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On the naming of river sections:
*A Cognitive and Socio-Onomastic Approach**

1.1. River names have long been prominent in onomastics. This scientific interest is due to the fact that they belong to the most archaic layer of names and also that river names, particularly the names of the larger rivers, are extremely timeless and difficult to change. Many of the largest river names can be traced back to antiquity. For example, in Europe, we have the Danube, Tiber, and Ebro; in Asia, the Tigris, Euphrates, Indus, and Ganges. The Ganges River, which flows through India and Bangladesh, takes its name from a term probably of pre-Indo-European origin, likely meaning 'river' (cf. Sanskrit *Gaṅgā* < PIE *geh_2*- 'to go, to pass, to walk', see e.g. FNESz.). It was mentioned by European travelers before Christ, including the Greek historian, explorer, and diplomat Megasthenes (c. 350–290 BC). Its earliest reference, however, comes from the Hindu religious text the Rigveda, which dates from around 1500–1200 BC.

However, the names of smaller rivers are often hundreds or even thousands of years old. For example, in Hungary, the nearly 300 km long Rába River has an Old European origin. The base of the name likely derives from the Proto-Indo-European root *$\bar{e}reb(h)$-* or *$\bar{o}rob(h)$-,* meaning 'dark red, brownish'. The Latin *Ar(r)abo* may have been transmitted into Hungarian through Slavic (or possibly German) as *Raba:* 1271/XIV: *Rabam,* Gy. 4: 133 (cf. FNESz). The Rábca, which flows into the Rába at Győr and is now 60 km long, can be traced back to the early 13th century: [c. 1200]: *Rabuceam Rabki [: Rabca]* (Gy. 4: 133), 1208/359: *Rabca* (Gy. 4: 156). The name of the *Garadna ~ Garadna-patak(a),* which today flows for only 13 km and derives from a settlement name of Slavic origin (< Slavic *gradъ* 'fortress,' cf. FNESz), also appears in early documents: 1234/1243: *Grathna,* Gy. 1: 41, 84, 150; 1326/1375: *Garadnapatak ~ Garadnapataka,* Gy. 1: 41, 150.

1.2. The fact that river names are difficult to change is also related to their lesser exposure to ideological, economic, and political influences compared to other names. In contrast to settlement names, for example, river names are passed down by the local population and adopted by newcomers, who rarely assign a new name to a river. This is evidenced by the fact that none of the major river names in the Hungarian-speaking area originate from the Hungarian language. Even among the names of smaller and medium-sized rivers, many were simply

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adopted by the Hungarians from the local population when they settled in the Carpathian Basin. For example, the name *Nyitra* originates from Old European (**neid-* ~ **ni-* 'flowing' + Germanic **ahwa* 'water'), *Csaronda* from Slavic (**čьrna voda* 'black water'), and *Besztrece* also from Slavic (Old Slavic **bystrь* 'swift'). These examples (cf. FNESz., HOFFMANN–RÁCZ–TÓTH 2017: 89, 92–93) illustrate that Hungarians were in close linguistic contact with the local peoples during this period. Thus, rivers represent a bridge across centuries, even millennia, connecting languages, cultures, and nations through the names used by different peoples (for more on this topic, see GYŐRFFY 2011: 22–24, 132–143, HOFFMANN–RÁCZ–TÓTH 2017: 85–95).

However, it is also worth mentioning that, although rarely, river names have been changed for political reasons. Until 1775, the river known today as the Ural (Russian: Урал) and flowing through Russia and Kazakhstan was called *Яйк* (transliterated *Yaik*) in Russian and *Жайық (Zhayyq)* in Kazakh. The name, of Turkish origin (cf. Old Turkic *Yayıq* 'wide, spreading'), was changed to Ural by Russian Empress Catherine II following the suppression of the Pugachev uprising. The river's name was altered as part of an effort to erase all traces of the rebellion, including the renaming of the settlement to Уральск. Pugachev's first manifesto in 1773 addressed the Cossacks living along this river, prompting the Tsarina's decision to obliterate even the memory of the uprising (cf. FNESz.). Despite the official change, the traditional names persist in local usage: *Zhayyq* in Kazakh and *Yayıq* in Bashkir.

