

Milan Harvalík

Czech First Names of Foreign Origin as Witnesses of Multicultural Contacts in Central Europe

1. Introduction

The territory of the contemporary Czech Republic has always been one of those areas where members of various nations and ethnic groups have come into close contact and this fact is reflected in the Czech anthroponyms, among which it is possible to find many names of foreign origin.

Czech onomastics have always paid attention to research into personal names and this has led to the discovery of a number of important pieces of information in the areas of both synchrony and diachrony. Thanks to this, the development of Czech given names and surnames has been thoroughly described, as has the contribution which personal names from foreign languages have made to the formation of both of these anthroponymic systems (BENEŠ 1962, 1998, HARVALÍK 2012, KNAPPOVÁ 1989, 2003–2004, 2008, 2017, KNAPPOVÁ–HARVALÍK 1997, KOPEČNÝ 1991, MOLDANOVÁ 2004, PLESKALOVÁ 1998, 2007, 2013, 2015, SVOBODA 1964).

2. The Development of the System of Czech Given Names

2.1. The Earliest Periods

In the earliest periods, which were initially still pagan, people only had one name and Slavic names were predominantly used. However, foreign names, especially German ones which were variously adapted into Czech (*Oldřich* from the original *Uodalrich*; *Adalbert*, *Konrád*, *Ota* and *Jindřich* from the original *Heimerich* or *Haganrich*; *Bedřich* from the original *Fridurihhi*), began to enter the Czech lands at that time as a consequence of the nascent international relations and the political marriages between members of the ruling house of Přemyslid and a number of foreign princesses and with German colonisation, especially urban.

2.2. The First Wave of Christian Names

Christianity made its way to the Czech lands from the 9th century onwards and it brought with it the so-called first wave of Christian names in the 13th century. Names such as *Bohuslav* ('to God be the Glory'), *Křižan* (from the common noun *kříž* 'cross') formed in accordance with Slavic customs or the literally translated (*Theofil* – *Bohumil*) became a verbal expression of the



acceptance of Christianity. In addition, names of foreign origin also began to be domesticated; these included Hebrew names (*Daniel, Jan* and *Jakub*), Greek names (*Ondřej* from the original *Andrea*; *Mikuláš* from the original *Nikoláos*; *Jiří* from the original *Geōrgios*; *Petr*; and *Řehoř* from the original *Grégōrios*) and Latin names (*Pavel* from the original *Paulus*; *Silvestr*; *Florián*). The use of Christian names was initially limited to monasteries and the clergy, while they also occasionally appeared in aristocratic families. As such, this mainly involved male names.

2.3. The Second Wave of Christian Names

The further significant dissemination of ecclesiastical Christian names especially occurred in the Czech lands during the Gothic period, in the 14th century. This involved the so-called second wave of Christian names. Slavic names took a back seat and the cult of the saints, which was substantially promoted by the Catholic Church, began to spread: it was only possible to use names from the Roman martyrology from the mid-16th century onwards. At that time, some names were used at all levels of society, in towns and in the countryside (for example *Petr, Jan, Mikuláš, Tomáš, Matěj, Marek, Markéta, Kateřina, Anna* and *Klára*), while others were stratified by class: for example, the nobility used names such as *Albert, Heřman, Jakub, Oldřich, Ondřej, Jaroslav, Eliška, Dorota* and *Žofie*, while names such as *Aleš, Diviš, Jitka* and *Marta* also appeared among the bourgeoisie.

2.4. Humanism and the Renaissance

No significant changes occurred until the period of humanism and the renaissance (the 16th century), when older names such as *Vojtěch* (of Slavic origin, the name of a saint) and *Jiří* gained new popularity. Old Testament names (*Ámos* etc.) began to reappear in the Czech lands under the influence of the reformation, as did several Latin and Greek names (*Veronika, Lukrécie, Helena, Maxmilián, August* and *Julius*). The use of two Christian names began to be applied to a greater extent in the 16th century. The use of two names was initially limited to the aristocracy, but it later also spread among the common folk. Multiple names enabled the acquisition of more patron saints (“guardians”), the honouring of more relatives etc.

As the numbers of inhabitants increased, it became necessary to further differentiate between people due to the relatively small number of available Christian names. For this reason, various other designations of individuals began to appear from the 13th century onwards. These diverse, so-called non-hereditary names gradually transformed into hereditary surnames. This process was completed in the 18th century during the reign of Emperor Joseph II, when



the name and surname became the official designation of a person, whereby the surname has held its predominant status since that time.

