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Chronological and Word-geographical Stratification of Geographical Common Words meaning ‘Watercourse’*

1. The etymological, word-geographical and chronological stratification of geographical common words meaning ‘watercourse’ has been addressed several times in the works dealing with geographical common words. For instance, the most recent word-geographical study of the lexeme *patak* ‘brook’ has been carried out by ISTVÁN HOFFMANN (2003), whereas the other geographical common words denoting ‘watercourse’ of the early Old Hungarian period have been studied in detail by ERZSÉBET GYÖRFFY (2011: 85–104, cf. MELICH 1925: 53, KÁLMÁN 1967, TÓTH 1997, 1998). These studies give an overview of the word-geographical characteristics of the geographical common words meaning ‘watercourse’ in the early Old Hungarian period. Drawing on these studies we can get closer to grasping the factors that have influenced the spread of geographical common words meaning ‘watercourse’ from the early Old Hungarian period. Yet, we must anticipate limiting ourselves to making assumptions and listing arguments supporting those assumptions to some extent instead of providing reassuring and exhaustive replies (cf. DITRÓI 2016: 39–128).

For the compilation of the data corpus of my study I have used GYÖRGY GYÖRFFY’s work (1963–1998) *Historical Geography of Hungary in the Age of the Árpád Dynasty* (Gy.), the publications *Data on Toponymic History from the Early Old Hungarian Era* edited by ISTVÁN HOFFMANN, ANITA RÁCZ and VALÉRIA TÓTH (HA. 1., 2., 3., 4., 1997, 1999, 2012, 2017), and the *Dictionary of Early Hungarian Toponyms* (KMHsz. 1., 2005). However, a number of blank spots have remained on the map covering the language area of the early Old Hungarian period even after recording these basic sources; as further sources, I have taken data from TIVADAR ORTVAY’s (1882), SÁNDOR MIKESY’s (1940), LÁSZLÓ PAIS’s (1941–1942), GEORG HELLER’s (1975, 1981, 1985), PÉTER NÉMETH’s (2008) and ISTVÁN SZABÓ’s works (1937), as well as from RÓBERT KENYHERCZ’s compilation relating to Szepes county and from the database of the Research group on Hungarian Language History and Toponomastics

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in Debrecen. The data corpus compiled in this way contains more than 1300 geographical common words (appellatives and parts of toponyms) meaning ‘watercourse’ originating from the early Old Hungarian period.

2. While studying the chronological stratification of geographical common words denoting ‘watercourse’, first and foremost we must bear in mind that among geographical common words we can observe a certain kind of contradiction that certain geographical common words of Ugric and Finno-Ugric origin (e.g. *falú* ‘village’, *hát* ‘promontory’, *ház* ‘settlement’, *mál* ‘slope’) appeared in the sources only in the 12th and 13th centuries. Furthermore, there are examples showing that the first data on such geographical common words come only from the 14th century (*domb* ‘promontory’). The spread of those ancestral geographical common words must have been influenced (besides many other factors) by the rapid spread of an element having a similar meaning, more precisely by its inhibiting and limiting role. For instance, the early spread of the lexeme *halom* ‘lower hill’, which inhibited the spread of the lexeme *domb* (RESZEGI 2011: 89–90), and the lexeme *kerek* ‘forest’ must have been overshadowed at the beginning of the 14th century by the influence of another lexeme of the lexical field, the derivative word *erdő* ‘forest’.

