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Toponym History and Local History*

1. Types of charters

In studies of historical linguistics and toponomastics in Hungary, charters play a crucial role as they enable us to explore the early (11th-century) history of the Hungarian language. For example, some charters contain the donations for a new abbey or the boundary survey of an estate. Charters are originally meant to be legal documents. They were written in Latin, but they also contain toponyms and personal names recorded in the language of the territories discussed in the charter. This ensured the subsequent identification of places and persons (cf. HOFFMANN–RÁCZ–TÓTH 2017: 72–76).

In what follows, I focus on place names or toponyms only. Place names may be characterized from the perspective of historical linguistics and toponomastics. The source value of a place name for historical toponomastics is examined by establishing the time since when the name has existed. The historical linguistic analysis, at the same time, reveals the chronological characteristics of the way the place was recorded (e.g., its spelling) (SZŐKE 2022: 201–205).

In my paper, I discuss how knowledge of the history of places can help us determine the source value of a name for historical toponomastics. I explore this topic separately for each type of charter because depending on the status of a document, local history can help in different ways.

We can distinguish between various types of charters, depending on their authenticity and survival to this day. Based on their authenticity, we can speak of authentic, forged and interpolated documents. On the basis of their survival, a charter may be an original or a copy (GIRY 1894: 6–36, SZENTPÉTERY 1930: 1–8, 244–249).

2. Authentic charters

The most valuable charters from the perspective of both historical linguistics and toponomastics are those authentic charters that have survived in the original. Their place names undoubtedly refer to the time when they were issued. It is important to note, however, that the documents were not created to

preserve place names. Nor were the names necessarily written down for the first time when they were created. This has to do with the fact that only those place names were included in a charter that were important for a particular legal case. This could happen simultaneously with the establishment of the settlement or decades or centuries later. What we can establish from the authentic charters is that the names and places in them already existed when the charters were issued. The first mention of toponyms was also influenced by the survival of the charters, as for example, during the Middle Ages many charters were destroyed by fire.

Of the Hungarian charters, the Founding Charter of Tihany from 1055 is the earliest authentic charter that has survived in its original form (cf. HOFFMANN–RÁCZ–TÓTH 2017: 72–74). It follows from the status of the charter that the toponyms recorded in it are also the first authentic and original records of the relevant place names. The places and their names mentioned in the charter certainly existed in the mid-11th century. It is also possible that there are some names among them the origin of which can be nuanced based on the history of the place. In the following, I will give an example from the Founding Charter of Tihany to prove this.

The village of Kesztölc, appearing in the most famous section of the Founding Charter of Tihany, i.e., "inde ad castelic et feheruuaru rea meneh hodu utu rea" – 'on the military road from Kesztölc to Fehérvár' (DHA. 1: 150), was located in Transdanubia, in Tolna County. As evidenced by archaeological findings, a fortress stood on this site during Roman rule (MNLex. *Várdomb*). This is also the reason why the 18th-century village established here was called *Várdomb* 'castle + hill' (FNESz. *Várdomb*). In addition, there are also traces of it in the contemporary toponymicon: e.g., Római-kő 'Roman stone'; Római út 'Roman road' (TMFN 494). Moreover, the semantic content of the name *Kesztölc* also shows the former existence of the fortress. The toponym entered the Hungarian language as a Slavic loan name (FNESz. *Kesztölc*). The basis of the place name is the Slavic *kostelъ* 'castle, fortress church' lexeme, to which the Slavic suffix -ьcь was added, while its original source is the Latin *castellum*. The name *Kostelьcь* was undoubtedly given by the Slavs, but the exact date of its creation is not known. The Roman fortress and its remains may have served as the basis of name-giving for centuries after the fall of the empire. We do not know exactly when the name was borrowed. This would also show when Hungarians appeared in the area. There are no clear traces on the name form in the Tihany Founding Charter that would enable us to determine whether the name was used by a Slavic or a Hungarian-speaking population in 1055 (cf. HOFFMANN 2010: 129–131). Despite all this, I think it is not a useless endeavor to look into local history as well in connection with this name, as it may be

inferred that the name had probably existed already before the charter was written (i.e., before 1055).

There are some authentic charters that have survived not in their original form but in the form of copies. From the perspective of historical toponomastics, they are studied similarly to the original and authentic charters. The names in the copy refer to the age of the original document from a historical toponomastic point of view, even if the charter was copied centuries later. Copying may have changed the way the names were written down, but no new names were added to the text (SZŐKE 2022: 202). If the first mention of a place is preserved in a copy, the knowledge of local history may also provide evidence that the place name might have existed before the first written record as well.

