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The growing distance between proper names and common nouns in German: On the way to onymic schema constancy

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Abstract: The aim of this article is twofold. Firstly, it shows that the history of German proper name inflection is a story of profound change. Proper names started out being inflected like common nouns; later, the reduction of their inflectional endings eventually resulted in a distinct declension class of proper names. Furthermore, gender assignment in proper names is different from that of common nouns, and today proper names may be accompanied by classifiers that have evolved from the definite article. Additionally, proper names show particularities concerning their syntactical behavior, word-formation processes, and orthography. While (most of) these developments provide evidence for change, they can, at the same time, be functionally interpreted as strategies to preserve the name shape for reasons of recognition. A second aim of this article is therefore to show that, as proper names are specific linguistic units, they deserve specific treatment. Most of the changes serve to stabilize the “name body” (schema consistency) and to mark morphological boundaries.

Keywords: language change, name grammar, gender assignment, classifiers, deflection, schema constancy

1 Proper names as specific linguistic units

Proper names (PN) are specific linguistic units that differ in several aspects from common nouns (CN), their closest linguistic neighbors. They therefore deserve specific grammatical treatment. First of all, PNs lack lexical meaning and thus refer they directly to one specific entity: *Berlin* and *Düsseldorf* uniquely refer to towns and *Iris Bauer* denotes a person. While many PNs are opaque in that they do not contain lexical material (*Berlin*, *Köln*), others are semi-transparent

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(*Düsseldorf*) in that they partially consist of existing CNs (here: *-dorf* ‘village’). They differ, however, in that the lexical meaning of these CNs is not activated: *Düsseldorf* is not a village but actually a town. Typically, these similarities between CNs and PNs will not give rise to misunderstanding; in particular, specific grammatical features prevent PNs from being misinterpreted as CNs (see Section 2 and Fleischer 1964; Kalverkämper 1978, Kalverkämper 1994; Debus 1980; Kolde 1995; Anderson 2007; Van Langendonck 2007; Nübling et al. 2015: 64–92). In other cases, PNs do make use of lexical material, in that PNs are identical with existent lexemes (full transparency): *Iris* is a species of flower as well as a first name, *Bauer* is a profession (‘farmer’) as well as a family name. The first name *Wolfgang* combines two lexemes (*Wolf* ‘wolf’ + *Gang* ‘corridor’/‘walk, gait’) in an unusual way, i.e., there is no CN compound containing these two constituents (originally, this name expressed wishes for the newborn boy: ‘may he march into battle like a wolf’). The fact that PNs make use of CN material can be easily explained by their emergence from CNs as most PNs are former CNs. This formal similarity, which contrasts with their functional dissimilarity, requires strategies that signal to the hearer whether s/he is dealing with a PN or a CN. Unlike PNs, CNs function semantically by relying solely on their lexical content: the CN *Stadt* ‘town’ denotes all members of the class of big settlements, and *Dorf* ‘village’ denotes all members of the class of small settlements. There is evidence that PNs and CNs are organized and processed in rather different ways (Yasuda et al. 2000).

As PNs are semantically void and formally often opaque, they cannot be translated, apart from some (transparent) exceptions such as *Schwarzwald* → Engl. *Black Forest*, Span. *Selva Negra*. Usually, and if one takes the history of German into account, also increasingly, foreign PNs are transferred unaltered to German, including their pronunciation (for example, German newsreaders increasingly tend to pronounce PNs as accurately as possible, trying to come as close to the source language pronunciation as they can). All in all, PNs constitute a “word class” with many foreign elements and deviating phonological structures. Even in the absence of relevant studies, it seems quite likely that the number of foreign PNs is higher than that of foreign CNs, which have usually integrated over the years. Furthermore, while the acquisition of CNs markedly decreases after first language acquisition, we continue being faced with new (usually foreign) PNs. The higher foreign character of, and the daily confrontation with, new PNs help explain why the shape of PNs has to be preserved. PNs should be left as unchanged and untouched as possible, because they must be recognizable as such. As they are hard to learn (and easy to forget), they should be kept as stable as possible. This explains most linguistic developments of PNs, which share the same purpose of preserving the “body”, i.e., the shape of the name: neither

internal modifications (umlaut) nor external modifications (affixes) serve this target of maintaining recognizability. Both processes, first internal and later external modification, have been dramatically reduced in the history of German.

PNs further exhibit some specific characteristics. As they ideally refer to one entity, they tend to be restricted to the singular. In fact, this is mostly the case, though not always, because objects (persons, towns) can share the same name. However, the PN plural differs functionally from the CN plural. The plural *Städte* ‘towns’ denotes objects sharing many similarities: settlements of a certain size and number of inhabitants, with a specific infrastructure, etc. If an object does not match these features, it can be denied the label *Stadt* and can be called village or a farm instead. In contrast, the plural of the PN *Frankfurt* can denote completely different objects which only share the fact that they were named identically. In Germany, there are two towns named *Frankfurt* and those *Frankfurts* are not more similar to each other than any two other towns in Germany. Additionally, *Frankfurt* also serves as a family name to nearly one hundred people. Accordingly, the plural formation of PNs works differently, apart from the fact that PNs have different ways of forming the plural. As will be shown in Section 2.2, PNs also differ in terms of gender assignment. Finally, as PNs are (usually) monoreferential, they are inherently definite. In contrast, CNs need to be marked for definiteness, for instance, by articles or other grammatical means. These functional differences lead to a specific morphosyntactic PN behavior. Furthermore, it will be shown that formal differences between PNs and CNs have increased during the history of German (Ackermann 2016). Figure 1 lists some diverging formal features that emerged as late as in Early New High German (ENHG: 1350–1650), with innovations printed in italics. PNs and CNs make complementary use of conservative as well as of innovative strategies. In the following sections, these divergences will be presented and discussed.

Section 2 focuses on the growing distance between PNs and CNs with regard to deflection (Section 2.1), special gender assignment rules (Section 2.2), the development of classifiers (Section 2.3), the behavior of pre- versus postnominal genitives (Section 2.4), word formation (Section 2.5), and orthography (Section 2.6). Section 3 explains most of these developments as strategies to preserve the name shape for reasons of recognition.

2 A closer look at the growing distance between PNs and CNs

In the following sections, special emphasis is placed on how PNs and CNs diverge morphosyntactically. Therefore, some of the features in Figure 1 will be investigated more thoroughly than others.

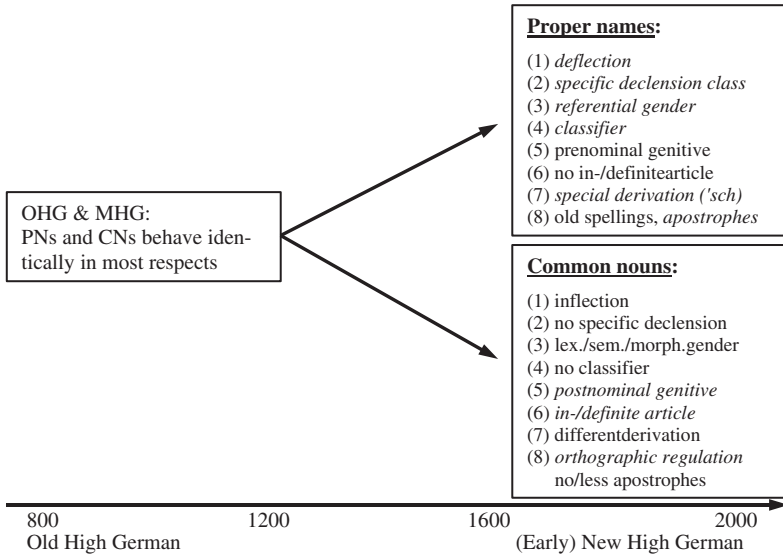


Figure 1: The growing distance between PNs and CNs in (Early) New High German.

