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Moldova's geography in names

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Moldova's geography in names

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Nature, economy, history, culture and habits particularities are often reflected in geographic names. Toponym researches have began in Moldova in 20s years of the past century. They resulted in conclusion that Slavic population of Bessarabia was more ancient than comparing with Roman and in scientific explanation of certain geographical names.

Additional investigations of the Bessarabia territory's inhabitation process led in 40s years of the past century and chronological analysis of geographic names proved previously acquired conclusions on the fact that before Moldavians appearance the territory was inhabited by Slavs and Tatars. The last ones were roving here till the end of the XVIII century. Tatars names as much as Turkish ones belong today to certain geographic objects: Rivers Cula, Chugur, Vilages Tocuz, Konchak, Baymaclia, Comrat town and others.

It should be mentioned that this place attracted other nations, which inhabited free land: Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Greeks, French, Russian, Albanian, and Czech. This, for instance, explains the fact that toponyms of Ukrainian origin can be found among the geographic names: Rivers Racovets, Byc, Botna, Village Racovets.

As it was mentioned above, specialists got interested by the place toponyms in the beginning of the last century, but these investigations became more purposeful starting from 60s. They were mainly done by the Institute of language and literature of Academy of Sciences of Moldavian SSR and served a serious basis for creation of toponyms base in republic. Detailed review of the existing publications on geographic names origin made it possible to select several blocks, containing geographic terms connected with:

- socio-historic processes;
- territory's natural particularities;
- people's economical activities and others.

It is known that republic's territory during a long period of time was suffering from invasions. As a result some places vanished but some new geographic objects appeared: citadels (during Ottoman Porte governing): Akkerman, Bender, Izmail and others. New places appeared in the period when Tatars resided on the territory (Tatareshty, Abaclia, Comrat, Minjir, Tocuz and others).

The process of territory's inhabitation by different nations was reflected in the villages names (Pelenia – Moldavskaya, Ukrainka, Lipoveny). People's movement from place to place caused new places appearance, which often kept the names of their old ones or added new words to them. For instance, Antonovca Village exists in two regions (Drochia and Suvorov). In Dubosary region there are villages Molovata and Molovata-Noua. The occupancy

of the land (XI-XVI), and appearance of the big land owners resulted in appearing of geographic names connected with their surnames: Pashcany (from Pashco Nemes), Raspopeny (from Fedor Raspop) and others.

The territory's natural particularities and first of all its rich landscape pattern are widely reflected in the place's systems of toponyms. It is formed by various relief forms, soil cover variability, dense river network, rich flora and fauna and others.

A wide distribution have orographic terms - dol (hill), movila (hump, kurgan), rypa (ravine), hyrtop (hollow). Villages names often reflect relief specifics - Valea Adynca (Deep Valley), Valea Mare (Big Valley) etc.

It should be mentioned that hydronyms occupy a big part in national system. Most of them contain directions on their characteristic features and particularities. Thus, flowing waters are characterized by such toponyms as pyrau (spring), gyrla (little river); lentic waters - balta (flux, lake), iaz (pond); springs and rills - izvor, fyntyna - well. Hydronyms often reflect main features of the hydro object (size, form, deepness, water color etc): Sarata - salty, Lunga - long, Galbena - yellow etc.

Toponyms that reflect republic's flora and fauna unique beauty and variety are also numerous. In this area Moldavian names prevail: dumbrava (oakery), poiana (glade), padure (wood), Valea Trandafirilor (Rose Valley), Poenitsa Fetelor (Girls Lawn) and many others.

Fauna representatives prevailing or unicity are also reflected in the names of geographical objects. Places' names were also traditionally connected with people's economical activities. Thus, Dubosary means "boatman, pont watcher".

In national system of toponyms one can also meet toponyms that show geographic position of the one object relative to the other. Thus, for instance, Jura de Sus (Upper Jura) and Jura de Jos (Lower Jura).

Mainly toponyms consist from geographic names of Moldavian origin. These names consist from Roman, Slavic, Turkic elements that are widely used in Moldavian language.

Together with independence (in 1991), Republic of Moldova needs a certain organization that would study geographic objects' names and compose methodical guides for geographic names standardization.