3. Interpolated charters

There are some copies that not only changed the spelling of place names, but also added to the text of the original charter. The documents created this way are called interpolated charters (SZŐKE 2022: 204). One of the most important interpolated charters in 11th-century Hungary is the Garamszentbenedek Charter. The original of this charter dates from 1075, while the interpolated version from the 13th century. The original version of the charter has not survived to this day, but it was still available in the 16th century. Most of these charters were forged by inserting longer or shorter texts because, when the original documents were written in the 11th century, oral evidence was still common in Hungary. The Garamszentbenedek Charter is about the foundation of a Benedictine Abbey (DHA. 1: 204–218). The foundation of an abbey was an important event in the life of the whole country thus usually oral evidence was not considered sufficient but the foundation and the donations received at the time of foundation were also recorded in a charter. However, these charters were often incomplete and not all donations were included. From the 13th century onwards, the donations had to be confirmed by charters, and it was necessary to fill in the gaps in the charters. This was often done by supplementing the existing documents (SZOVÁK 2001: 38).

This is the reason for one of the problems in the assessment of interpolated charters: it is difficult to decide what those parts are that make up for missing sections in the original charter and which are actually forged. The historical toponomastic assessment of such a document is also more complicated than in the cases mentioned above. If we can distinguish the original parts from those added later on the basis of various criteria (e.g., ownership history), we can also come closer to the source value of place names in terms of historical toponomastics. The most reliable results can be obtained in connection with the

place names of the original parts of the interpolated documents. The original parts of an 11th-century charter interpolated in the 13th century have source value for toponym history in the 11th century. However, it would be a mistake to automatically attribute 13th-century source value to the place names of the subsequently inserted parts. The later insertion basically means that the donations described by these names had belonged to someone else. They may also include names that had not existed before. In this case, the source value of the place name for historical toponomastics may coincide with the age of the interpolation. In many cases, it can be assumed that despite the subsequent insertion, the source value of names is older from the perspective of historical toponomastics. In certain cases, we do not even need to go beyond the text of the charter to discover this, while in other cases, knowledge of local history may help us establish an association with the given period (cf. SZŐKE 2023: 424–426).

3.1. Interpolated names that also appear in the original parts of the charter

When such names appear in the subsequently inserted parts that also appear in the original unit, the name can be associated with the age of the original charter. A good example in this regard is the mention of *Sági* settlement in Csongrád County in the Garamszentbendek Charter. This name is found in both the original and the interpolated part of the charter. Based on the original parts it may be assumed that Sági village belonged to the abbey from the 11th century. The existence of the place and its name in the 11th century is also supported by the fact that the boundary description of the settlement can also be found in the text. This description of the area fundamentally belongs to the 11th century, with only shorter passages added in the 13th century: "Ex alia vero parte Tize **vill**am, que dicitur Sagi, **cum terra sua mercatumque in eadem cum vado libero; nullusque de hoc participetur, nisi solus abbas,** dedi cum propriis terminis, qui termini ita dividuntur: […] **postea donec idem fluvius Huger decurrens prope villam Kurth, quam supradixi, et cadit in Tiza, ultimus terminus est**" (DHA. 1: 216–217) – 'I have also given a **village** from the other bank of the *Tisza* within its own boundaries, *Sagi* **with its lands, market and free ford, which should only be granted to the abbot.** The boundaries are thus divided: […] **then as far as this *Huger* flows down past the village of *Kurth*, which I have already mentioned, and flows into the Tiza, this is the final boundary'.**[1]

The passage shows that on the one hand the boundary description was supplemented by the fact that the land, the market and the ford of the area should be granted only to the abbot, and on the other hand, the author of the

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[1] The interpolated parts are indicated in bold.

charter extends the final boundary of the boundary description to the village of *Kurth.* I will return to the explanation of the latter later.

The boundary description of the settlement is also preserved in another charter. This was written in 1338, after the interpolation of the founding charter, but the author did not rely on the interpolated 13th-century document, but the original one from 1075 (SZŐKE 2015: 94). The place and its name undoubtedly existed in the 11th century and this is also confirmed by the archaeological finds from the Árpád period in the area (LASZLOVSZKY 1986: 13).

3.2. Interpolated names to extend the boundary

One of the neighboring settlements of Sági is the village of *Kurth.* This name appears twice in the interpolated part of the charter. In both cases the boundary of a territory is extended to the area marked with this name. At first glance, this would seem to indicate that the subsequent insertion was intended to give the abbey a larger area. Nevertheless, the place and its name may have existed as early as the 11th century already, i.e., the historical toponomastic source value of the name *Kurth* may be earlier than the age of interpolation.

