

TOPONYMS AND THEIR CLASSIFICATIONS

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Annotation

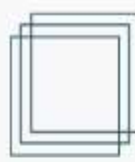
Toponyms (place names) represent language units denoting elements of topographic environment. The relevance of the study is caused by the need to develop the theory of toponymy and to systematize all the existing toponymic classifications. Place names have a complicated (multidimensional) nature, which should be taken into account while classifying them. This research is an attempt to highlight various principles according to which it is possible to group the place names. This article is based on 15000 British and 17000 American toponyms, received from toponymic dictionaries, reference books and electronic toponymic search systems GNIS (Geographic Names Information System) and Get-a-map.

Keywords: Toponym; Place Name; Toponymy; Classification; Principle; Nickname

Introduction

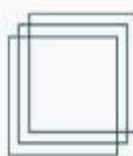
Place names (toponyms) are the linguistic signs of a natural language denoting certain fragments of topographic space. These linguistic signs form a system, called a toponymic system, which is artificially contractual in character. Toponyms are a kind of repositories of political, social and cultural views of the society, which display certain language trends and peculiarities of word formation. Toponyms make up a significant part of the lexical fund of the language. According to some researchers, "toponymic layer constitutes 2-3% of common vocabulary". There become fewer and fewer unnamed geographical objects as humankind learns and develops new geographical objects on the earth and expands its geographical horizons. The geographical name is a part of the lexical system of a particular nation. It is formed according to "the fundamental laws of the language and it functions in speech in accordance with its basic rules and traditions". Any geographical object has both a geographic term, which determines its type, and a geographical name; therefore, a topographic object is "named twice", enriching the semantics of a toponym.

The main disadvantage of classification schemes of toponyms is the impossibility to "fit all the variety of geographical names into the Procrustean bed of one classification". However, some linguists tried to classify toponyms combining different principles simultaneously. One of the first researchers to classify place names in any systematic manner was George R. Stewart. In 1954, he published an article in Names entitled "A classification of place names". His typology based on the

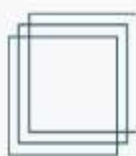


“naming-process” recognizes ten main toponym types: 1) descriptive names and compass-point names (names that describe and characterize the object's quality or its location; 2) associative names (names that evoke associations with different objects); 3) incident names (names from an event associated with a person, G. Stewart also refers to this group acts of God, calendar names, animal names, names of human actions, names from feelings, names from sayings); 4) possessive names (names originated from some idea of ownership); 5) commemorative names (names given in memory or in honor of outstanding people and names for abstract virtues); 6) commendatory names (names given by some attractive peculiarities of a geographical object); 7) folk etymologies (names with false etymology); 8) manufactured names (names which have been consciously constructed of fragments of other words, or names from initials, by reversals of letters or syllables, or in other ways); 9) mistake names (names appeared from a mistake made in the transmission from one language to another, either from inaccurate hearing of what was said, or because of faulty rendering of the sounds in writing); 10) shift names (names which have been moved from one location to another).

A mixture of lexical, grammatical and semantic principles is considered as the disadvantage rather than the advantage of such classifications. The scientific approach assumes that the set is divided into subsets as many times as many principles of division there are, meanwhile the divided subset can also be subdivided. It is obvious that it is impossible to create a unified classification of place names, which would reflect the entire multidimensional nature of the toponymic vocabulary. Classifying toponymic nominations, one must consider the multifaceted (intra- and extra-linguistic) principles of allocation of toponymic units, such as: 1) parametric characteristics of an object, 2) ontological characteristics of an object, 3) type of toponymic basis, 4) etymological characteristics of place names, 5) motivational characteristics of place names, 6) chronological characteristics of place names, 7) structural characteristics of toponyms, 8) toponymic polysemy, 9) degree of toponymic nomination, 10) variety of toponymic nomination, 11) localization of an object. 1. Classification based on parametric characteristics of an object involves the division of place names into macrotoponyms (names of large geographical objects and political-administrative units) and microtoponyms (individualized names of small geographical objects, reflecting the peculiarities of the local landscape, familiar only to local residents). There exist no rigid boundaries between these types; however, it can be confirmed that macrotoponyms are functionally more stable and standardized, while microtoponyms are characterized by relative instability and mobility. Depending on geopolitical, economic and socio-cultural significance of geographical objects denoted by the place names one can differentiate between hypertonyms (names of the continents, oceans, countries), macrotoponyms (major regions, states, capitals, mountain ranges, major seas,



