

Aspects of the Formation of Toponyms from the Neamț River Basin

Daniela BUTNARU*

Key-words: *Neamț river basin, toponymy, classification, etymology*

The material which will be analyzed below was collected both through field surveys conducted in Neamț river basin and through research papers published or unpublished.

In terms of language, the toponyms are of two basic types: descriptive – made from appellations, and personal – formed from personal names. Subtypes can be distinguished within each type resulted from the linguistic classification: simple, derived, collocations, compounded, periphrases. Some descriptive toponyms that refer to geographical realities of the surveyed area include: *Căldarea* [*the Depression*], *Dealul Cărpiniș* [*the Hornbeam Hill*], *Dealul Gol* [*the Empty Hill*], *Pârâul cu Pucioasă* [*the Brimstone Brook*], *Pârâul la Brazii Albi* [*the Silver Fir River*], *Pârâul Mesteacănului* [*the Birch Brook*], *Valea Seacă* [*the Dry Valley*]. Personal toponyms are very numerous. For some of them the determinant is identified and for others nothing is known about the person who borrowed the name to a topic. In the first category which is the recent layer of personal toponymy, we can mention: *Culmea lui Anghelina* [*Anghelina's Peak*], Petru Anghelina being a forester, now retired, who had his sector in that area; *Dealul Tulan* [*Tulan Hill*], named like this because the Tulan family live down the hill; *Dealul la Todireasa* [*the Hill at Todireasa's*], where Todireasa family had lands etc. Other toponyms are formed from old names, forgotten by the locals: *Dealul Bușaga* [*Busaga Hill*], *Pârâul Ifimia* [*Ifimia Brook*], *Piciorul Olteanului* [*Olteanu's Foot*], etc. *Pârâul lui Moș Gavrilă* [*Old Gavrilă's Brook*] doesn't have a personal name as etymon but the nickname used by the locals for the bear.

Most linguists prefer the distinction *simple toponyms* vs. *compounded toponyms*, the latter including all names consisting of two or more terms. We took the classification method proposed by Dragoș Moldovanu: simple, derived, compounded, collocations and periphrases (TTRM I₁: XLII).

1. *Simple toponyms*. They are quite numerous in this area, especially in local language; because we must stress that there are often differences between the popular form of the toponym and the official one, meaning the one from the documents in the archives of the town halls and forest districts. Most of the simple

* “A. Philippide” Institute of Romanian Philology, Iași, Romania.

toponyms are formed from appellations (*Arșița* [the Heat], *Bâta* [the Hummock], *Bulgăria* [the Garden], *Cariera* [the Quarry], *Căldarea* [the Depression], *Colacul* [the Twist], *Lunca* [the Meadow], *Măguricea* [the Little Hummock], *Măngălăria* [the Mound], *Osoiul*, *Rediul* [the Grove], *Slatina* [the Salted Spring], *Urzicăria* [the Nettle Place] etc.), but there are some formed from persons' names: *Bompa*, *Branu*, *Pițigaia*, *Drehuța*, *Iftimia*. Some of them are used in collocations, together with a generic element designating the geographical category of the designated object. For example, the toponyms *Iftimia* and *Pârâul Iftimia* [*Iftimia Brook*] coexist in local language; the presence of the simple toponym is a sign of socio-geographical demotivation.

Busuiocii (plural of *Busuioc*), the name of a hamlet from Vânătorii-Neamț, is plural formation without suffix, such personal toponyms being formed usually when the anthroponym comes from a common name or is its homophone (Moldovanu 1970: 30); in this part of the village live more families named *Busuioc*.

Simple structure toponyms are usually older than those having a periphrastic or collocational form (cf. Bolocan 1975: 385).