2.1 Deflection of proper names

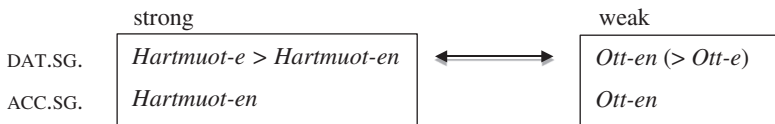
The deflection of PNs, which is not well investigated, seems to have started as late as the seventeenth or even eighteenth century (Paul 1917; Nübling 2012; most information in Ackermann 2016). In Old High German (OHG) and Middle High German (MHG), PNs and CNs shared the same declension system, but PNs exhibited some additional grammatical features. In OHG, most PNs consisted of native linguistic material and were completely integrated into the inflectional system, as can be seen in Table 1. There were only few differences between PNs and CNs. Interestingly, PNs had more explicit markers for inflectional categories than CNs, as around 800, they had more explicit case markers than CNs. For instance, PNs of the masculine *a*-class had a special accusative ending *-an* (underlined in Table 1) instead of zero; this is explained by a loan from the adjectival declension (Schatz 1927: 252), as adjectives always distinguish between the nominative and the accusative. Many first names originally were compounds and often contained adjectives (e.g., *Helm-brecht* ‘helmet’ + adjective ‘splendid, bright’). De-adjectival *-an* then spread to all PNs. As bearers of PNs are usually highly animate, formal marking of the agent/patient-distinction is useful. The same holds for strong feminine nouns (second column): they showed a special zero-ending in the nominative, whereas CNs had the marker *-a*, which

Table 1: The integration of PNs in the declension system in Old High German (OHG).

Case	Strong declension classes (PNs with final consonant)				Weak declension classes (PNs with final vowel)	
	Masculine <i>a</i> -class	Feminine <i>ō</i> -class	Feminine <i>i</i> -class	Masculine <i>u</i> -class	Feminine	Masculine
NOM	<i>Hartmuot</i>	<i>Gundrūn-<u>ō</u></i>	<i>Hiltigart</i>	<i>Stetifurt-u</i>	<i>Mari-a</i>	<i>Ott-o</i>
GEN	<i>Hartmuot-es</i>	<i>Gundrūn-a</i>	<i>Hiltigart-ī</i>	<i>Stetifurt-es</i>	<i>Mari-ūn</i>	<i>Ott-en (-in)</i>
DAT	<i>Hartmuot-e</i>	<i>Gundrūn-u</i>	<i>Hiltigart-ī</i>	<i>Stetifurt-iu</i>	<i>Mari-ūn</i>	<i>Ott-en (-in)</i>
ACC	<i>Hartmuot-an</i>	<i>Gundrūn-a</i>	<i>Hiltigart</i>	<i>Stetifurt-u</i>	<i>Mari-ūn</i>	<i>Ott-on (-un)</i>

blurred a nominative/genitive/accusative-distinction. Altogether then, the declensions of PNs and CNs were largely similar (note in this respect that the weak declension classes showed many syncretisms).

In Middle High German (MHG), vowel reduction in unstressed syllables led to a similarity between the dative and accusative forms of strong and weak masculines: while the accusative ending *-en* was the same for both classes (*Hartmuoten*, *Otten*), the original strong dative *Hartmuote* was influenced by the weak class and adopted the ending *-en* (*Hartmuoten*). Less frequently, the weak dative was influenced by the strong ending *-e* (*Otten* besides *Otte*). Thus, the phonological weakening of the inflectional endings led to ambiguous forms, as represented in Figure 2:

**Figure 2:** Mutual inflectional influences between weak and strong PN classes.

Over time, the dative ending *-en* became very successful and even spread to the strong feminine class. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, however, this ending being connoted pejoratively was used to refer to people of lower class before it eventually disappeared. For instance, Hermann Paul (1917: § 111) states for the eighteenth century that the datives and accusatives with *-(e)n* started being considered vulgar. Today, these inflectional endings are lost completely.¹

¹ Fuß (2011) debates whether the plural ending *-en* could have favored the loss of the homophonous case ending.

With regard to the genitive, the MHG weak ending *-en* was often even supplemented by strong genitive *-s* in ENHG: *Franz-en* > *Franz-ens*. This onymic double genitive suffix has survived until today and still applies to some monosyllabic first names and family names ending in *-[s]*: *Hans-ens Familie* ‘Hans’ family’, *Marx-ens Geburtstag* ‘Marx’s birthday’. Apart from this, weak *-en* was replaced by strong *-s*: *Otten* > *Ottos* ‘Otto’s’. Note that the ending *-s* best preserves the whole PN *Otto*, whereas *-en* requires the deletion of the last vowel: *Otto* (nominative) → *Ott-en* (genitive). This is an important fact that explains the linguistic career of the *s*-marker, also for the plural. Thus, genitive *-s* superseded all other genitive variants and became a *superstable marker* (in the sense of Wurzel 1987, Wurzel 2001). As a result, the onymic declension classes merged. This also holds for feminine names, which equally switched to the declension of the strong masculine class without giving up their feminine gender (nominative *Anna* → genitive *Annen* (weak) > *Annas* (strong)). This morphological development of PNs was completely different from that of CNs. In NHG, the CN inflection strongly separates feminine and masculine classes (the number of differences between these two classes is even higher than in earlier periods), whereas the PN declension displays a clear feminine–masculine convergence. Today, we can observe the deflection of the last genitive allomorph *-ens*: *Hans-ens Familie* is turning to *Hans’ Familie* ‘Hans’ family’.² Konopka and Fuß (2016: 188) found that genitives of PNs ending in *[s]* exhibit old *-ens* in 4.3% of the cases.

All in all, the former onymic case allomorphs were lost and turned into one uniform suffix. This can be regarded as paradigmatic deflection.

What followed was syntagmatic deflection, i.e., the complete loss of case endings. This process operated on the PN body itself. In the eighteenth century, a rapid reduction of the DAT/ACC-ending *-en* > *-∅* occurred:

- (1) *ich habe Karl-en gesehen* > *ich habe Karl_ gesehen*
 I have Karl-ACC seen > I have Karl_ seen
 ‘I saw Karl.’

² Thus, *-s* is the last genitive morpheme. Interestingly, PNs never show the long (syllabic) ending *-es* (except for some monosyllabic names already ending in *-s*), which otherwise is purely phonologically conditioned, as can be seen with common nouns: if they end in plosives or consonant clusters, *-es* is preferred (*des Kopfes* ‘of the head’), whereas the more voiced the final sound is, the more frequently the short allomorph *-s* is used (*des Zoos*/**des Zooes* ‘of the zoo’; see Szczepaniak 2010). Even these phonological allomorphs are suppressed on PNs (Nübling 2012: 232; Nübling et al. 2015: 70–71).

