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Etymological Problems Related to Toponym Clusters*

1. The phonological oppositions develop as a result of changes in phonological history. These oppositions in certain cases appear in lexeme pairs that may originate from the same etymon and that are distinct from one another both in terms of semantics and possibly even their form. Several examples serve to illustrate this phenomenon in the history of the Hungarian language (some early examples include *szipog* ‘sniffing’ : *szivárog* ‘leaking’, *mell* ‘breast’ : *mál* ‘mountainside’, *kajla* ‘curved’ : *hajlik* ‘bending’, etc.) (cf. GRÉTSY 1962, BENKŐ 1967/2002: 344–347, ZSILINSZKY 2003: 186–187, 199, 380, 624, 731, 807, PUSZTAI 2003: 882–883, 2018: 281). Name pairs as the result of divergent changes are also known among toponyms: e.g., *Csitár* : *Csatár*, *Komló* : *Kömlő*, *Kékcse* : *Tiszkécske*, *Piski* : *Püski*, etc. (cf. KISS 1994, 1995). This phenomenon is referred to as name splitting in scholarly publications. We should also note, however, that the association between such names may sometimes be questionable, thus their etymological review is certainly justified.

Several sound changes may be identified in the background of name splitting. I will not discuss these in detail in my paper but will rather focus only on one phenomenon and its categories, thereby illustrating the etymological difficulties we may encounter when studying these names.

2. For this analysis, I chose toponyms representing the labial-illabial opposition because this category provides the most abundant set of examples for name splitting. This is an important circumstance because we need to involve the largest possible toponymic corpus for the exploration of etymological issues related to name clusters. When introducing the typical examples, I highlight the etymological issues of particular toponym clusters from a given category and, through this, I illustrate the problems characteristic of the entire set.

2.1. In the majority of toponymic examples discussed here, the labial-illabial nature of the opposition is straightforward but the processes behind the development of the name pairs and their direction is not clear in all cases. The labial-illabial difference between members of the name clusters is most often the result of **labialization**: this is an important change in the history of Hungarian that affected the entire vowel system and during which the illabial vowels were

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replaced by labial ones. We may draw conclusions about the direction of change partly from the early data of toponyms and partly from the illabial nature of the anthroponym, toponym or common noun base word.

a) For example, it is made probable by several circumstances that, from the *Berve* and *Börvely* settlement names in Romania, the illabial *Berve* was the primary one. On the one hand, the settlement names derive from anthroponyms and the anthroponym base word has an illabial *Bervej* form (cf. 1138/1329: *Beruei*, 1235: *Beruey*, 1270: *Bervej* szn., ÁSz., FNESz.). On the other hand, the early records of the names are also illabial: although *Berve* in the former Fehér County in Transylvania has only one early record (1348/1352: *Bervej*, Gy. 2: 134), *Börvely* in Szatmár County has a rich dataset (1216/1550: *Beruei*, 1280: *Beruey*, *Tóth Beruey*, [1320]: *Beruey*, [1322]/1466: *Berwey*, 1324: *Berue*, [1324]: *Berue*, 1326: *Berwe*, *Beruey*, *Berwey*, 1331/1331: *Berue* ~ *Berwe*, 1332–34/PR.: *Berney* [ɔ: *Beruey*], [c. 1320–35]>1423: p. *Berwey*, 1341/1469: *Berwe*, 1342>1423: *Berwey*, 1342/1433/1810: *Berwey*, 1345: *Berwe*, 1348: *Berwey*, *Beruey*, 1366/1496: *Berwey*, 1411: *Berwe*, NÉMETH 2008: 36, 1435: *Berwe*, *Berwely*, *Berwey*, Cs. 1: 472). Data indicate that the vowel in the first syllable could originally be illabial in the case of both names. The first labial data of *Börvely* are from the sixteenth century: 1598: *Beorwey* (DÁVID 2001: 405); 1648: *Börvej*, *Beörwey* (MAKKAI 1954: 392).

b) Using the same methods, we may suppose, in the case of toponym clusters of certain loan names, that their labial member originally included an illabial sound. (*Nagy*)*peleske* in Szatmár County and *Pölöske* in Zala County serve as good examples for this. The basis of the names could be a Slavic hydronym (cf. Slk. *Plieška* place name, Ukr. *Плѣука* place name, FNESz.). The name of the brook in Hungarian took the *Piliske* form (with the disappearance of the consonant cluster at the beginning of the word and the palatalisation of the name) (cf. 1234/1303/1332/1399: *Piliske*, FNESz.). The early records of the name of *Pölöske* settlement also indicate that the name of the settlement established next to the brook could also be the illabial *Piliske*, similarly to the name of the brook (1234: *Pyliske*, 1318: *Pilyske*, 1335: *Pyleske*, 1430: *Peliske*, *Pyliske*, 1513: *Peleske*, Cs. 3: 23, 24).

c) We also need to examine in the case of toponyms with a common noun the origin of whether the given common noun could include a labial or illabial sound originally. Both members of the toponym pair including the Romanian *Piski* and *Püski* in Győr-Moson-Sopron County could originally be illabial. The early illabial records of *Püski* could indicate this (cf. 1397/1629: *Piski*, 1489: *Pyskj*, FNESz.), but this is also made likely by the etymology of the *püspök* lexeme ‘bishop’. This loanword has spread to many languages because this is a Wanderwort, and it probably entered Hungarian from German and the primary



Hungarian form could be *piskup* ~ *piskop*, i.e. there was an illabial *i* vowel in the first syllable (EWUng., TESz., ZAICZ 2006).

