

The configuration of polarizing toponymic fields illustrated by examples from TTRM, II₁₋₂[†]

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Abstract

The *toponymic field* represents a denominative ensemble concentrated around a *nucleus*, designating from the denominator’s perspective an object of maximum (socio)geographical importance in a micro-area, to which one or more *derivate toponyms* are subordinated, representing toponyms of secondary importance in their close proximity. The processes generating such a toponymic structure are *polarization*, which deals with (socio)geographical realities belonging to different classes and *differentiation*, which involves the same (socio)geographical reality. In this study we focus on the polarizing toponymic fields, whose accurate configuration is always conditioned by the identification beyond doubt of the polarizing nucleus. Therefore, our aim is not to identify the primary toponymic etymology, that is the designation relationship between the nucleus-toponym and the designated geographical object, but to establish the direction of polarization within the field, the so-called *secondary etymology*, that reveals and explains the relation of dependence of each toponymic derivate towards the polarizing factor.

1. Introduction

The *toponymic field*, a concept developed by D. Moldovanu, a specialist in toponymy from Iași, based on a parallelism between the organization of a lexical field and the configuration of toponyms in a continuous geographical map, represents a denominative ensemble that requires a *nucleus* designating from the denominator’s perspective an object of maximum (socio)geographical importance in the considered micro-area, to which one or more *derivate toponyms* are subordinated, representing toponyms of secondary importance in the close proximity of the nucleus (see [Moldovanu, 2010](#), p. 18).

From the very title of this study we have announced our intention to limit the discussion to the toponymic fields resulted from polarization, a process that concentrates around the nucleus “toponyms that usually designate [relatively contiguous] objects belonging to different geographical classes”¹, between which there are oppositions of equal value, either privative or gradual ([Moldovanu, 2014](#), p. X). For instance, *Vocotești*, a name that designates a human settlement, gave the name of both the hill the village is situated on, *Dealul Vocotești* [Vocotești Hill], and two other geographical realities in its proximity, namely *Pădurea Vocotești* [Vocotești Forest] and *Șesul Vocotești* [Vocotești Plain] ([TTRM, II₁](#), p. 447/1).

The accurate configuration of such a polarizing toponymic structure is always conditioned by the correct identification of the nucleus. Thus, our aim is not to identify the primary toponymic etymology, that is the designation relationship between the nucleus-toponym and the designated geographical object, but to establish the direction of polarization within the field, the so-called *secondary etymology* (for details, see

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¹Moreover, we note the existence of toponymic fields formed through *toponymic differentiation*, a structural process manifested within the same (socio)geographical class, “which designates parts of a denominated geographical object by means of lexical delineators” ([Moldovanu, 2010](#), p. 19).

Moldovanu, 2014, p. X), that reveals and explains the relation of dependence of each toponymic derivate towards the polarizing nucleus.

2. The identification of the nucleus within the polarizing toponymic field

There are cases when the trajectory of the polarization process is easily identifiable, yet in some other cases it requires the corroboration of several edifying aspects. Within the plural derivate toponymic formations, the collective suffixes *-ești*, *-ani/-eni*, *-ari*, *-oń/-oi* always represent a sure indication for a polarizing factor pertaining to the name of a human settlement. Besides the meaning of these suffixes, namely the social dependence of a group of people of the owner of the designated settlement or an important personality of the area, the certainty of the nucleus is also supported by the attestations of the elements belonging to the respective toponymic field, the oldest one involving the names of localities: the name *Oțeleşti* (1438), formed from the name of a clerk, *Oțul*, and the collective suffix *-ești*, serves as a nucleus for an oronym derivate and a hydronym derivate, respectively: *Dealul Oțeleştilor* [Oțeleşti Hill] (1584) and *Pîriul Oțeleşti* [Oțeleşti Stream] (1914) (TTRM, II₁, p. 300/2); the name of the Piticeni village (1528), derived from the name of a nobleman, Toader *Pitic*, with the collective suffix *-eni*, becomes the polarizing factor for *Zarea Piticeniilor* [Piticeni Summit] (1746) and *Pîriul Piticeniilor* [Piticeni Stream] (1831) (TTRM, II₁, p. 323/2).