Subsequently, genitive inflection was increasingly omitted, a tendency which continues to the present day. Goethe's *Leiden des jungen Werthers* 'The Sorrows of Young Werther' appeared in 1774 and still inflected the PN, whereas -s was dropped in the second edition from 1787: *die Leiden des jungen Werther*. This led to a further morphosyntactic development, namely the emergence of mono-inflected noun phrases (NPs) with PNs. If case is already marked, e.g., on an article (here *des*), it is expressed only once and not again on the PN (Duden-Grammatik 2016: §§1517, 1534; Ackermann 2016).

At the end of the nineteenth century, grammarians observed that toponyms as well started lacking a genitive marker: "Der Genetiv der nicht-deutschen männlichen Flußnamen entbehrt bisweilen das -s, z.B. *des Nils – des Nil*. In neuerer Zeit fehlt das Genetivzeichen nicht selten auch bei den Namen deutscher Flüsse, z.B. *An den Ufern des Neckar, des Main*." [The genitive of foreign river names sometimes lacks the ending -s, e.g., *des Nils – des Nil*. Nowadays, even the names of German rivers do without the genitive marker, e.g., *An den Ufern des Neckar, des Main* 'at the riverbank of the Neckar, the Main'] (Blatz 1900: 342).

An advantage of deflection is that it supports the preservation of the shape of PNs. In this sense, Steche (1927: 142) states: if (personal) PNs are inflected, the base form cannot be clearly deduced, i.e., the PN's identity is endangered. For instance, an inflected form such as *Franken* could (in the nineteenth century) be derived from three different nominative base forms: *Frank*, *Franke*, and *Franken* could be the base form of inflected *Franken*. In other words, as the onymic identity (or integrity) was compromised by inflection, the base form of the PN could not be identified anymore. This led to the long-term result that PNs tend towards deflection.

The need for a stable PN shape also results from the fact that PNs are difficult to process for a number of reasons. Mainly, they show specific semiotic (referential) particularities such as direct reference to an entity. As they furthermore have usually developed from CNs, there is a high need for formal and grammatical differentiation. In addition, they occur altogether less frequently than CNs. As Zimmer (2016) points out, mountain names such as *Großglockner*, *Zugspitze*, or *Mont Blanc* occur less frequently than the corresponding CN *Berg* 'mountain'. PNs are therefore harder to memorize – a processing difficulty that is also contributed to by the fact that PNs, as frequent borrowings, often contain foreign structures.

Evidence for the fact that foreign phonological features are harder to process is provided by a corpus-based study of native and foreign river names. Nübling (2012) and Nowak and Nübling (2017) show that s-suffixation directly depends on the degree of foreignness. More native structures (*Rhein*, *Schwarzwald*,

Balkan) tend to take more *s*-endings, while increasing foreignness (*Orinoco*, *Mississippi*) correlates with increased zero endings. Native phonological structures consist of monosyllabic words or trochees ending in a reduced second syllable with [ə] or [ɐ]. Thus, *des Orinocos* only occurs in 3% of the cases with *-s*, *des Rheins* in 99.5%. Ackermann and Zimmer (2017) conducted a reading experiment and showed that PNs (and difficult CNs) without genitive inflection are processed much faster than inflected ones.

Last but not least, PNs belong to a “word class” which has to be acquired throughout life. Every day we are confronted with dozens of new PNs, but not with that many new CNs or verbs. Most of the PNs are soon forgotten; some have to be learned because of their important referents. Thus, PNs are marked units in many respects.

A further factor for maintaining the stability of names is animacy, as pointed out by Kempf (this issue) and Zimmer (2016). Personal names deserve more stability because they refer to animate subjects, whereas toponyms are less relevant to a person’s identity. When considering the grammatical behavior or the history of PNs, it appears that animacy always plays an important role (animate PNs often change earlier and faster, as could be seen with deflection).

Based on a written newspaper corpus, Zimmer (2016) tested the impact of each of these factors (phonological foreignness, frequency, animacy) on the genitive formation of toponyms. As further factors, he included the graphematic foreignness (or markedness) and the so-called familiarity of the PN to the speaker, which correlates with his/her geographical (and supposedly conceptual) distance to the named object. Familiarity is not identical to token frequency.³ Zimmer (2016: 136) suggests that *-s* is more likely to be used when a name is frequent and/or familiar. Furthermore, animacy (which is perceived to be higher in country names since countries are inhabited, in contrast to rivers, deserts or oceans)⁴ favors the occurrence of *-s*, while a large number of full vowels disfavor it (leading to zero). Thus, frequency, familiarity, the differences between more animate country names and other less animate names and marked phonological features are significant, with the number of full vowels

³ For example, Zimmer (2016) shows that in Swiss newspapers *Engadin*, as the PN of a Swiss region, takes the zero ending in the genitive only in 3% of the cases (rest: *-s*), whereas German and Austrian newspapers preserve the PN shape significantly more by using zero in 45% of the cases. Further details (Zimmer 2016) confirm the highly relevant status of the factor “familiarity”.

⁴ For this concept of animacy see Fraurud (2000). Here, inhabited locations, such as countries and towns, are called “people containers”, in contrast to rivers, oceans, mountains, and deserts. Zimmer (2016) also uses this broader notion of animacy.

being decisive.⁵ Hence, the deflection of the genitive is conditioned by a bundle of factors (see also Konopka and Fuß 2016).⁶

Deflection has also affected the plural formation of PNs. PNs originally (here, in the nineteenth century) exhibited the same allomorphs as CNs: e.g., umlaut + *-e* (*Hans* → *Hänse*), pure *-e* (*Sokrates* → *Sokratess-e*), *-en* (*Maria* → *Mari-en*), *-s* (*Alexander* → *Alexander-s*), and zero (*Richter*-Ø). Eventually, two of these were lost, leaving *-s*, zero (after word-final *-er*: *zwei* ‘two’ *Alexander*-Ø), and *-e* (after word-final *-s*: *zwei* ‘two’ *Tobiass-e*). Today, there is a tendency to drop *-s* and *-e* and to generalize to zero-marking: *die beiden Deutschlands* > *die beiden Deutschland-Ø* ‘the two Germanys’.⁷ At present, *-s*, *-e* and zero still co-occur, depending on the factors mentioned above.

In sum, these linguistic changes have led to the fact that today, unlike in OHG and MHG, PNs have developed a specific declension class, which is characterized by deflection (Duden-Grammatik = Dudenredaktion (eds.) 2016: § 298). Contrary to CNs, they are uninflected in the singular, except for the genitive (*-s*), if not indicated otherwise. This mono-inflection does not hold for CNs, e.g., *der Geburtstag des Bruders*/**des Bruder-Ø* ‘the brother’s birthday’. As mentioned above, the genitive of feminine PNs is also marked by the *s*-marker (*Annas Geburtstag* ‘Anna’s birthday’), which is completely impossible for feminine CNs.