rivers, islands), regionyms (names of cities, areas, rivers, mountains of regional significance) and microtoponyms (names of small objects in some localities known only to a limited circle of people, e.g. ravines, fields, forests, buildings, roads, parks, quarters). 2. Classification based on ontological characteristics of an object is characterized by worldwide orderliness and uniformity. The peculiarity of this classification is that "toponymic categorization duplicates the structure and the content of the categories of natural objects, i.e. it forms ontological model of the categorization of the world". Despite the fact that toponymic lexis presents an extensive layer in the language system, the diversity of place names can be reduced to a relatively small number of types. They can be divided into two groups: 1) names of natural objects and 2) names of manmade objects. Names of natural objects include hydronyms, oronyms, drymonyms and insulonoms. Hydronyms are the names of all water objects; the branch of linguistics that studies hydronyms is called hydronymy. The hydrographic network, representing a set of inland water bodies and streams, includes oceans, seas, rivers, lakes, swamps and reservoirs. Names of oceans (the smallest toponymic class) are combined by the term oceanonyms, names of the seas belong to pelagonyms, names of rivers – to potamonoms, names of lakes – to limnonoms, names of swamps – to gelonoms. Names of small hydrographic objects (with a narrow field of use, e.g. brooks, springs, wells) commonly refer to microhydronoms. Oronyms combine the names of relief elements (mountains, headlands, hills, hillocks, hollows); the section of toponymy that studies oronyms is called oronymy. Speleonyms (names of caves, chasms, grottoes, mines and entire underground systems) also belong to oronyms. Drymonoms are the names of forests; subsection of toponymy studying drymonoms is called drymonomy. Insulonoms is a subclass of place names, combining the names of islands. Some names can belong to different groups simultaneously, for example, the underground rivers and lakes, belong to hydronoms (potamonoms) and oronyms (speleonyms). Traditional Toponymy. The traditional approach of toponymists who study place names, has, it has been suggested by Reuben Rose-Redwood, "been characterized by political innocence." They mostly dig into etymology, archives and local histories to unravel what names mean, but don't consider the processes behind the naming. In fact, many Anglo-European place names probably don't have much of a story to tell, and simply arose as descriptions that made sense for local inhabitants. These give individuality to somewhere yet can also have broader connotations, and the spelling may have shifted over the centuries. Chepstow, one of the towns I regularly visited as a child, is a straightforward combination of the Old English **cheap**, meaning market, and **stow**, meaning place. There are countless places in Britain with names that have generic elements such as these. A simple guide to generic elements in British place names.



Some place names do summarise narratives, though it is not always clear what these are. Corstorphine in Edinburgh is said by some to derive from **croix d'or fin** and is where Mary Queen of Scots is said to have lost a gold cross. Alternatively it could mean Torfin's Crossing because the earliest recorded use is Crostorfin in 1178. Nevertheless, where place names embed history toponymists can reveal obscure origins that can be of great value to historians, archaeologists and even in support of environmental protection. Gwaun Henllan in Carmarthen is the oldest recorded field name in Wales, first noted in the 8th century. When it was threatened with open pit mining the place name history proved to be critical in the prevention of the mining. For cultures other than Angle-European ones, place names can serve as ways not only of remembering geography but also as means of reinforcing traditions and cultural memories. When the anthropologist Basso asked an Apache native American "What is wisdom?" the answer was: "Wisdom sits in places." For the Apache the names of places have stories associated with them that are used to teach others and to convey correct behavior. Basso calls this "the ethnography of lived topographies."

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