In the following, let us explore if there is any evidence for the dating of this name earlier than the 13th century. The archaeological finds in the area dating from the late 9th century, for example, indicate this (LASZLOVSZKY 1981: 19, Adatok 2: 485). Previously, it was thought that place names could only have been created from the names of the conquering tribes (such as the place name *Kürt*) during the 10th century and the first half of the 11th century when people still remembered their tribal affiliation. Before settling in the Carpathian Basin (at end of the 9th century), Hungarians lived in a tribal community, which was originally a military organization. The tribal alliance was still in existence around 950, but it seems to have disappeared abruptly by the beginning of the 11th century. *Kürt* was one of the conquering tribes arriving in the Carpathian Basin in the late 9th century. The assumption regarding the origin of the name type is no longer valid today. However, it would be a mistake not to consider the origin of *Kurth* name as a name of a tribe (cf. HOFFMANN-RÁCZ-TÓTH 2017: 181–187, KRISTÓ 1976: 42).

Therefore, this toponym cannot be clearly linked to the original (11th-century) layer of the Founding Charter of Garamszentbenedek. The association of place names with a date value was in fact a way of providing data for the 11th century, which is otherwise poor in sources. The theory is contradicted, for example, by the fact that the place names derived from the names of tribes could later serve as a model for the creation of other toponyms (presumably with an increasingly fading semantic content) (HOFFMANN–TÓTH 2016: 275–278). Thus, place names of the *Kürt* type could have been created even at the time of the interpolation of the founding charter (in the 13th century). In my opinion, in the

context of what has been said about the local history of the settlement, it is also worth considering that this name may have an earlier source value for historical toponomastics; i.e., that it dates from the 11th century. This is supported by the fact that the neighboring Sági settlement discussed before, and the boundary description of which we are familiar with, certainly existed in the 11th century already.

4. Forged charters

The fourth group of charters includes forged documents. I include those charters in this category that were not written in the year indicated in the text, but later (often centuries later). The Benedictine abbeys of Pécsvárad and Bakonybél were founded at the beginning of the 11th century. Their founding charters date from the 13th century, but according to the text they are from the early 11th century. They are forged documents and have survived only in the form of copies. Despite the creation of the charters, most of the toponyms have 11th-century source value for historical toponomastics. On the one hand, this is linked to the foundation of the abbeys in the 11th century. At the time of foundation, the abbey received substantial donations from its founder, which enabled it to function. On the other hand, some of the forged charters (including the two mentioned above) had an authentic version from the early 11th century (Szőke 2023: 423–424).

Previously issued charters or other sources were used to write the forged documents. In some fortunate cases, the sources of a forged charter include documents of an authentic status also that have survived to this day. This is the case of the 13th-century Bakonybél Charter forged for the early 11th century. Its source was the authentic text of the Bakonybél Survey of the late 11th century. Comparing the two charters, we see that there are names that appear in both charters. These names have historical toponomastic source value in the 11th century even in the 13th-century forged founding charter. Of the 34 toponyms in the forged charter, 23 have such source value dating back some two centuries earlier than the age of forgery (Szőke 2023: 424–425).

The name of the settlement of Paloznak on the shore of Lake Balaton appears with two consonants at the beginning of the name in the authentic survey of the late 11th century and with one consonant (a vowel was added between the consonants) in the forged founding charter of the 13th century: 1086: *Ploznic,* +1037: *Poloznuk* (DHA. 1: 118, 250, 251, 253). The former is a Slavic structure, the latter a Hungarian one: a word beginning with two or more consonants is not a phonological-phonotactic structure typical of Hungarian. The chronological characteristics of forms containing consonant conjunctions are difficult to determine in general, since the two forms often coexisted

(KENYHERCZ 2013: 28, 80). This name has many data that allow us to consider this distinction as a marker of age: 1002 e./1109: *πωλοσνίκου* [polozniku], +1037 [1240]/+1246/1330: *Poloznuk,* +1037/1490: *Poloznok,* 1079: *Poloznic,* 1086: in *Ploznic,* 1086/1368, 1359, 1368: *Palaznuk,* p., 1360: *Poloznok ~ Poluznuk,* 15. sz.: item possessionem *Paloznak* (DHA. 1: 85, 114, 116, 118, 225, 253, 260), +1082 [XIII.] (DHA. 1: 238), 1222 (MELICH 1931: 151), 1269, 1304, 1312, 1327 (DHA. 1: 228): *Poloznuk,* pr. (Cs. 3: 92), 1109: *Poloſinic,* v. (DHA. 1: 367), +1109 [1280–1295]: *Poloznik,* v. (DHA. 1: 379), 1217: *Polosnuc* (VO. 35), 1229 (MELICH 1931: 151): *Palaznak,* 1269, 1330: *Palaznuk,* 1323: *Poloznok* (Cs. 3: 92). Only the charter of 1086 includes the form with this consonant form. In the other authentic charter of almost the same date, we find a form beginning with one consonant: 1079: *poloznic* (DHA. 1: 225).