2.2 Referential gender assignment of proper names

Gender assignment principles are much debated (Corbett 1991; Köpcke and Zubin 1996; Köpcke and Zubin 2009). Unfortunately, PNs are often not considered in these discussions. Only one study, by Dahl (2000), has, thus far, clearly described that referential gender assignment is crucial for PNs. Essentially, there

5 “Bedeutsam sind also Frequenz, Vertrautheit, die Unterschiede zwischen belebteren Staatennamen und weniger belebten anderen Namen sowie markierte phonologische Merkmale, wobei hier die Anzahl der Vollvokale ausschlaggebend ist.” [Thus, frequency, familiarity and the differences between more animate names of countries and names of lower animacy are relevant as well as marked phonological properties with the number of full vowels being crucial.] (Zimmer 2016: 136).

6 These developments cannot be easily transferred to other languages. Hoekstra (2010) shows for some West Germanic dialects that case was preserved on PNs. This makes sense as the referents of names are usually animate and can therefore occupy the agent as well as the patient position, which is highly relevant. Deflection seems to depend on foreign structures. My impression is that (personal) names in these Germanic dialects exhibit rather native structures.

7 As a reviewer noted, the English spelling of the plural PN <Germanys> confirms that language users do not like changing the internal structure of PNs (<-y> + <s> is usually changed to <-ies>: <country – countries>).

are (i) formal and (ii) (in a wider sense) semantic gender assignment principles for CNs and/or PNs.

- (i) The first group of principles makes gender formally deducible. Phonological principles have less of an impact on gender assignment in German and only consist of a few tendencies. For instance, disyllabic trochaic words with [ə] in the last syllable have a high probability of being feminine, whereas monosyllabic words with consonant clusters are often masculine. Morphological principles are very relevant and override all the other principles. Accordingly, diminutives ending in *-chen* or *-lein* are always neuter, whatever the original gender of the CN base: *der Mann* (m.) → *das Männchen* (n.) ‘the small man’. Derived words in *-ung* and *-heit* are always feminine; those ending in *-ling* and *-er* (agent nouns) are masculine.
- (ii) The second group relates to the meaning or the referent of the CN. To start with, a very important principle operating in German, but the least predictable one, is that of lexical gender assignment, that is, gender assignment is arbitrary. Often cited examples are *Messer* (n.), *Gabel* (f.), and *Löffel* (m.) ‘knife, fork, spoon’, whose genders have to be learned. In the case of semantic assignment (in the narrow sense), gender can be derived from the meaning of the word. For example, CNs denoting fruits are always feminine (*die Mango*, *die Ananas* ‘mango, pineapple’).⁸ More importantly, female humans are feminine and males are masculine. In the case of PNs, which by definition do not carry meaning, gender is determined by the (group of) objects the PN belongs to (referential gender). PNs of ships are always feminine (*die Kaiser Wilhelm*, *die Titanic*), names of countries⁹ and towns are neuter (*Dänemark*, *Kopenhagen* ‘Denmark, Copenhagen’), names of mountains and cars are masculine (*Schauinsland*, *Opel Ascona*). Thus, PNs do not have gender as such, but rather derive it from their referent. Hence, one and the same PN can be assigned different genders depending on the referent: *die Yamaha* may be a motorbike, *der Yamaha* a car, and *das Yamaha* a hotel or a restaurant.

There is even an additional assignment level, which only holds for personal names and has thus far only been attested in German dialects and in

⁸ With two exceptions: *Apfel* ‘apple’ and *Pfirsich* ‘peach’, both masculine.

⁹ There are a few exceptions such as *die Schweiz* (f.) ‘Switzerland’, *der Irak* ‘Iraq’, *der Iran* ‘Iran’, etc. Interestingly, they come with an obligatory article, which is not common for names of countries in German. Currently, *der Irak* and *der Iran* are losing their article and then sometimes show neuter gender on corresponding pronouns (Nübling 2015b). Thus, some of these exceptions are entering the prototypical class of country names.

Luxembourgish, namely pragmatic gender. German dialects allow for different genders (feminine or neuter) for the first names of females, depending on the social relation between speaker and referent, the referent's age, her marital status, her education, and other factors which can differ from dialect to dialect (see Nübling et al. 2013, Nübling 2015a). *Die Anna* (f.) 'Anna (f.)' usually denotes a socially independent, generally married woman with a profession and a certain social status, whereas *das Anna* (n.) is a young, generally unmarried girl or woman from the village who is not highly educated and possibly related to the speaker (in which case she could also be, for instance, his/her aunt or grandmother). A clearly pejorative neuter gender associated with surnames is described in Nübling (2014a). An example is *Merkel*, the surname of the German chancellor, which turns into neuter (*das Merkel*) when she is severely criticized or even insulted. Thus, it is quite likely that one and the same female is assigned two different genders depending on the relation to or her evaluation by the speaker. As this kind of gender forms a paradigm, it behaves like a real grammatical category with a specific function. Gender can thus be said to have been refunctionalized. In sum, there are two different gender assignment principles exclusively applicable to PNs: referential and pragmatic gender (for further details see Fahlbusch and Nübling 2014; Nübling 2017).

This raises the question how PNs acquired their referential gender if they mostly developed from CNs. German *Burg* 'castle' is feminine and it is also a part of the PN *Freiburg* (a town), which, in contrast, has neuter gender (*das schöne Freiburg* (n.) '(the) beautiful Freiburg' (n.)). During language history some PNs have adopted a purely referential gender (No. 1 in Figure 2), as *Freiburg* (n.) has done observing the rule that town names are neuter. German names for mountains tend to be masculine, although their referential gender is not as established as with other PN classes (therefore this category appears in brackets in Figure 3). More recent PNs, which are not yet fully dissociated from their former CN (but are nevertheless PNs), first inherit the former CN's gender ("morphological gender"). Here, many items denoting mountains still show the morphological gender (No. 3 in Figure 2): *der Schönberg* (m.), *die Zugspitze* (f.), *das Matterhorn* (n.), with the last constituents (underlined) determining gender. Doubtful cases, such as *die/der Annapurna* (f./m.) or *die/der Rigi* (f./m.), show the change from the original feminine to the referential masculine gender. Sometimes PNs adopt the gender of the corresponding CN, which holds for syntagmatic mountain names such as *der Schauinsland* (m.), lit. 'the look-in-the-countryside' (m.) or opaque PNs such as *der K2* (m.), both in line with the gender of *Berg* (m.) 'mountain'. In many cases, the gender of the corresponding CN (No. 2) and the referential gender (No. 1) are the same and cannot be clearly distinguished. In other cases, however, they diverge: the CN *Schiff* 'ship' is

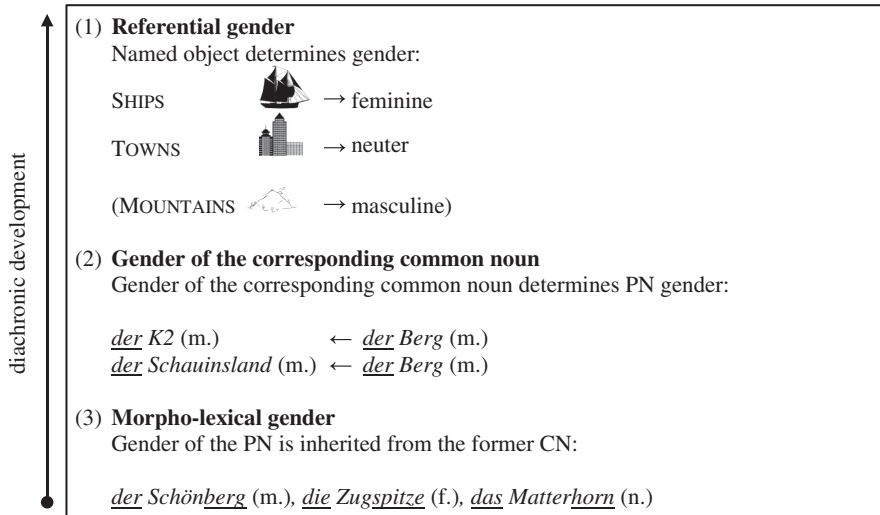


Figure 3: The diachronic path to referential proper name gender (based on Fraurud 2000).

neuter, while ship names are feminine; the CN *Stadt* ‘town’ is feminine, while town names are neuter.