2. Many scholars argue that, due to the primary function of a proper name being unique and exclusive identification, place names should not have synonyms. In other words, a watercourse, for example, is typically designated by a single name. LORÁND BENKŐ highlights the general principle of onomastics, noting that a river is unlikely to have two names within a single language system (1984: 400), as this situation is generally not justified either by the exchange of communicative information or by political, ideological, or psychological reasons. However, empirical research regularly challenges this general thesis. Several studies have reported a high synonymy ratio (the ratio of place names to the places named) for the place-name material of a region or settlement. For instance, VARGA reported a ratio of 1.5 (1981: 159), PESTI 1.44 (1985: 86), and HOFFMANN 1.56 (1980: 18). More recently, ÉVA HANKUSZ conducted a similar study and found an average of 1.51 names per object in the region she investigated (2017: 28). Moreover, authorities themselves acknowledge this issue: "The principle of identification—that a name should correspond to only one object—is unfortunately not always upheld. The same object may be given different names by different communities, or a name may refer to several objects. A long-standing effort for unambiguous identification is to standardise

geographical names and collect them into directories for unambiguous future use" (MoFnT. 1: 3).

The results of research on river names also confirm this phenomenon: both ancient and modern river names exhibit polyonymy. Traditionally, in semantics, polyonymy is associated with the concept of synonymy. KATALIN J. SOLTÉSZ defines synonymy as that aspect of polyonymy where names of different forms refer to the same individual, such that their interchange within a text does not alter the meaning of the text (cf. 1979: 38–40).

Synonymy is a complex phenomenon, and it is not surprising that researchers have developed various definitions of what constitutes a synonymous name and its subtypes. For example, in his classification, ISTVÁN HOFFMANN identified three subcategories of synonymous pairs (1980): 1) pairs of names that differ only in their linguistic form: e.g. *Ágói-patak* [*Jászágó > Ágó* 'settlement name'/-*i* adjective derivational suffix + *patak* 'brook'] ~ *Ágó-patak* [*Jászágó > Ágó* 'settlement name' + *patak* 'brook'] (MoFnT. 1: 13), *Berettyó* [< *berek* 'grove' + *jó* 'river'] ~ *Beretty-folyó* [*Berettyó* 'rivername' + *folyó* 'river'] (E. NAGY 2021: 67), 2) pairs that reflect different naming approaches but share the same element indicating the type of place: e.g. *Kánya-patak* [*kánya* 'red kite' + *patak* 'brook'] ~ *Vér-patak* [*vér* 'blood' + *patak* 'brook'] (MoFnT. 1: 21), *Szilas-patak* [*Szilasliget > Szilas* 'place name' + *patak* 'brook'] ~ *Palotai-patak* [*Rákospalota > Palota* 'place name'/-*i* adjective derivational suffix + *patak* 'brook'] (MoFnT. 1: 30), 3) pairs for which there is no evidence of synonymy: e.g. *Berettyó* [< *berek* 'grove' + *jó* 'river'] ~ *Folyó* [*folyó* 'river'] (E. NAGY 2021: 67), *Horgas* [*horgas* 'hooked'] ~ *Kis-kubik* [*kis* 'small' + *kubik* 'chanel'] (GYŐRFFY 2018: 142).

In my presentation, I will address a specific aspect of polyonymy in river names: the issue of river section names. I will examine why a watercourse might be assigned several (section) names, which can vary from one settlement to another. I will also explore the factors influencing the choice of a single (official) name for the entire watercourse, how these names relate to one another in the naming process, and to what extent they can be considered truly synonymous. The analysis will be conducted using cognitive and socio-onomastic criteria.

3. By examining river names from both the present and the past, we observe that the names of rivers flowing through multiple settlements can vary, even from one locality to another. In exploring this phenomenon, it is useful to distinguish between historical and contemporary examples. Let us first look at some examples from the old world.

3.1. The brook known as *Szikszó,* which originates in the northern part of Hungary in the Bükk Mountains and flows into the River Cserő, is recorded as

Szikszó from early times. Historical references include: [c. 1067]/267: per litus *Scekzov* (Gy. 3: 39 [here as *Zcekzov*], 136), 1248/402/483: *Zekzow,* riv. (Gy. 3: 39, 133, 136). Its lower section was called *Bába ere* (1327, 1346: *Babaere*, Gy. 3: 39, 68, 101), the middle section near the settlement of Szalók was referred to as *Szalók* (1323/1446: *Zalouk [ɔ: Zalowk]*, Gy. 3: 39, 133), and the upper section near the settlement of Bátor was called *Bátor pataka* (1295: *Bathurpataka*, Gy. 3: 39, 70).

