

## The Traditional and Modern Forms of Hungarian Female Matrimonial Names

Erzsébet Fercsik

By tradition, in most European countries women's family names are changed after marriage. Women adopt their husband's family name, indicating that they belong to a new family. For centuries it has been one of the features of the Hungarian anthroponym system that women after marriage adopt not only their husband's family name, but his full name, indicating their matrimonial relationship with the feminine derivative (formative syllable) *-né*. At the same time, women abandoned their maiden name, the content of which was not detectable any more in their official matrimonial name. For instance, after the marriage of *Nagy Mária*<sup>1</sup> and *Kis János* the woman's maiden name was known only by her closest family. Officially, she became *Kis Jánosné*; in other words she appeared after marriage merely as an appendage of her husband. The use of this name form poses several communication problems; on the one hand, it aggravates both identification and reference; on the other, it makes it almost impossible to address the woman. The use of this name is made even more complicated in foreign language communication. For instance, when a Hungarian name is written in another language, the family name is in second position, e.g. *Jánosné Kis*. Consequently, people without any knowledge of the Hungarian language might consider *Jánosné* as the woman's first name (SOLTÉSZ, J. 1979).

The suffix *-né* is a peculiar constituent of the Hungarian female matrimonial names. The recent technical name of this suffix is a wife-name derivative, but originally it was not a derivative syllable but an alternative variant of the noun *nő* (PAIS 1951). Its derivative function developed in the sixteenth century in the history of the Hungarian language. Originally, the pair *nő/né* could form a compound either with a personal name or an appellative which was denoting a male person (*Balázsné, Antosné; bíróné, tanítóné*). Thus, the elements of the compound appeared as a semantic variant different from their original meaning; for instance, *Kis János + né* meant that the person this term refers to is 'Kis János's wife (*nője-neje*)'. This possessive compound form generally meant that 'somebody is

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<sup>1</sup> In the Hungarian language the family name precedes the given name, so John Smith becomes Smith John. Throughout this paper a man, *Kis János* (family name *Kis*) marries a woman, *Nagy Mária* (family name *Nagy*).

somebody's wife'. Later the compound became indistinct, so the pragmatic uses of *-né* gradually distanced itself from its phonetic formant *nő*. Thus, the suffix acquired individual identity, and became used as a free morpheme. This process was bolstered by the different phonetic form of *nő-né*. The semantic modifier function was ascribed to the *-né* element, so the pragmatic practice treated it as a derivative and created new lexemes by attaching it to certain words. Although there used to be a rich stock of forms denoting married women, since the sixteenth century, the name forms of married women created with the *-né* derivative forged ahead, and became consolidated over the centuries.

From the introduction of the state registration of names in 1895 until recently, laws and regulations defined the name forms women could adopt after their marriage (UGRÓCZKY 1997). This period of almost 110 years will be surveyed in this paper in four shorter stages of different lengths. The beginning of each period coincides with the introduction of new statutes regulating names. The main rules governing the choices of name and the customs characteristic of each period will be discussed.

#### I. period: 1895–1952

For more than half of the century the traditional name form with the *-né* derivative was dominant although married women were officially registered in both their maiden and married name (*Kis Jánosné; Nagy Mária*). However, in every day usage only the name form created with the *-né* derivative occurred. There were a few exceptions; some women with special occupations retained their maiden name in public after marriage. For instance, *Kaffka Margit* (1880–1918), a writer, continued to publish her poems and short stories in her maiden name after her marriage to the forestry engineer, Föchlich Brunó. The actress *Aczél Ilona* (1884–1940) is an instance of a unique name use; the elocution teacher used *Aczél Cs. Ilona* by attaching the initial of her husband, Kálmán Csató's family name. *Kosáryné Réz Lola* (1892–1984), a writer and a translator, is an example of a different kind of name use.

As an illustration of the very close relationship between names and society, it is worth mentioning a prime minister's decree from 1945 which enabled the fiancée of the men killed in the war to take their fiancé's name, as if she had been his wife (*Kis Jánosné*). The decree mainly served psychological purposes, but also indicated the social prestige for women having a matrimonial name.

