The Lexical Contribution of Geographical Names

INTRODUCTION

There are words which only the toponymic dictionary drawing from information gathered in field surveys aiming at obtaining the meaning of geographical names which are present in the Brazilian official mapping but to which there are no other bibliographic references. The surveys also seek to establish the part of speech to which they are assigned.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this work is to build a toponymic dictionary drawing from information gathered in field surveys aiming at obtaining the meaning of geographical names which are present in the Brazilian official mapping but to which there are no other bibliographic references. The surveys also seek to establish the part of speech to which they are assigned.

APPROACH AND METHODS

Geographical names have several aspects, among which we highlight here the historical, cultural and linguistic. This paper focuses on the semantic aspects, on grasping the meaning of geographical names whose spelling is not in common use and do not have lexical bibliographic reference.

We have been working for a long time on the standardization of geographical names and often the lack of knowledge on the meaning and/or motivation of the "baptism" of a particular geographical feature brings great difficulty to standardization.

In Brazil, geographical names are collected mostly during the reambulação, which is a field survey for the collection of information of various natures about cartographic elements. This collection follows the anthropological method, that is to say, the names are acquired through interviews with the local inhabitants, according to the way these names are known and used by population. Therefore, surveyors (reambuladores) are being instructed to collect the meaning and toponymic motivation of names in the interviews carried out in the field. An example of toponymic motivation: Rio Lava-Pê (Rio = River, and Lava-Pê is a plant which motivated the naming of the river. Thus, Rio Lava-Pê is a phyto-toponym).

RESULTS

A toponymic dictionary will not only contribute to complement the lexicon of our language as well as inform the process of standardization of geographical names and populate Geographic Names Database of Brazil (BNGB) in its linguistic and historical aspects. Standardized geographical names are a key to the quality of statistical and cartographic information. The activity of treating the names which are acquired in the field survey (reambulação) contributes to the quality control of this information, which will be made available to the Brazilian society, in the form of products.

CONCLUSIONS

The toponymic universe goes far beyond bibliographic references, because geographical names fit in the area of knowledge of the humanities, and the capacity of the speaker-listener to create names is infinite, and significant. Since every act of nomination has a toponymic motivation which reflects historical, cultural and/or social aspects, the incorporation of these names to the lexicon of Portuguese and their consequent dictionarization is of great importance.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES


WEB PAGES

Geographic Names of Brazil http://www.ngb.ibge.gov.br

Division Portuguese-Speaking Countries http://www.divporg.ibge.gov.br