3.2. To understand why a watercourse might have had multiple names in antiquity and how these names could have coexisted within a community, we need to examine the phenomenon through the lens of contemporary naming practices and concepts such as the cognitive map and the name community. A cognitive map represents an individual's spatial, geographical, and environmental knowledge—a mental spatial representation of places. It comprises spatial representations (e.g., landmarks, routes, broader spatial overviews), their interrelationships (directions, distances, part–whole relationships, spatial contact), and the individual's perception of them. Within this cognitive framework, there is an integral connection between spatial representations and spatial language use.

KATALIN RESZEGI emphasizes that individuals learn about and understand the world within a community, and that the behavior and communication of the community impact the cognitive system being developed. Thus, speech not only conveys spatial knowledge but also plays a crucial role in aligning individual cognitive maps, which differ due to categorization processes, through the articulation of spatial information (e.g., certain spatially related language forms, such as spatial suffixes) (2022: 93). Place names are essential for our ability to recall and discuss locations (though we can refer to them using other terms besides proper names), and some of our knowledge about places is also represented in the form of the names themselves.

It is useful to link the individual cognitive map with the concept of a name community. Simply put, a name community is a group of people who share more or less the same toponymicon and have similar mental representations and rules of name use.

The place names associated with an individual's cognitive map are recorded during communication and thus become comparable with those of others. This comparison leads to the formation of a kind of "community" cognitive map. We do not mean a virtual network that exists beyond individuals, but rather that individual cognitive maps within a name community tend to exhibit a similar pattern. (For information on cognitive maps, see e.g., GYŐRFFY 2018: 53–74, RESZEGI 2022: 87–128; for the concept of a name community, see e.g., GYŐRFFY 2018: 101–103.)

The perspective of space is also reflected in naming. At the moment of naming, the namer, after perceiving and conceptualizing a new geographical object, seeks to find a name that effectively facilitates its distinction and individuation through the verbal act of naming.

When examining the old Hungarian naming and name-using practices, it is important to consider the much narrower scope of geographic knowledge among people of that time, which resulted in a smaller cognitive map. People were not very mobile; they typically stayed within the boundaries of their own settlements and had limited interaction with people and places (and, by extension, place names) outside their immediate area. Today, modern public transport has greatly increased mobility for everyone. Even if you do not travel beyond your own locality, mass media (radio, TV, print media, internet) have expanded access to information about places and place names that you have not had and will certainly not have personal experience of.

In the context of antiquity, it is also important to highlight the absence of extensive literacy and the limited creation and use of maps. In later times, these factors would likely have contributed to a tendency toward uniformity and the development of official forms of naming.

Accordingly, we should envision the emergence and existence of river section names in antiquity as being understood by the name community primarily as names for the "whole" watercourses, and thus belonging to the cognitive map of a closed name community. In other words, these river names were not related to each other, as users likely were not aware that the same river could have different names in other name communities. Therefore, these names represent the same entity within different place-name systems, originating from different namers and name-users, and are thus independent, non-synonymous designations.

4. Thus, while a diversity of names is a natural consequence of the naming process, there may also be a tendency towards uniformity, which may eliminate polyonymy, including the use of river section names. The reasons for this uniformity are certainly manifold: economic, administrative,[1] cultural and linguistic prestige factors can all influence the process.

The Danube is the largest river in the Carpathian Basin. It originates in the Black Forest in Germany and flows southeast for 2,850 kilometers to the Black Sea. In Latin documents from Hungary, the river is referred to as *Danubius*,

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[1] This is evident in contemporary cartographic publications. For instance, one publication states: "The use of name variants (river section names) valid only for a single section is not recommended; their inclusion serves merely to provide better information and facilitate comparison" (MoFnT. 1: 5).

following medieval writing standards. This name, which was used throughout Europe, also appears on later maps after the Middle Ages. The name *Danubius*, derived from the ancient Latin *Danuvius*, ultimately comes from the Indo-European word *danu-* 'river' (cf. FNESz.). In antiquity, *Danubius* referred specifically to the upper section of the river, with some sources indicating it extended as far as Vienna, while others suggest it reached the Iron Gate. The lower section of the river was called *Ιστρος* ~ *Hister*, which, according to Lajos Kiss, has Thracian origins and is rooted in the Indo-European adjective *is(ə)ro-s* meaning 'strong, powerful, fierce' (cf. FNESz. *Duna*). It is possible that the name *Danuvius*, originally used for the upper section, was transferred to the lower section during the eastern expansion of the Celts, with the name variant from a higher prestige language replacing the previous name for the lower section. The widespread use of this form of the name throughout the entire river area was likely reinforced by the Latin-language documentation system in the Middle Ages, where renowned European rivers were typically given the same Latin exonym in official documents.