#### II. period: 1953–1973

In this period the law allowed married women to keep their maiden name officially (*Nagy Mária*). Wives were given the freedom to decide either to have their husband's full name with the *-né* derivative or to attach their maiden name as well to this name formation (*Kis Jánosné Nagy Mária*). The latter form was rarely used in practice. Similarly, there were very few married women using their maiden name in public, although a few women, other than artists, started to adopt the practice; the photo reporter *Keleti Éva* (1954, Mátray Mihály), the astronomer, *Illés Erzsébet* (1959, Almár Iván) and the opera singer, *Kincses Veronika* (1970, Vajda József). Public opinion, however, was still strongly influencing the choice of name type showing that marriage and the name forms with the *-né* suffix possessed a high social status.

### III. period: 1974–2003

In 1974 the officially available name stock was increased, so married women were able to choose among even more name forms than before. Besides the already existing official name forms (*Kis Jánosné*, *Kis Jánosné Nagy Mária*, *Nagy Mária*) a new one emerged *Kisné Nagy Mária*. The latter form illustrates a compromise, and it is characterised by its ability to convey matrimony by the *-né* derivative, while retaining the wife's full maiden name. Thus, this new form separates the woman's identity from the man's and eases address. Another name form – *Kis Mária* – was introduced; it consists of the husband's family name and the wife's given name. This kind of name type introduced a potential confusion since it has the same construction as the maiden name, but it does not indicate the marital status. Its advantages are, however, that it permits address and easy reference, as well as giving privacy to the woman's marital status.

The period between 1974 and 2003 has been divided into two stages due to the availability of data. In the first stage, state offices did not provide any national statistics of women's name choices. However, in the second stage official statistics are already available indicating the frequency of several name types.

#### 1974–1995

The statistical data illustrated below originate from both our own departmental database, and partly from the data published by other researchers (LACZKÓ 1996). Women's name choices originating from their marriage are illustrated below and are compared with the national average.

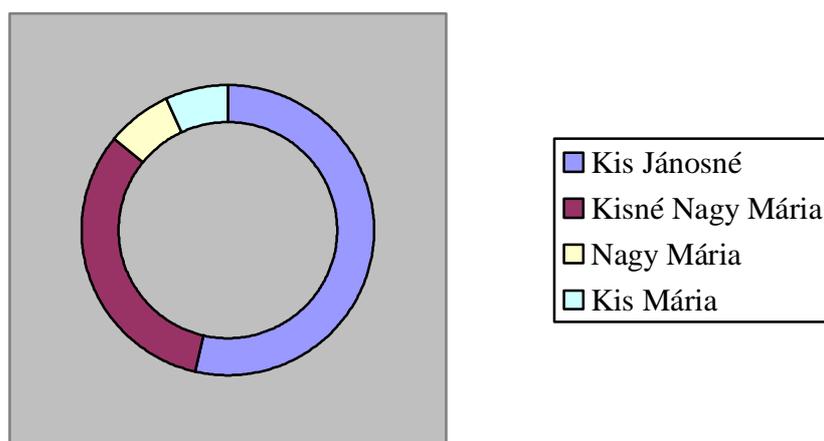


Figure 1

The national distribution of the chosen name types (1974–1995)

Name type			
Kis Jánosné	Kisné Nagy Mária	Nagy Mária	Kis Mária
53.5 %	32.4 %	7.1 %	7.0 %

The diagram indicates that a little more than half of the women (53.5 %) chose the traditional (*Kis Jánosné*) name form. The second most prevalent name form of this period was the latest one, i.e. *Kisné Nagy Mária*. About one third of the married women (32.4 %) used it, which is considered a compromising possibility in onomastics, as it refers clearly to marital status, but conserves the women's full maiden names as well. Only a few decided to keep their maiden name alone (*Nagy Mária*), or take the name type obtained by combining the husband's family name with the wife's given name (*Kis Mária*). The rate of the latter two name forms in total remains below 15 %.

It can be noticed that in slightly more than two decades the popularity of the traditional name form dropped considerably. Also, a large proportion of young women, almost 40 % of them, considered it important to keep their maiden name (*Nagy Mária*) or keep the husband's family name with the *-né* derivative (*Kisné Nagy Mária*). The name choices of this period differ according to place of residence, occupation and other sociological factors. Let's take a closer look at the data relating to women teachers who form a specific professional group in society (FERCSIK 2002a).

