
Jewish Name Magyarization in Hungary*

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Abstract: *This article presents the surname changes of the Jews as formal acts which served as a means of assimilation, and which resulted in a characteristic phenomenon of the history of Jewish communities as well as of the surrounding society of the majority. Surname changes as the sign of forming cultural and national identities were used for an individual crossing of a conceptual borderline between ‘they’ and ‘us’ in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Hungarian society. The paper is based on research in different fields of scholarly studies, applying multi- and interdisciplinary standpoints. It focuses on the Name Magyarization process, but also makes comparisons with the name changes of the Jews in other countries. It applies different sources to investigate the social, historical, cultural and ideological background, context and the characteristics of the nominal assimilation of the Jews. It analyzes their names as ethnic symbols, and presents the reasons that made the surname changes so typical for them. It presents the assimilation process of Jewish persons and their personal names in general, and the history of their surname changes in Hungary. The characteristic features of the surnames chosen and their typical motivations are also analyzed, in comparison with those of the non-Jews in the country.*

Keywords: Family Names, Surname Changes in Hungary, Hungarian Jews, Assimilation, Names as Ethnic Symbols.

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The official surname changes of the Jews were formal acts that served as a means of assimilation, and which resulted in a characteristic phenomenon of the history of Jewish communities as well as of the surrounding society of the majority. Surname changes as the sign of forming cultural and national identities of the petitioners were used for the crossing of a conceptual borderline between ‘they’ and ‘us’ in the nineteenth and twentieth century Hungarian

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society, as well as in many other countries after the birth of nationalism. The crossing was made individually, but it was in close connection with the background of the person changing his (or her) name. An official surname change is formally an interaction between the petitioner and the administrator, but they are both surrounded by the given historically determined social, linguistic, cultural, political and ideological atmosphere. It means that this "field of power" can always influence the individual decisions, form the demand and the personal motives for them, influence the content and the form of the name change, as well as the conditions of the permission. And there is the surname, the central and linguistic element of this model which turns out to be an appropriate tool for solving some extra lingual aims of the name changers.

Due to the complexity of the phenomenon, the issue of surname changes can be relevant for many disciplines, including linguistics (sociolinguistics, language contacts, language ideologies, intercultural linguistics, applied linguistics), onomastics (anthroponomastics, socioonomastics), historical sciences (social, local, cultural history), minorities and identity research (Hungarian minorities abroad and ethnic minorities in Hungary, i.e. Jewish Studies, German Studies, Romology), jurisprudence and other disciplines, and also could be approached as a field of study of Hungarian and cultural studies.

The present paper is based on research in different fields of scholarly studies, but applying multi- and interdisciplinary standpoints. It focuses on the Name Magyarization process, but also makes comparisons to the name changes of the Jews in other countries. It applies different sources to investigate the background, context and the characteristics of the nominal assimilation, i.e. the Name Magyarization of the Jews in Hungary.

Names as Ethnic Symbols

The Jews of Central Europe began to use surnames relatively late in their history and mostly as a result of state regulations. In 1787, Emperor Joseph II of the Hapsburg Empire (to which Hungary belonged at the time) issued a decree that required the use of unchanging surnames by the Jews of the Empire. This decree also required the taking of surnames, which affected the Jews who had yet to be incorporated into the society of the non-Jewish majority. Similar measures were also taken over the following decades in the German states, France and, later on, in Russia. The aim of the Emperor's decree was the modernization of the state along with the integration of the Jews. (Karády & Kozma 2002: 20-23, Kaganoff 1978: 21-22, Mugden 1994-1995 #5, 9. For the names of the Hungarian Jews prior to 1787, see Scheiberné 1981.)