2. *Derived toponyms*. There are toponyms formed with collective suffixes, often designating parts of villages or hamlets that take the most common family name of the place. The derivation of an anthroponymical theme using the suffix *plurale tantum -ești* (considered the most common collective suffix in our country) has resulted in some villages name: *Boboiești*, place name formed from the name of the *Baboi* family, frequently in this part of the village and mentioned since the 19th century (Ungureanu 1964: 35), *Humulești*, from the name of *Humă* family (Ciubotaru 2005: 70), attested in this area through documents from the 18th century; *Mănești*, from the personal name of Manea, as reflected in a document from 1437: “to the Tartar border of Manea” (DRH, A, I: 237) etc. Through derivation using another collective suffix, *-eni*, the following place names were formed: *Agăpieni*, the name of a hamlet from Pipirig village, reflecting the fact that here there are many families named *Agapie*, *Cujbenii*, terms formed from the surnames *Cujbă*¹, *Pâțâligeni*, derived from the surname *Pițiliga*², present in a large number in this village, *Tărățeni*, formed from the surname *Tărăță*³, *Varticenii*, the name of a hamlet where live several families named *Vartic* etc. From the name of an owner *Băloș*⁴ and with the collective suffix *-ești*, the place name *Băloșești* was formed (mentioned in documents from the 15th century), which then, changing the suffix with another one of the same value, was named *Băloșeni* (recorded by that name in the 19th century and preserved like this in through the phytonym *La Băloșeni*, designating a grass field of the former domain of the village under discussion).

In our inquired area there are some derived toponyms formed from another toponym. We are talking about the name of the principal tributaries of some rivers or streams smaller than those designated by the hydronym-base, situated in close

¹ Ion Cujbă from Pipirig signs a document in 1841 (Ungureanu 1964: 35).

² Dumitru Pițiliga is also a signer of the document mentioned above, from 1841 (Ungureanu 1964: 35).

³ Tărăță family is between the eldest ones in these places; the proof is the same document signed also by Iacob Tărăță and Nicuță Tărăță from Pipirig (Ungureanu 1964: 35).

⁴ In a document from 1437 it is mentioned “the border of Băloș” (DRH, A, I, 237).

proximity. The name of the *Neamțul* river sits for basis, to which the *-ișor* suffix was added and formed the hydronym for its main tributary – *Nemțișorul*; *Mânzățelul* is the name of the tributary of the *Mânzatul* brook. A special case is the *Mihăiețul* brook, which was mentioned at the beginning of the 17th century as *Mihaiul* (DIR, A, XVII–I: 177, 184, 236), and its tributary was named *Mihăețul* in the same documents. The name of the tributary has broadened and today it designates the main brook. With the diminutive suffix *-ița* formed the name of *Dolița* brook flowing in the vicinity of *Dolia* brook, and adding the *-așu* suffix the name of *Dobrenașu* brook formed, brook that flows east of *Dobreanu* brook. In the vicinity of *Secul* brook flows the *Săscuța* brook, whose name is formed by derivation with the diminutive suffix *-uța* from the hydronym *Sasca*, but one cannot find any hydronym with this name in its vicinity but only few miles away, in *Lunca* village. It must have been that this flow *Săscuța* was in the vicinity of some brook named *Sasca* and today is named differently. But considering that it is *Secul* (certified at the end of the 16th century) flowing east of *Săscuța*, means that it is very likely that the west brook, *Dumesnicul* to be called once *Sasca*.

3. Very numerous are the *collocations* “formed from a ‘determinatum’ noun, always articulated when being proclitic, and a determinant with attribute function” (TTRM I₁: XXXVII). “The collocations are syntactic pluri-member constructions characterized by the relative terms cohesion, terms that agree in gender and number (if they belong to the nominal group) and by the transparency of meaning” (TTRM I₁: XLII).

