The dynamism of the development of contemporary Czech onymic systems

Milan Harvalík

The Institute for the Czech Language of the ASCR, v. v. i., Czech Republic

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Abstract: In addition to the linguistic factors, extralinguistic – primarily social – factors have also always contributed significantly to the origination and development of individual proper names and of entire onymic systems of all languages. The aim of this paper is to describe the development of the system of Czech proper names. Attention is paid specifically to the period from 1989 to the present. In this paper the most important groups of proper names, i.e. anthroponyms, toponyms and chrematonyms ("names of things"), and their major subgroups, in which new developmental trends are particularly significant, are analysed in detail.
Keywords: the Czech language, anthroponyms, toponyms, chrematonyms (names of things).

0. In addition to the linguistic factors, extralinguistic – primarily social – factors have also always contributed significantly to the origination and development of individual proper names and of entire onymic systems of all languages. This is easily understandable – in fact, proper names constitute not only a language phenomenon but also a broader social phenomenon and they therefore also reflect the evolution of society and its changes. This is also the case in their contemporary usage in the Czech language. The complex of the proper names that exist and are used in the Czech language has undergone significant changes during recent years, though in the course of a detailed examination it becomes evident that their intensity and dynamism are manifested unevenly in terms of specific groups and subgroups of proper names. Attention is paid specifically to the period from 1989 to the present (cf. Harvalík 2010).

1. In the case of personal names (anthroponyms) what this mainly concerns is first names (both in their basic and their hypocoristic forms) and surnames, and in recent years also including the chosen proper names used by participants in instant communication on the Internet, known as nicks.

In the Czech Republic, as also in many other states, the rules for choosing personal names and for recording them in the register are established by law (relevant in the Czech Republic is Act No. 301/2000 Coll. on Registries, Names and Surnames as amended). This Act has superseded the previous legal provisions so that it is permissible to record in the registry books only a basic, standard form of the documented spelling of first names. It is not possible, therefore, to record common nouns and other types of proper names than first

names, with the additional proviso that the first name may not be garbled, diminutive or familiar. Nor may a natural male person be attributed a female name and vice versa. A significant change in comparison with the previous law is that currently a citizen of the Czech Republic may also have two first names recorded in the register (the recording of a second first name may be additionally requested).

An important stimulus for the development of the system of Czech first names (i.e. the first names used in the Czech language, whether their origin is domestic or foreign) is the expansion of the repertoire of the names used. Four ways in which this occurs were defined, namely: the reassessment of what were previously considered hypocoristic forms of names that have lost their emotional tone becoming "official", the restoring of obsolete names that were used in the past, the creation of as-yet non-existent or unused forms of female names based on male names and the adopting of names used in foreign languages (Knappová 2010a: 43).

A characteristic feature of the change to the inventory of first names used in the Czech Republic is their internationalisation, which is a result of the increasingly expanding relationships of the Czech Republic with the outside world (the possibility for Czech citizens to travel abroad and for foreigners to come to the Czech Republic, mixed marriages, etc. – cf. Knappová 2010a: 22–25). As in earlier times, applicable in varying degrees to the choice of first names for new-born children are family and local customs, linguistic influences, the social status and the education-level of the parents and their interests, professions and friends, religious influences, the contemporary social popularity of specific names, the popularity of certain celebrities and the attempt to revive currently unused names (Knappová 2010a: 26–39).

Compared to the situation prior to 1989, nowadays the use of first names (both in their basic and hypocoristic forms), together with the usage of the polite (formal, respectful) form (i.e. using plural verb forms when addressing a single person), appears to be more pronounced, also frequently addressing individuals as *Mr, Mrs, Miss*, in the course of communication in which, previously, this was not customary (e.g. TV competitions, calls from radio listeners, etc.). The reasons for the expansion of this phenomenon can be looked on as the adoption of the practice prevalent in certain foreign languages, in a reduced level of formality and the wish to establish closer contact, a feeling of friendship and intimacy, while – on the other hand – also retaining the possibility of preserving a certain degree of anonymity (e.g. if a participant in a competition is addressed only by his/her first name or if the caller also introduces himself/herself without using his/her surname, it lessens the possibility of his/her identification, which may be advantageous in certain circumstances).