Surnames taken at that time could differ in many aspects from the historic ones, which evolved spontaneously throughout the previous centuries. Thus, the new names often became characteristic of their bearers. The vast majority of Hungarian Jews, not only because of Emperor Joseph II's decree, but also because of their linguistic background, took on German surnames, while a much smaller portion used Jewish surnames (e.g., *Katz*, *Kohn*, *Lévi*, *Jeitelesz*), and only few of them took on names of other (first of all Slavic) origin. (For an overview of this name stock, see Frojimovics 2003.) The proportion of these surname categories within the group of the Jewish name changers of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were: 85% German, 12.5% Jewish, 2.5% other (Karády & Kozma 2002: 23). The most frequent original surnames of the name changing Jews were names like *Kohn*, *Weisz*, *Klein*, *Schwarcz*, *Deutsch*, *Stern*, *Löwy*, *Steiner*, *Krausz*, *Friedmann*, *Schlesinger*, *Berger*, *Braun*, *Pollák*, *Weinberger*, *Goldstein*, *Rosenfeld*, *Singer*, *Spitzer*, *Grosz* (Forgács 1990a: 26). (We should remark that the distribution cited above does not necessarily reflect their distribution among the whole of the Jewish population, as the

bearers of the less characteristic Jewish surnames should not have been as motivated to change their name as those bearing the most typical Jewish ones.)

Through the birth of nationalism, the surnames used in the society received a special function: they also became ethnic symbols (cf. Maitz & Farkas 2008). Surnames of foreign origin began to be associated with the foreign origin of their bearers by their linguistic character or, more commonly, by the frequency of their occurrence in a given population of society. For example, a Slavic surname likely pointed to a Slavic origin, whereas a German surname probably suggested German or Jewish roots. The fact that these German-Jewish surnames could be worth to be changed also in the Austrian territory of the Monarchy illustrates that they could also be not 'German enough' (cf. J. Kozma 2009). Moreover, what later became apparent is that when the same names were Hebraized in great numbers in Israel, they could not be regarded as 'Jewish enough' either (cf. Kaganoff 1978: 86-93, Bányai 2009).

Personal names could become ethnic epithets (cf. Allen 1983). It could be exemplified also by common words from the (one-time) Hungarian language (from different dialects), based on the one-time typical first names of the Jews: *kóbi* (diminutive form of *Jacob*), *móric* (= Maurice), *mózes* (= Moses), *mózsi* (diminutive of *Moses*) for Jewish men; *rebeka* (= Rebecca), *sára* (= Sarah) for Jewish women; *rifke* (diminutive from *Rebecca*) for Jewish girls (Szendrey 1936: 253). The names can be particularly characteristic when in conjunction with other sociological features. Illustrated by a Hungarian Jewish joke (Farkas 2012a: 349):

'Your name?'

'Schwarz Sámuel Jakab.'

'Your profession?'

'Goose merchant.'

'Your address?'

'Rumbach Street.'

'Your religion?'

'What a stupid question! What do you think? I am called Sámuel Jakab Schwarz, I sell geese, and I live in Rumbach Street? What can I be? Shiite Moslim?'

To what extent simply the personal names were able to reflect Jewish characteristics is marked most significantly by the name decrees of the Third Reich, forcing dissimilation in society (Rennick 1970). But the same can also be surmised from a remark made by the head of the Hungarian State of the inter-war years, Governor Horthy (who was not an active anti-Semite personally), which explained why he was not in favour of Jewish name changes in general: "Den Vogel erkennt man an den Federn" (= 'A bird can be recognized by its feather'; cited in Karády & Kozma 2002: 180).

The adjustment to the dominant linguistic and cultural environment and its name system can be regarded as a natural process (cf. Farkas 2009a). However, it was likely also strengthened by prevailing social, ideological and political factors (cf. I. Kozma 2007b, Maitz 2008, Maitz & Farkas 2008). At a time when Hungarian surnames played a special role in expressing national identity, a surname bearing Jewish characteristics, apart from being 'alien', was also regarded as 'Jewish', thus even more easily stigmatizing the bearer. (For the stigmatization of Jewish names in general, see Bering 1987, 1996; cf. Singermann 2001: 116-117, etc.) It was not by chance that a new and former Jewish surname would sometimes be mentioned together at that time (not only in Hungary) when referring to a Jew who had changed his (or her) name. This phenomenon was

also reflected in jokes about Jews (and it is also revealing that similar jokes are known regarding double religious conversions as well; Farkas 2003: 157):

*'You have just changed your name from Grósz to Nagy (= 'Big'). Why did you change it to Kis (= 'Little')?'
'Simply because if someone asks me what my name used to be, I can say: Nagy.'*

The act of changing surnames, due to the vast number of Jews who changed their names, became identified with Jews, not only in Hungary but in other countries too. As per another Hungarian Jewish joke (Farkas 2003: 157):

*'What should I become? Kovács? Kopárligeti? Kósavári? If people hear these names they will say right away: Yes, he must have been a Kohn.'
'You should be Grün. Nobody will think that you used to be Kohn before.'*

Nevertheless, it also can be added that, before and during World War II, many from non-Jewish backgrounds tried to take back their original non-Hungarian names because they were thought of as Jews because of their changed names (I. Kozma 1997: 414, 442).

