

LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF SLOVAK ONOMASTICS IN SLAVISTICS RESEARCH

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Abstract: In his paper the author argues that interdisciplinary research and collaboration between different scientific branches are important in ensuring that research captures the wider picture. The author ascertains common points in history, ethnology, dialectology, and folkloristics by looking at various examples of onomastic research conducted in Slovakia. The research findings are part of broad pan-Slavic research and are important in Slovak Slavistics as well.

Key words: Slavistics; onomastics; ethnology; folkloristics; interdisciplinary research.

Current models of science differ from the way in which sciences were previously understood, primarily in their complexity. Science conducted in isolation without collaboration between related scientific disciplines is doomed to stagnation. Therefore, Slavistics is, more or less, seen as an integral to interdisciplinary comparative studies conducted within other sciences. Slavistics uses knowledge from other disciplines to shape its academic hypotheses and conclusions, and thus is also part of these disciplines. The interaction between research projects and the development of joint research teams has been described very precisely by J. Doruľa in his article *Potreba interdisciplinárneho výskumu v jazykovednej slavistike* [The need for interdisciplinary research in linguistic Slavistics]. J. Doruľa stated that “many of the problems with which linguistics research engages can only be comprehensively explained from an interdisciplinary point of view, since it concerns issues that are the subject of research by several of the social sciences” (Doruľa 1990, 378). The First Congress of Slovak Slavists was held from 26th to 28th October 2011 in Bratislava and was called *Slovenská slavistika po roku 1993* [Slovak Slavistics after 1993]. It was held in a desire to see cooperation and integration in social science research in Slavistics. The Congress resulted in an edited volume entitled *Slovenská slavistika včera a dnes* [Slovak Slavistics Past and Present].

Onomastics is an important field of study which is integral to knowledge obtained through Slavistic research. Onomastics, like Slavistics, presents itself as a broad-spectrum discipline operating alongside linguistics, geography, history, sociology, psychology, ethnology and folkloristics primarily, but there are other fields involved as well.

Onomastics research (especially investigations into the synchronous state of onymy) may be linked to regional or nationwide areas, but the findings may be an important source of comparative research in a broader sense—i.e. a Slavic or European context. Diachronic onomastic research focuses on older, possibly the earliest, stages of the naming processes and forms of preserved proper names. Here we are interested in a common Slavic background, possibly Proto-Slavic rationales for contemporary European toponymy and anthroponymy. The analysis of large onymic objects which were previously important landmarks relates to diachronic onomastics, especially toponomastics. These are mostly mountains, mountain ranges, individual hills, and especially larger rivers.

Research on Slovak watercourses (hydronymy) is currently being conducted as part of the *Hydronymia Slovaciae* project, which is based on an older project called *Hydronymia Europea*. In 1987, M. Majtán formulated the basic research objectives of this project, which are to investigate all the basins in Slovakia in their complexity, and capture and analyse the synchronic and diachronic forms of Slovak hydronyms, including content and derivation and then compare the results in a broader context—i.e. a Western Slavic and pan-Slavic context. This ambitious project is gradually investigating individual basins—the first basin to be analysed as part of the *Hydronymia Europaea* project was *Hydronymia slovenskej časti povodia Slanej* [Hydronymy of the Slovak part of the Slaná Basin], Sičáková 1996), followed by *Hydronymia povodia Ipla* [Hydronymy of the Ipeľ Basin], Majtán, Žigo 1999), and then *Hydronymia povodia Turca* [Hydronymy of the Turiec Basin], Krško 2003). The first river basins to be analysed in western Slovakia include the river Nitra basin—J. Hladký published a book entitled *Hydronymia povodia Nitry* [Hydronymy of the Nitra Basin] in 2004. In 2006, M. Majtán prepared the second (revised) edition of *Hydronymia povodia Oravy* [Hydronymy of the Orava Basin], co-authored by K. Rymut) in line with the principles of the *Hydronymia Slovaciae* project. A PhD dissertation entitled *Hydronymia povodia horného Hrona* [Hydronymy of the Upper Hron Basin], Nemčoková, 1988) became the basis for investigating the whole of the river Hron basin, published in *Hydronymia povodia Hrona* [Hydronymy of the Hron Basin] by J. Krško (2008). Analysis of the Hron river basin completed the mapping of almost all the river basins in central Slovakia. In 2008, research was begun into the synchronic and diachronic hydronymy of the river Váh. The most up-to-date results of hydronymic research into the parts of the Hron river basin have been published in the following books: *Hydronymia povodia Kysuce* [Hydronymy of the Kysuca Basin] (Krško, Velička 2011), *Hydronymia horného povodia Váhu—od povodia Rajčanky po prameň Váhu* [Hydronymy of the Upper Váh Basin—from the Rajčanka river basin to the source of the Váh] (Krško 2011) and *Hydronymia povodia Dudváhu* [Hydronymy of the Dudváh Basin] (Hladký 2011). Analysis of the Eastern Slovak river basins is underway. In her dissertation, A. Goóťšová is investigating the Hnilec and Hornád river basins. The entire Hornád river basin will be finalized once the Torysa river basin has been completed (a grant project led by A. Chomová). Slovak language students were engaged in research on the Topľa, Ondava and Laborec rivers in the upper basin for their dissertations. This work suffices as a basis from which to investigate the remaining hydronymy of Eastern Slovakia.

