PROTO-SLAVIC PATTERN OF IMPERATIVE NAMES IN BULGARIAN TOPONYMY

Dragomir LALCHEV
"Neofit Rilski" South-Western University, Sofia
Bulgaria

Abstract

A part of the huge corpus of imperative toponyms collected over a long period of time mainly on the territory of Central and Western Bulgaria is presented in this study. Verb-noun types of compounds in toponymy are predicative forms containing a verb element in their structure, and showing the presence of subject-object relations expressed in a syntactic form. The word-formation pattern of "an imperative verb + noun" is a peculiar type of linguistic structure possessing figurative-expressive colour and modality contained mainly in the meaning of the verb component. It expresses a semantic nuance of necessity, possibility or obligation for the performance of the action. For example: *Звъни-град*, *Вади-очи*, *Пали-град*, *Празни-торба*, *Чуй-петел*, *Гаси-лула*, *Дери-вол*. In this type the imperative part for the second person singular, present tense, is (in most cases) represented by a transitive verb: ring, take, light, jump, mourn raise, topple over, empty, hear, extinguish, tear. Many imperative toponyms, in their inner form, reflect the social and cultural originality of the Slavic way of life, formed by the living conditions and specifics of the historical development of each Balkan Slavic people. With their spirited functional figurativeness and imagery, and expressive vividness, imperative toponyms resemble phraseological lexical structures.

Key words: *compound*, *toponym*, *imperative*, *Slavic*, *phraseology*

Résumé

Nous présentons dans cette étude une partie du fort grand corpus de toponymes que nous avons rassemble, durant une très longue période dans le temps, surtout dans le centre et l'Ouest de la Bulgarie. Les mots composes du type: «verbe + nom» en toponymie sont des formes prédicatives contenant dans leur structure un élément verbal et qui expriment en bonne et due syntaxe la présence des rapports qui existent entre sujet et objet. Pour la formation de nouveaux mots, le modèle: «verbe impératif + nom» est une structure linguistique toute particulière, qui possède de la puissance figurative et expressive, de la couleur locale et dont la modalité spécifique est d'habitude contenue dans le sens exprime par ladite composante verbale. Par rapport a l'accomplissement de l'action visée, cette composante exprime sémantiquement les nuances de possibilité, de nécessite ou d'obligation. Par exemple: *Звъни-град*, *Вади-очи*, *Пали-град*, *Празни-торба*, *Чуй-петел*, *Гаси-лула*, *Дери-вол*. Dans ce modèle, a la seconde personne du singulier, au présent, la composante impérative est représentée (dans la plupart des cas) par un verbe transitif: sonner, prendre, sauter, illuminer, élever, plaindre quelqu'un, rouler en boule, vider, entendre, éteindre, rompre. De par leur forme intrinsèque, beaucoup parmi les toponymes impératifs reflètent l'originalité sociale et culturelle de la manière Slave de vivre, formée, pour

BDD-A3891 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-18 20:52:11 UTC)

chacun des peuples Slaves Balkaniques, de par son développement historique particulier et vu ses conditions spécifiques de vie. Avec leur potentiel figuratif et imagistique d'une grande efficacité fonctionnelle, nourri par l'esprit populaire, et avec leur vivacité d'expression, les toponymes impératifs ressemblent par beaucoup aux structures lexicales phraséologisées.

Mots-clés: *compose, toponyme, impératif, Slave, phraséologie*

In Bulgarian onomastics, the group of compound geographic names of localities has not been investigated as much as that of compound nouns in the literary and dialect Bulgarian language. They appear here and there in various sources, most often concerning mountain areas inhabited in ancient times by Slavic people in the Balkan linguistic area. In the Proto-Slavic language, this pattern was inherited from the Proto-Indo-European language, and is also found in the toponymy of other Slavic languages as an indispensable part of their ethnolinguistic characteristics.