Finally, name changes among Jews are part of a more complex context than that of any other social groups – as can be simply expressed with a saying (in this case, not from Hungary) regarding the name changes of the Jews: "They can change their name from Moses, but they can't change their noses" (cited in Lapierre 1995: 301).

Name Change as a Jewish Trait

A change in name was considered to be a typically Jewish trait, as recorded by Jewish jokes (cf. Frank 1993, Farkas 2003, Spalding 2001 passim etc.). The surname changes of the Jews are also instructively appear in the Hungarian satirical papers in the Golden Age of Name Magyarization, much more typically than in the similar Austrian papers of that age (Tamás 2010: 86-87, 2011: 129). The novels and short stories of Hungarian fiction also offer a wide range of fictive examples for the then contemporary surname changes of the Jews (cf. Somogyi 2009, Vácziné 2009). Let me cite two examples from the international Jewish humor (Kaganoff 1978: 88) for the typicality of the name changes of the Jews in general:

*'How do two Jews introduce themselves to each other?'
'My name was Feldman. And what was yours?'*

*'What is the title of 'Who is Who' in Israel?'
'Who was who?'*

Jewish names, formerly taken or received, inherited from generation to generation, could result in a separation from the majority of the society. As a result, the changing of names also became typical in Hungary where the proportion of the Jews was relatively high, even in comparison with other European countries (before 1918 it was 4.5-5% of the Hungarian population; cf. Karády & Kozma 2002: 76).

In Hungary, the vast majority of the official name changes during the Golden Age of name changes (i.e., between the middle of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth

century) was the change of surnames of foreign origin or characteristics to ones that sounded more Hungarian. The most typical group of name changers were the Jews, especially during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1867-1918) which, by its national liberalism, offered a backdrop for their natural assimilation. (For the social and historical characteristics of the course of surname changes in Hungary, see Karády & Kozma 2002, and also Karády 2009.)

In historical multi-national Hungary (in other words, the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy), the Hungarian nationality itself only amounted to approximately half of the population. Therefore, in the age of nationalism, the importance of strengthening of the Hungarian nation could be viewed as a natural conclusion from this situation. Because the changing of names was considered to be a symbolic expression of assimilation, the prevailing social environment and the authorities more or less agreed or even supported this action (e.g., with simplified administration and reduced fees.) The Jews, desiring social integration, were therefore prone to willingly change their names and, when the occasion presented itself, took advantage of the opportunity, regularly far over-representing their proportion in society. They typically also formed the majority of name changers during the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; with the exception of one single year (1898), when a strong action within the state hierarchy influenced the rate, pressing many civil servants – typically non-Jews – to change their surnames also. (Meanwhile, the assimilation of Jews to the strongly positioned German population in Hungary, which could be represented by a *Pfeffersamen* > *Pfeffermann* type name change in 1854, was rather rare; the case cited in Telkes 1898: 56.) When considering the strong representation of Jews among the name changers, it needs to be taken into account that the name change is a singular demographic act, i.e., families that had already changed their names would not be part of the group that would later possibly take part in the so-called Name Magyarization (in other word, Hungarianization, i.e., adoption of a Hungarian sounding name).

The special features of Jewish name changes can be explained, on the one hand, by their specific names and a kind of stigmatization potentially linked to it and, on the other hand, by the typical social background of the Jews. In general, those who changed their names were usually in frequent contact with the dominant linguistic and social community, were on a high level of social mobility, were modern city dwellers, were better educated, and were those who came from a Hungarian-speaking background. These groups within the Jewish community had a high representation, not surprisingly mostly among the Reformed Judaists. The reasons for name changes can be better appreciated if viewed in the context of the advantages it presented and the disadvantages it eliminated, as influenced by the social factors and historical context of the day.