2.5. The Baroque Period

The baroque period brought substantial changes in the 18th century. The third wave of Christian names was instigated by the cult of the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph and was associated with the dissemination of the names *Marie* and *Josef*. Names such as *Terezie*, *Karel*, *František* (from the Italian *Francesco*) or *Antonín* also began to appear as a result of the canonisation of new baroque saints. The dissemination of these names was also assisted by the example of the House of Habsburg. Its members pushed aside the older names (with the exception of the names of the saints and that of the patron saint of the Czech lands, *Wenceslas (Václav)*, and also the name *Jan*). The fashion wave also introduced the women's names *Karolína*, *Viktorie*, *Eleonora* and once again *Barbora* and feminised names of the baroque saints; *Josefa (Josefina)*, *Františka*, *Karla* and *Antonie*. Baroque names also began to spread among the rural folk.

The preserved records show that from the 13th century to the first half of the 19th century the most common male names were *Jan*, *Petr*, *Mikuláš*, *Jiří* (from the 15th century), *Václav*, *Martin*, *Ondřej*, *Tomáš*, *Jakub*, *Matěj*, *Pavel*, *Adam* (from the 16th century), *Josef*, *František*, *Karel* and *Antonín* (from the 18th century) and that the most frequently appearing female names were *Kateřina*, *Anna*, *Dorota*, *Markéta*, *Alžběta*, *Klára*, *Ludmila*, *Magdaléna*, *Barbora* and *Marie* (from the 18th century), i.e. names of foreign origin with the exception of the names of the Czech saints, *Václav* and *Ludmila*. The popularity and frequency of the individual names were, of course, variable in individual periods and territories.

2.6. The Czech National Revival, the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938), the Second Republic (1938–1939) and the Second World War (1939–1945)

The so-called national revival took place in the Czech lands from the end of the 18th century and especially during the 19th century. Interest in the language, history and culture of the Czech nation increased greatly within society and the use of Czech names (toponyms and anthroponyms) was seen as an expression of patriotism. Patriotic sentiment therefore also influenced the choice of given names. Old Czech and broadly Slavic names, which were seen as national names, were revived and new names were also created according to their example.

Even though national names (Slavic and Czech) were used substantially, they were significantly dispersed and the names *Josef, Jan, František, Václav* (a Czech name), *Antonín* and *Karel* maintained their leading positions (albeit in a changing order) and were then followed by the Slavic names *Jaroslav, Bohumil, Ladislav, Miroslav* and *Zdeněk*. In the case of female names, *Marie, Anna, Kateřina, Josefa, Antonie* and *Františka* alternated in the leading positions, later followed by *Božena, Věra, Vlasta, Růžena, Zdeňka, Jarmila, Libuše, Jiřina, Ludmila, Hana, Eva* and *Milada*. In general, the countryside was more conservative than the town, where the influence of western fashion was greater and names such as *Eleonora, Filoména* and *Eufrozína* became widespread.

2.7. The Third Czechoslovak Republic (1945–1948) and the Communist Period (1948–1989)

After 1945, the significant historical and social changes in Czechoslovakia also led to changes in the repertoire of the used given names. The occupational, social and local differences (including those between the town and the countryside) in the selection of names were wiped away and the influence of the church disappeared. However, family traditions were preserved. The selection of names was governed by the given registry regulations. Period social popularity, taste and fashion played a significant part during the selection, as did all domestic and international social, cultural, sport and other events. This led to the significant revival of names such as *Martin, Michal, Tomáš, Jakub, Ondřej, Kateřina, Markéta, Zuzana, Barbora* and *Lucie* (all of non-Slavic origins), some of which had been popular earlier and had then been displaced by baroque names. New foreign names entered the entire territory of Czechoslovakia, both from the Slavic area, for example *Igor, Galina* and *Soňa*, and from the West, such as *Monika, Renáta, Iveta, Ivona, Nikol(a), Andrea, Patrik* and *René*. Oriental names such as *Aram, Faris* and *Lejla* also began to appear in Czechoslovakia due to the influence of the expansion of international relations with countries of the so-called Third World which resulted, for example, in foreigners studying or undertaking business in the country.

2.8. The System of Czech Given Names after 1989 and the Tendencies of Its Development

After 1989, important changes occurred in the political, social and economic life of Czechoslovakia and subsequently the Czech Republic. They influenced various areas of the life of society and consequently also had an impact on the variation and enrichment of the repertoire of names chosen for newly born children. The newly open possibilities to travel to various areas in the world provided Czech citizens with unprecedented modern contacts with foreign-

speaking areas and foreign nations and cultures which influenced them during the selection of the names of their children. The repertoire of names gradually became internationalized, globalized and it expanded, both in the system of male and female names.