In general, there are two paths which lead to referential gender. First, when a PN was accompanied by a (classifier-like) CN denoting the object, the CN could later (when the name was well-established) disappear, and its gender would be transferred to the remaining PN: ENHG *Ägyptenland* (n.) > NHG *Ägypten* (n.) ‘Egypt’, *der Amazonasfluss/der Amazonasstrom* (both m.) ‘the Amazonas river’ > *der Amazonas* (m.) ‘the Amazonas’.¹⁰ Today, names of insurance companies are losing their CN part, *Versicherung* (f.) ‘insurance’, and thereby adopt feminine gender: *die X-Versicherung* (f.) > *die X* (f.), *die Hannover Rück*, *die Roland*, *die Mobiliar*, *die HUK* [‘høk]. The same process currently applies to names of newspapers: *die BILD-Zeitung* (f.) ‘the Bild newspaper’ > *die BILD* (f.) (the CN *Bild* ‘picture’ is neuter). In other cases, the old CN was lost or became infrequent, but its gender has been retained. e.g., NHG *der Wagen* (m.) ‘car’, which has been replaced by *das Auto* (n.) (roughly since the 1960s). As names of cars were first coined about one hundred years ago, the old masculine gender of *Wagen* has been retained and remains dominant.

¹⁰ There is a rather interesting gender difference between German and many other European rivers, which are feminine (*die Donau* [f.] ‘the Danube’), and rivers of other continents, whose names are masculine (*der Mississippi* [m.]). For an explanation, see Fahlbusch and Nübling (2014).

Second, referential gender can be borrowed from other languages. The feminine gender of ship names in German cannot have derived from a German CN (*Schiff* ‘ship’ and *Boot* ‘boat’ are both neuter). Here, the feminine gender was taken from Greek ship names (the Greeks were very early to name their ships). It is difficult to explain the origin of the feminine gender of German (and many European) river names, as in *die Donau* (f.), *die Elbe*, etc.¹¹ Feminine gender is highly productive and has already replaced many masculine river names (e.g., *der Drau* (m.) > *die Drau* (f.)). It is assumed that the feminine is rather old and was taken from Germanic or from a Celtic language (more details in Fahlbusch and Nübling 2014, Fahlbusch and Nübling 2016).

When PNs develop from CNs (which is the most typical way), they often change their original gender. This is a further means to distinguish CNs from PNs (see Section 1). Moreover, gender provides some information about the named object; for instance, neuter names can refer to towns and countries but not to rivers, airplanes, and cars. These changes in gender assignment seem to be rather recent, i.e., they did not yet exist in OHG and MHG. At that time, few foreign, and therefore opaque, names existed, and they were often accompanied by their corresponding CN (*Ägyptenland*, *Berg Sinai*). Steche (1927: 81) writes “Aber diese Einheitlichkeit ist geschichtlich sehr jung; im Ahd. und Mhd. konnten die Namen der Orte und Länder jedes Sprachgeschlecht haben”. [However, this uniformity [that all names of towns and countries are neuter] is very recent; in OHG and MHG, the names of towns and countries could have any gender]. This is also confirmed by Paul (1917), who shows that town names could have any gender. It is supposed that frequently occurring neuter constituents, such as *-dorf* (n.) ‘village’, *-heim* (n.) ‘home’, *-tal* (n.) ‘valley’, led to generalization, so that today all town names are assigned neuter gender (Fleischer 1964; Debus 1980).

Like other onymic developments, referential gender has only emerged in the last centuries. This process is still on-going.¹² So far, the diachronic development of PN grammar has hardly been investigated and much research still needs to be done (see, however, Ackermann 2016).

2.3 Development of onymic classifiers

There is another significant divergence between CNs and PNs, which is also quite recent. PNs are on their way to establishing classifiers that develop from the definite article in combination with gender. Classifiers are a type of nominal classification

¹¹ Some exceptions remain, such as *der Rhein* (m.) ‘the Rhine river’, *der Main* (m.) ‘the Main river’.

¹² First names make an interesting exception, as their gender is inherent and corresponds to sex.

comprising meaningful and independent items that usually grammaticalized from lexical elements and occur next to the noun. In contrast to gender, classifiers do not show agreement. They are “selected largely according to semantic criteria” (Corbett 1991: 137). Thus, one and the same noun may have different classifiers (more details in Bisang 2002; Grinevald 2000; Grinevald 2002; Kilarski 2014). Thus, the development of the definite article in combination with gender to a classifier can be regarded as a case of de-grammaticalization (see below).

Many PN classes (e.g., mountain names) are accompanied by an obligatory definite article (so-called primary articles); others come without an article (e.g., town names).¹³ The combination of the presence (+) or absence (–) of a primary article and three genders leads to a system of six different PN classes (see Table 2).

Since PNs are inherently definite, there is no grammatical requirement for definite articles, and a closer look reveals that the onymic article behaves differently compared to definite articles before CNs. Not surprisingly, there is no paradigmatic opposition to other articles which are also excluded for semantic reasons: *der Rhein* – **kein Rhein/*ein Rhein*; *die Schweiz* – **keine Schweiz/*eine Schweiz*. Negation with *kein* ‘no’ and replacement by the indefinite article *ein* ‘a’ is not possible (apart from very specific exceptions). This has led to the assumption that the onymic article is an expletive article (Longobardi 1994) or that it only serves to determine case. In fact, the earlier definite article before PNs is on its way to becoming a real classifier. This can be demonstrated most clearly by using an invented PN, *Fifibu*, and the associations which it elicits when combined with different genders in combination with and without an article (Table 3).

As the article (i.e., the classifier) in German is the most obvious gender marker (gender is not marked on the CN/PN itself), it is hard to deduce gender from PNs without a classifier accompanying them.¹⁴ This explains why PNs without classifiers are typically of neuter gender. The classes No. 5 and No. 6

Table 2: The abstract six-class system of German PNs.

	Neuter	Feminine	Masculine
+ article	1	2	3
– article	4	5	6

¹³ Town names (and other types of PNs lacking the primary article) can take a so-called secondary article, if they are accompanied by an attribute: *Das schöne Freiburg* ‘the beautiful Freiburg’, *das Freiburg des 17. Jhs.* ‘the Freiburg of the 17th century’.

¹⁴ Moreover, PNs as monoreferential units are neither often combined with adjectives nor frequently followed by relative or personal pronouns, i.e., gender can hardly be detected.

Table 3: The invented PN *Fifibu* and its associations with different objects depending on +/- article and gender.