The changing of names within the Jewish community, especially in those groups of the social profile that were the most suitable for changing names, became a collective social experience, a common pattern. The two, probably most zealous promoters of name changes in Hungary, Simon Telkes and Zoltán Lengyel (establishing non-governmental organizations and writing prominent publications supporting this aim) were themselves assimilated Jews. It is worth quoting Telkes (earlier *Rubin*) who underlined the importance of name changes sometime at the turn of the century as follows (Telkes 1898: 3-5):

As one becomes Christian and is admitted into Christian society with the adoption of Christianity, one can gain full acceptance into Hungarian society, into the nation with a national baptism by changing his foreign name to a Hungarian one. Name must be considered as a political creed of a Hungarian citizen [...] Magyarization of the name is an oath of allegiance, a patriotic vow.

For the above-mentioned reasons, Magyarization of names in dominant society partly became a Jewish question as well, while the diverse views of the public concerning this phenomenon was also connected with how Jewish assimilation was perceived.

Nevertheless, the motivation for Jewish name changes cannot be limited to assimilation of national characteristics and the society of the majority. It is also connected with the question of secularization and modernization, and with the role of individualization, as it identified the bearer of the name not as a 'Jew' but as a member of the nation. (Cf. Karády 2001, 2009; Fenyves 2009.) It is also connected to the question that in general the too frequently occurring names were replaced, to some extent, with a wider variety of unique names (up to 20%, according to an extensive study, refer to Forgács 1990a: 26-27).

In this paper I'll focus on the surname changes of the assimilation process. Nevertheless it should be remarked that the name changes of immigrants to a country could have been similar on the one hand, and could have been different on the other. The fundamental question in both cases is if changing one's surname can be an appropriate means of gaining real or supposed social and/or practical "advantages" and/or reducing disadvantages. In the case of the immigrants, at least in their first generation, the question is not the participation in an assimilation process, but first of all the integration into the society of the majority. Those Jewish immigrant groups which already had been assimilated in their home country, could be integrated more easily into the society of the new country, a sign of which can be the change of the name. Among the immigrants abolishing the features of their foreignness can be a typical aim, while in the case of the Jews especially their Jewish origin could be something to conceal, even if there are also examples of dissimulative surname changes, i.e. adopting typically Jewish names when immigrating from Central Europe into the United States (see Maass 1958). Unfortunately, regarding the name changes of Hungarian immigrants to other countries, not much research was made, most of which are concerning North America (Kontra 1990, Nogrady 1990, Bartha 1993; for Israel, see Bányai 2009). But it is still much more than what we know of the history of the surname changes of the Hungarian or other minorities of the surrounding countries. At present, the latter processes are practically unknown to our scholarly research.

Assimilation and Magyarization of Names

The first phase of assimilation, i.e., basic integration by borrowing elements of the material culture, is followed by integrating elements of the psychological-intellectual culture, to which the development of bilingualism and the possibility of a language shift are linked. The mostly German- or Yiddish-speaking Jews were the pioneers of linguistic Magyarization, far outpacing other minorities in Hungary in this regard. (The percentage of Hungarian-speaking people among Jews in 1880: 59%, in 1910: 77%; while also in 1910 among Germans: 23%, among Slovaks: 17%, among southern Slavs: 19%, among Rumanians: 5%. Cf. Karády & Kozma 2002: 51, Maitz & Farkas 2008.) In the transformation of Jewish name usage, the first step was the spontaneous adoption, followed by the official adoption, of surnames. This was followed by the usage and giving of first names to Jewish children that originated from, and fitted well into, the dominant name system. Along with that, personal names in Hungary took the form of "surname + first name" in terms of order, which is the usual sequence in Hungarian. (It also needs to be noted that the custom of Jewish name usage could survive in parallel.) The next, and generally the final level of assimilation was the change of surname. It was sometimes preceded by the use of a nonofficial name (the adoption of a so-called alias), as in the case of, for example, the

famous orientalist Ármin Vámbéry (earlier *Bamberger*). However, in the case of the Jewish community, there was one more factor that separated them from dominant society: religion, which they often changed as well, usually as the last step in their assimilation. The different phases of the assimilation process were sometimes linked, and their order could also be different as was seen before and during World War II among those who tried to sever all ties to their Jewish roots. (For the assimilation process regarding the personal name usage, see Frojimovics 2003, Fenyves 2009. For the assimilation of foreign surnames in general, see Farkas 2009a.)