We can enumerate many other – phonetic, morphological and vocabulary-related – examples supporting the assertion that the withdrawal or the limited spread of a given linguistic phenomenon is caused by the advancement of other linguistic phenomena. For example, the restriction of the use of the phoneme *ly* [ɫ] (e.g. *hely* ‘place’) (which had been previously widespread throughout the Hungarian language area) to the Palóc regions situated in the Northern part of the language area occurred as a consequence of the use of the phoneme *j* (e.g. *hej* ‘place’) and the use of the phoneme *l* (e.g. *hel* ‘place’). In the field of morphophonology there are similar processes in the creation of forms with palatal-velar or labial–non-labial assimilation (e.g. *ötször* ‘five times’) of single-form suffixes (e.g. *ötszer* ‘ötször’ / ‘five times’) that led to the withdrawal of non-assimilated forms (BENKŐ 1957: 22, 2002: 231). Of the numerous lexical phenomena, a parallel phenomenon is, for instance, the overshadowing of the previously generally known *törökbors* ‘pepper’ under the influence of the Southern Slavic *paprika* ‘pepper’ (BENKŐ 2002: 364). The spread of the different toponym types may also be influenced by such factors, i.e. the previous name types may hold back the territorial spread of a given name type. For instance, according to ANDRÁS MEZŐ, in the territory of Szabolcs county, the spread of patrociny settlement names may have been inhibited by the fact that by the time this name-giving habit reached that region, the settlement names had been designated according to other settlement name-giving patterns (MEZŐ 1996: 229, TÓTH 2010: 137, cf. DITRÓI 2016).

The situation may have been somewhat similar in the case of geographical common words denoting watercourses: the geographical common word *patak* ‘watercourse, smaller than a river’, which is of Slavic origin, displaced the ancestral words *jó* ‘river’ and *ügy* ‘river, brook, fish pond’, and its spread may have significantly inhibited the frequent use, as well as the territorial spread of other elements of the lexical field (such as the lexemes *aszó* ‘periodic watercourse, dry brook’, *fok* ‘brooklet or canal flowing out of larger waters’, *sár* ‘muddy stream, moorland, soggy area’, *séd* ‘source, brook’) (cf. GYÖRFFY 2011: 104).

The mutual impact of the spread of geographical common words is well illustrated by the territorial distribution of the two most frequent geographical common words meaning ‘watercourse’ of the early Old Hungarian period, since by studying the word-geographical characteristics of the geographical common word *ér* ‘brook’ and the geographical common word *patak* we can observe that their distribution is relatively sharply separated from each other: in the Northern, the Southern, South-western and the Eastern territories the geographical common word *patak*, while in the Central and North-western part of the language area the geographical common word *ér* can be found (see Figure 1). This separation is certainly not independent from several other circumstances either such as the geographical environment or the semantic factors that are in close relationship with it (cf. KÁLMÁN 1967: 346–347).