However, the criterion of the first documentary attestation can no longer be applied to the singular toponymic formations. In their case, the polarizing part can be played by any toponymic name. Besides the historic and geographical information with a significant role in the configuration of such a toponymic field, of outmost importance is the experience acquired from field investigations that reveal certain patterns of the either popular or cultivated topic denomination, which in turn might prove to be the key element in determining the polarization direction or at least one more guarantee for the accurate choice of a polarizing factor. This observation applies to toponyms that do not have a suffix and result from names of people/appellatives with a toponymic function. Within the folk topic denominative system, the frequency of cases recorded by toponymy specialists on the field reveals that streams are often named after a mountain or hill in their vicinity. Thus, the name *Bicaz* (1781) numbers among its toponymic derivates both *Pîriul Bicaz* [Bicaz Stream] (1788) and the name of the locality *Bicaz*. The preference for the oronym as a polarizing element is also supported by the meaning of the etymon *bicaz*, a version of *bicas* “white shiny rock”, correlated to the presence of Pietra Luciului [The Shiny Rock] in the Northern part of the mountain (Moldovanu, 2010, p. 23). However, in the cuesta areas, hydronyms put pressure on the other elements of the toponymic field, oronyms included, enforcing their polarizing nucleus function: *Dealul Zeletinului* [Zeletin Hill], *Zarea Zeletinului* [Zeletin Summit], and *Colinele Zeletinului* [Zeletin Hillocks] took their names from the hydronym *Zeletin* (TTRM, II₁, p. 456/1).

The second so-called ‘law’ of the folk toponymic system emphasizes the preference for names of glades against names of hills, as in the case of the personal toponymic field *Timoftei*. This field is centred around the phytonym *Poiana lui Timoftei* (1631), whose primary derivate is *Dealul Timofteiului* [Timoftei’s Hill] (1691), with the secondary derivate *Pîriul Timofteiului* [Timoftei’s Stream] (1899), and a third degree derivate representing the name of the Timoftei village (1830)² (TTRM, II₁, p. 417/2).

Moreover, the same folk denominative common laws impose the naming the foot of a hill or mountain after the hill or mountain in their proximity³. The field of the personal toponym *Beleşetul* illustrates all

²(A) + *Poiana lui Timoftei* [Timoftei’s Glade] → (I) *Dealul Timofteiului* [Timoftei’s Hill], designating the hill on which the Timoftei’s Glade was situated → (1) *Pîriul Timofteiului* [Timoftei’s Stream], the name of the stream that flows beside the Timoftei’s Hill → (a) *Timofteiul*, the old name of the village located on the Timoftei’s Stream (known today as Chițocul, Lipovăț commune, Vaslui county).

³This particular observation proves to be functional in the reconstruction of certain toponymic nuclei. Moldovanu (2010, p. 26) points out that the foot of the mountain situated in the North-Western part of Poiana Mărului [Apple Glade], known today as *Piciorul Mărului* [Apple Foot], was called in the past *Piciorul Dragoşinului* [Dragoşin Foot]. Starting from this data, the toponymy specialist retraces the old name, that was not attested, of the oronym called nowadays *Muntele Poiana Mărului* [Apple Glade Mountain], namely **Dealul* (or *Măgura*) *lui Dragoşin* [Dragoşin’s Hill / Dragoşin’s Hillock].

these regularities⁴: from the phytonym *Poiana lui Belegheat* [Belegheat's Glade] (1439), designating a former glade on the Trotuș River located probably in the current area of the Beleghet village, there derives the oronym *Dealul Beleghetul* [Beleghet Hill] (1898), which is in turn a polarizing factor for the oronym *Piciorul Beleghetul* [Beleghet Foot], designating a North-Eastern ramification of the hill, as well as for the hydronym *Pîriul Beleghetul* [Beleghet Stream], the name of the left tributary of Trotuș River, which springs from Beleghet Hill (TTRM, II₁, p. 39/1–2).

