

Names of Characters of Non-Hungarian National Groups in Hungarian and Austrian Humour Magazines in the second half of the 19th Century

Ágnes Tamás

DOI: 10.2436/15.8040.01.179

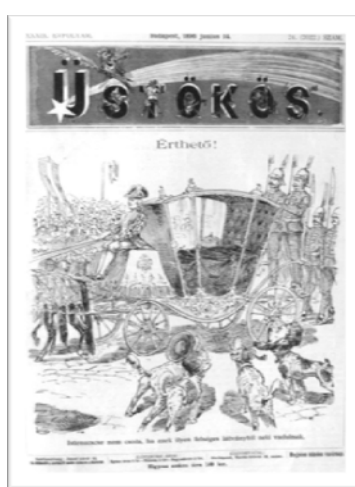
Abstract

The paper examines whether the names of characters of non-Hungarian ethnic groups appearing in humour magazines of the 1860s and 1890s bear some resemblance to real-life family names of the era occurring in official registers. Relevant data were collected from three popular contemporary humour magazines, entitled “Az Üstökös” (published in Budapest), “Borsszem Jankó” (Budapest) and “Figaro” (Vienna). I have chosen the comic papers, since they were not only popular, but we also know that the readers sent the humorous texts in the redactions, therefore, one can conclude on the opinions of Hungarians and non-Hungarians about each other as well. The collected names tend to inform us about the social status as well as the nationality of the indicated characters; thus, family names as ethnic symbols can clearly differentiate Hungarian or Austrian and other figures in the magazines.

The paper presents, on the one hand, the importance of the source because it informs us about national stereotypes of the readers, on the other hand, it groups the types of names which were published. The author demonstrates new achievements with the help of the sources and methodology in the field of the “nationality question”, which one of the important areas of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was. Finally, a short outlook to the names of other comic papers (Slovak, Romanian and Serbian) will be made.

Sources of the analysis

The satirical newspapers flourished in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy from the 1860s, from the period of a more open political milieu until the First World War. Within this research I compare the names of the following comic papers from two decades, from the 1860s and from the 1890s in *Az Üstökös*, and the *Borsszem Jankó*, published in Budapest as well as *Figaro* published in Vienna (analysed volumes: 1860-1861, 1868-1869, 1890-1891, and 1898-1899). Nonetheless I compare only the names of not living persons and I do not examine the names of constant characters reappearing weekly. Consequently, all of the analysed names are fictional ones which is thereby important to note, since these names contain stereotypes.



The comic papers proved to be useable sources for uncovering the national stereotypes because the readers, who also sent their ideas of caricature in the redactions, and the caricaturists as contemporaries, considered the national groups by using similar schemata. Therefore, one can plausibly reconstruct the opinions of Hungarians and non-Hungarians about each other and one can also observe the process of creating an “enemy” in connection with the nation-building process. The satirical journals naturally reflected not only the views of the readers and editors, but also belonged to the repertoire of political propaganda, thus, the caricatures could influence the viewpoint of their readers.

The examined historical period

Doing research on the first two years of the 1860s is rewarding, because the domestic and foreign political situation of the Austrian Empire and the failure of the neo-absolutistic regime facilitated the possibility of meeting between the Hungarian and the non-Hungarian national leaders. Similar process took place in Austria; however its representation in the comic papers can be different.