Compound toponyms, comprised of an imperative verb and a noun deserve attention as a relatively rare and archaic structural type found not only in Bulgarian but also in the toponymy of the other Slavic languages. The proposition of the Proto-Slavic origin of the imperative pattern of compound names is supported by most Bulgarian and foreign Slavonic experts (Miklosich, 1875: 377-417; Jagić, 1898-1899: 519-556; Koshelev, 1964: 15; Eichler, 1964: 50-61; Mladenov, 1929: 208-211). In this study I do dwell on the issue of compound nouns in the literary Bulgarian language as these nouns have been discussed in other works (Andreychin, 1944; Shanskiy, 1958: 30-35; Rospond, 1957; Georgieva, 1967: 157-202; Baltova, 1977; Stoyanov, 1977; Popov, 1968: 609-615; GSBKE, T.2, 1983: 28, 76, 81). The same applies to compound words in dialects, too, which are the subject of other studies concerned with Bulgarian folk dialects (Vasileva, 1987: 383-385; 2009: 427-433). There are scanty imperative toponyms in the Proto-Bulgarian written records, due to the genre specifics of these literary works, few of which have been preserved to the present day. The loan-words, Slavic toponyms, in the neighbouring non-Slavic languages also provide an opportunity to follow the migration processes among Proto-Slavic tribes that brought archaic name patterns to the Balkans. Thus the relative chronology, intensity and directions of spreading of this kind of toponyms that pervaded the lands of Balkan peoples today (Slavonic and non-Slavonic) after the 6th century can be established. This, in turn, enables experts to identify approximately the contact areas of interaction between the various ethnic groups of Balkan population (GrStbE, 1991: 61-62).

Compound toponyms are a subject of linguistic archeology which makes it possible to reconstruct archaic Slavic forms, which are no longer found in current dialects but have been preserved in the sphere of toponymy. This opens new horizons to scientific observations and theoretical conclusions of diachronic nature in two directions: 1) the state of Proto-Bulgarian lexis in the pre-script period, that is, identifying proto-Slavic structural patterns of toponyms from the 7th – 8th century; 2) revealing the specifics of the Slavic ways and culture in the Balkans from the perspective of the ethnopsychology and cultural demography of the Balkan peoples, and of the Slavic ethnos among them, in particular.

The word-formation pattern of "an imperative verb + noun" is a peculiar type of

BDD-A3891 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-18 20:52:11 UTC)

linguistic structure possessing figurative-expressive colour and modality contained mainly in the meaning of the verb component. It expresses a semantic nuance of necessity, possibility or obligation for the performance of the action. In most cases there is desemantization of the imperative verb form in the second person, singular, present tense. It has resulted from the historical process of fading of the original meaning and loss of the motivating link between the separate components. The metaphorical transformation of the verb component must have occurred in the course of the figurative use, and finally, the compound toponym as a whole has lost the connection with the specific semantics of its constituent parts. Thus it has also acquired a pejorative nuance typical of this kind of compound words in the Bulgarian spoken language, such as: *варùклèчко*, *изгорùкłща*, *бутнùгàбър*, *вртùопàшка*, *развèйпрàх* и др. (Rusinov, 1962: 64).

Verb-noun types of compounds in toponymy are predicative forms containing a verb element in their structure, and showing the presence of subject-object relations expressed in a syntactic form. In onomastic studies they should be discussed as compound formations of a main part and a subordinate one, whose stress interdependence is to be graphically represented through two stresses (Bulahovskiy, 1959: 107), the first of which falls on the verb component, and the second – on the noun.

A part of the huge corpus of imperative toponyms collected over a long period of time mainly on the territory of Central and West Bulgaria is presented in this study.

According to their origin, compound verb-noun toponyms can be divided into two main groups: a/ imperative toponyms formed directly from existing compound words found in dialects, in which they most often mean medicinal plants. The first part of these names is usually a verb: bloom, intoxicate, hang, hurt. For example: *Цъфти́-трън*, *Опи́й цвет*, *Боли́-главá* (от раст. *боли-глава* Conium maculatum), Hang-bur (from *burdock* – a kind of grassy plant); b/ imperative toponyms which have originated not from existing dialect words but in connection with an event, an incident in the denominated area. For example; *Звъни́-град*, *Вади́-очи́*, *Пали́-град*, *Нехáй-град*, *Скочи́-девóйка*, *Оплачи́-връх*, *Стани́-мъка*, *Претури́-сáни*, *Празни́-торбá*, *Чуй-петéл*, *Гаси́-лулá*, *Дери́-вол* and many others. In this type the imperative part for the second person singular, present tense, is, in most cases, represented by a transitive verb: ring, take, light, jump, mourn, raise, topple over, empty, hear, extinguish, tear.