In cases when the singular toponyms are suffixed formations, the direction of the polarization can be imposed by the suffix attached to the anthroponym or appellative base. The name of the human settlement *Pogana*, for instance, is derived from the hydronym *Pîriul Pogana* [Pogana Stream], a nucleus validated by the motional suffix *-a*, which implies the concord with the implied entopic term *apă* [water] / *vale* [valley] (TTRM, II₁, p. 328/2–329/1). The large field of the personal toponym *Nicolina* starts from a hydronym polarizing factor, as indicated by the possessive adjectival suffix *-ina*, usually attached to the name of a person ending in *-a*⁵, *Mikola* in this case, which concords with the entopic term *dolina* “valley” or *voda* “water” (TTRM, II₁, p. 286/1). The name of the human settlement *Popoiul* is a third degree derivate from the oronym *Popoiul*⁶, attested previously also by the name of *Arșița* [The Heat] or by the intermediate name of *Arșița Popii* [Priest's Heat]. This time, the polarizing factor is established based on the suffix *-oiu*, attached to the anthroponomical base *Popa* to “designate the mountain where *Arșița Popii* was situated” (TTRM, II₁, p. 332/2). In some cases the definite article provides indication on the polarizing nucleus. The field of the toponym *Nechitul*, based on the person's name *Nechita/Nichita*, is organized around the hydronym, while the direction of the polarization is determined by the masculine article that agrees with the geographical term *pîriu* [stream] (TTRM, II₁, p. 282/1).

There are also cases, as far as descriptive toponyms⁷ are concerned, in which the presence of a certain suffix can be confusing; relating to the meaning of the appellative base is the only approach that guarantees the accurate choice of a polarizing nucleus. To exemplify this particular situation we can consider the case of the toponymic field *Pustiata*. The motional suffix *-a*, often in concord with the entopic terms *apă* [water] or *vale* [valley], does not make reference to any hydronym nucleus, although *Pîriul Pustiatei* [Pustiata Stream] is attested in 1824, yet it refers to a glade which no document mentions. The toponymy specialist M. Ciubotaru (2001, p. 141) claims that it is possible for this toponym to have designated at the beginning a small settlement in a glade, in the 18th century, that was subsequently deserted, *pustiită* [devastated]. Despite not being attested in the area (Oniceni commune, Neamț county), the semantic content of the appellative base compels us to reconstitute a phytonymic nucleus of the field, namely **Poiana Pustiata* [Pustiata Glade].

In order to indicate that there is more than one case in which the primary toponymic etymology requires the reconstruction of a certain nucleus, we also mention the topic name *Polocinul*, which designates both a left tributary of the Siret River at the Homocea village, Vrancea County, and a former district that included the villages in the draining area of this stream (1774). Although we should be inclined to identify the hydronym attested in 1472 as the nucleus, the etymon does not allow such an approach. According to the information provided by Gh. Ghibănescu, the toponym is based on the Slavonic term *polocine*, composed of *pol* “half” and *otcina* “estate from the father”, making reference to “the old way of dividing

⁴The cultivated system, applied in geography starting from the second half of the 19th century, imposes different rules for toponymic derivation: mountains, hills, as well as the foot of a hill or mountain get their names from the streams flowing in their proximity; glades are also named after the hills in their (see Moldovanu, 2014, p. X).

⁵See in TTRM, II₁ also *Mînjina*, a Ukrainian derivate of the anthroponym *Mînjea* with the possessive suffix *-ina*, in agreement with the implied term *dolina* “valley”. With the form *-in*, the same suffix makes the agreement with the masculine entopic term *potok* “stream”, still indicating a hydronymic nucleus: *Bobotin* (derived from the Ukrainian name of person **Bobota*), *Miletin* (derived from the Ukrainian anthroponym *Miljata*), *Zeletin* (derived from the Bulgarian hypocorism **Zeleta*), etc.

⁶(A) *Popoiul* [Mountain] → (I) *Valea Popoiului* [Popoiul Valley], designating the right tributary of the Trotuș River, which springs under the Popoiul Mountain → (1) **Poiana Popoiul* [Popoiul Glade], the name of an old Glade located at the mouth of the Popoiul Valley → (a) *Popoiul*, the name of the village that was set up in Popoiul Glade (Palanca commune, Bacău county).

⁷These toponyms are treated in the second part of TTRM, II, which is still in progress.

the first inheritance in two: two old people” (Ghibănescu, 1906, p. 207). The necessity of establishing a relation of compatibility between the meaning of the Slavonic appellative and the polarizing nucleus entitles us to assume the existence of an informational chain that indicates an unidentified estate whose name automatically becomes the nucleus of the field.