After the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy the first two years (1868-1869) are interesting from several aspects, despite the fact that fewer comic papers were published than at the end of the 19th century. After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (1867) the Hungarian national movement could celebrate the victory after the defeat of the revolution of 1848-1849 and after the Germanizing tendencies of the neo-absolutism. Furthermore, according to the Compromise law the “nationality question” became a Hungarian and an Austrian internal matter. Franz Joseph sanctioned the Hungarian “nationality law” (1868) which contained the equality (*Gleichberechtigung*) of the individuals for the liberal Hungarian political elite as a maximal concession. In theory, the “nationality law” enabled the non-Hungarian national groups to use their mother language in the lower levels of administration and jurisdiction, in the primary and secondary schools and within the field of ecclesiastic life. The demands of the non-Hungarian national movements can be summarized as the following: in contrast to the years 1848-1861 the non-Hungarian politicians did not conceptualise the territorial autonomy plans which could have meant the federative reorganisation of the empire. They recognised that with the Hungarian political elite which achieved the minimum of their goals with the formation of the dualistic system, the territorial autonomy could not be a starting-point of the negotiations. Thus, the most important aim of the non-Hungarian national groups became the procurement of cultural autonomy, the education in mother language — at the universities —, the building of multilingual administration and jurisdiction, free non-Hungarian press, founding of non-Hungarian associations in which they could cultivate their literature, culture, and history. Their territorial demands tended to reflect the concept of reorganisation of the borders of the counties to the ethnic borders which could have simplified the multilingual administration. Against these demands the Hungarian political elite objected more forcefully with the argument of endangering the territorial integrity of Hungary.¹

Names of the comic papers

The names of persons of comic journals referring to non-Hungarian and non-Austrian national groups give information about the aspect from which national groups the political elite of another group wanted to separate itself, more precisely, from which groups the Hungarian or Austrian elite would like to segregate itself. In his classic work on the concepts of the “political enemy” Reinhart Koselleck ranks name, a distinctive feature in this respect, as the first example in terms of the relationship between “Us” and “Them”. The non-equality

¹ For the demands of the non-Hungarian national movements see Wandruszka and Urbanitsch and Rumpel, 1980.

and the non-acknowledgement of a group can be easily composed by nicknames, through the medium of language, the historical importance of which increases, if one refers these nicknames to groups (Koselleck, 1998, 5-6). Due to the fact that the comic journals represented a stereotyped way of thinking, one can interpret the names mentioned later on referring to whole groups, such as “the Czech” and “the Serb”, thus the authors did not relate the names with the supposed characteristics to individuals, but in order to demarcate between “Us” and “Them”. The stereotypes reflect the social hierarchy before the modern, civil state, since, where non-Austrians or non-Hungarians lived, most of the landlords regarded themselves as Hungarians or Austrians and the bondmen were non-Hungarians or non-Austrians. Furthermore, the following short text shows the character of names being an ethnic symbol as well: “Für Zeitungleser. Liest man Namen auf «witsch», «witsch», «witsch», Ging ein Fürst in Serbien wieder mal «pritsch» (“For newspaper readers. If one reads names with the ending «witsch», «witsch», «witsch», a monarch goes in Serbia again to «pritsch””, Figaro, 1868, 109). The text refers to the murder of the Serbian monarch Mihail Obrenović.

In the first table one can observe that it is worth comparing the names of the Czech figures in the 1860s.

<i>Non-Hungarian national group</i>	<i>Az Üstökös</i>	<i>Borsszem Jankó</i>	<i>Figaro</i>
Jews	48	60	78
Gipsies	21	9	–
Slovaks	17	14	–
Czechs	1	18	78
Serbs	2	16	–
Saxons	1	–	–
Romanians	–	6	–
Total	90	122	156

Table 1. Names of the comic papers in the 1860s.

Although one can more rarely find Czech characters in the Hungarian journals, since the Hungarian readers, naturally, paid less attention to Czech political events than the Austrian readers. From the eighteen Czech names appearing in *Borsszem Jankó* twelve names belonged to administrators of the — in Hungary disliked — Bach-era of the 1850s in which Czech administrators speaking only Czech or German came to Hungary. A name of a Czech figure also refers to these administrators: Schreiber (‘writer’) Vrtek. According to the comic weeklies of both parts of the Monarchy the most characteristic Czech first name was Wenzel, also referring to a name in the *Borsszem Jankó*, **Wenczlicsek Wenczel**, which could be connected to a popular Czech king of the Middle Ages, Sankt Wenzel. In the second place stood Frantisek, afterward Waclav in *Figaro*, while Vendel and Vrtek in *Borsszem Jankó*. The common feature of the surnames of the Hungarian satirical magazines was their endings to -icsek/-ek which differs from the suffixes -ka/czek of *Figaro*. For example, the Czech press-correspondent’s name was a word without a vowel (Prbszrczkbplkricsek) in *Borsszem Jankó* which also demonstrates that making fun of the collision of consonants was perhaps the strongest in the case of the Czechs among the Slavic national groups of the Monarchy.