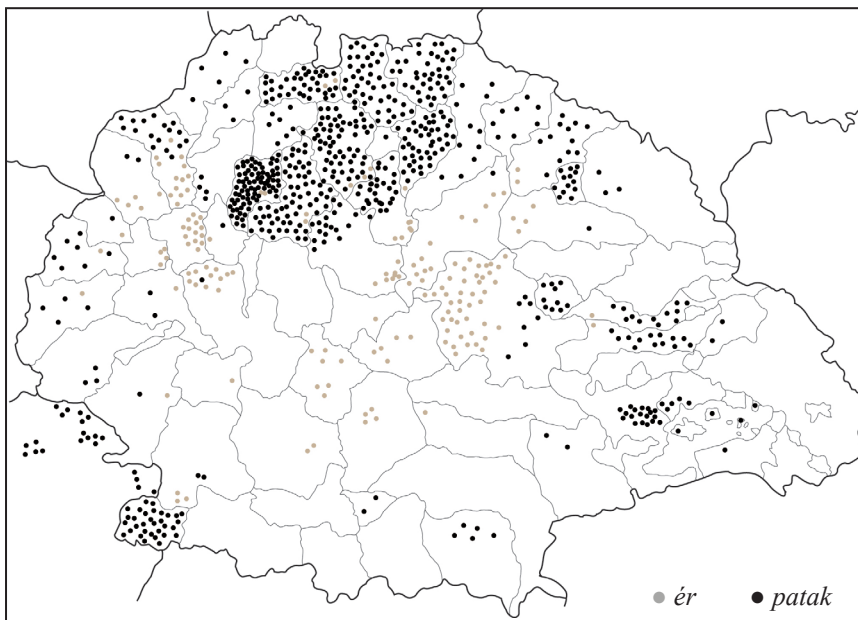


Figure 1: The Word-Geographical Distribution of *ér* and *patak*

We must also bear in mind that certain geographical common words were used a priori as dialectal lexemes in the early Old Hungarian period. In connection with the lexeme *patak*, ISTVÁN HOFFMANN refers to the fact that it must have been a dialectal word at the time of its inclusion in our language, since the word *patak* is a Slavic loanword. The geographical common words *sevnice* ‘smaller watercourse mostly with sour water’ and *maláka* ‘soggy moorland’ as Slavic loan elements may also have had a dialectal restriction, since on the basis of the early Old Hungarian maps they can unequivocally be linked to Slavic territories (see Figure 2).

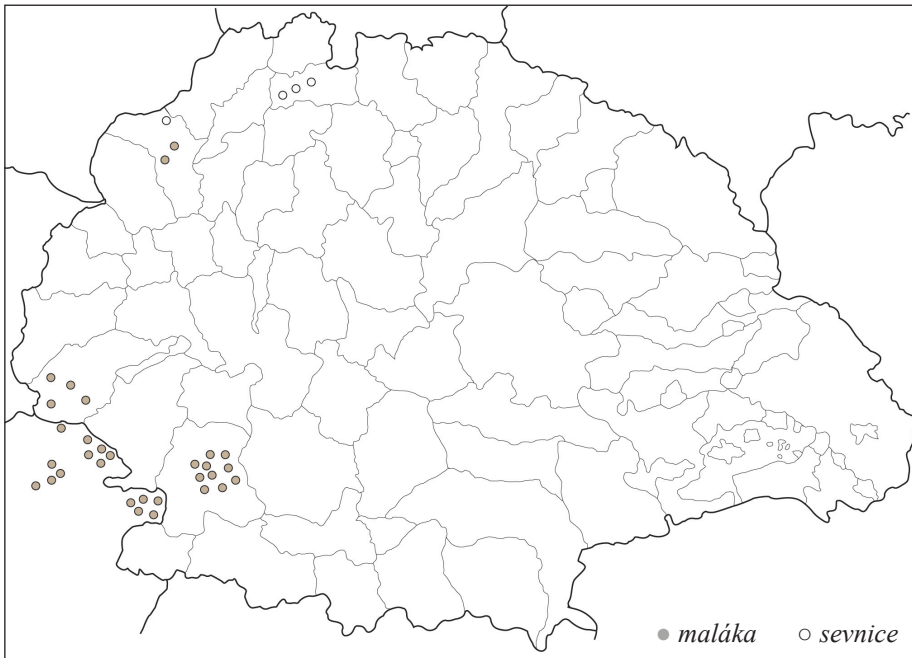


Figure 2: The Word-Geographical Distribution of *sevnice* and *maláka*

According to the assumptions of several researchers and from the testimony of the cartographic data, the geographical common word *jó* was used also as a dialectal element only in the Northeastern and Eastern dialects (cf. KÁLMÁN 1967: 345–347, TÓTH 1997: 263, HOFFMANN 2003: 669, GYÓRFFY 2011: 97–99, 100–101). (See Figure 3.) The territoriality of *jó* may be linked to the fact that it must have had an ethnic or tribal restriction even before the Hungarian Conquest. So it is less likely that a word previously widespread throughout the Hungarian language area would have rolled back to a more confined area in the course of time. Similarly, the fact that in the early Old Hungarian period several ancestral lexical elements and Turkish loanwords anterior to the Hungarian Conquest had a dialectal character (e.g. the Finno-Ugric words *csúp*