The steps in the assimilation process need to be examined not only in the case of individuals but also through successive generations. This was authentically portrayed in István Szabó's film entitled 'A napfény íze' / 'Sunshine' (1999). In this film, the ancestor of the *Sonnenschein* family, *Emmanuel*, arrives in Hungary from Galicia in the second half of the nineteenth century, where, as *Sonnenschein Manó*, he becomes the founder of the family factory. His son, *Sonnenschein Ignác*, Magyarizes his surname to *Sors* (= 'Fate') somewhere in the early 1900s to help further his career. His sons inherit this new family name and receive typical Hungarian first names, *András* and *István*. A change in religion also takes place during this generation before the start of World War II. After the war, a member of the next generation of the family, *Iván*, searches for his place in the new post-war world, and the family members who survived the war later change their surnames back to their ancestors' *Sonnenschein*. Although the story is fictional, it is historically plausible, except perhaps for the last part, as reverting back to an earlier surname, although possible at the end of the twentieth century, was not typically done.

The question of surname changes has until recent times been a relatively under-researched topic, even if varied, complex and interesting enough for several scientific disciplines. The research in the field has been gaining more interest in Hungary over the past two and a half decades (cf. I. Kozma 2007a, Farkas 2008b). Concerning the Jewish surname changes in the country in a wide context, there are onomastic and social-historical analyses in the literature (Forgács 1990a, 1990b; Karády 1993, 2001: 126-167), as well as research on the surname changes of some local Jewish communities (Baja, Szolnok and Miskolc; see Köhegyi & Merk 1993, Gulyás 1999, Kecskés 2003) and some other groups of the Hungarian Jews (Frojimovics 2003, Fenyves 2009). Comparisons were made between the surname changes of the Jews of the Hungarian and the Austrian part of the Habsburg Empire (J. Kozma 2009), and the Hebrewization of surnames in Israel was presented with many Hungarian examples (Bányai 2009). The differences of the Jewish and non-Jewish surname changes are treated in a paper by István Kozma (2009), and among many other questions also in the monographic works in the field (Karády & Kozma 2001, Farkas 2009b). (Concerning the literature of the surname changes in Hungary in general, see also Farkas 2012b and Slíz 2012 in the present volume of AHEA.)

The History of Jewish Name Changes in Hungary

A decree in 1814 lifted the 1787 ban on name changes in Hungary, therefore, the history of official surname changes dates from this point in time. (For an overview of this history, see Karády & Kozma 2002.) For Jews, name changes were at first only allowed if accompanied by a religious conversion as well, but from the middle of that century onwards, name changes could take place without it. Although Jews were still a minority in the first wave of name Magyarization that took place in Hungary during the Revolution and Freedom Fight of 1848/49, later the number of Jews who changed their names grew steadily. Most of the members of the first Jewish name-changing generation were middle-aged. In this case, name changing was an expression of the individual results of their cultural assimilation. But the typical name changers

of the following decades were members of the younger generations for whom Name Magyarization was a voluntary, strategic step linked to improving future career prospects. During the decades preceding 1918, the Jews were over-represented ten-fold in Name Magyarization when compared to other minorities. On average, every 8-12th Jew changed their name while approximately only 1/100 did the same among other minorities (From 1895 to 1918, on average, only 1/26 Germans, 1/23 Slovaks, 1/40 Rumanians, and 1/238 South Slavs changed their surnames. For these data, see Karády & Kozma 2002: 53, 76-77.)