About the names of national groups appearing only in Hungarian satirical journals the following can be deduced. Firstly, the names of Serbian protagonists end to -ics/vics which functioned as an ethnic symbol, everybody and everything could be a Serb with this suffix, like the rubble-stones, since the Hungarian word for rubble-stones ends with -vics (‘kavics’) or a made-up Serbian member of the Hungarian parliament, **Icsvics** Athanáz. The names of a fictive congress of the national groups represent not only the Serbians (Hiáavalovics), but also the Slovaks (Hitványszky). Both of the examples are telling names: Hiáavalovics

suggests that the territorial demands of the Serbs and the demand to re-establish the Serb Voivodina, which had existed in the 1850s as a separate imperial province, are aimless, since this name was created from the Hungarian equivalent of ‘aimless’ and from the suffix -vics. This demand was refused by the Hungarians referring to the necessary integrity of the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom. The surname Hitványszky was made up from the Hungarian equivalent of ‘caddish’ and from the ending -szky connected typically to the Slovaks and suggesting the contemporary Hungarian opinion about the Slovaks, since they had political demands against Hungary in the 1860s, too. The other Slovak surnames mock the collision which made these names funny and strange for the Hungarian readers (Krcsek, Hrcska). The other names could also have living Slovak persons: Hugyecz János, Janó and Gyúró.

The above mentioned three Slavic national groups show up in a joke which was composed almost of names remembering the reader to the surnames of administrators from the neo-Absolutistic period from the 1850s:

“In the Bach-era the children learnt this instead of Quemaribus [correctly: Quae maribus, which was a Latin memorial hexameter]:

Lauzevics, Odrebinyák, Kracsum, Ondrejkovics, Kreckx, Pabla, Javorka, Wozek, Pomszky, Novotny, Czvekits, Zahrandicsek, Zanicsek, Kropacsek, Wrytymaczka, Czibulka, Hauska, Janauska, Hugyecz, Hugli, Krepelka, Svihak, Hulki, Zdrahál, Drahanek, Palubek, Csek, Poblasek, Wrtek, Wrzna, Okorka, Wranak, Zdruhnyelavác, Nyahúlác” (Borsszem Jankó, 1868, 610).

Weird made-up names came up also in case of the Romanians which poked fun at the Latinizing tendencies of the Romanian language mostly with the suffix -ulu or -ului in the 1860s. One example could be the name of a fictive Romanian oppressor: Monoporoniuului Godofoniulului.

The last group analysed from the 1860s differs from the above mentioned ones, since the Gypsies were an ethnic group without demands against Hungary. They were often protagonists of humorous texts including names, but they had almost every time just a first name in a shortened form (Jancsi < János, Anti < Antal, Gyurka < György, Zsiga < Zsigmond, Peti < Péter or Feri < Ferenc). Exceptions were only a head of a family (Ferencz), and the Gypsy voivode (János) symbolizing their power with names and workers with an important job in the community, a smith (János) and the maker of the clay-bricks (János). As a new element, a name of a Gypsy woman, Pocse Tera can be observed, too. Though one also has to note that the Hungarian protagonists generally — even so a peasant or a landlord — had never had their names in shortened form, thus suggesting the difference between “Us” and “Them”, and thereby the contemporary paternalist contempt of the “Other”.

If we take a look at the table with the names from the 1890s we can see that most of the names are the names of Jews in Hungary as well as in Austria.

<i>Non-Hungarian national group</i>	<i>Az Üstökös</i>	<i>Borsszem Jankó</i>	<i>Figaro</i>
Jews	408	695	45
Gypsies	16	40	–
Croatians	1	–	1
Slovaks	12	6	–
Czechs	1	3	7
Serbian	2	3	1
Polish	–	1	13
Romanians	–	2	–
Total	440	750	67

Table 2. Names of the comic weeklies in the 1890s.

