

UDC: 911.3:316

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## **THE ROLE OF THE CARTOGRAPHIC METHOD IN THE RESEARCH OF TOPONYMS**

**Abstract.** *In this article, the method of cartographic research is studied. In this case, attention is mainly focused on the advantages and significance of the cartographic research method in toponymic research. Because a toponym, that is, a geographical name, is an important element of these maps.*

**Key words:** *toponym, toponymy, research methods, cartographic method.*

Names help to identify and distinguish places. It is thanks to this ability that they help to mark directions, detect movement and identify addresses. Transportation, trade, tourism and even defense operations depend on knowing the exact names of the places. The broadcast of news is characteristic of events that occur in a certain place. To natural disasters, be it a tsunami or a terrorist attack, or the declaration of counting the votes of a political candidate loses its identity if it is not a place name.

Toponymy, when referring to past historical stages, constitutes an element of maps of singular informative value whose usefulness is given, if we are able to unravel its meaning, by the information that is accumulated in a simple word that gives name to a part of the territory. A place name can inform us of facts that may

still be evident today, such as orography or hydrography, but also of others that may have varied over time, as it is a testimony anchored in history and, often, tremendously resistant to innovations. Hence the usefulness it has to better understand, for example, ancient population systems, agricultural expansion, the existence of certain botanical species, the presence of ancient peoples and, of course, linguistic geography and the very history of a language.

Toponymy, understood not only as the collective term that designates a set or subset of place names, but also, and above all, as the discipline that has as its object of study the place names themselves, and cartography, whose purpose is the elaboration, and also the analysis, of maps containing place names, are closely linked. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the problems and limitations posed by each one can be addressed, and often solved with the possibilities offered jointly, because both are interrelated and both, in their cooperation, can be beneficial.

The toponym, as we all know, is the proper name by which a geographical feature is designated, which makes it an important element of geographical reference. Hence, one of the means in which geographical names are best located is the map. Although names can exist, and really do exist, outside the supports of cartography, a map without names cannot be conceived. That is why it is said that “the map constitutes the vehicle par excellence for the dissemination of place names” and that geographical names become, once written, a vital element of maps.

Geographical names, unlike the other symbols used on maps, are not just a geographical object. Their choice, their form, their spelling and their application to geographical details do not correspond only to the cartographs, because they are symbols borrowed from another communication system.

The cartographic aspect of toponymic study is the oldest and the most represented geographical aspect. It is closely related to the need to present a large number of toponyms on maps, and also in school literature and lexicographic

editions. Toponyms are interpreted as a means of identification, communication, and orientation that are important for conveying accurate information about the locations of named objects. Therefore, they are primarily perceived as an element or “language” of maps.

Collecting a cartographic material is an important part of any toponymic study since maps are the most important source of geographic nomenclature. While names of most population centres of the World’s countries may be determined from district map reference books, maps are in many cases the only and exhaustive (especially and in case of large-scale mapping) source of determining names of geographical objects.

The method is successfully employed in stating the principles of toponymic phenomena locations, the dynamics of their chronological development, spatial links and relations (both between single toponymic facts and between a latter and various social and natural events reflected on maps). Identification of toponymic materials calls for various cartographic sources to be used. Maps constructed at different time periods allow one to study the dynamics of various phenomena and their components based on toponymic data.

Cartography cannot be considered separately from identification of toponymic areals, which aims at precise localisation of demi diffusions marked by onomastic phenomenon analysed, or objects named in a particular manner. Application of cartography, however, is not only limited to identification of areals found. Among subjects of cartography one may find various territorial place name distributions made in the course of regional studies, as well as global characteristics of place names found in various languages. Areal identified as a result of cartography make up a specific toponymic text, the reading of which sets a number of new tasks before a researcher. A map bearing a toponymic load in itself becomes a source for further studies of geographical names.

In the field of toponymy cartographic method may be successfully employed for identification of the principles of toponymic phenomena localisation, their

chronological dynamics, as well as spatial links and relations (both between single toponymic facts and between a latter and various social and natural events reflected on maps). These aims and objectives can be reached by wide-range use of various existing maps (from the most recent to the old ones), as well as by construction of new cartographic works (toponymic maps and map collections). Depending on the nature of study the latter may focus on different aspect of cartographic method. Identification of toponymical material, links and relations of different levels require the use of already previously constructed topographic, special and thematic maps. Map construction is a generic element of studying the “geography” of toponymic phenomena.

Cartographic method is closely linked to other methods of toponymic study. This relation is bilateral. Firstly, cartographic method provides the researcher with factual data which may then be analysed by means of other methods. Secondly, it provides graphic interpretation of results obtained and when “tied” to a map, i.e. geographical reality or certain historical setting, significantly enriches the understanding of the nature of event while serving as a reliable accuracy criterion of results obtained.

The difference and advantage of the cartographic method over other methods is that the degree of study of names, natural, social, economic phenomenon and relation to objects, makes it possible to accurately indicate the repeatability and density per unit area. Identification of toponymic data requires the use of various cartographic sources. With maps of different periods, the stages of development of natural phenomena and processes can be observed and determined on the basis of toponymy data. The cartographic method requires the toponymist to draw clear conclusions from the general materials studied. For this reason, the information on the map is clearly and clearly visible in relation to the text and makes it possible to understand toponymic phenomena and laws.

Using modern information and GIS technologies, the creation and effective use of maps that contain toponymic data gives great results in the creation of an electronic base of geographic names and the creation of new toponymic maps.

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