World War I, the communist rule in 1919, and the implementation of the ensuing Trianon Peace Treaty resulted in a large-scale loss of area and population of Hungary. This fundamentally changed the situation. By that time, the most mobile part of the Jewish population had already Magyarized their names, whereas some others left Hungary and started lives in other countries. Applications for name changes in Hungary were, for some years, only approved if strict conditions were met, and the number of Jewish name changes was also limited in accordance with an internal quota. Up until the 1930s, the number of name changes grew again, to a proportion which even overtook the figures of the nineteenth century. What followed is that name changes were, at first, restricted to religious Jews. Then, from 1938 onwards (which was also the year of the first law that limited the rights of Jews in the country), the same restriction for name changes was extended even to Jews who had already been converted. A decree was not needed for these restrictions, unlike in several countries under German rule (cf. Kaganoff 1978: 67) since the administrative system for approving the applications could manage it. For the annulment of former Jewish name changes, Udvarhely county introduced a bill ("so that a Jew cannot be mistaken for a Hungarian"; see Karády & Kozma 2002: 247-248), but it was never passed. But at the same time religious conversion became more frequent among the Jews, which may have seemed to be the only way to escape.

During the years following 1945, many surviving Jews got rid of everything, even their names that alluded to their Jewish identity. While the *Pro Domo* notes of the ministerial bureaucracy in Hungary had earlier regarded Jewish origin ("P.d.: Izr.!") as a reason for rejecting name change applications, they now used it as a strong argument in support of that. (It should be mentioned that the other large group of name change applicants consisted of Germans, who were collectively labeled in a way as guilty of war crimes. The reasons for their often rejected applications are interestingly in parallel with the motivations of the Jewish applications of the previous period.) The communist party also supported or even requested Name Magyarization to be applied to their party members of Jewish origin (I. Kozma 2002: 57-59), while many of the communist leaders had already done so many years earlier, just like the party leader Mátyás Rákosi (in 1903, from *Rosenfeld*).

By the mid-twentieth century, the Golden Age of Name Magyarization came to an end, and name changes became far less frequent, motivated first of all by the factors of private life and becoming independent of prevailing ideologies. (At the same time, in society and for researchers, in the socialist era the subject became taboo due to its historical, social and political context.) Decades later, after the fall of communism some of the descendants of the one-time name changers petitioned for the original name of their family. But, obviously, they were rather the exceptions.

Names in the Jewish Surname Changes

The majority of Jewish descendants in Hungary now use names obtained in the past as a result of name changes. The number of names that are typically Jewish have decreased significantly. It has happened, for example, to the surname *Kohn* (= 'Cohen, priest'), the most typical Jewish surname (both in the United States and Israel; cf. Rosanwaiké 1990), and the most characteristic surname among the Jews in Hungary, too. (Even if occasionally it was also used by Germans as a surname from a diminutive form of *Konrad*; cf. Kohlheim and Kohlheim 2005: 389.) In 2007 only 174 persons were bearing this surname in Hungary, 38 persons (22%) of which in Budapest (Farkas 2010: 76), while 88% of the Hungarian Jews were living in the capital city (Karády & Kozma 2002: 324). The low representation of the *Kohns* in Hungary and especially in Budapest, whose dwellers were always highly overrepresented among the name changers, are both the results of the one-time surname changes of the Jews.

In Hungary, just as in other countries, the history of Jewish name changes can be characterized by the choice of simple, common surnames, at least when compared to the choices made by non-Jewish contemporaries (see also Maass 1958: 169, Scherr 1986: 293, etc.). Here, the desire to assimilate as seamlessly as possible, and also a more developed, more civil name taste likely played a role. It can be identified in the case of the adopted names and in their semantic categories as well (see below). There could occur differences even in the morphology of the adopted names of the Jews and the non-Jews. For example, the surname *Róna* (= 'plain') was much more typical for the Jews, while *Rónai* ~ *Rónay* (*róna* + *-i* suffix) was preferred by the non-Jews when changing their names (Farkas 2010: 72-73). Nevertheless, there were also fewer examples among the adopted surnames of the Jews that belonged to an old-type orthography (especially the surnames ending in *-y*), which were linked to a higher social prestige at the time of Name Magyarization. However, it needs to be recognized that these old type orthographical forms were less often permitted by the state for the Jewish applicants.