In connection with the internationalisation described above, it is possible to notice the ever-increasing proportion of names of foreign origin, including surnames in use in the Czech language – whether this concerns the surnames of foreigners who have come to the Czech Republic to work and/or to live, or the surnames of personalities of political, social and cultural life, who are in the public eye through the media. It is possible to state that in the Czech language, as a flective language, the current classification of foreign surnames in accordance with the declination paradigms based on the endings of the surnames is virtually obligatory. Only a limited group of surnames that, due to their endings, cannot be assigned to any of the Czech declination types is treated as uninflected in the Czech language (Knappová 2008).

A sensitive and topical issue for a certain group of language users is the use of the feminine forms of surnames in the Czech language. The basic legal provision for recording female surnames in official documents in the Czech Republic is Act No. 301/2000 Coll., On Registries, Names and Surnames as amended by virtue of amendment No. 165/2004 Coll., in which in § 69 it is stated that female surnames are formed in accordance with the rules of Czech grammar (i.e. in the feminine form). When recording entry into marriage in the registry book, it is possible, based on the request of the woman whose marriage is concerned, to record in the registry book the surname that she intends to use after marriage in the masculine form, if she is a) a foreigner, b) a citizen who has or will have her permanent residence abroad, c) a citizen whose husband is a foreigner, d) a citizen who is of a nationality other than Czech. Similar rules also apply to the registration of the birth of a female child. Upon the request of the parents it is possible to record her surname in the masculine form, if the child is a) a foreigner, b) a citizen who has or will have her permanent residence abroad, c) a citizen, one of whose parents is a foreigner, d) a citizen who is of a nationality other than Czech (Knappová 2008: 36–37).

In regard to basic communication the custom of gender transformation/non-transformation of foreign female surnames is inconsistent; however gender transformation is a natural feature of the Czech language and is evaluated as such in grammar books and in linguistic manuals. Therefore, it is recommended as a more sophisticated form of expression. Although it is always necessary to distinguish between gender transformation in everyday communication, where it is appropriate, and in official documents of a legal nature and in bibliographic records, etc., in which it is appropriate to respect the original form of the surname without gender transformation.[1]

A special group of anthroponyms includes the nicks, i.e. the personal names used by participants in instant communication on the Internet (David 2006a, 2006b, Patráš 2000, Wachtarczyková 2000). In the manner of their creation, in terms of the specific function that they perform and also in their form they differ significantly from other types of personal names, though some of their characteristics resemble both pseudonyms and nicknames. Like nicknames, nicks also belong to the category of unofficial anthroponyms and the same individual may well have several nicknames or nicks, but whereas nicknames are attributed by other persons, nicks are chosen by their bearers themselves. Unlike in the case of nicknames and pseudonyms a nick can also be the official or hypocoristic form of the personal name of the participant in the instant communication (first name or surname or a combination of the first name and the surname). Characteristic of the choice of nicks is their high level of creativity and expressiveness, manifested amongst other ways, by the use of variants of proper names and common nouns, abbreviations, acronyms, unusual

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[1] When selecting gender transformed or non-transformed forms of foreign female surnames there is a parallel with the choice between exonyms and endonyms: Users of language have to approach the usage of these forms functionally. Depending on the situation, a speaker should use either the foreign or the native form of the name. If an emphasis is placed on accuracy and clear guidance, endonyms are appropriate; in casual conversation, on the other hand, preferable and more natural is to use exonyms. This kind of functional differentiation and situational conditionality enriches the expressiveness of languages and can only be beneficial for its continuing development (Harvalík 2004: 123).

combinations of graphemes (including any combination of upper and lower case letters), combining graphemes, digits and special typographical and/or computer characters with the absence of diacritics. Frequently accentuated by nicks is their characterisation function. All of this enables their bearers to engage and to excel, to create their own virtual identity and to manifest their desires, preferences and attitudes and to stylise and establish a "virtual image".