It may be inferred from all this that there was an authentic version of the forged charter, which was produced in the early 11th century. This consonant form is derived from it, and from here it was included in the late 11th century charter. This late 11th-century charter later served as the source of the forged charter in the 13th century. It is therefore possible that the name already existed at the beginning of the 11th century. The existence of the name in the early 11th century is also confirmed by the fact that the name *Paloznak* has been claimed to have derived from a Slavic place name, but also from a personal name of Slavic origin, and the Slavic personal name has a similar form at the beginning of the word: Plaznik (FNESz. *Paloznak,* PELCZÉDER 2022: 138–141). The personal name derivation would suggest that the form beginning with two consonants was the primary one. By the end of the 11th century, the *Paloznak* form (or both of them) was already in use. The name may therefore have an early 11th century source value for historical toponomastics.[2]

We can also support this idea from the perspective of local history. The archaeological evidence suggests that Hungarians have been present in the area since the Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin (895–900): remains of houses and artefacts typical of Hungarians have been found from that period (cf. VERESS D. 1993: 17).

In the forged Bakonybél Charter, there are 11 names that do not appear in the authentic source from the end of the 11th century. Among these, there are some names whose historical sources date back to before the 13th century. This source value is similar in nature to that of the subsequently inserted parts of the interpolated charters. Their absence in the 11th-century authentic source of the

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[2] There is a Greek-language charter from the early 11th century that already mentions the settlement. This document survived not in its original form, but as a copy from the early 12th century: 1002 e./1109: *πωλοσνίκου* [polozniku] (DHA. 1: 85).

forged charter is essentially an indication of the later ownership of the donations. This did not necessarily mean that the names were also created later (SZŐKE 2023: 425–426).

5. Conclusion

In this paper I presented the important and not negligible role of local history in the field of toponomastics as it may provide important additional information when determining the source value of early toponyms for historical toponomastics. It is important to note, however, that information on the history of places can be taken into account in different ways for different types of charters. From this perspective, the easiest documents to evaluate are those that have survived in their original form. It is known that the toponyms included in them already existed at the time the document was issued. Knowledge of local history also reveals that their source value for toponym history may be earlier than this. The source value for toponym history of the toponyms preserved in the transcript is similar to that of the authentic documents preserved in the original. During transcription, usually only the way the names were recorded was changed. Cases that are more difficult to define include non-authentic charters: interpolated and forged charters. The text of interpolated charters was supplemented with longer or shorter details during transcription. The original parts of an 11th-century document interpolated in the 13th century have an 11th-century source value for toponym history. However, it would be a mistake to automatically attribute 13th-century source value to the toponyms of subsequently inserted parts. Among them are names that did not even exist before. In this case, the source value of toponym may coincide with the age of interpolation. However, it is often likely that, despite the subsequent insertion, source value of the toponyms is earlier. Knowledge of local history helps to confirm these ideas. From the point of view of the source value of toponyms, forged charters are the most uncertain, as these documents were not recorded at the time indicated in the text, but only centuries later. However, there was often an authentic version of these documents, or documents from the forged era were used to write them. Names with source value before the time of forgery can be determined by local history knowledge.

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Abstract

The early (11th-century) history of the Hungarian language can be explored with the help of charters. In these Latin legal documents, we can determine the source value of vulgar (e.g., Hungarian) place names both for purposes of toponym history and the history of language. In the case of an authentic (i.e., not forged) document which has survived in the form in which it was issued (i.e. not a copy), the description of toponyms from this point of view does not represent a problem as we can associate the existence of place names and their recording with the time when the charter was issued. However, only four such charters have survived from the first century of Hungarian written culture using Latin letters (the 11th century). The majority of these documents have therefore survived in the form of copies, or are not authentic but forged. In these documents that are referred to as charters of an uncertain chronological status, traces of several chronological layers can be assumed, both from the point of view of the history of names and that of language. In the case of a forged document that had an authentic original, the question arises as to which period the spelling of the toponym reflects: was the spelling of the place name preserved on the basis of the authentic charter or was the spelling adapted to the conventions of the period of forgery? At the same time, in the case of a forged document, it is also uncertain which of the place names could have been included in the authentic document already and which were added only at the time of forgery. The latter group may include names that did not even exist in the century of the authentic charter. In this case, the name can be considered to have source value for a later time in toponym history. It is also possible, however, that even though the name in question did not appear in the authentic charter, its existence can be assumed for this earlier period as well.

I explore the question of how knowledge of local history may facilitate the determination of the source value of a particular name for toponym history.

Keywords: medieval charters, toponyms, local history, 11th century