Ensuing from the examples given above is the question of the origin of this archaic pattern of geographic names: whether they were formed from existing compound words inherited from Proto-Slavic and existing in the older stages /Proto-Bulgarian/ of the development of the recipient-language, or those names followed some kind of structurally inherited toponymic tradition with its own specifics. This question may be answered through a more comprehensive comparative study of the other Slavic languages in compiling a common *Slavic Toponymic Atlas*. At this initial stage, it can be assumed that part of the imperative compound toponyms were probably formed from existing verb-noun appellatives, still used or already disappeared from the Bulgarian dialects but preserved in some Slavic languages. This is especially valid of place names containing dialect names of plants with a figurative-expressive coloring: *цъфтù-трън*, *болù-глàва*, *стърчù-крак*, *лàйкучка*, *кърпù-кожýх*.

The lexical composition of imperative compound names includes geographic

BDD-A3891 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-18 20:52:11 UTC)

terms connected with the specifics of the local view of life of the people and allow for discussing some natural, geographic, territorial and social specifics of the Slavic pastoral world with its material and spiritual culture. This group of compound place names is one of the most diverse and it includes examples with a vivid imaging basis. They can be presented in several semantic groups:

1. Terms used to designate bulging or flat terrain (за именуване на изпъкнал или равнинен терен/ glen, gorge 'hill, knoll', streamlet, pool, waterfalls, peak, clearing, glade, swamp, puddle, elevation, rock, mound): *Бучи́-дол*, *Гази́-ба́ра Върти́-бок*, *Не види́-бок*, *Губи́-поляна*, *Гледи́-чука́р*, *Загуби́-ръ́тли́на*, *Плачи́-моги́ла*, *Пържи́-рид*, *Оплачи́-поляна*, *Стърчи́-ка́мък*, *Дели́-рид*, *Дели́-бла́то*, *Ломи́-дол*, *Черпи́-вир* и др.

2. Words connected with farming, agricultural crops, soil and farming tools (beans, peas, potatoes, corn, wheat, plough, scythe, sickle): *Вари́-бо́би* (*~пата́дес*), *Завлечи́-мису́р*, *Звекни́-сърп*, *Клепи́-ка́мик*, *Кореви́-лъг*, *Криви́-плуг*, *Кърни́-храст*, *Кърти́-пън*, *Ломи́-коса́*, *Пали́-гора́* (*~греди́ца*, *~круша*, *~о́бело*, *~сла́ма*), *Плещи́-ба́ра*, *Повали́-ръж*, *Пържи́-грах* (*~орма́н ~рид*), *Скочи́-гръм*, *Страни́-сто́ки*, *Трощи́-ра́ло*, *Търколи́-кочи́н*, *Хвати́-рек*, *Черпи́-вир*, *Чупи́-междá*.

3. Botanical terms designating forest vegetation and plants: beech, pine-tree, birch, willow, forest, grove, thunder, oak, tree, hazelbush, wood, log, prickle, thistle, bush, blossom, leaf: *Бери́-бук*, *Бричи́-бор*, *Вали́-гръм*, *Гърми́-бук* (*~гора*), *Кърни́-храст*, *Опи́й-цвет*, *Оплачи́-трън*, *Пери́-о́рех*, *Пали́-гора́* (*~гори́ца*, *~о́бел*), *Плачи́-гора́* (*~върби́*, *~го́рница*, *~дъб*, *~круша*), *Руби́-бреза́*, *Цери́-дърво́*, *Цъфти́-трън*, *Чепи́-лескá*.