The determinant can be expressed by an adjective which agrees in gender and number with the determinatum: *Apa cea Galbenă* [*the Yellow Water*], *Dealul Dulce* [*the Sweet Hill*], *Dealul Gol* [*the Bold Hill*], *Drumul Roșu* [*the Red Road*], *Glodul Mare* [*the Big Sludge*], *Mihăiețul Sec* [*the Dry Mihăieț*], *Pârâul Adânc* [*the Deep Brook*], *Pârâul Alb* [*the White Brook*], *Piciorul Mare* [*the Big Foot*], *Piciorul Rău* [*the Bad Foot*], *Pițigaia Rea* [*Bad Pițigaia*], *Plaiul Bătrân* [*the Old Field*], *Poiana cea Mare* [*the Big Glade*], *Valea Rea* [*the Bad Valley*], *Vârful Înalt* [*the High Peak*]. Very often, the determinant in the collocation is a noun in the genitive form. Depending on the dependency ratio, the collocations having a noun as determinant can be synthetic (*Dealul Chiriacului* [*Chiriac’s Hill*], *Obcina Tăciunelui* [*the Coal’s Crest*], *Piciorul Gălățeanului* [*Gălățeanu’s Foot*], *Pârâul Șubei* [*Suba’s Brook*], *Poienile Grajdurilor* [*the Barns’ Glades*] or analytic (*Piciorul lui Boboc* [*Boboc’s Foot*], *Crucea lui Florea* [*Florea’s Cross*], *Pârâul lui Stan* [*Stan’s Brook*], *Pârâul lui Niță* [*Niță’s Brook*]). One can notice that some toponyms from the area under discussion keep a specific aspect of old Romanian language- the synthetic genitive for male names: *Dealul Chiriacului* [*Chiriac’s Hill*], *Pârâul Chiriacului* [*Chiriac’s Brook*], *Vârful Chiriacului* [*Chiriac’s Peak*], *Bahna Chiriacului* [*Chiriac’s Puddle*], *Poiana Chiriacului* [*Chiriac’s Glade*], *Vârful Chiriacului* [*Chiriac’s Peak*] (in this case, the ample toponymical field and the synthetic genitive are indications of the antiquity of *Chiriac* anthroponymic nucleus, around which the mentioned names were formed), *Pârâul Dobrului* [*Dobru’s Brook*], *Piciorul Gălățeanului* [*Gălățeanu’s Foot*], *Pârâul Gămănuțului* [*Gămănuț’s Brook*].

We can also notice prepositional collocations in our surveyed toponymical collection: *În Fagi* [*In the Beeches*], *În Gropi* [*In the Holes*], *Între Iazuri* [*Between Ponds*], *La Adăpătoare* [*At the Waterhole*], *La Cucoșeni* [*At Cucoșeni*], *La Gaboreni* [*At Gaboreni*], *La Plopi* [*At the Poplars*], *La Profesori* [*At the Teachers*], *La Ruptură* [*At the Crack*], *La Troiță* [*At the Big Cross*], *La Zidul Morții* [*At the Death Wall*], *Pe Picior* [*On the Foot*] etc. In the case of some toponyms, the *la* (*at*) preposition indicates affiliation and not proximity; it's the case of the *La Profesori* [*At the Teachers*] name which designates the land whose owners were teachers. The new appositional collocations, resulted from the process of transformation in nominative form (made under the influence of the official style), consist of a determinatum and a determinant with function of noun adjunct, the name being in nominative form: *Bariera Boiștea* [*Boiștea Barrier*], *Dealul Tulan* [*Tulan Hill*], *Dealul Cireș* [*Cireș Hill*], *Imașul Deleni* [*Deleni Field*], *Pârâul Maghernița* [*Kennel Brook*], *Vârful Humulești* [*Humulești Peak*].