2. In regard to toponyms we will focus our attention on place names, minor place names (anoikonyms), street names and exonyms vs. endonyms.

In the period monitored the Czech place names system was relatively stable. The emergence of new oikonyms was not so frequent – apart from the names for new town districts, satellite settlements, residential complexes, residences, etc. In many cases sites of this nature are named according to the proper names of properties in the locations where they are developed (depending on the urban or rural character of the area, most frequently used are street or minor place names); in other cases they are attributed with the names of the places, of which they constitute a part, while an attribute of the *New* type is added to the name. (For obvious reasons, we are leaving out those sites that have not been named because they are viewed as being parts of larger units – cities, town districts, villages – in whose cadastral areas they have been developed.) Developers building residential locations perceive their nomenclature as an aspect of their advertising presentation, therefore appearing amongst the names are expressions that have a positive associative value, exclusivity, an urban character, but which, on the other hand, may also underline the rural character of the location. The English language is frequently employed denoting prestige; the French language to a lesser extent (David 2008).

The extinction of place names is rare nowadays, because the extinction of oikonymic objects is also rare. Most frequently there are only administrative changes, whereby the community has become a part of another municipality or municipal district – the original name is then retained following a hyphen, although it remains still an oikonym. The period subsequent to 1989 influenced an opposite process, however – the emancipation of municipalities, for example, the municipality of Točník, which had been part of Žebrák, is now once again an independent municipality; Králův Dvůr is no longer a part of Beroun.

Due to the fact that ideological influences were only minimally relevant to the Czech oikonymy of the twentieth century, after 1989 renaming occurred only exceptionally (Gottwaldov – Zlín); in isolated cases the names of German origin were restored (Křížová – Krucemburk).

Changes to the Czech anoikonymic system during the past 24 years have not been featured to any great extent; however, it is possible, on the basis of several small investigations undertaken by the author, to identify certain tendencies. While the hydronyms and oronyms seem virtually unchanged, the same cannot be said about the field names. Similar to the collectivisation of the early 1950's that caused significant changes not only to the ownership of agricultural fields, but also to their names (Olivová-Nezbedová 1998), the political and social situation following 1989 was also reflected – albeit to a lesser extent – in this part of the Czech anoikonymy. When examining the impact of changes in ownership, land restitution, the disappearance and/or transformation of collective and state farms on the field names, the following alternative situations were determined:

a) the field is now referred to by the name that it had prior to collectivisation (leaving aside whether during the period of collective farming the original name was retained, lost or modified);

b) the name that the field was given at the time when it was owned by the state or collective farm is retained;

c) when required, there is an entirely new name independent of the previous name/names of the field.

The first of these types is most common in the event of the land being returned to its original owner(s) or their descendants; the second is typical in cases in which the land is cultivated by a transformed cooperative; the third usually represents a property that has been purchased by a new owner. To reach more detailed conclusions it would be necessary to undertake more extensive research.

In the context of the emergence of new names it should be noted that such anoikonyms are also created by cottage owners and/or new residents (e.g. of residential complexes), either because they are not aware of the original name, or that they "appropriate" and "approach" the landscape in this manner. This is an example of the utilisation of (micro) social toponyms, which were examined in the Slovak language by J. Krško (1998, 1999).

The group of toponyms in which extralinguistic influences and changes have been reflected to the greatest extent during recent years are street names (Harvalík 2004: 29–34). Although street nomenclature has always developed under the influence of social factors, we encounter an abundance of its intense application, especially during recent times. This fact stands out markedly, particularly when comparing the names of streets from a previous era with the names that have been chosen recently.

After 1989 the names associated with the previous regime disappeared and characteristic was a return to the traditions of the pre-Munich Republic (1918–1938), regardless of whether the pre-war name was restored or not. Top amongst the reasons why a new name might be chosen, and why the name from the First Republic was not renewed, is in particular the fact that the importance of the person after whom the street was called before the war is not currently so significant as it was experienced at that time. For this reason, the selection of a new name of a person who is really well known is now often perceived as necessary. In addition, after 1989 there were also cases in which, due to the broken continuity of the street nomenclature, a different street was given the name that had been used during the period of the First Republic than the one that had that name prior to the Second World War.