‘peak’, *lol* ‘ham’, *hoporcs* ‘uprise’, the Turkish words *pőcsik* ‘horsefly’, *üvecs* ‘two-year old sheep’, *csécs* ‘pock-mark’, *szongor* ‘predatory bird belonging to the Falconidae’) may also be related to the fact that in one of the ancestral Hungarian dialect types they may have been present as real dialectal words (cf. BENKŐ 1957: 70, 2002: 362–363). In the Old Hungarian period, it is of course not easy to demonstrate that a given word was a colloquial word or a dialectal word in the period, but in connection with a given lexeme, e.g. the geographical common word *mál* ‘versant’ it can be assumed that it must have been a more widely known word, and its use must have withdrawn in the course of time (BENKŐ 2002: 365, cf. RESZEGI 2011: 108). The dialectal restriction of *jó* may provide an explanation for the spread of certain loan elements as well, since it seems obvious that the lexeme *jó* as a dialectal lexeme inhibited to a lesser extent the rapid spread of other (newly emerging) elements of the lexical field (e.g. *patak* which is of Slavic origin).¹



Figure 3: The Word-Geographical Distribution of *jó*

According to the testimony of early toponyms and common words, in the stock of geographical common words meaning ‘watercourse’ we witness a continuous spread, which is not independent from the subsistence of the sources and the

¹ It is important to emphasize that in this period Old Hungarian does not have a normative variety so that ‘dialects’ aren’t defined relative to it, we can only talk about geographical variations in general.

data they contained. In the 11th century, only the occurrences of *sár* ‘muddy stream, moorland, soggy area’ and *ér* ‘brook’, one datum about *ügy* ‘river, brook, fish pond’ and one datum about *patak* can be found in the charters. In the 12th century, the lexical field is enriched with the geographical common words *aszó* ‘periodic watercourse, dry brook’, *séd* ‘source, brook’, *fok* ‘brooklet or canal flowing out of larger waters’ and *jó*, in the 13th century and at the beginning of the 14th century with the geographical common words *víz* ‘river, watercourse, still water’ and *ág* ‘arm of a river, brook’, as well as with the geographical common words *maláka* ‘soggy moorland’ and *sevnice* ‘smaller watercourse mostly with sour water’. So, the unevenness that can be generally observed in the etymological stratification of geographical common words is also typical in relation to geographical common words meaning ‘watercourse’, since, for instance, in the case of the lexeme *ág* of Ugric or Finno-Ugric origin and of the lexeme *víz* of Uralian origin, it is rather contradictory that their data appear only in the 13th century, so relatively late compared to the beginning of the use of written records in Hungary (cf. GYÖRFFY 2011: 89, 94).

However, by analysing the frequency indicators it is also obvious that from the 13th century on, the proportion of data about *patak* presents a sharp increase, and the frequency of the geographical common word *patak*, by the 14th century becomes almost dominant within the given semantic field. (The reduction of the amount of data in the corpus about *patak* at the beginning of the 14th century is related to the fact that certain compendia include data only until the end of the 13th century, see Figure 4.) So, the rapid spread of the data about *patak* could not be limited by the flow of many other loan elements. It should also be noted, however, that no data can be found about the lexeme *patak* in the central part of the language area even in the first half of the 14th century. In the case of the data about *patak* occurring here sporadically, we must also bear in mind that they could be linked to the dialect of the given region only with uncertainty. For instance, in Baranya and Fejér counties we find only a few data about *patak* (1239: ad *patak* Kekkektowa, Gy. 2: 323, 421; 1294: ad quod *potok*, Gy. 1: 345), and in their case the context leads to the assumption that they occurred as common words. That circumstance is important because it implies that they might have been the linguistic intervention or the mark of the charter writer rather than an element of the local spoken language (cf. BÁBA 2016: 107–121).