The name of the second (or arguably the first) longest river on Earth, the Nile, is derived from the Latin *Nilus,* which can be traced back to the ancient Greek *Νεῖλος.* Homer, however, refers to the river as *Αἴγυπτος (Aiguptos).* In later times, Greek authors began using the term *Neilos* to refer to the lower section of the river, and this usage eventually extended to the entire river. The name may have originated from the Old Egyptian *nꜣ rꜣw-ḥꜣw(t)* 'the mouths of the foremost parts,' which specifically referred to the branches of the Nile flowing through the delta (cf. GOEDICKE 1979). The transfer of the name to the entire river might also have been influenced by prestige considerations. In some regions of the Lower Nile, the river was called *Iteru,* which referred, among other things, to the annual flooding that allowed water to be supplied to the fields. Additionally, the Lower Nile was known as *Hapi* (or *Hapy*), named after the Egyptian god of the Nile. The term *Sihor* (or *Siaḥor, Sehor*) 'black river' was also used in some parts of the Lower Nile, likely referring to the dark-colored, fertile mud deposited by the river during its annual flood. It is noteworthy that this section of the Nile is now divided into two branches, whereas ancient sources, such as Pliny the Elder, record it as being divided into seven branches. This raises the possibility that the individual names might have referred to specific branches of the river.

An interesting phenomenon in the study of river section names is the brook now known as *Hejő.* This stream flows in a south-easterly direction in northern Hungary, east of the Bükk Mountains, and joins the River Tisza after approximately 40 kilometers. Early written sources refer to the upper section of the stream as *Tapolca:* [c. 1200]/896: *Topulucea* (Gy. 1: 736, 809). The origin of this name may be linked to the Slavic adjective **toplъ* ~ *teplъ* 'warm'

(PřSlTop. 180), to which the characteristic Slavic place-name suffix *-ьca* was added (ŠMILAUER 1970: 28). In its lower section, however, the stream was known by the Hungarian name *Hév-jó* [c. 1200]/896: *Heuyou,* fl. (Gy. 1: 736, 772), and later Hejő. The Hungarian name is equivalent to the Slavic name, being a compound of the words *hév* 'warm' and *jó* 'river.' The meaning of the name prompts the question of how the Hungarian name came into existence. Did it originate as a direct translation of the Slavic name (cf. FNESz.), or did the Hungarian name-givers independently choose a name based on the warm temperature of the water? If the latter is the case, the naming would likely have occurred in the upper section of the stream, where a warm spring feeds the brook. If the water remained warm enough throughout the entire stretch to avoid freezing in winter, the predominance of the Hungarian name over the Slavic form might also be attributed to linguistic prestige factors.

5. Although the desire for clarity in communication and linguistic economy (one name for one denotation) may lead to the selection of a single name among river (section) names to designate the entire watercourse, our experience indicates that this is by no means a necessary outcome.