In Figaro the Jewish names were followed by the names of Polish figures whose surnames ended with the suffixes -szki or -czky. With different spelling but with the same pronunciation the name of the Polish figure of the Hungarian comic paper had also the suffix -szky. The Polish “royal offspring” was nominated as Hiábavalovszky Boleszláv which was created from the Hungarian equivalent of the adjective ‘aimless’, again suggesting the failure of the reorganisation of the Polish Kingdom and Boleszláv shows his Slavic origin. Additionally, the Polish protagonists had the following first names in Figaro: Ladislaus (two-times), Jaroslaw, Jan, Mila, Carla, Bronislawa, Wasil, and Kasimir.

Similarly to Boleszláv the form -szláv as Venceszláv appeared in connection with the Czechs in the Hungarian press and Vencel showed up twice. In Figaro Wenzel came up just as a constant figure, but most of the Czech protagonists did not have names in this period in contrast to their growing political activity and their radicalization. Moreover, the Czechs and Polish were the most often occurring figures of Figaro.

The Hungarian pulp magazines gave names for five Serb characters which had the same suffix as they had had in the 1860s — except of Szerb Gyurka [Serb Geordie]. According to a story, Torrvich Jasa wrestled with Dimitrievics and **Torrvich** daggered him. The name of the killer referred to his act and to the contemporary opinion about the Serbs, since ‘tör’ means ‘dagger’ and the 19th century-Hungarians wrote down the Serbs as warlike and blood-thirsty. Additionally, one can read about a Serbian representative Zsivánovics Zsiván whose name was created from the Hungarian adjective ‘bandit, robber’ also referring to another common stereotype about the Serbs.

The two Romanian figures with the names **Vakareszku** and **Krätzuleszku** refer to the Hungarian and German verbs ‘scrape’ and end with the suffix -szku which is nowadays more popular than the ending -iu of the 1860s. In addition, these names suggest the Hungarian opinion that the Romanians wash themselves more rarely than necessary. New elements of the 1890s were that one can find names mostly in shortened form of Swabian (Báni, Háni, Krédli, Náni, Paul, Hanzi and Vassermann Tóbiás, Sölcher Hans with surnames, too) and Croatian (Mirkó) protagonists. Similarly to these figures, the Slovaks also came up mostly with first names in shortened form (Gyuró, Jano/Janó/Jankó, Misu/Miso/Misa) except of Csubolyka Misa, Vrabel János and **Csicsóka** Jano. The lastly mentioned surname, Csicsóka refers to the Hungarian equivalent of ‘potato’ showing the supposed favourite meal of the Slovaks.

<i>Polish Names</i>	<i>Czech Names</i>	<i>Serbian Names</i>	<i>Romanian Names</i>	<i>Swabian Names</i>	<i>Slovak Names</i>
Hiábavalovszky Boleszláv Ladislaus Jaroslaw Jan Mila Carla Bronislawa Wasil Kasimir	Venceszláv Vencel	Szerb Gyurka (= Serb Geordie) Torrvich Jasa Dimitrievics Zsivánovics Zsiván	Vakareszku Krätzuleszku	Báni, Háni, Krédli, Náni, Paul, Hanzi Vassermann Tóbiás, Sölcher Hans	Gyuró, Jano Jankó, Misu Miso, Misa Csubolyka Misa, Vrabel János Csicsóka Jano

Table 3. Summary of the names in the 1890s.

Finally, in the 1890s the names of Gypsies were also often likewise in the 1860s. In contrary to the earlier period one can read Gypsy surnames, too, representing supposed stereotype features of the Gypsies or these names were telling names. From these names which you can see in the table Csori/Csóré was the most frequent which means ‘thief’ suggesting the social sentence and one of the stereotypes about the Gypsies. Most of the characteristics refer to outside features, since Benya means ‘cripple’, Meztlábos ‘barefooted’, Nyápicz and Vézna ‘puny’, Sunyi ‘sneaking’, Suta ‘ungraceful’, Szapora ‘fertile’, Szappanyos ‘soapy’, Szurkos ‘pitchy’, but Paszulyka was created from the Hungarian equivalent of ‘bean’ with a diminutive (-ka). Some of the surnames contain not only outside characteristics like the skin of the Gypsies was darker than that of the Hungarians (< pitchy), but also other supposed information: they had more children, than the Hungarians (< fertile), they were more poor than the Hungarians (< barefooted) and did not wash themselves often enough (< soapy). The names Banda, Kolompár and Vámleső refer to their jobs as musicians, tinker and tollman. The names after jobs or outside features were really popular among the Gypsies in 19th century Hungary as well. Equally to the 1860s, the Gypsy figures often had first names in shortened form (Marczi, Józsi, or Miska).