2.2. In certain cases, the labial-illabial dualism between the name pairs is due to the fact that **the base word of the toponyms itself had labial and illabial forms simultaneously.**

a) The *Gerény* settlement name (1332–37: *Gheren*, FNESz.) supposedly has its roots in the illabial *Gerény* personal name (cf. 1221: *Gerén*, personal name, FNESz.), while the first constituent of the *Görénypuszta* name (1329: *Guryn*, 1367: *Gwren*, NÉMETH 1997: 82) in a personal name with a labial *Görény* form (cf. 1329: *Gwren*, personal name, FNESz.). The reason for the labial-illabial anthroponym versions is that the common noun serving as its basis also existed in such a dialectal dualism (the existence of today's dialectal *gërény* ~ *görény* variants also confirms this, cf. ÚMTsz. *görény*).

b) The labial-illabial differences in toponyms may also reflect these differences of the given common nouns. Thus, for example, the name of *Ipolyszög* settlement in Nógrád County (1906: *Ipolyszög*, FNESz.) (formerly named *Riba*) was formed from the combination of the name of the Ipoly river and the labial *szög* geographical common noun 'corner, area surrounded by a watercourse'. *Bakonszeg* in Bihar County, however, includes the illabial version of the same geographical common noun (1434: *Bakonzeegh*, 1438, 1470: *Bakonzegh*, 1480, 1536: *Bakonzeg*, 1598: *Bakonizegh*, RÁ CZ 2007: 37). It should be noted at this point that the labial versions did not necessarily emerge from common nouns, including labial sounds, as labialisation may have also taken place in the toponym itself.

3. The association between the names of the toponym clusters introduced so far is unquestionable etymologically. However, a significant part of toponyms exhibiting a labial-illabial opposition may be judged in a less straightforward way in this respect.

a) It may happen, for example, that the **connection between the names is straightforward but their etymon has not been clarified.** The *Kisberzsény* and *Nagybörzsöny* names (in Veszprém and Pest County respectively) reflect the *Berzsény* ~ *Börzsöny* parallel and are probably related etymologically (cf. FNESz.), as also confirmed by the similarity of their early data; *Nagybörzsöny*: +1258: *Bersén*, 1293: *Bersén*, 1295: *Bersén*, 1312: *Bersén*, 1312: *Berseen*, 1327: *Bersén*, 1332–37/PR.: *Bersán* (Gy. 3: 184); *Kisberzsény*: 1398: *Bersén*, 1478: *Bersén*, 1488: *Kysbersén* (Cs. 3: 223). As for the origin of the names, however, we only know that they may have been created with the borrowing of the Slavic **Brěžane* toponym meaning 'people living on a shore, hill'.

b) We may also find several labial-illabial toponym pairs where the etymological relationship has been established and the shared etymon has also been



identified in former etymological studies but based on the data **it cannot be decided with certainty whether the labial or the illabial form was the primary.**

The case of toponyms containing the *üreg* ‘cavern’ geographical common noun, for example, seems to be problematic in this regard at first look because of the uncertain etymology of the common name (cf. TESz.). If, however, we inspect the early records of the names, we may consider the primacy of the illabial form to be more likely: *Iregszemcse* (1387: *Irug*, FNESz., 1441: *Irek*, 1443: *Ireg*, 1444: *Ireg*, 1506: *Iregd*, Cs. 3: 430): *Magyarürög* (1252: *Yrug*, FNESz.), *Nagy-ürögd* (1552: *Nagyh Iregdh*, 1560: *Nagy Irwgd*, 1580: *Nagyregd*, 1587: *Nagyregd*, 1588: *Nagyiregd*, 1589–90: *Magy Eoregd*, 1598: *Nagiureogd*, RÁCZ 2007: 201), *Üreg* (1113: *Erig*, 1113/1249/1310: *Erig*, 1113/1249/1310: *Yrugh*, 1261 [ɔ: 1267?]: *Irewg*, 1267/1270: *Ivrug*, 1268: *Ireg*, Gy. 4: 482).