It is worth examining the various names of the river now officially known as the *Koppány*. This 75-kilometer-long river flows south of Lake Balaton through the Danube hills and eventually empties into the River Kapos. Collections of living language usage from the second half of the 20th century reveal that the river is known by different names in almost every settlement along its course. The following variations of the name are documented: *Nagy-árok* [*nagy* 'big' + *árok* 'ditch'], *Sërëkai-árok* [*Sereka* 'place name'/*-i* 'adjective derivational suffix' + *árok* 'ditch'] (in Kisbárapáti), *Nagy-árok* [*nagy* 'big' + árok 'ditch'] ~ *Borsi-patak* [*Borsi* 'placename' + *patak* 'brook'] (in Fiad), *Nagy-kanális* [*nagy* 'big' + *kanális* 'channel']~ *Malomi-nagy-árok* [*malom* 'mill'/*-i* 'adjective derivational suffix' + *nagy* 'big' + *árok* 'ditch'] (in Bonnya), *Kanális* [*kanális* 'channel'] (in Szorosad)*, Malomárok* [*malom* 'mill' + *árok* 'ditch'] ~ *Öreg-árok* [*öreg* 'old' + *árok* 'ditch']*,* (in Törökkoppány), *Koppány-patak* [*Koppány* 'rivername' + *patak* 'brook'] (in Somogydöröcske) (SMFN. 241, 245, 248, 254, 256, 258); *Kanális* [*kanális* 'channel'] (in Tamási and Értény), *Némët-árok* [*német* 'German' + *árok* 'ditch'] ~ *Koppány* (in Koppányszántó), *Kanális* [*kanális* 'channel'] ~ *Koppány* (in Nagykónyi)*, Koppány* (in Pári)*, Kis-kalányis* [*kis* 'small' + *kanális* 'channel'] ~ *Majsai–kalányis* [*Majsa* 'place name/-i* 'adjective derivational suffix' + *kanális* 'channel'] ~ *Koppány* (in Regöly) (TMFN. 104, 111, 117, 122, 127, 131). Medieval sources indicate that the river was once called *Füzegy* (1055: *Fizeg ~ Fyzeg* [*fűz* 'willow' + *-gy* 'place-name derivational suffix'], DHA. 1: 150), a name that appears for the last time in sources in the 16th century. Later maps typically refer to the river as *Koppány* or use names containing *Koppány* as a name-element: 1763–1787:

Koppan (EKFT.) 1799–1803: *Koppony* (Lipszky MT), 1808: *Koppány* Fl., (Lipszky), 1890: *Koppány p., Kopány-patak* [*Koppány* 'rivername' + *patak* 'brook'] (Gönczy), 1914: *Koppány* (MÁKT.), 1941: *Koppány* (MaKF.), 1984: *Nagy-Koppány* [*nagy* 'big' + *Koppány* 'rivername'], *Nagy-Koppány-patak* [*nagy* 'big' + *Koppány* 'rivername' + *patak* 'brook'], *Koppány-patak* (MoFnT. 1: 23).[2] However, on the cadastral maps of the Habsburg Empire from the second half of the 19th century (Kat.), various names for the river appear. In 1859, the upper section of the river is labeled with names such as *Borsi folyó* [*Borsi* 'placename' + *folyó* 'river], (in Karád), *Malomárok* [*malom* 'mill' + *árok* 'ditch'], *Borsi folyó* (in Fiad), and *Derék-aszó* [*derék* 'waist; great' + *aszó* 'dry riverbed'] (in Acsa). The name Koppány is first noted in the settlement of Döröcske and subsequently appears as: *Koppány* (in Döröcske, Szorosad), *Koppány víz* [*Koppány* 'placename' + *víz* 'water'] (in Törökkoppány, Szántó, Értény), and *Koppány folyjú* [*Koppány* 'placename' + *folyó* 'river'] (in Kónyi).

According to ISTVÁN HOFFMANN, the official adoption of the name *Koppány* was likely facilitated by the presence of the largest settlement near the river, Törökkoppány. This association helped the name spread from the middle and lower sections of the river to a larger and larger portion of its course (cf. 2010: 212). However, it is also important to note that the name *Koppány* was not recorded in informal language use in the place name directory from the second half of the 20th century. As we have observed, *Koppány* did not become the exclusive name for the river; other variants of the name are still used in the settlements along the river. It can be concluded that in areas where the official name *Koppány* coexists with one or more alternative names within the same community, the different variants are used in different communicative situations.

Using the concept of diglossia, we can shed more light on the question of these name variations. One of the most important features of diglossia is that the language varieties are functionally distinct from each other. In our case, this means that different names can be attached to the same denotation in different language varieties, highlighting their functional differences and varied uses. In Hungary, no diglossia has developed, so we must consider the name variants as belonging to different speech domains.

The selection of name variants is influenced by a number of factors. GROSJEAN's model (developed for the study of bilingual communities) distinguishes four groups of factors: the participants in the conversation, the situation, the content of the conversation, and the social function of the conversation (1982). Several characteristics of the participants influence the

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[2] In the MoFnT., the names *Koppány*, *Nagy-Koppány*, *Nagy-Koppány-patak*, and *Koppány-patak* are listed as name variants, while the name *Fiadi-víz* is classified as a river section name.

selection. In addition to the classically studied characteristics such as age, gender, occupation, education, and ethnicity, other determinants include linguistic proficiency, the speaker's speech history, the quality of the relationship, familiarity, the effectiveness of the relationship, linguistic attitudes, and other external influences. Regarding the situation, GROSJEAN (ibid.) points out that the location/environment, the presence of other members of the linguistic community, the degree of formal contact, and the degree of familiarity can all influence the selection of a particular linguistic element. The content of the conversation, i.e., the topic, can also be important, as well as the function of the conversation as a social interaction: for example, raising social status, highlighting social differences, excluding someone, inviting, or commanding.