	Neuter	Feminine	Masculine
+ article	1. <i>das Fifibu</i> : → restaurant → hotel → beer (→ further objects)	2. <i>die Fifibu</i> : → river in Germany → ship, airplane → journal (→ further objects) → woman	3. <i>der Fifibu</i> : → river outside Germany → mountain → car (→ further objects) → man
– article	4. \emptyset <i>Fifibu</i> (n.): → town → country → continent	5. \emptyset <i>Fifibu</i> (f.): → woman	6. \emptyset <i>Fifibu</i> (m.): → man

do not have many members: \emptyset *Fifibu* in the feminine or masculine can only refer to a woman or a man. However, in (spoken) German, there is a strong tendency to place the article (classifier) before personal names. In the northern part of Germany, as well as in standard German, personal names are still used without the article. Table 3 indicates that the combination of gender and +/- classifier is closely connected with specific objects. This is exactly the function of classifiers: they provide information about the denoted objects and divide them into different classes. The diachronic change from definite article to classifier is a case of de-grammaticalization, whereby highly grammatical elements (article) or even features (gender) have been reanalyzed and refunctionalized to indicate the class (or a small group of classes) of a named referent (more details in Nübling 2015b, Nübling to appear).

2.4 Pre- versus postnominal genitives

Originally, genitives mostly preceded their head nouns: *meines Vaters Haus* > *das Haus meines Vaters* ‘my father’s house’. This syntactic change from pre- to postnominal position already started in OHG and gained in speed and scope in ENHG, lasting until today. Determining factors in the shift were: the length of the genitive attribute (the more complex, the more often it would be placed postnominally), definiteness (indefinite genitives were postnominal), concreteness and abstractness (abstract nouns were positioned postnominally earlier), animacy (inanimate genitives were postnominal), and individuation (PNs were positioned prenominally, CNs postnominally). There

were no rigid rules governing these cases, but strong tendencies (more details in Kopf 2016).

Today, PNs, personal names in particular, typically precede the head noun if they do not come with an obligatory (onymic) article, whereas CNs, even if animate, are in postposition (Ackermann 2016). Thus, CNs and PNs are almost, but not quite, in complementary distributions: *Manfreds Haus*, *Vatis Haus* (both genitives are PNs) vs. *das Haus meines Vaters* (CN). As Peschke (2014) points out, short personal names most often precede the noun (*Merkels Politik* ‘Merkel’s politics’), whereas complex PNs tend to be used postnominally (*die Politik Angela Merkels*) or employ periphrastic *von* ‘of’ (*die Politik von Angela Merkel* ‘the politics of A.M.’).¹⁵ Toponyms tend to follow the head noun due to low animacy, although PNs of towns and states as “people containers” (Fraurud 2000: 199–204) occur preminally. Thus, the animacy hierarchy can be extended as follows: PRONOUNS [1ST PERSON < 2ND PERSON < 3RD PERSON] < PROPER NAMES [PERSONAL NAMES < TOPONYMS [COUNTRY NAMES < RIVER NAMES]] < KINSHIP TERMS < OTHER HUMANS < OTHER ANIMATES < INANIMATES. Some kinship terms can be used as PNs if they are definite and occur without an article: *Vaters Socken*, *Omas Buch*, *Tantes Kuchen* ‘father’s socks, grandma’s book, aunt’s cake’. These highly animate entities also precede their head noun and take the uniform possessive *s*-marker which can be classified as a clitic (Fuß 2011; Ackermann 2016).

It is debatable whether these differences are stable, as many PNs increasingly move to the postnominal position, mostly embedded in a PP introduced by *von* ‘of’. In a corpus-based study carried out by Peschke (2012), about one third of personal name genitives follow the head noun if the PN is (highly) complex and if the PN genitive as well as the head noun show a low degree of animacy. A study by Eisenberg and Smith (2002) shows that anthroponyms still tend to occur preminally (66% of the personal names), whereas toponyms slightly prefer postnominal position (56% of the toponyms). Preminally PN genitives are mostly interpreted as agents (*Annas Entdeckung* ‘Anna’s discovery’, i.e., Anna discovers something) and postnominal genitives as patients (*die Entdeckung Annas* ‘the discovery of Anna’, i.e., Anna is discovered). Due to the fact that the syntactic behavior of PNs is formally and functionally conditioned, it is not easy to make general statements. However, the position of the genitive relative to the head noun still marks a distinction between CNs and PNs. This specific syntactic behavior helps to distinguish CNs from PNs.

¹⁵ Furthermore, polysyllabic PNs ending in *-s* (e.g. *Rüttgers*) always occur postnominally, since they are not able to mark the genitive (no further *-s* can be added). Thus, a purely phonological constraint has an impact on syntax.

2.5 Word formation

There are many name-specific morphemes, such as *-ien* (*Indien*) and *-istan* (*Afghanistan*) in toponyms (country names), or *-ina* (*Christina*) and *-ian* (*Florian*) in anthroponyms (Fuhrhop 1998; Fleischer and Barz 2012: 179–184). Whereas these typical morphemes help to build the PNs themselves (and dissociate them from CNs), there are derivational morphemes which originally applied to both PNs and CNs and developed different allomorphs. Kempf (this issue) describes the development of the adjective-forming suffix *-isch* < OHG *-isc*, originally meaning ‘pertaining to/originating from’ (*heidanisc* ‘pertaining to/originating from the heathens’). This suffix splits into two allomorphs: syllabic *-isch*, which is restricted to CNs (*himmlisch* ‘celestial’), and asyllabic *-sch* (mostly written < ‘sch > if the PN is capitalized), which occurs after PNs (*Grimm’sche/grimmsche Märchen* ‘Grimm’s fairytales’). Kempf (this issue) documents the rapid development from *-isch* > *-sch* between 1769 and 1800. Starting as a pure phonological variant, *-sch* became a special suffix sensitive to (anthrop)onymic bases with a purely relational reading (*Kant’scher Gedanke* ‘Kant’s thought’). If a qualitative reading is needed (which rarely occurs), the full suffix *-isch* can still be attached to onymic bases (*kantischer Gedanke* ‘Kantian thought’), interestingly without triggering umlaut. The preserving effect of asyllabic *-sch* leaving the PN intact is pivotal in its occurring with PNs, as in *Goe.the.sche*, with correlating syllable and morpheme boundaries (instead of former *Goe.thi.sche*, affecting the original PN *Goethe*).

Another example is the derivation of female family names, such as *die Müllersche* ‘the daughter or spouse of a man called *Müller*’, which is another path of the same *-(i)sch*-suffix and mainly occurs in the north. In the south, the suffix *-in* is used, e.g. *die Müllerin* (Steffens 2014; Werth 2015; Schmuck 2017). This suffix also attaches to CNs and (nearly) always triggers umlaut: *Arzt* ‘doctor’ → *Ärztin*, *Koch* ‘cook’ → *Köchin*, etc. Even CNs for animals allow this derivation: *Wolf* ‘wolf’ → *Wölfin* ‘she-wolf’. Most interestingly, umlaut also affected derived PNs in former times, but was later eliminated. It has not yet been established when precisely umlaut disappeared. In 1794, Stutz points out the following in his grammar:

Außerdem werden bei einigen die Vokale a, o und u in å, ö und û erhôhet, als: Koch – Köchinn, Narr – Närrin, Rath – Râthinn. Nur bei den Geschlechtsnamen findet diese Erhöhung des Vokals niemahls Statt. Von dem Thiere heißt der weibliche Geschlechtsname Wölfin, aber die Gattin des Herrn Wolf heißt Frau Wolfin.