Once the aims of the *Hydronymia Slovaciae* project have been completed, conditions will be favourable for comparing the Proto-Slavic roots of water courses via onomastic research in Poland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. The extensive Slavistic research

takes into account findings on Southern Slavic hydronymy. According to current findings, the appellative sources of Slovak hydronymy mainly derive from a common Proto-Slavic basis. The analysis of Slovak river basins (including the historical toponymy and historical settlement names in general) will provide the groundwork documenting Western Slavic and non-Western Slavic (South Slavic and East Slavic) language changes, which could be the next step in Slavic hydronymy, the basis for drawing up maps illustrating the distribution of Proto-Slavic appellative forms reflecting, for example, the characteristics of water (temperature, flow rate, water source, sound characteristics...), stream channel, depth, subsoil colour, surrounding vegetation on the shores/banks, animals and so on.¹ These elements have been used not only in Slavic hydronymy, but all around the world. Common early Proto-Slavic roots can be traced in the hydronyms of the Váh, Nitra, Orava, Turiec, Slaná, Žitava, Myjava, and Hnilec, etc. In many cases, the individual names can be interpreted in several ways. However, different appellative roots cannot be excluded either (cf. interpretation of the Váh and Turiec toponyms in Krško 2010; Golema 2008). Naturally, older etymological interpretations are reassessed as more knowledge is gained on the subject. Integral to this process of reassessment is the use of findings from other sciences and comparison of results across borders.

In addition to noting the territorial distribution of the same appellative root in Slavic countries, the distribution of the various forms could also be mapped out in the future. Such work would be a suitable complement to the *Celoslovenský lingvistický atlas* (Pan-Slavic Linguistic Atlas).

Research into Slovak and Slavic hydronymy is also important in monitoring settlement processes. In the Slovak geographic area, German and Wallachian colonization are important, as shown by hydronyms from the 14th century, and the period during which they originated overlaps with the settlement stages of these ethnic groups. Historical hydronymy also demonstrates the influence of other ethnic groups—the oldest research shows German and Celtic influences prior to the arrival of the Slavs (there is evidence of a Proto-Slavic name in the Hron hydronym, which features in the records of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius dating from between 166 and 180). Many linguists therefore assume that significant Slovak watercourses could have been named by ethnic groups who lived here before the arrival of the Slavs.

Another significant project within Slavic research conducted in Slovakia is the collation of Slovak field names. The corpus of a future dictionary entitled *Slovník slovenských terénných názvov* [Dictionary of Slovak Toponymy] is based on records collated between 1966 and 1975 from excerpts of university student dissertations and papers, regional books, journals, studies and articles, cadastral maps, and two maps of Czechoslovakia—1: 10 000 and 1: 50 000 in scale. The corpus currently contains about 250 000 names. A Slovak field name lexicon would certainly enrich Czech research (*Slovník pomístních jmen v Čechách* – [Dictionary of Microtoponymy in Bohemia]), and Moravian and Silesian toponymy (*Slovník pomístních jmen Moravy a Slezka* – [Dictionary of Moravian and Silesian Microtoponymy]),

¹ See lexical and semantic classification of hydronymy in the work of V. Šmilauer *Vodopis starého Slovenska* [Hydrography of Old Slovakia] (1932) or *Přírůčka slovenské toponomastik* [A Guide to Slavic Toponomastics] (1970).

compiled at the Department of Onomastics at The Institute of the Czech Language at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague and at the Department of Dialectology at The Institute of the Czech Language at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Brno.

Research into current and historical settlement names (oikonymy), like that conducted in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, would contribute to the language and cultural dimensions of Slovak onomastics as part of Slavistic research. The almost complete areas of Slovak onomastic research—hydronymy, toponymy and oikonymy—should facilitate the development of a national and pan-Slavic science.

Ethnography and folklore are other areas of interdisciplinary Slavistic research. Interesting areas of research that intersect ethnography, folkloristics, dialectology and onomastics include nicknames of inhabitants and cities. Various academic disciplines have dealt with these from different perspectives; however, the issues can be illustrated through synergic effect.

Slovak linguistics and onomastics have also analysed inhabitants' nicknames.