c) There are also such name pairs, name clusters among names with a labial-illabial difference, in which due to the multiple etymological options, **the relationship of the names themselves is questionable.** The *Derecske*, *Pápadereske* : *Somogydöröcske*, *Töröcske*, *Döröske* name cluster may serve as a good example for this phenomenon. Toponym-etymological publications argue that the *Döröske*, *Pápadereske*, *Somogydöröcske* names were all formed from personal names by means of metonymic name giving (i.e., without a formant), however, in connection with the phonetically also clearly connected *Derecske*, *Töröcske* and *Vámosderecske* names other options are also present. The *Döröske*, *Pápadereske* and *Somogydöröcske* names may be rooted in a Sl. **Drugča* or **Drugša* anthroponym (although these anthroponyms are reconstructed forms) and the primary toponym forms created from it were velar (also illustrated by the following data: *Döröske*: 1244: *Druska*, *Pápadereske*: 1240/1355: *Doroska*, *Somogydöröcske*: 1138/1329: *Durugsa*, FNESz.). According to the explanation, from the velar *Durugsa*, *Doroska* toponyms, the *Dörö(c)ske*, *Dereske* name forms were created in Hungarian with the changes of the phonological form. At the same time, it has also been mentioned in connection with the etymology of the *Derecske* and *Töröcske* names that they are the derivatives of *derék* ‘long soil protrusion’ with the *-cse* affix cluster (FNESz.). In the case of *Derecske*, the only early *Derekcse* record indicates this (1291–94: *Derekce*, FNESz.), from which the *Derecske* form could be formed with metathesis (cf. RÁCZ 2007: 81–82). According to etymological research conducted so far, the *Vámosderecske* settlement name in Austria may only be associated with this name cluster due to its phonological form. The primary Hungarian base form of the *Derecske* name constituent was the *Dregza* form (1263/1367/1591: *Dregza*, FNESz.), the source of which could be the **Dregza* toponym of a southern Slavic origin. *Dregza* was formed from this with metathesis, then due to the analogical effect of the *-cske* diminutive affix cluster



the *Derecske* name form was created. It is obvious, however, that just like in the case of *Derecske* in Bihar County, we can also find a *Derecske* variant among the records of *Vámosderecske* and, therefore, we might also consider it possible that the second constituent of *Vámosderecske* was also the derivative of the *derék* geographical common noun with the *-cse* affix (1235–70/1347: *Derekce*, FNEsz., 1401: *Derechke*, 1425: *Derezke*, Cs. 3: 605).

Thus, the detailed review of the etymological questions of the *Derecske* : *Döröcske* name cluster is certainly justified. This is even more so because the etymological explanations outlined here include several unresolved problems that go beyond the etymological questions of the given name cluster. Therefore, for example, it is of key importance both from the perspective of toponym etymology and historical dialectology and phonology to reconsider etymologies of an uncertain credibility that only refer to deduced anthroponym or toponym etymons.

These examples also reflect some general experience quite well. For example, it seems to be clear that the joint analysis of the members of toponym clusters may represent the best starting point concerning the etymological issues related to toponym clusters. At the same time, the examples introduced here also highlight that, without the consideration of the complete dataset of toponyms, we may only provide an uncertain opinion when specifying the adequate etymon.

d) At the end of the discussion of names with etymologically uncertain associations, we should probably also mention those name pairs that appear to belong together in terms of their phonological form, but their relationship has not yet been confirmed by etymological studies. Thus, for example, the etymological relationship between *Kecel* in Bács-Kiskun County and the second constituent of *Rábakecöl* in Győr-Moson Sopron County has been rejected by earlier research, similarly to the origin of *Izbég* in Szentendre and *Úzbég* in Slovakia from the same etymon. Therefore, the discussion of such names among name clusters is unjustified if we accept former results without criticism. If, however, we take a closer look at the etymological explanations of these names, we may sometimes confront such problems that are characteristic of the etymological literature of toponym clusters in general (for example, the deduction of the relevant base word from a single record). Such experience indicates that the association of such names should also be reconsidered.

5. Studies in historical phonology reflect the experience that, without the clarification of toponym-etymological questions, we cannot provide substantial answers in certain issues. This is because the basis for studies in historical phonology is naturally represented by early toponymic data and the reconstruction of their original phonological form cannot be carried out without the identification of the relevant etymons. My paper has also shown that the etymological questions related to certain toponyms involve highly complex problems. These



problems also greatly influence the options for describing phenomena in historical dialectology and phonology (in this case the labial-illabial opposition). Looking at certain types of problems together, however, may later lead to the clarification of the disputed issues of toponym etymology. The introduced problems have also indicated that certain toponym-etymological studies may only be successful with the joint analysis of the members of name clusters. It is not an unrealistic idea either that the regional descriptions of studies in historical dialectology may in the future also moderate the etymological uncertainties to an extent, so the more or less precise regional definition of dialectal differences may provide additional information for the etymological explanations of a given toponym. Even if the primary source materials for the description of features in historical dialectology are represented by toponymic data.

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Abstract

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Keywords: name splitting, etymology, historical dialectology, labial-illabial opposition