4. *The periphrases* are forms with a low degree of being abstract, resulted from the compression of an attributive or the ellipsis of the determinatum (the verb or the name) and the linkage element is a preposition: *Dealul la Potcoavă* [*The Hill at the Horseshoe*] (< *Dealul unde era cărciuma La Potcoavă* = the hill where there was the bar 'At the Horseshow'), *Drumul la Ocea* [*The Road at Ocea*] (< *Drumul care duce la Ocea* = the road towards Ocea), *Drumul pe Dobreanu* [*The Road on Dobreanu*] (< *Drumul care merge alătura cu pârâul Dobreanu* = the road aside Dobreanu brook), *În Vârf la Stână* [*On the Peak at Sheepfold*] (< *Mă duc în Vârf la Stână* = I am going at the peak where the sheepfold is), *În Deal la Todireasa* [*On the Hill at Todireasa*] (< *Urc în Deal la Todireasa* = I am climbing the hill where Todireasa lives), *Izvorul la Tulan* [*the Spring at Tulan*] (< *Izvorul care curge la Tulani* = the spring which flows at the Tulan's), *Muntele la Borte* [*the Mountain at the Holes*] (< *Mă duc pe Muntele unde sunt Bortele* = I am going on the mountain where the holes are), *Pârâul la Gămănuț* [*the Brook at Gămănuț*] (< *Pârâul care curge la Gămănuț* = the brook that flows at Gămănuț). The periphrases are usually used when the name is recent and hasn't been fixed yet. If, as we mentioned above, the *la* (*at*) preposition can suggest sometimes the possession, on the contrary, the genitive-possessive article *lui* (= prep. *of*) can indicate, in some cases, proximity and not possession. Thus, *Dealul lui Vartic* [*the Hill of Vartic*] is not the property of this family but the place of their house.

Some socio-geographical objects are named both through a simple toponym but also through a collocation or a periphrasis. These morphosyntactic equivalents (toponymical forms developed from the same determinant through different grammatical methods) indicate the instability of some elements of the toponymical system: *Pârâul la Gămănuț* [*the Brook at Gămănuț*] but also *Pârâul Gămănuțului* [*the Brook of Gămănuț*], *Pârâul Șubei* [*Suba's Brook*] or *Pârâul Șuba* [*Suba Brook*], which proves the instability of some toponymical formations. One can also notice that for the majority of the collocations there is also a morphosyntactic equivalent specific to the official style: the appositional collocation.

5. The compounded toponyms⁵ in the area are often specific to the official style so we usually found them in documents or in the language of the administration representatives. For example, in a file about the Agrarian Reform from 1959 there is the form *Dolia-Coastă* [*Dolia-Flank*] – resulted from decreasing the collocation *Coasta Doliei* [*the Flank of Dolia*]. Following the attestation of the *Vânătorii-Neamț* village, one can observe the evolution process from *Vânătorii* (the 17th century) to “*Vânătorii Neamțului*” (1752, cf. DRA, II: 304) or “*Vânători de Neamțu*” (1759, cf. DRA: 347), name resulted from the need to make the difference between two villages from a certain area having the same name: *Vânătorii Neamțului* and *Vânătorii Pietrei*. Today, as a consequence of the officials’ tendency to ‘simplify’ place names, the designation is *Vânătorii-Neamț*⁶.

Starting from the fact that the place names given by the Romanian population based on Romanian elements are Romanian toponyms, and that the names taken from a foreign population or formed using foreign words (Petrovici 1970: 174) are foreign toponyms, one can notice that the toponymy in the Neamț river basin is predominantly Romanian, with characteristics specific to the Romanian denominative system. The origin of the *Osoi* toponym is uncertain because, as the same Emil Petrovici said, the chances are very high that some words of Slavic origin might have existed in the Romanian language, words that disappeared and then the Romanian named some places with words that no longer exist in Romanian; “the appellative *osoi* may have existed in the Romanian language meaning ‘a mountain’s coast exposed to the north, back’ [...]” (Petrovici 1970: 176).

Of foreign origin are the names *Hălăuța* (< ucr. *holóvka* “little head” whose *-ov*, with a *v*, transforms into *-ău*⁷), *Sasca* (< the appellative *sas* + the Slavic toponymical suffix *-ca*) and *Cacova* (< sl. **kak-* ‘high place’ + suf. *-ova* or personal name *Cacu* + suf. *-ova*). The name of Slavic origin of a village situated south of Humulești, *Ocea*, can be found in several toponyms in the surveyed area; the toponym was analyzed by Ciubotaru (2001: 114), Moldovanu (2009: 434).