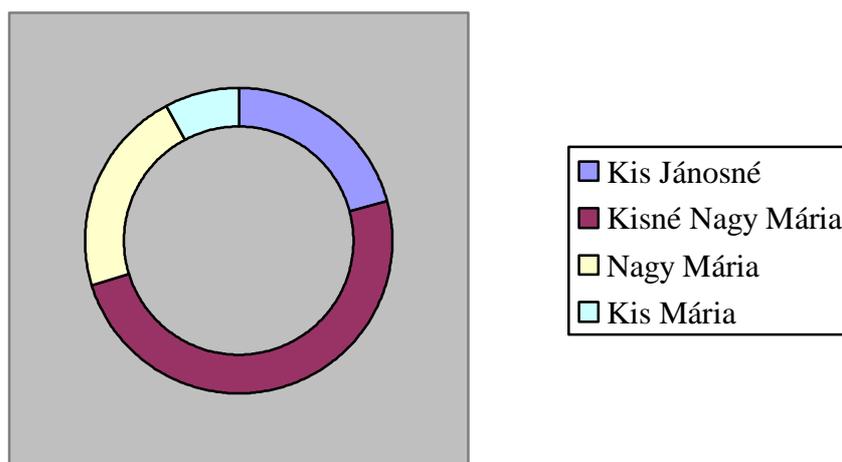


Figure 2

The name types chosen by female teachers (1974–1995)

Name type			
Kis Jánosné	Kisné Nagy Mária	Nagy Mária	Kis Mária
20.7 %	49.5 %	22.0 %	7.8 %

The diagram illustrating the name choices of female teachers demonstrates that the traditional name form with the *-né* derivative is chosen by fewer than half of the national average (20.7%). The prevalence of the compromise name form (*Kisné Nagy Mária*) diverges from the average as well, but was chosen by one third more female teachers than by the general population. It is noticeable that the compromise name type is used by almost half (49.5%). The largest difference was among women who kept their maiden name: i.e. three times more female teachers chose this possibility compared with the national average (22%). The least popular *Kis Mária* name type did not differ from the general average.

#### 1996–2003

Since 1996 the national statistical data is officially available for researchers; every year the Central Office of Data Processing, Storing and Election of the Ministry of the Interior publishes the data concerning women's name choices. This data contains all the names of married women irrespective of the year of their marriage in contrast to previous databases which provided information about women who married in specific years (FERCSIK 2002b).

Today, 42-45% of adult women are married in Hungary. In the examined period the number of marriages was between 42 and 49 thousand; in other words these figures define the number of women who decided their name type after marriage.

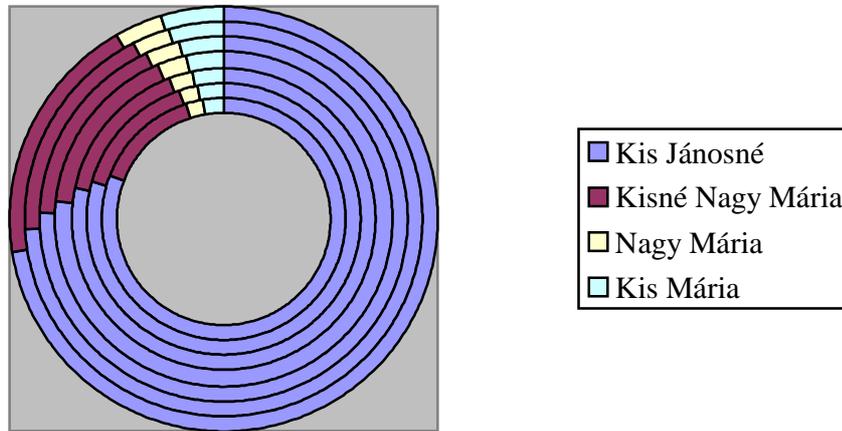


Figure 3

The name type pattern of married women (1997–2003)

Year	Name type			
	Kis Jánosné	Kisné Nagy Mária	Nagy Mária	Kis Mária
1997	80.9 %	14.2 %	2.2 %	2.7 %
1998	79.5 %	15.1 %	2.4 %	3.0 %
1999	78.2 %	16.0 %	2.5 %	3.3 %
2000	76.2 %	16.9 %	2.9 %	3.6 %
2001	75.4 %	17.6 %	3.1 %	3.9 %
2002	73.9 %	18.3 %	3.3 %	4.3 %
2003	72.4 %	19.1 %	3.7 %	4.6 %

The change in the national average can be detected in the traditional, *Kis Jánosné* name types. The number of married women who took this name form dropped by 8.4% over

eight years. The highest increase appeared in the prevalence of compromise *Kisné Nagy Mária* name types which increased by 4.9% between 1997 and 2003. Similarly, the *Kis Mária* type gradually increased at a lower rate, 1.9%. The number of married women retaining their maiden name (*Nagy Mária*) increased by only 1.5%.