[In addition, in some derivations the vowels a, o and u are raised to å, ö and û, e.g., Koch – Köchinn, Narr – Närrin, Rath – Râthinn ‘cook, fool, council’. Only family names never exhibit this raising. The female of the animal is Wölfin ‘she-wolf’ but the spouse of Mr Wolf is called Frau Wolfin ‘Ms. Wolfin’.] (Stutz 1794: 305)

As we know, and as Stutz's remark suggests, derived family names were also umlauted in former times. The subsequent loss of umlaut is in line with the claim of onymic schema consistency: a full original PN that appears unchanged in the derivative can be recognized best. Schmuck (2017) investigated ENHG interrogation records and found out that 66 % of the *-in*-derived CNs (which were phonologically able to take umlaut) were umlauted, against family names, which took umlaut in only 38 % of all cases. Thus, CNs and PNs already behaved differently around 1500. Later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the suffixes *-in* and *-sche* started to be used in a downgrading way for negatively perceived women. Today they are no longer used in standard German. They did survive in some dialects, where they are mostly used in a pejorative way. Thus, the observations in Section 2.1 about formerly umlauted plurals (*Kläuse*), which later shifted to uniform *-s* (without umlaut) and today to zero, are confirmed: first, the PN body is rid of internal modifications and at a later stage external modifications can be dropped.

The loss of umlaut also occurred in the diminutives of PNs. Until today, diminutives of CNs trigger umlaut (*Wolf* 'wolf' → *Wölfchen* 'little wolf', *Maus* 'mouse' → *Mäuschen* 'little mouse'); this umlauting originally also held for (personal) PNs: *Hans* → *Hänschen*, *Klaus* → *Kläuschen*. Later, umlauting was given up but a small group of these old diminutives survived. The rule, however, has not been productive for some centuries. Modern PNs are immune to umlaut as they only take the suffix: *Jan* → *Janchen*, *Hanne* → *Hannchen* (compare phonologically similar CNs as *Kanne* 'jug' → *Kännchen* 'small jug'). Lüßy (1974) investigated umlaut phenomena in Swiss German dialects and observed that umlaut is extremely frequent and diverse in Swiss dialects, whereas in some dialects proper names are largely exempt from this morphological umlaut rule. Lüßy also explains this special behavior by the need for word shape protection:

Bei Namen und Bezeichnungen für bestimmte Personen ist offenbar das Bestreben, den Wortkörper unverändert zu erhalten, ausgesprochen stark: die Identität des Lexems muss voll bewahrt bleiben; der Name „steht fest“. – Ein vertrauliches Sichnäherbringen eines Namens durch Diminution [...] wird ohne weiteres gestattet; doch muss der Wortkörper intakt bleiben: die Person, die Sache wird nicht angerührt. Der Name gehört zur Identität der Person, des Ortes.

[Names and nouns for persons clearly show the strong desire to keep the word body unchanged: the identity of the lexeme must be fully preserved. The name "is fixed". A diminutive of a PN allows the speaker to get closer to the bearer of the name, but the word body must remain intact: the person, the thing is not touched. The name belongs to the identity of the person or of the location.] (Lüßy 1974: 186 – my translation)

With regard to family names, Lüßy (1974: 189) makes a particularly important observation:

Lebendige Diminutive zu Geschlechtsnamen haben keinen Umlaut: *Schwarzli, Rötli, [...] Lutzli*. Wenn hier und da ein solches Diminutiv okkasionell mit Umlaut verbunden wird, ist der Ausdruck stark gefühlsbetont und deutlich abschätzig gemeint: *ja dë Schwärzli! was dë wieder gsait hät!*

[Productive diminutives of family names have no umlaut: *Schwarzli, Rötli, [...] Lutzli*. If a diminutive does happen to be formed with umlaut, the expression is strongly affective and clearly pejorative; *ja dë Schwärzli! was dë wieder gsait hät!* 'oh, the Schwärzli! The things he said again!']

Here again, we find a close connection between a modified name body and the pejoration of the named object. This is in line with the prior derivation of female family names and with the dative endings that started to be negatively connoted in the eighteenth century (see Section 2.1). As internal modification affects the word shape more drastically, it seems to have a more negative effect than external modification. Today still, diminutive suffixes do occur, but umlaut has been abandoned. So, whenever inflection or derivation are reduced, this process starts with internal modifications.

Schlücker (2017) investigated compounds with PNs as first constituents and found that, in contrast to CNs, they hardly take linking elements. She explains this by the need for schema constancy. Although German CNs ending in *-ing* always take a linking *-s* (*Frühling + s + rolle* 'spring roll'), it is suppressed in PNs (*Dr.-Frühling-Team* 'Dr. Frühling's team'). The more lexicalized the compound containing a name is, the more linking elements occur (*Valentin + s + tag* 'Valentine's day', *Hiob + s + botschaft* 'Job's news'), although their overall linking rate of 6.1% is still considerably lower than that of CN compounds with a linking rate of around 40% (for details, see Schlücker 2017).

2.6 Orthography

Schlücker (2017) describes another peculiarity of compounds on the graphematic level. As can be seen in <Dr.-Frühling-Team>, compounds with onymic first constituents contain more hyphens in order to mark the boundaries of the constituents (and at the same time their unity) and to preserve the original PN shape. Lexicalized compounds are known widely enough to manage without hyphens (<Hiobsbotschaft>). There is yet another correlation: the more foreign and/or the more complex a PN is, the more hyphens are used, e.g., *Majorana-Effekt*, *King-Charles-Spaniel*.

Another frequently used strategy to mark morphological boundaries and, at the same time, unity is the use of apostrophes. While English employs them before every genitive -s, German strongly restricts their use to PNs. Since the orthographic reform in 2006, the use of these apostrophes (e.g., *Rudi's Autohaus* 'Rudi's car dealer') – a hotly debated issue – is not forbidden anymore.

As Scherer (2010), Scherer (2013), and Nübling (2014b) point out, PNs, especially personal names, attract most apostrophes, historically as well as at present. Figure 4, based on Scherer's (2010) corpus,¹⁶ shows that over the past one hundred years personal names (essentially surnames but also first names) have attracted most of the apostrophes, namely 94 % of all occurrences. Here, animacy is the most relevant factor: PNs referring to humans tend to preserve the "PN body" to the greatest extent. Note that the effect of names and naming on a person is comparable to touching them. Personal names are often felt to be an integral part of a person's identity (as also Lüssy 1974 mentions, see Section 2.5).

In Figure 4, 3 % of the apostrophes refer to "other" PN classes such as toponyms. A closer look at the corpus reveals that these PNs can be characterized as highly foreign (e.g., *Benomatapa*, *Inyanga*, *Pozuzo*). Once again, the above-mentioned (see Section 2.1) list of factors becomes visible: the more foreign and the less familiar and frequent a name, the higher the probability of apostrophes occurring before suffixes.¹⁷ To an even higher degree, this also applies to the remaining 3 % of CNs and "other" instances. Here, abbreviations, acronyms, and borrowings constitute the typical bases (*Jh's* 'century's'; *LKW's* 'truck's'; *Genie's* 'genius's'). Like hyphens, apostrophes separate the suffix from the PN base. As these apostrophes serve morphological demarcation, they are termed "morphographic apostrophes".