Name variants are associated with usage rules, meaning one name variant is used in one situation and another in a different situation. This depends, for example, on the composition of the participants in the situation. One variant might be used in close family circles, another when talking to other locals, and yet another when dealing with outsiders from outside the municipality.

Fortunately, the collection of place-names with a sociolinguistic–socio-onomastic background is now sensitive enough to record not only the formal forms of names used in official situations but also the forms actually used within the name community. I have repeatedly observed during the course of name collection and other socio-onomastic surveys that the presence of an "official person" prompts the use of the "learned" name variant, as the respondent believes this is the "correct" answer and wants to provide the name associated with official language use. If an unofficial name is mentioned, they often add, "That's what we say, not the official name."

It is also important to highlight what cognitive semantics emphasizes: meaning is not static but is, in fact, a process. Meaning is continuously shaped by the words, sentences, and statements chosen and is assumed to be relevant in the given situation; it is not exclusively an intrinsic property of words and sentences. The speaker has something to convey and selects the appropriate elements from the mental lexicon with the corresponding phonetic form, but the concrete meaning is constructed by the linguistic structure in the situation. Language is not merely a reflection of objective reality; it also involves the conceptualization and interpretation of the world by both the speaker and the listener (see RESZEGI 2022: 44).

In concrete terms, this means that the meaning of river names can vary depending on the context. For example, in Tépé, located in Hajdú–Bihar County, one of the more important watercourses is called *Szalányos*, which refers to a section of the river that flows alongside the land named *Szalányos.*

When locals hear this name, they mentally picture only the segment of the river that flows through Tépé. However, they are also familiar with the names *Kati-ér* [*Kati* 'female nick name' + *ér* 'brooklet'], *Kálló* (< old Slavic **Kalьno* 'muddy', cf. FNESz. *Nagykálló*) and even *Derecskei-Kálló* [*Derecske* 'place name'/-*i* 'adjective derivational suffix' + *Kálló* 'rivername'] (see Győrffy 2018: 147). Depending on the situation, the latter names may refer only to the section of the river named Szalányos, but in other cases (e.g., in official contexts), they may refer to the entire watercourse.

In the context of name variants belonging to different speech domains, we must also consider the individual and group identity-forming power of names, as well as the social meaning that a name conveys. An individual who uses a river section name is often aware that others elsewhere might use a different name for the same denotation. However, they insist on using the local variant because it is part of their local identity, and the social meaning conveyed is, "I am part of the local (name) community." (For more on the identity-marking and identity-creating role of place names, see e.g., Győrffy 2018: 28–32; for associative meaning, see e.g., Reszegi 2022: 52–53; and Ainiala–Saarelma–Sjöblom 2012: 119–123.)

6. István Hoffmann also pointed out that different river section names can be used even within the same municipality in the absence of a primary variant (2010). The small river in Tapolcafő, north of Lake Balaton, has several names within the local naming community. It is called *Páskomi-ér*, *Bótakői-ér*, and *Kalapácsi-ér*, depending on the land through which it flows. In the case of these river section names, it is evident that the cognitive map of the locals does not perceive this small stream as a single entity. Instead, the identifying role of the river section names within the community is much stronger than that of a single name, which prevents the process of standardization.

Among the names of the West Pantar in the Philippines, there are examples of different sections of a shorter watercourse being called by different names. Holton suggests that a 4 km long watercourse is referred to by at least three different names (2011: 160). At its source, it is called *Masi Hauwang Ara* (lit. 'big and far sulfur creek'). In its middle, it is known as *Masi Ke Baddang* (lit. 'crow sulfur creek'), and at its mouth, it is referred to as *Masi Kepasali* (lit. 'obscure'). According to Holton, the reason for these distinctions becomes quite obvious when considering the landscape features to which these names refer. Masi Hauwang Ara is a hot springs area with significant mineral deposits covering about 2.5 hectares. In contrast, Masi Kepasali is a steep-walled canyon where the stream meets the sea. From a human perspective, these are very different places: the former is easily traversable on foot, while the latter acts as a barrier to travel.