In figure 3 the diagram demonstrates that in 2003 only slightly over 70% of married women took the traditional *Kis Jánosné* name form. It can be noticed as well that the number of women with the traditional name type was dropping every year. The second most prevalent type is the compromise *Kisné Nagy Mária*. This name form is gradually more prevalent within the database of women's official marital names. Among the non-traditional variants this form, based on compromise, was chosen by most of the women. A good deal fewer women take the other two name forms (*Nagy Mária*, *Kis Mária*), which do not contain the *-né* derivative and has no constituent indicating marital status.

#### IV. period: 2004-date

From 1 January 2004 the law widened the variety of officially available matrimonial name types. One novelty was that it also provided a possibility for a man to change his name. The husband can decide to use his own full name (*Kis János*), but he can alternatively adopt his wife's family name (*Nagy János*). Both the husband and wife can take a name form which is the result of combining their family names with their own given name (*Kis-Nagy Mária*, *Nagy-Kis Mária*; *Kis-Nagy János*, *Nagy-Kis János*). The law also changed the official terminology. Instead of the term *wife's name*, the *matrimonial name* is used, and *maiden name* becomes *birth name*. The time since the introduction of this new law has been too short for obtaining statistical data for analysis about the chosen name forms.

It is worth creating an overview of the linguistic forms of the Hungarian marital name types. The name elements of the traditional married women's name are: the husband's family and/or given name, the wife's family and/or given name and the *-né* derivative. Several name forms can be created by combining these elements. Only a few of these name forms are officially available options as matrimonial names for women; the rest of them are used in an informal setting. Figure 4 illustrates the official name forms of matrimonial female names, since the introduction of the state registry.

Period The form was introduced	The official forms of female matrimonial names	
	with the <i>-né</i> derivative	without the <i>-né</i> derivative
I. period 1895–1952	Kis Jánosné ( <i>traditional name</i> ) Kis Jánosné Nagy Mária	
II. period 1953–1973		Nagy Mária ( <i>retained name</i> )
III. period 1974–2003	Kisné Nagy Mária ( <i>compromise name</i> )	Kis Mária
IV. period 2004–		Nagy-Kis Mária Kis-Nagy Mária

Figure 4

The official forms of female matrimonial names

According to the traditions in onomastics the syntagm of the family name and given name is considered to be a subordinate adjectival structure (KÁLMÁN 1978). Since the onomatosystem of two elements have developed, the real connection between the name and the denoted person ceased to exist. As the denotation diminished there is more stress on their function, thus logically it becomes obvious that one of the name constituents would fulfil the role of an emphasising adjective (HAJDÚ 2003). The recent binominal marital names linked with a hyphen are considered to be co-ordinate structures. There are no direct antecedents of such binomial dual name forms either in the Hungarian tradition or in the history of the Hungarian language. Although there were binominal family names, they were constructed by the distinctive name or noble prename and the family name. The popularity of hyphenated marital names can be supported by psychological reasons; i.e. the grammatical form of this name type indicates not only the unity of man and woman, but also their equality by the co-ordinate structure. At the same time, its spread is encouraged by the example of several European countries, where this type of marital name type is universal (RAÁTZ 2004). The impact of these changes is increased as a result of the social openness after the regime change in Hungary, in particular instances of marriages with a foreign partner has increased. Some partners formed a dual name either by requesting a name change when they married in Hungary, or they obtained a dual name registered by the registrar of their marriage abroad.

The number of officially registerable name forms is continuously increasing which has been noticeable in our survey elucidating the changes in the period from the beginning of state registration to date. In the last decades the number of women increased significantly who either do not want to change their name after their marriage, or even if they change their name, they wish to retain their maiden name in some form in their marital name. The *wife's name* was changed to *marital name* in state administration in 2004, and since then the law permits men to change their name after marriage as well. The marital names with a coordinate structure are representing a new name type, which represents an unequivocal change in attitude compared with the traditional *-né* suffix name types which was predominant over the centuries.

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The study presents the development of the traditional Hungarian wife's name with the *-né* derivative. It then discusses the marital names women can officially choose, based on the laws regulating names since the beginning of state registration to date. The statistical data published after 1974 proves that traditional name forms were changed to name types which include women's maiden names as well. It compares the national data with the ones describing the name choices of a specific population, namely of female teachers. It concludes that their need to retain their original name is more predominant than that of the average. It points out that the frequency and spread of family names with the co-ordinate structure officially permitted since 2004 indicates a significant change in society.