Recently, we have been encountering an increasing emphasis on the socially prestigious function of street names (as well as of other proper names, e.g. the names of public transport stations, the names of sports and concert halls, etc.), as manifested, for example, in the fact that companies either require the streets where they are located to be named after them or to be renamed, if they do not consider its current name sufficiently "representative" (Knappová 1996a, 2010). In terms of the stability of onymic systems and the proper performance of onymic functions (in particular individualisation and differentiation), these efforts cannot be evaluated positively.

In terms of the development of Czech exonymy after 1989 primarily we can identify trends that continue from the previous period. During the twentieth century, especially since the 1950's, a stage commenced in the development of exonyms, which, in contrast to

the previous period, brought a new trend – the creation and use of exonyms was restricted at that time and many of them became extinct. Apart from the Czech names for countries and multiword names containing topographical terms, i.e. translatable appellatives, only the most common exonyms that are generally widespread and well known remain in usage in the Czech language today. This trend of the disappearance of geographical exonyms has also been reinforced by the international efforts to standardise the geographical names that former Czechoslovakia and the subsequent Czech Republic respected and still respects with the main goal of summarising one geographic object – one name – as a postulate (Harvalík 2004: 119).

3. During the last 24 years significant changes to the Czech chrematonymic system have occurred. This is certainly not a surprising finding; directly reflected in the development of chrematonyms ("names of things"; commercial names, product names…), in fact, are the life and transformation of the society (Knappová 1995b), and therefore the changes after 1989 found an adequate reflection even in this part of the Czech onymy, particularly in terms of trade names and product names. Together with the development of private enterprises the development of the Czech chrematonymic system also took place and, in a similar manner to that in which new (or renewed) forms of businesses have developed, so also have chrematonyms. The situation existing during the first half of 1990's was examined and described in detail by M. Knappová (1995a, 1995b, 2000).

In accordance with legislation, trade names become official based on their registration in the Commercial Register, which represents the condition for the existence of a physical or a legal entity as an entrepreneur. Although the Commercial Code contains the general principles concerning the formation of trade names, it does not contain any linguistic recommendations and therefore, the forms of trade names sometimes do not correspond to the rules of the Czech language (or in the case of names of foreign origin to the rules of the relevant foreign language) (Knappová 1996b). Such incorrect forms are not usually intentional; rather they show evidence of a lack of knowledge of the principles of spelling.

A survey of today's Czech chrematonyms, of the impulses stimulating their massive development, of the competition between the foreign and the domestic elements in chrematonymy, of the expressive specificity of the linguistic aspects of these names, which, inter alia, is expressed in the use of parasystemic word formation[2] together with an abundant occurrence of composites and acronyms, along with an analysis of the extralinguistic aspects of chrematonyms, appears to be one of the current challenges for the research into proper names.

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[2]   The so-called parasystemic word formation was described in Old Czech compounds by D. Šlosar (1994), and applied to Old Czech anthroponyms by J. Pleskalová (1998, 2000). An analysis of further onymic material (Harvalík 2000a, 2000b) shows that this type of formation is also used in other groups of proper names. The substance of parasystemic word formation lies in the fact that proper names (similar to terms and expressives) have become separate, in the linguistic system, from the basic system of notional appellatives, and have constituted themselves into special systems and subsystems characterised by their position on the periphery of the basic system. These special systems are jointly called parasystems, and their common features are manifested primarily in word formation – in all parasystems, peripheral word-formation means and processes are used for forming special naming groups.

4. In this paper the most important groups of proper names, i.e. anthroponyms, toponyms and chrematonyms, and their major subgroups, in which new developmental trends are particularly significant, were analysed in detail. Attention was also paid to the linguistic/extralinguistic influences that are involved in the emergence and development of the onymic systems and subsystems and in addition to the sociolinguistic and legislative aspects applicable to the use of proper names. It has become evident that the onymic system is able to respond to changes in society and to the communication needs for the new proper names, often more swiftly than the appellative sphere of the language (Knappová 2000).

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