V. Uhlár suggests that:

Nicknames are valuable and interesting issues in the fields of language, ethnography and folklore, as well as sociology. They deserve universal description and field research. We know that all settlements and their inhabitants in Slovakia have nicknames. A complete list of these including explanations would be highly valuable linguistic, ethnographic, historical and socio-cultural material. It is unfortunate that ethnographers and dialectologists did not make use of the opportunity to obtain this material (1995, 305-306).

Inhabitants' nicknames constitute valuable material from the perspective of dialectology because they occur mostly in non-standard oral forms used in spontaneous communicative situations and contain features of the local dialect. The stories behind the origin of nicknames are especially valuable to folkloristics, where nicknaming is one aspect of paremiology. If we assume that in order to have a closer understanding of folklore, then criteria relating to oral form, collectivity, syncretism and traditions should be taken into consideration, we find that the inhabitants' nicknames meet all of the above mentioned criteria (initial formation and use occurred in oral form) Although nicknames are spontaneously created by individuals (mostly anonymous), they refer to a collective—the whole group of people that uses the nickname identifies with it and the nickname characterizes the collective inhabitants of the village or city in question. The tradition is associated with the oral origin of the inhabitants' nickname passed down generation to generation, along with other genres of oral folk literature—songs, stories, ritual folk customs and miniature folk forms (rhymes, proverbs and idioms and so on).

The spatial distribution, frequency and occurrence of different kinds of inhabitants' nicknames is an interesting area for ethnographers (see, e.g. Švecová 1991). Ethnography distinguishes the *ethnographic group* as one of the entities to be researched. It is defined as an “ethnic sub-unit, which is created by bearers of folk culture, socially and culturally different from their surroundings, united by group awareness and a group name” (Botík, Slavkovský 1995, Vol. 1,127). Ethnographers most frequently analyse ethnographic groups according to dialectal characteristics (*Čilejkári, Trpáci, Sotáci, Švakári, Cóckari*—on origins

see below), geographical area (*Horniaci*—derived from adjective “horný—upper”, they lived in the upper part of the village; *Dolniac*—derived from adjective “dolný—lower”, they lived in the lower part of the village; *Sysli*—derived from “syseľ—marmot”; *Jazveci*—derived from “jazvec—badger”, they are hoarders like marmots, they live in dens as badgers do; compare e. g. Šrámek 1977; Švecová 1991), or on the basis of clothing (*Holopupkári*—they had “holý pupok—bare belly buttons”; *Kabaničiari*—derived from “kabanica—tabard”). Nicknames relating to occupation provide us with information about traditional occupations in particular areas and villages. Nicknames vary in degrees of expressiveness. If they refer to an occupation that was typically found in a village, then the nickname tends to be informative rather than expressive: Jelšava—*Kvaškére* (*kvaškér*—tanner, leather was processed in the town); Revúca—*Tepšáre* (producing *tepše*—baking sheets); Kláštor pod Znievom—*Krošniari* (producing *krosná*—haversacks for peddlers selling healing oils in the Turiec region); Oravská Poruba—*Korytári* (trough-makers—*korytá*); Bobrov—*Kerničkári* (they produced *kerničky*—butter churns; Slezáková 2012, 524). If the nickname is informative, but also highlights the poor quality of a product, it is more expressive—Príbovce—*Panvičkári* (produced leaky wooden frying pans *panvice*). As Slovakia was once an agrarian country, inhabitants’ nicknames often refer to the crops typically grown by the inhabitants—Ďanová—*Bôbari* (*bôb*—beans; Sučany—*Fazuliari* (*fazuľa*—haricot beans); Martin—*Kapustiari* (*kapusta*—cabbage the main crop); Lopašov—*Mrkvári* (*mrkva*—carrots); Holíč—*Cibulári* (*cibuľa*—onions), etc.

Ethnographic classification is closely related to dialectology, because some of the nicknames of inhabitants’ refer to specific dialects or dialectal pronunciations that differ from those in the surrounding area. These nicknames “often originated as a nickname given by neighbouring residents, they were known by both communities and contributed to the awareness of community groups” (Botík, Slavkovský 1995, Vol. 1, 127). Groups of villages can be named according to the dialectal features of the language of the inhabitants (*Švakári*—the relative pronoun *čo* is pronounced *šva*). This phenomenon applies to larger dialectal districts and regions as well (*Sotáci*—the relative pronoun *čo* is pronounced like *so*; *Čilejkári*—instead of the adverb *teraz* [now] the form *čilej* is used—see e. g. map in S. Švecová 1991, 29).

Slavistics and other (mainly humanities) disciplines enable three-dimensional cross-societal images to be created. Thus the findings of scientific exploration are an important resource for society, revealing its history and culture.

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