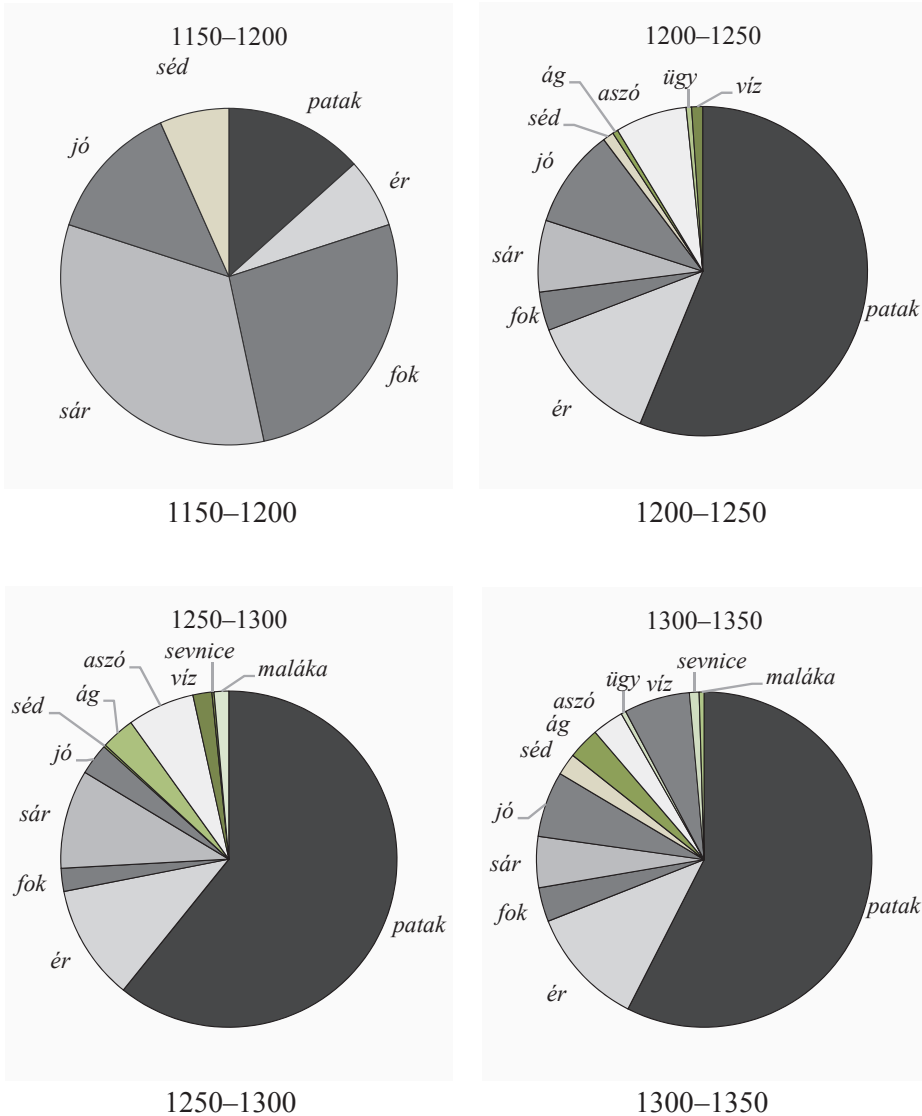


Figure 4: The Frequency of Geographical Common Words Meaning 'watercourse'

3. Consequently, the territorial spread of geographical common words meaning 'watercourse', like the territorial spread of lexical elements, may be impeded by the dominance and the territorial spread of other geographical common words having the same or similar meaning. Furthermore, the degree of dominance of a given geographical common word in a territory may show a close relationship with the meaning or the semantic change of the given geographical common word. The spread of the geographical common word *domb* was also hampered



by its meaning as a ‘protuberant thing’ in the original basic language, since the meaning of the geographical common word as ‘hill’ emerged only in the Old Hungarian period (RESZEGI 2011: 90).

In the case of certain geographical common words the withdrawal may have been facilitated by their polysemic nature as well. The fact that the lexeme *erdő* ‘forest’ reached a significant dominance by the beginning of the 14th century despite its somewhat later emergence, may have been influenced by the fact that its synonym, the geographical common word *kerek* meaning ‘forest’ was also used in its meaning as ‘round’ even in that period. We can assume a similar background factor in connection with the extinction of the geographical common word *jó* as well, since it has a meaning as an adjective (‘good’) which has survived until today. Yet, another important circumstance in the disappearance of the lexeme *jó* was the rapid spread of the lexeme *patak* and the significant increase of the elements of the lexical field (BENKŐ 1998: 126).