The Hungarian name changers chose or created new surnames most frequently by deriving them from their original names. The former names of the Jews in this way could influence the new set of names, from which typical old > new surname-pairs also originated. In the history of surname changes the retaining of the initials; the more or less exact translation of the names; the semantics of the new surnames; and the adjustment to the existing surname system, were all significant (see Farkas 2008a, 2009a). The typical Jewish surname-pairs (cf. Forgács 1990b: 327) also represent the characteristic methods:

1. Preserving the initials, from *Kohn* > *Kun* (= 'Cumanian', ethnonym), *Kertész* (= 'gardener'), *Kardos* (= 'sword-cutler, swordsman'), *Kalmár* (= 'merchant'), *Kemény* (= 'hard, stiff'), *Komlós* (= 'hopper'); from *Weisz* > *Vajda* (= 'voivode', a dignitary), *Váradi* (= *Várad* settlement name + *-i* locative); from *Deutsch* > *Dénes* (= 'Denis') from *Löwy* > *Lukács* (= 'Luke').

2. Preserving the semantic content: *Weisz* > *Fehér* (= 'white'), *Stern* > *Csillag* (= 'star'), *Schwarz* > *Fekete* (= 'black'), *Fischer* > *Halász* (= 'fisher'), *Weinberger* > *Szőllősi* (= 'grape' + *-si* suffixes).

3. In some cases the two methods could result in the same new name: *Braun* > *Barna* (= 'brown'), *Kohn* > *Kovács* (= 'smith'), *Klein* > *Kis* (= 'small').

Concerning the typicality of these methods, it is also revealing that there is a popular Jewish joke, which can be cited from many sources, about two Jews traveling by train and, even if they do not know each other personally, the surname of the person coming from the city to the village can be guessed from his supposed old name – as "it was obvious". (For different variations, see

Frank 1993: 47-48, Spalding 2001: 21, Farkas 2003: 156, for also its analysis Fenyves 2012: 128-130.) The typical ways of changing the names are also documented in the jokes, cf. in the literature cited.)

A comparison of the frequency of new surnames between Jewish and non-Jewish name changers reveals significant variation. An examination of the "top 10 list" of new surnames of Jews and non-Jews (refer to Table 1) based on a large number of samples from the Austro-Hungarian period (N=32704, an electronic database provided courtesy of Viktor Karády), indicates that there are only two surnames (*Kovács* 'smith', *Molnár* 'miller') that are represented in both lists of this kind. The representational proportion of one of these names, i.e., *Kovács*, which is the most frequent one on both lists, also varies significantly.

Table 1

The most popular adopted surnames of Jews and non-Jews of the Austro-Hungarian period in Hungary

		Among Jews (position / %)		Among non-Jews (position / %)	
Kovács	'smith'	1.	2.11%	1.	1.64%
Székely	'Sekler' (ethnonym)	2.	1.91%	18.	0.56%
Kertész	'gardener'	3.	1.41%	21.	0.50%
Fodor	'curly'	4.	1.31%	50-51.	0.31%
László	'a Christian name'	5.	1.24%	90-96.	0.22%
Vajda	'voivode' (dignitary)	6.	1.14%	178-182.	0.12%
Molnár	'miller'	7.	1.10%	2-3.	1.05%
Révész	'ferryman'	8.	1.09%	59.	0.29%
Kemény	'hard, stiff'	9.	1.02%	37-38.	0.39%
Radó	(a former first name)	10.	1.01%	139-144.	0.15%

Further research has found more significant differences between lists of surnames exclusively or predominantly chosen by Jews or non-Jews in the era. It can be hypothesized that in the formerly existing name-choosing trends among Jews in Hungary, a new grouping mechanism might be detected besides the mechanism associated with assimilation tendencies. (For this analysis, see I. Kozma 2009.)

The differences in the choice of names can be seen by examining not only the frequency of individual names, but also by looking at the recurrence rate of certain categories of these surnames. Using research results from two studies from two different periods, further comparisons can be made (See Table 2a and Table 2b below. The sources used: 1. 1897-1908, above the 0,13% frequency of adoption, N=5185: I. Kozma 2009; 2. 1948, N=400: Farkas 2009b: 84). The different categories will be presented below by typical examples (namely, the most frequent examples of the category, based on the database of Viktor Karády) of the Jewish name changes of the Austro-Hungarian period.