We should consider what might influence the decision to assign river section names to shorter watercourses. From a cognitive perspective, these phenomena suggest that translucent, descriptive names are more easily retrieved because they evoke a wider range of associated images compared to non-transparent names (RESZEGI 2022: 37–38). Therefore, names that specify the exact location of a river section are more effective in communication, as they provide a clearer and quicker indication of the river section's location.

Place names can be seen as landmarks on the cognitive map. What a naming community perceives as such is strongly influenced by the nature of the landscape itself, as well as socio-cultural factors. The perception of space is thus reflected in the names and the process of naming. The often-cited perception of space by the Inuit illustrates this: they perceive the landscape, which to others may appear as a continuous field of ice and snow, as fragmented, and the use of place names greatly aids in this perception (cf. RESZEGI 2022: 103).

In this sense, river section names also provide insight into the spatial perception of the namers. In this case, the namers do not perceive the watercourse as a continuous entity but as distinct, fragmentable parts. For some reason, it was important for the naming community at the time to refer to these parts as separate objects, and this spatial perception of the river has been maintained without any need for unification.

7. Thus, despite the unifying intentions of official bodies, river section names remain a dominant part of hydronymic systems. The creation of official, standardized variants of names for entire rivers may have been prompted by administrative and cartographic needs. Perhaps the most important of these needs is clarity. However, there may also be more practical reasons, such as the difficulty of legibly indicating river section names on smaller-scale maps.

It is important to recognize that the assignment and use of river section names is a natural and universal feature of the hydronymic system. The discovery of their onomastic characteristics and the rules of their use can be achieved through a detailed analysis of the present-day name corpus. In Hungary, the Hungarian National Toponym Registry Programme provides an excellent opportunity for this, as experts, in the course of collecting names, pay special attention to capturing the place-name heritage in all its diversity and variety.

Having a well-structured corpus, it is important to extend research on the phenomenon of polyonymy among Hungarian river names more broadly. In Slavic onomastics, this issue has been thoroughly studied; for instance, JURAJ HLADKÝ (2004) identified and categorized nine causes of polyonymy in his comprehensive work: 1) diachronic polyonymy – the coexistence of older and newer names for the same water body, reflecting historical change; 2)

synchronic polyonymy – the simultaneous use of different names in various regions, often due to dialectal or administrative variation; 3) functional changes – shifts in the nature or use of a water body that result in renaming; 4) bilingual or multilingual contexts – the presence of multiple language communities leading to parallel naming traditions; 5) standardization vs. local usage – discrepancies between officially standardized names and those used colloquially; 6) emotional or expressive variants – names with emotional, humorous, or symbolic meaning differing from neutral terms; 7) substitution with appellatives – the replacement of proper names with common nouns such as 'stream' or 'brook'; 8) ideological influences – renaming driven by political, national, or ideological shifts; 9) individual usage – unique, often undocumented names used by individuals or small communities. HLADKÝ emphasizes that these factors often overlap, making it difficult to attribute a given case of polyonymy to a single cause. His research also underlines the inherently interdisciplinary nature of hydronymic studies, combining linguistic, historical, cultural, and social dimensions. By applying similar frameworks to the Hungarian context, future research could uncover patterns of naming that reflect deeper historical and ethnolinguistic processes, enriching our understanding of regional identity and language contact.

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Abstract

The paper explores why a watercourse might be assigned multiple section names, which can differ from one settlement to another. The analysis is based on cognitive and socio-onomastic criteria. In antiquity, limited geographic knowledge and mobility led to different names for the same river sections in various settlements, with these names being non-synonymous and context-specific. While uniformity in river naming might be preferred for clarity, multiple names persist due to factors such as local usage, economic, administrative, and cultural influences. Historical examples, such as the Danube and the Nile, demonstrate how names can shift due to prestige and linguistic factors. In modern contexts, such as the Koppány River in Hungary, diverse local names reflect different contexts and identities, revealing how meaning is dynamic and shaped by usage. Additionally, from a cognitive perspective, descriptive names are more effective in communication because they evoke specific imagery related to a river's features, functioning as cognitive landmarks shaped by both landscape and socio-cultural factors.

Keywords: hydronyms, river section names, Hungarian