With the enlargement of the use of *patak* its meaning also became more general, which accelerated its spread in the Hungarian language area (HOFFMANN 2003: 671, cf. GYÖRFFY 2011: 85). The same may be said about the lexeme *víz* ~ *vize*. The enlargement of the meaning of the geographical common word *ér* in the second half of the 14th century probably also influenced the spread of this word (cf. BÁBA 2014: 146). This semantic change may also have entailed the fact that the lexeme *ér*, as it became an element having the same or similar function as the lexeme *patak*, could not penetrate to the lexeme *patak*’s area of diffusion.

4. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the meaning of the geographical common words influences their territorial spread in such a way that the word-geographical distribution also means semantic distribution, which might arise from the different nature of the geographical environment as well. For instance, by taking a closer look at the territorial separation of the lexemes *patak* and *ér*; it can be observed that in the Central Tisza region and the area to the North of the Tisza mainly data about *patak* appear, whereas on the Southern and South-eastern bank of the river there are almost exclusively data about *ér*. By concentrating on a narrower area, this separation is more eye-catching. For instance, in Heves county there are data about both geographical common words, whereas in the Northern part of the county we can record data almost exclusively about *patak*, and in the Southern and South-eastern part of the county we can record data almost exclusively about *ér* (see Figure 5). At the same time, it is also noticeable that the names containing the lexeme *ér* are all microtoponyms designating the branches of the river Tisza. So, their territorial separation may derive from the fact that the smaller watercourses designated as *ér* were fed by the water of a larger river, both in the Árpád era and today. By comparing the territorial distribution of the lexemes *patak* and *ér* with the topographic conditions, the

assumption that the smaller, slow and lower section-like watercourses were designated by the name givers as *ér*; while the upper and central section-like watercourses were designated as *patak*, appears to be justified (GYÖRFFY 2011: 88, TÓTH 1997: 263, KÁLMÁN 1966: 346–347).



Figure 5: The Word-Geographical Distribution of *ér* and *patak* in Heves County

5. The spread of geographical common words meaning ‘watercourse’ of the early Old Hungarian period might have been influenced by many other background factors. Yet, they cannot be justified by data from the early Old Hungarian period. Our assumption may still be justified by the fact that in the synchronic onomastic corpus we can find obvious traces of such phenomena. For instance, there are the migration processes going on as a result of settlements or certain cognitive factors (cf. BENKŐ 1957: 31–32, TÓTH 2010: 135, BÁBA 2016, DITRÓI 2016: 79–106).

As we have seen in several cases, while compiling and presenting the data on a map, the work of the researcher is made difficult by a number of obstacles, such as the survival of the charters, the norms of the charter-writing practice, or the name-density indexes (cf. SOLYMOSI 2006: 194, 206–207, HOFFMANN 2007: 10, TÓTH 2016: 13–14, BÁBA 2016: 63). Since those circumstances influence significantly the assessment of the chronological and word-

geographical results, the period-related and word-geographical source value of data about toponyms, common words may subsequently become the subject of an independent study.

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Abstract

This essay highlights those factors affecting the territorial spread of linguistic phenomena primarily affecting vocabulary. The examination attempts to answer the question how different factors promote or inhibit the spread of the elements of a particular word field, such as specific language historical reasons, the role of cognitive factors as well as the semantic relationships of the given lexemes. The research compiled the data mainly by involving Old Hungarian place names, namely those place names that are suitable as sources of historical dialectological examinations because of their early appearing in the charters and due to their exact location. This does not only enable dialectological analysis of common geographical names functioning as a marker of place-names, but through the place names other common word elements can play a role in the

research. The involvement of place-names in historical dialectological research is particularly useful because in this way the territorial expansion of the various place name models may also be examined.

Keywords: geographical common nouns, territorial spread, place name