In the nineteenth century, apostrophes even preceded the former dative and accusative ending -n: Bauer (1828: 281/282) mentions formations as *von Schröder'n* 'of Schröder (dat.)', *durch Herr Brunner'n* 'by Mr Bunner (acc.)'. Before -n was lost, it was graphically separated by an apostrophe. In this respect, Bauer emphasizes repeatedly that especially PNs should be left unchanged.

¹⁶ This corpus is composed of three big corpora: 1. *The Digital Dictionary of German Language* (DWDS; see www.dwds.de/d/korpora/des/20. Jhs.) covering the twentieth century; 2. the newspaper *Berliner Zeitung*, edition of 1994/95, and 3. the newspaper *Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten* 2003-2005. Here, only the word-final sequence <'s> was extracted, i.e., apostrophes in the middle of the word (*Grimm'sche Märchen*) were excluded.

¹⁷ This assumes that these PNs are inflected in the first place. As we know from Section 2.1, such PNs usually tend to be uninflected. As Scherer (2010) searched for the sequence <'s>, we only get s-genitives.

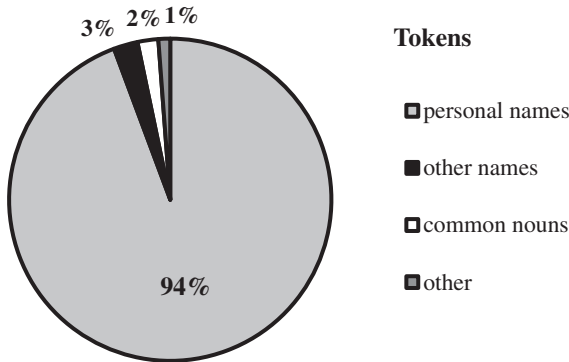


Figure 4: The apostrophe before genitive -s: most frequent bases.

Last but not least, German PNs differ from CNs by not being subject to orthography and common writing principles. PNs have often preserved their old, conservative orthography and thereby dissociated themselves visibly from their CN counterparts. Thus, the German surname <Becker> differs in lacking the special umlaut letter <ä>. In contrast, the CN <Bäcker> ‘professional bread baker’ marks umlaut to indicate the relationship to *backen* ‘bake’ (this belongs to the morphological writing principle marking interparadigmatic connections). Morphological writing principles are not necessary for PNs, since they lack lexical meaning and are not integrated into word families (see Nübling et al. 2015: 86–92). However, they exclusively serve to dissociate PNs from CNs and do not directly contribute to the preservation of a stable PN shape, even though the onymic spelling is archaic.

3 Conclusion: PN/CN-dissociation and onymic schema constancy

This article has attempted to account for the different behavior of PNs from CNs. The main findings are the following. In the Middle Ages, the grammatical differences between CNs and PNs were quantitatively, as well as qualitatively, substantially smaller than today. Over time, the grammatical distance between these two noun classes increased considerably on every linguistic level. Phonologically, there was an increase in borrowed names, leading to more foreign structures; morphophonologically, a reduction of umlaut in PNs could be observed; inflectionally, there was the development of different inflectional

affixes, of proceeding PN deflection and referential gender assignment; morpho-syntactically, mono-inflection of NPs with PNs and the development of onymic classifiers occurred; syntactically, diverging genitive positions evolved; in terms of word-formation there was a split of derivational suffixes and a loss of affixes; at the orthographic level, there was the demarcation of morphological boundaries by hyphens and apostrophes on PNs and a lack of orthographic regulation of PNs. Some of these developments serve to increase the formal distance between PNs and CNs (different phonological and orthographical structures, different genders, different syntactic distribution). As PNs usually develop from CNs, it is crucial to keep them apart using different grammatical means.

Other developments preserve and stabilize the shape of PNs, i.e., they keep them as constant as possible for reasons of recognition and processing (loss of umlaut, simple, asyllabic suffixes which do not affect the PN body, loss of affixes/deflection, stable relations between gender and class of referents and their marking by classifiers, visual indication of PN boundaries). The need for formal constancy depends on, and increases with, the following factors: animacy (personal names always show more deflection than toponyms, and within toponyms, names of so-called people containers show less inflection than those of uninhabited locations), familiarity (conceptual distance favors deflection), frequency (low frequency demands deflection), and, finally, deviant structures or formal foreignness (loanwords require more deflection).

The question arises why PNs in OHG and MHG were in line with CNs. In these cases, the factor of foreignness seems to have been essential. In the Middle Ages, the number of PNs was relatively low, as most people lived within their families in small villages and typically only moved within a small radius. Moreover, their relatives and neighbors shared names taken from an extremely small name pool (*Heinrich, Hedwig, Wolfgang, Adelheid*). Additionally, most names corresponded to native structures, personal names (inherited from Germanic) as well as toponyms. This situation changed profoundly in the fifteenth century, when new countries and even continents were discovered and visited, when Christian names began to dominate the onomasticon, and when people migrated and met many foreigners. The distribution of books and, since the seventeenth century, newspapers promoted contact with many new and foreign PNs. Unfortunately, there is no research on the extent of this fundamental language contact, and therefore we have to content ourselves with impressionistic statements such as the one by Steche (1925: 206), who remarks that a single edition of a present-day newspaper surpasses the number of foreign PNs even the most educated German would have been familiar with in 1800. Thus, a rather manageable inventory of PNs with native structures shifted to become a huge inventory with foreign linguistic material. Furthermore, PNs

tend to be isolated as they do not undergo much derivation and therefore do not form (large) word families, as CNs do.

Similar phenomena in other languages can easily be found. In French, family names are uninflected in the plural: the CN *cheval* [ʃə'val] 'horse' forms the plural *chevaux* [ʃə'vo] 'horses', whereas the surname *Cheval* has the zero plural *Cheval*, both pronounced [ʃə'val]. Kalverkämper (1978: 169) speaks of "morphological invariability" of PNs. In Luxembourgish, there is a famous sandhi phenomenon: final *-n* is instable and highly dependent on the following sound; it is only pronounced before [h, t, d, ts] and before every vowel. PNs, however, are not subject to this deletion rule: in *Grüchenland* (**Grücheland*) 'Greece', for example, *-n* is not dropped, whereas it would be suppressed in similar CN compounds. The same holds for *ech si mam Här Bemtgen* (**Bemtge*) *gaangen* 'I went with Mr Bemtgen', and other PNs.¹⁸ Thus, the phonological form is kept stable. In Section 2.1, graphematic stability was mentioned for English PNs ending in <y>, whose alteration to <ies> is blocked in the plural, as in <both Germans>. In Estonian, typical word-internal modifications in the plural (consonant gradation) do not occur within PNs: the CN *mägi* 'mountain' forms the plural *mäed* 'mountains', whereas the surname *Mägi* only takes an (external) suffix *Mägid*; the CN *põder* 'elk' has the plural *põdrad* 'elks'; the surname *Põder* uses only a suffix, *Põderid* 'the Põders' (Nübling 2005). Future research has to determine the many faces and real extent of onymic schema constancy.

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Abbreviations

ACC = accusative; DAT = dative; GEN = genitive; NOM = nominative

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¹⁸ Thanks to Peter Gilles who provided these examples.

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