In some cases it is practically impossible to establish the direction of toponymic polarization precisely, simply because the same appellative underpins two or more toponyms of the same micro-area, which are formed autonomously through derivation with different suffixes and which become nuclei for independent toponymic fields⁸. For instance, the name of the nobleman *Liuban* Stravici generated, on the one hand, the name of the locality *Ibănești* (a. 1599) and, on the other hand, the hydronym *Ibăneasa* (a. 1429), both developing in their turn own toponymic structures. Although the name of the village is formed with the collective suffix *-ești*, which, as mentioned above, renders names of places their role of toponymic nuclei, *Ibăneasa* cannot be regarded as a regressive derivative from *Ibănești*, since in this case the name should have been *Ibăneasca*⁹. The suffix *-easa* is in this case an independent motional suffix attached to the anthroponymic base in order to agree with the entopic *vale* [valley] (see TTRM, II₁, p. 224–226).

Another polynuclear toponymic structure, of a descriptive nature in this case, is the one based on the Slavonic appellative **rokyta*, designating an osier area on the middle valley of the Siret River. In this instance, the Slavonic suffixes that were attached to the common appellative base, namely *-ov* for *Răcățău* (< o.Ukr. *Rokytow(a)* “with osiers”) and the patronymic *-janin* (*-ėnin*)—occurring, however, as the archaic plural *-jane* (*-ėne*)—for *Răcăciune* (< **Rokičene* “Răchiteni”), imposed two nuclei, one related to the name of a watercourse and another related to the name of a human settlement, which generated in turn ample toponymic fields (TTRM, II₂, ms.).

Polynuclear toponymic fields are also formed by topic names with a double tradition occurring in Moldavia especially in the context of Slavonic-Romanian bilingualism. This is motivated by the fact that this type of toponymic structure can host two topic formations generated by the same anthroponymic / appellative base, but derived with suffixes corresponding to each of the languages that come into contact, which do not admit a relationship of subordination between them. In an area cohabited by Romanians and Ukrainians, parallel with the Romanian name of settlement *Rînghilești*, attested in 1582, there was in circulation an old Ukrainian derivative with the suffix *-owci*, namely *Rîngăuți*, attested in 1735–1736, both names being based on the Slavonic anthroponym *Ringo*¹⁰. Although most probably the two village names used to designate the same referent at the beginning, in 1786 they are mentioned for distinct administrative units: *Rîngăuți*, in the Dorohoi county, property of hetman Costachi Ghica, and, in its vicinity, *Rînghilești*, estate belonging to headman Sturza in the Iași county. This is the reason for which the two settlement names are considered as distinct nuclei within the same field, each having independent toponymic derivatives (TTRM, II₁, p. 347/2–348/1).

Last but not least, we touch the topic of the situation in which the very option for one of the etymological solutions provided by linguists for certain topic names can orient the direction of toponymic polarization. For instance, for the toponym *Nerejul* in the Vrancea county, Jordan (1963, p. 80) asserts with certainty that the name is based on the Hungarian term *nyires* “birch grove”, which would entitle us to organize the toponymic field starting from a nucleus phytonym. Ivănescu (1965, p. 270) invalidates this hypothesis, showing that the Romanian form in which the final *-ș* is toned while the initial group *n + j* remains unpalatalized cannot be explained based on the Hungarian etymon. Moldovanu (1983–1984, p. 412–413) advances the idea that the term originates from the old Slavonic form **Nirėži* (**Nerež*)

⁸In this situation we speak about *polynuclear toponymic fields* that differ from the *mononuclear* ones, made of a pre-established single polarizing nucleus (see Moldovanu, 2014, p. XI).

⁹See, for instance, the hydronym *Brăiasca*, formed by regressive derivation from the name of the *Brăiești* village (TTRM, II₁, p. 60/1).

¹⁰Although some historians (N. Iorga, Șt. Gorovei) have thought that the settlement name *Rînghilești* is based on the name of Alexander the Good’s wife, Ryngalla, this does not provide an explanation for the form of its correspondent, *Rîngăuți*. Consequently, the etymon proposed by TTRM, II₁ (p. 348/1) is the Slavonic anthroponym *Ringo*.

“deepened (river)”, derived from the verb *nireți* “to sink” with the suffix *-éžǎ*, an etymological option which requires the configuration of the toponymic field *Nerejul* starting from a hydronymic nucleus.

3. Conclusions

While we remain deeply aware of the fact that the topic we proposed can be dealt with from more perspectives than this study proposes, our research aimed at presenting, starting from examples taken from **TTRM, II₁₋₂**, a series of solutions for the hierarchization of the elements belonging to a polarizing toponymic field. Despite its being sometimes facile, sometimes full of obstacles and uncertainties, this process requires the specialist in toponymy to make proof of both a thorough historical and geographical documentation and a solid experience acquired from field investigations.

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