One of the modern motifs for selecting names is the fact that the further revival or introduction of biblical, Old Testament and Jewish names such as *Joshua*, *Eliáš* and *Abigail* occurred in the Czech Republic under the influence of Western European or North American fashion. Interest in the Celts and their culture, religion etc. gave rise to the selection of names such as *Brian*, *Kevin* and *Jenifer*. The selection of names has also been motivated by various foreign films and, in particular, television series: this involves names such as *Esmeralda*, *Kassandra*, *Pandora* and *Cedrik*. Names such as *Damon* or *Samanta*, for example, have been taken from the world of culture or sport. Names used in other Slavic languages, no matter whether originally of Slavic or other origin (*Lenek*, *Srdjan*, *Oresta* and *Oksana*) and of Greek origin (*Stavros* and *Kiriaki*) have also fluidly entered the Czech Republic, albeit that they are most frequently selected for children from families with ties to the given ethnic group.

New names which are not yet common in Czech have also appeared as a consequence of the establishment of multinational, mixed-parent couples, in which one parent is a citizen of the Czech Republic and the other comes from a different language area. Such a parent usually wants to name the child according to the family, ethnic, national, religious or cultural traditions which he or she comes from. They are usually people, with whom Czech citizens have become acquainted during a stay abroad or foreigners who are studying, looking for work, political asylum or a quieter way of life etc. in the Czech Republic and who have immigrated to the Czech Republic from various corners of the world.

This is substantiated by the selection of Islamic names. Parents who choose these names for their children come from various areas in Africa, such as Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia etc., from Saudi Arabia, Turkey and from other Asian countries, where Islam is practised, but also from Albania or the Muslim areas of the former Yugoslavia. Hence, Arabic male names such as *Hasan*, *Akram*, *Ilham* and *Ramiz* and female names such as *Manal*, *Salma* and *Amira* and Turkish male names *Jasam*, *Kemal* and *Tarkan* and female names *Ardita*, *Nihal* and *Melike* have all appeared in the Czech Republic. Albanian names include, for example, the male names *Arben*, *Iilir* and *Flamur* and the female names *Ardita*, *Emina* and *Rinore*.

Names from various eastern Asian teachings chosen by followers of Buddhism, Hinduism etc. (for example, the male names *Kumara*, *Madan* and *Surga* and the female names *Anahita*, *Sávitri* and *Hotmida*) have entered the Czech language from Asia. A special group consists of diverse indigenous African names which



come from a variety of large and small language groups. These include, for example, the male names *Adebajo*, *Kofi* and *Osaze* and the female names *Akua*, *Oluremi* and *Mojisola*.

Vietnamese names chosen for newborns in the Czech Republic, whose both parents or one of whose parents comes from Vietnam, constitute a special language group. Armenian, Mongolian, Japanese, Chinese and American native names etc. have also entered the Czech Republic to a lesser extent.

It is necessary to add that many mixed parental couples resolve their interest in using names from the aforementioned languages and geographical areas by choosing two different names, whereby one comes, for example, from an African or Asian country and the other is common in Europe. As a result, combinations such as *Tomáš Amjad*, *Karel Takeo*, *Jana Sydney* and *Ayla Suzanne* have appeared. The interest in names written in accordance with the principles of the Czech phonetic and orthographic system is on the wane and this has enabled regular users of Czech to achieve the relatively precisely audibly reproduce the name in question in Czech, while the names are registered in their foreign-language orthographic forms. In the case of names which are not written using the Latin alphabet (for example those written in Arabic), the English or French transcriptions are frequently selected (for example, *Aíša* in Czech is *Aisha* in English, *Aissa* in French and *Aischa* in German).

It can be expected that the names which began to enter Czech in the aforementioned manner after 1989 will remain relatively limited to a specific set of users, who choose them on religious, ethnic, family or cultural grounds, because the choice is a linguistically or socially prestigious matter for them. Citizens of the Czech Republic choose them less frequently on the basis of individual impetuses arising from travels and contact with different language and cultural environments.

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Abstract

Contacts between people speaking different languages can have a wide variety of outcomes and one of them can be traced in the system of proper names. The territory of the present Czech Republic has always belonged to areas where members of various nations and ethnic groups have come to close contacts. That fact is also reflected in the Czech anthroponymy where many names of foreign origin can be found.

The penetration of foreign personal names into the Czech lands had begun already before the 13th century and has continued in several waves until present days, as a consequence of international relations along with great historical and societal upheavals connected with political, economic and cultural changes.

Apart from the names of domestic origin, the system of Czech first names include a large amount of names of biblical (Hebraic, Greek, Latin) and German origin, but, among others, also names from Romance languages, names from the Slavic area and – especially in last years – names from English, Muslim names, names from various African languages and Asian (particularly Vietnamese) names.

This paper analyses the above-mentioned development of the system of Czech first names and foreign elements in them in greater detail.

Keywords: Onomastics, Czech language, personal names, first names