Summing up the results of the paper, we can conclude that the names as ethnic symbols of the comic papers contained either a stereotyped meaning (for example: cripple) or referred to political demands (as Hiábavalovics). In both cases, they suggested the supposed blemishes of the non-Hungarians.

Lastly, after the names of persons, it is worth taking a quick look at the names of the nations in the comic weeklies, since a self-denomination, a common name of a nation or ethnic group is important, on the one hand, from the point of view of national ideology, on the other hand, from the collective ethnic consciousness. Furthermore, the person names were also regarded as typical to a non-Austrian or non-Hungarian national group. The Hungarian comic papers did not characterize the non-Hungarian national groups with their self-denominations in captions and other humorous texts. The Slovaks existed as ‘tót’, the Serbs in the 1860s as ‘rácz’, but in the 1890s as ‘szerb’ or ‘wild rácz’, while the Romanians as ‘oláh’ or ‘rumuny’. These names — ‘rácz’, ‘tót’, and ‘oláh’ — were rooted in the feudalism: the Hungarians nominated the other ethnic groups traditionally with these names, while the “new” names — ‘szlovák’, ‘román’, and ‘szerb’ — appeared during the 19th century. The names of the feudal times remained unchanged in the Hungarian press in spite of the protests of the Romanians against this nomination in their Memorandums in which they worded their demands against Hungary. The Hungarian political elite considered itself as a historical nation and saw these new nation names as illegitimate and concurrent constructions of the non-Hungarian elites.

Contrary, Figaro nominated the national groups with their original names or with the German equivalents of the names, so the Czechs as ‘česky’ or ‘Czechen’, the Hungarians as ‘magyar’, ‘magyar-ember’ (Hungarian-man) or Ungar, etc. And if we would like to expand the scope of the research even more, we can observe similar processes in the captions of the Slovak, Serbian, Czech, and Romanian comic papers, since they nominated the Hungarians generally as ‘magyar’, or ‘magyar-ember’ or with the most popular first names like Pista — a shortened form of István which was one of the most popular first names in the 19th century-Hungary by the registers (Hajdú, 2003, 559-569) — or János. Therefore, in contrast to the Hungarian press, these authors acknowledged the Hungarians as a ‘nation’ with the use of the official name of the nation. However, the nickname of the Slovak humour magazine for the “average” Hungarian ‘Kutaláncos’ (bandog) contained stereotypes about the Hungarians. This name referred to the supposed feudal oppression of the Slovaks by the Hungarian landlords — also in the 19th century, but the type of oppression changed: at the end of the 19th century it was regarded as a ‘national’ oppression — stressing

the significance of the names in expressively creating an “enemy” or in showing ironic meanings and stereotypes.

Primary Sources

Az Üstökös: 1860-1861, 1868-1869, 1890-1891, and 1898-1899 (published in Budapest).

Borsszem Jankó: 1868-1869, 1890-1891, and 1898-1899 (published in Budapest).

Figaro: 1860-1861, 1868-1869, 1890-1891, and 1898-1899 (published in Vienna).

References

Hajdú, M. 2003. *Általános és magyar névtan* [General and Hungarian onomastics]. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó.

Koselleck, R. 1998. “Ellenségfogalmak” [Concepts of enemy]. In: Szabó Márton (ed.), *Az ellenség neve*, 12-23. Budapest: József Eötvös Műhely Kiadó.

Wandruszka, A. – Urbanitsch, P. – Rumpler, H. (Hrsg.). 1980. *Die Habsburgermonarchie: 1848-1918. Bd. 3.: Die Völker des Reiches*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Ágnes Tamás
University of Szeged
Hungary
tagnes83@yahoo.com