Table 2a

Name categories of adopted surnames among Jews and non-Jews in Hungary (main categories)

	Period of sample taking, proportion of cases			
	1897-1908		1948	
	Jews	non-Jews	Jews	non-Jews
From a place name	12.4%	40.9%	40.9%	67.9%
From a first name	22.9%	11.0%	21.2%	4.1%
From a common word	59.4%	41.9%	34.9%	22.8%
Other and special cases	5.4%	6.1%	3.0%	5.3%

Surnames based on place names (and, not uncommonly, pseudo, i.e., non-existing place names) occurred far more frequently among non-Jews than among Jews. Typical examples are: *Róna* and *Rónai*, *Szigeti*, *Somogyi*, *Szilágyi*, *Váradi*, *Somló*, *Salgó*. This type is the most typical surname type in the Hungarian surname stock, even if their proportion is lower there than among the surnames adopted by name changes. The surnames based on place names also corresponded more to the romantic taste in surnames, gave more flexibility to unique name formation, and could resemble more closely the names of noble families.

In contrast, surnames derived from first names (especially from ones that were used at that time) were more commonly used by Jews, probably also in remembrance of Jewish naming tradition. Typical examples: *László*, *Radó*, *Sándor*, *Gerő*, *Barta*, *Gál*, *Lukács*, *Kálmán*, *Dénes*.

Deriving names from common words that had a more 'civilian' character were also more popular among Jews. (Joining to Table 2a, this is presented in Table 2b below.)

Table 2b

Name categories of adopted surnames among Jews and non-Jews in Hungary (surnames from common nouns)

	Period of sample taking, proportion of cases			
	1897-1908		1948	
	Jews	non-Jews	Jews	non-Jews
Ethnic groups	7.8%	5.6%	3.0%	2.9%
Occupation	29.8%	22.8%	20.5%	13.5%
Social/political status/function	5.2%	2.8%	1.5%	3.5%
Characteristics	9.6%	6.5%	4.5%	1.8%
Object, living creature, natural phenomenon	5.2%	2.8%	5.3%	1.2%
Other or uncertain	1.7%	1.3%	—	—

Typical examples are:

1. Ethnic groups: *Székely* (= 'Sekler'), *Horváth* (= 'Croat'), *Lengyel* (= 'Polish');
2. Occupation: *Kertész* (= 'gardener'), *Vajda* (= 'voivode'), *Molnár* (= 'miller'), *Révész* (= 'ferryman'), *Szántó* (= 'ploughman'), *Faragó* (= 'carver'), *Kardos* (= 'sword-cutler, swordsman'), *Halász* (= 'fisher'), *Kalmár* (= 'merchant');
3. Social/political status/function: *Földes* (= 'landowner'), *Nemes* (= 'noble(man)'), *Polgár* (= 'citizen, bourgeois');
4. Characteristics: *Fodor* (= 'curly'), *Kemény* (= 'hard, stiff'), *Nagy* (= 'big'), *Fehér* (= 'white'), *Kis* (= 'little');
5. Object, living creature, natural phenomenon: *Vas* (= 'iron'), *Fenyő* (= 'pine(tree)'), *Hajnal* (= 'dawn');
6. Other or uncertain: *Farkas* (= 'wolf' or 'Wolfgang'), *Sugár* (= 'ray' or 'slim'), *Vértes* (= 'armour, armoured' or the name of *Vértes* mountain).

Naturally, the special features of name choice trends were varying in time and in different social groups of the Jewish population. Many aspects and details of these changes were revealed by Krisztina Forgács, Viktor Karády, István Kozma, Kinga Frojimovics, Katalin Fenyves and others in their research, but much further work would be necessary in the field.

This paper attempted to provide a brief overview of the history, the historical-social function, and the main characteristics of Jewish surname changes, focusing on examples taken from the nineteenth-twentieth centuries in Hungary. Recognizing that further research is needed in this area, it is perhaps best to conclude with a Jewish joke (cf. Farkas 2003: 158) which highlights the complexity of this subject:

Katzmann, who lives in France, complains that his Jewish sounding name causes him a lot of problems:

'Change it!', advises his friend.

'What to?'

'The simplest way is if you just translate word by word. Let's see, Katz in French is chat, and Mann is l'homme...'

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