The variety of landforms led to the creation of an impressive number of major and minor toponyms.

⁵ “The compounded toponyms are non-syntactic pluri-member formations, characterized by the close cohesion of the terms whose agreement in gender and number is optional, and by the lack of transparency of the significance in all cases where they are not the result of the reversal of a specific collocation’s members” (TTRM I₁: XLII).

⁶ In *Introducerea (The Introduction to) TTRM I₁: LIX*, Dragoș Moldovanu shows how, because of the convenience of officials, this official toponymy appeared, “with a strong synthetic pattern manifested in the tendency to replace the analytical collocations, dominant in the popular toponymy, with synthetic collocations [...] and of the collocations with paratactic constructions [...]. Resulted from the removal of grammatical instruments specific to collocations (the proclitic article, the prepositions), the paratactic constructions represent a category specific to the official toponymy after Cuza’s reform [...]. As reflexes of the synthetic character, there may also be considered: the removal of the genitive mark (transformation into nominative), of the articles in general, the suspension of the genitive forms, as well as the centripetal topic, with the determinant being post-placed, which can be noticed not only in the central administrative texts but also in materials developed by municipalities, forest districts or collective farming units”.

⁷ Janitsek 1969: 136; cf. Iordan 1963: 20.

For a human collectivity the geographical landscape represents a reality whose diversity is assured by the socio-geographical importance of its components, and this fact is reflected directly on the value of the respective names. *The more important the object, the bigger the name's value, stability over time and, therefore, chances to be older.* Maximum value toponyms were named *major* or *macrotoponyms*, while the minimum value ones – *minor* or *microtoponyms* (Moldovanu 1983–1984: 419).

The major toponyms, being known by many people, resist in time and sometimes they become words without significance for the speakers, unlike minor toponyms (Moldovanu 1983–1984: 420). If we consider the totality of toponyms in a country (or historical region) we can speak of an *itself* or *absolute* major toponyms, and if we consider only a relatively small geographical area we speak of *zonal* or *relative* toponyms (Moldovanu 1983–1984: 425).

The absolute major toponym from the surveyed area is *Neamțul*, this also being the oldest toponym attested from the area under discussion. Other major toponyms, attested during the 15th century are the place names *Grași*, *Timișești*, *Zvorănești*. There are also very old minor toponyms, mentioned in documents beginning with the 16th until the 18th century: *Cacova*, *Chiriacul*, *Coasta Fagului*, *Dealul Rusului*, *Dobreanul*, *Hălăuca*, *Mihăiețul*, *Pipirigul*, *Pițigaia*, *Pleșul*, *Sihla* ș.a. But most names of places in the investigated area are recent, from the 19th and 20th century.

There are also some particular linguistic aspects in the toponymical file of the surveyed area. Thus, it is interesting to notice the masculine form *Măguriciul* (*wrong diminutive (masculine gender) for the word Măgura [the Hill] (feminine gender)*), which can be explained through the agreement with a determinant of this gender, probably *deal* [*hill*], as a result of the ignorance of the today villagers of the sense of the entopic *măgurice* [*little hill*], the correct form. *Fagiul* from the name *Coasta Fagiului* [*Coast of the Fagiul*], obtained from an investigation in the Vânătorii-Neamț village, is a singular form restored from the plural form which requires *Dealul Fagilor* [*Hill of the Fagilor*] → *Fagiul*. (*Fag* = noun, meaning *Beech*, having *Fagi* for plural).

We report the existence in Timișești village of some toponyms containing numerals: *La Patruzeci* [*At Forty*], *La Nouăzeci* [*At Ninety*], *La Treizeci* [*At Thirty*]. It is a particular characteristic for the investigated area, but not unique; such toponyms were recorded by the investigator Dragoș Moldovanu in Gherăiești, Tețcani, Iugani and Mircești (Moldovanu, 2003: 266).

