Hungary, but it also shows several discrepancies with the Greek source written at the same time as the Hungarian conquest, namely *De Administrando Imperio* by Constantine Porphyrogenetos.

Only two Hungarian water names of the Körös rivers refer to the Romanian ethnic element: *Olá pataka* (Kolozs County) and *Oláh Kis patak* (Szilágy County). A significant part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century names of the Körös rivers in Romania are in Romanian. One reason for this is the country's official language, and the other reason is the continuous assimilation of Hungarians in Transylvania, which leads to the gradual disappearance of Hungarian names.

If we ignored the testimony of the charters, which mention Romanians in Transylvania for the first time in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, more precisely in 1222 in the region of the Făgăraș Mountains (Fekete Nagy, 1941, p. 106), and would place the migration of the Romanian people in the pre-Hungarian period, we would have to take into account the Romanian origin of the oldest and longest-lived water names. However, among our larger waters there is no Romanian-originated water name, nor even such an ancient water name that would

have come to Hungarian or other languages through Romanian mediation. Bíró Sándor (1941, p. 171) showed the development of Hungarian–Romanian relations from the era of dualism to the 1930s, which changed almost every decade. These waves spread to both the upper and middle social strata, until they finally reached the population of the smallest villages. The survival of the Romanians in Transylvania also depended on the awakening and strengthening of their national consciousness, accepting as a historical fact the hypothesis that its development and strong impact fell on the 1910s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the free Romanian press was proclaiming that while Hungarians had been living in this territory for a thousand years, Romanians had been living here for two thousand years (Bíró, 1941, p. 183).

The linguistic stratification of the Körös rivers' hydronyms in later centuries, the development of the numerical ratio of Hungarian and Romanian names, is the result of the interplay of historical and ethnic relations, as a result of which the linguistic elements of the two populations have also left their mark on the hydronyms. The most colourful picture of hydronyms containing ethnonyms is found in the Berettyó and Sebes-Körös regions. At the source of the Berettyó, we find Roma, Romanian, then Bosnian ethnonyms, followed by Roma ethnonyms again before the confluence with the Sebes-Körös. The Sebes-Körös source region includes names with the prefixes Szekler, Roma, Romanian, Hungarian and Rhacians. Moving further west, the Hármás-Körös region includes lexemes denoting the Cuman, Russian, Greek, Saxon, and Jewish ethnic elements in the name formation.

## **Greek**

Among Indo-European languages, Greek also appears. The *Görög-fok* (Grecian Cape) flowing in the vicinity of Okány and Vésztő (Haán, 1870, p. 318) probably marked the settlement of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century Greek merchants or one of the points of their market route.

Among Romanian hydronyms, the Russian-originated Romanian 'țigan' 'Roma' ethnonym is the most widespread, appearing in total five times in the form *Valea Țiganului*, equipped with the Romanian possessive pronoun '-lui'. In terms of suffixes, water names with the meaning 'Hungarian stream' are similar in structure, with both singular and plural names appearing in the Kalota region, which belongs to the Sebes-Körös (*Valea Ungurului*, *Valea Ungurilor*). The meaning of the Romanian *danț* 1. 'folk dance'; 2. "Transylvanian person from the Vaskoh region" (DEX.) is reflected in the latter in the water name located in the Segyest area.



## Turkish

The Turkish ethnic name occurs only once, in the water name *Valea Turcilor*, on the right bank of the Fekete-Körös. In the same area, we also encounter the water name *Valya Készilor* meaning the Keszik stream; both names have plural suffixes, so it is likely that the name refers to a group, while the water names *Valea Sicula*, from the Romanian sicul meaning 'Szekler,' and *Valea Sovaruluj* (see Szovár clan name; Benkő, 2009, p. 83–86) are likely to be traced back to clan names. The main feature of the Romanian names listed here is that they have survived in the later Romanian-recorded name stock, as Romanians did not meet with the conquering tribes and clans.

## Personal names

The majority of the names that occur in this study are old Hungarian personal names, family names, and given names, such as *Bodójó*, *Bodó folyása* (ÁSznt. p. 130), *Csente-patak* (ÁSznt. p. 190), *Varsány-ér* (VárReg. p. 9), and *Isti-fok*, for which we have an Árpád-era record as well (1251–1281 *Ista*, *Usthe*, in ÁSznt. p. 431), but we cannot rule out the diminutive form of the name István either. We also find water names of similar form, such as *Hölgy ere* and *Kölgyes-ér*, in which the confusion of the capital letters "K" and "H" is likely.

Although Armenians were also present in Transylvania from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, no names related to this people have survived in the Körös region. One reason for this is that they did not settle in larger numbers in the Körös basin. Another reason is that they carried out their trade mainly in cities, and the third reason is that they became Magyarized relatively quickly.

## Summary

In the following part of the study, a short statistical summary is presented on the length of the Körös branches and the distribution of hydronyms containing ethnic names in the region. Of the tributaries belonging to the catchment area of the Körös rivers, which are more than 700 km long, the longest is the Fehér-Körös (236 km), followed by the Sebes-Körös (209 km), then the Hármás-Körös (91.3 km) and the Kettős-Körös (37 km). The total number of water names formed with ethnonyms is 32, of which the largest number occurs in the catchment area of the Sebes-Körös (20 data), followed by the Hármás-Körös (5 data), the Fekete-Körös (4 data), the Fehér-Körös (3 data) and finally the Kettős-Körös (1 data) closes the ranking. Of these names, the Roma (7) ethnic name appears the most often, followed by the *Ungur* or Hungarian (3), the *Olá* (2), the Szekler (2) and the Jewish (2), while only 1 data was recorded for the other names on the maps

and registers used (Bosnian, Slovak, Tatar, Rhacians, Turkish, Serbian, Czech, Cuman, Russian, Pecheneg, Moravian). Another interesting fact is the occurrence of tribal names, which also testify to the existence of human microcommunities, such as the 13<sup>th</sup> century *Szovár* tribal name or the place name derived from the *Keszi* tribe name.

## Conclusion

The onomastic study showed that the word biography of the water names was fundamentally determined by the geographical and ethnic characteristics of the area. The population processes and settlement policies of previous centuries have created such heterogeneity that determines the linguistic, geographical and historical features of the region. This trend is exacerbated by the fact that the Körös catchment area connects two countries, so we can gain a wealth of information about the situation and changes in the linguistic state reflected in the names. As a result of the border-crossing role of the Körös rivers, we could get an overview of the naming activity of the population of the study area.

The parallel analysis of the name material raises problems that affect the peculiarities of both Hungarian and Romanian (water) naming. However, the present study does not fully exploit the various scientific opportunities offered, because the details would exceed the limits of the scope. From the point of view of onomastics, it is also important to see the spatial and temporal location, movement, and changing role of the region's characteristic ethnic groups in naming. The analysis proved that the ethnic composition of the study area fundamentally influenced the development of all types of names, including hydronyms. The consideration of these external circumstances appears in several disciplines, for instance in historical geography, social history and ethnography. These scientific researches can eliminate many uncertainties.

The question arises as to where these hydronyms can be found today. Are they still part of the living language use, or are they just archival evidence from a bygone era? We can only get a credible answer to all of our questions if we have a modern, up-to-date and thorough living language place name collection available to us from the area. The MNHP (*Hungarian National Place Names Register Program*) will soon be able to implement the database display, which will compensate for this lack, but it is important to emphasize that field work is also essential in the authentic presentation of the current water name status.

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