Following field surveys we noticed that the *Cacova* hydronym is used by the locals only in the form *Cacovea*, with a final diphthong, version which resulted from the genitive form *Cacovei*, by restoring the nominative. Regarding tautologies, we see that the phenomenon can be attributed to removal of its usage and forgetfulness of the meaning of one of the generic elements of the toponym (the case of *Valea Dolia* [*Dolia Valley*]) or it may be a negligence, an automatic naming of places met on the maps or documents prepared by representatives of the administration (*Pârâul Valea Rea* [*the Bad Valley Brook*]).

Bibliography

- Bolocan 1975: Gheorghe Bolocan, *Stratificarea în toponimie*, in “Limba română”, XXIV, nr. 6, p. 383–385.
- Ciubotaru 2001: Mircea Ciubotaru, *Oronimia și hidronimia din bazinul superior al Bârladului*, Iași, Casa Editorială Demiurg.
- Ciubotaru 2005: Mircea Ciubotaru, *Humulești – un model derivativ popular*, in “Analele Științifice ale Universității «Alexandru Ioan Cuza»” din Iași (serie nouă), secțiunea III e, Lingvistică, tomul LI.
- DIR, A: *Documente privind istoria României*, A, Moldova series, Bucharest, 1951 and the next ones.
- DRA: Vasile Mihordea, Ioana Constantinescu, Corneliu Istrati, *Documente privind relațiile agrare în veacul al XVIII*, vol. II, *Moldova*, București, Editura Academiei Române, 1966.
- DRH, A: *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, A, Moldova series, Bucharest, 1975 and the next ones.
- Jordan 1963: Iorgu Iordan, *Toponimie românească*, Editura Academiei Române.
- Janitsek 1969: E. Janitsek, *Toponimia văii superioare a râului Șieu*, in “Studii și materiale de onomastică”, București, Editura Academiei Române.
- Moldovanu 1970: Dragoș Moldovanu, *Legile formative ale toponimelor românești cu radical antroponimic. I. Formații de plural*, in “Anuar de lingvistică și istorie literară”, tome XXI.
- Moldovanu 1983–1984: Dragoș Moldovanu, *Stratificarea genetică a toponimiei românești*, in „Anuar de lingvistică și istorie literară”, XXIX, A,
- Moldovanu, 2003: Dragoș Moldovanu, *Toponimia satului Gherăiești*, in vol. *Gherăiești. Un sat din ținutul Romanului*, Iași, Editura Presa Bună, p. 247–266.
- Moldovanu 2009: Dragoș Moldovanu, *Sincronia și diacronia câmpurilor toponimice*, in *Lucrările celui de-al doilea Simpozion Internațional de lingvistică* (București, 28/29 noiembrie 2008), Editura Universității din București, p. 139–147.
- Petrovici 1970: Emil Petrovici, *Studii de dialectologie și toponimie*, București, Editura Academiei.
- TTRM I₁₋₂: Dragoș Moldovanu (coord.), Mircea Ciubotaru, Vlad Cojocaru, Ion A. Florea, Gabriel Istrate, Ion Nuță, *Tezaurul toponimic al României. Moldova*, volumul I, *Repertoriul istoric al unităților administrativ-teritoriale. 1772–1988*, părțile 12, București, Editura Academiei Române, 1991–1992.
- Ungureanu 1964: *Ion Creangă. Documente*, edition and introductory study by Gheorghe Ungureanu, București, Editura pentru literatură.

Abstract

The toponyms gathered through field surveys conducted in Neamț river basin or collected from different documents published or existing in archives are analyzed starting from their formation process. Hereby, there are examples of descriptive toponyms (formed from appellations) or personal (formed from anthroponyms). Both the minor toponyms and the major ones in the surveyed area are simple or derived, collocations or periphrases. The majority of the place names were formed within Romanian language, with only few being of Slavic origin. In the last part of the study some linguistic aspects particular for the analyzed area are presented.