4. Words designating domestic animals: lamb, ox, mare, mule, goat, horse, cow, donkey, buffalo, cattle, sheep, hen, stallion, rooster, bitch, kid: *Печи́-а́гне*, *Беси́-вол*, *Върви́-коби́ла*, *Вържи́-во́лица* (*~муле*), *Гърми́-ко́зе*, *Дави́-коби́ла* (*~коза́*, *~кон*), *Дели́-вол* (*~крава*, *~магаре*), *Дери́-би́вол* (*~говедо*, *~кон*, *~магаре*, *~овца*), *Дери́-вол*,, *Жежи́-кра́вите*, *Коли́-вол* (*~жребче́*, *~ква́чка*, *~коза́*, *~кон*, *~кра́ва*), *Мини́-кон*, *Не чуй-пете́л*, *Подържи́-кон*, *Пърли́-кучка*, *Реви́-мага́ре*, *Скочи́-коби́ла*, *Трепи́-мага́ре*, *Трещи́-ярища*, *Търколи́-биволи*, *Чуй- пете́л*, *Язди́-вол*.

5. Anatomical terms for parts of the body: head, neck, back, hump, leg, knee, hair, foot, eye, tail, thumb, tail, such as: *Бакни́-о́ко*, *Боли́-гла́ва*, *Вади́-о́чи*, *Влачи́-крак*, *Вържи́-гла́ва* (*~па́лец*), *Върти́-гла́ва*, *Гради́-крак*, *Гризи́-кост*, *Дери́-гла́ва* (*~ коляно*, *~ чело́*), *Дреми́-гла́ва*, *Издáй-гла́ва*, *Кърши́-врат* (*~ коляно*), *Ломи́-врат*, *Лупи́-главá*, *Паду́-кос*, *Пари́-ногá*, *Пасú-глав*, *Печи́-гърби́ца*, *Пърчи́-но́га*(*~крак*), *Разби́й-главá*, *Сечи́-глави́ца*, *Скуби́-брадá*, *Сломи́-врат*, *Стрижи́-брадá*, *Стърчи́-гръб* (*~крак*, *~нога*), *Трощи́-гла́ва* (*~крак*), *Търчи́-крак* (*~нога*), *Чупи́-главá* (*~ ко́сти*).

6. Zoological terms, names of wild animals, reptiles and birds (bear, wolf, eagle, frog, toad, snake, grass-snake, wild cat, crow, fly, mole, lizard, fish): *– Бори́-ме́чка*, *Врещи́-чука́р* (reverberation of the bleat of wild goats), *Дери́-вълци*, *Дери́-жа́ба*, *Дери́-змия*, *Дери́-смок*, *Дери́-ма́чка*, *Кацни́-орле́*, *Коли́-ма́чка* (*~жа́ба*), *Кричи́-вра́на*, *Кърки́-жа́ба*, *Лапни́-муши́ца*, *Мори́-вра́на*, *Пали́-къртúца*, *Печи́-гущер*, *Пищи́-орли́*, *Плаши́-вра́на*, *Плаши́-ри́ба*, *Скочи́-вра́на*, *Смърди́- вра́на*. In the composition of the imperative toponym expressing human behavior, the zoology lexeme acts as a semantic centre as it is this lexeme that bears the main metaphorical meaning that renders the geographic name so colorful and figurative.

BDD-A3891 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-18 20:52:11 UTC)

7. Terms designating hydrographic places – different in size reservoirs, mostly brooks and rivers (gorge, pool, river, water, well, fountain, waterfalls, swamp, marsh) cauldron, dry river-bed, foam, flow, brook, well), metaphorically formed hydronyms: *Дави́-дол*, *Дави́-калугер*, *Дави́-кобила*, (*~коза*, *~кон*); *Завлечи́-миси́р*, *Залеви́-цървул*, *Капи́-води́ца*, *Капи́-ка́мен*, *Кипи́-пяна*, *Леви́-вир*, *Мъти́-вир*,, *Пищи́-во́да*, (*~дол*), *Плещи́ ба́ра*, *Разпели́-суши́ца*, *Сипи́-вир*, *Скочи́-вир*,(*~вода*), *Суши́-кутел*, *Смърди́-буна́р* (*~пото́к*), *Страни́-сто́ки*, *Стърчи́-кладенец*, *Суши́-ко́ло* (*~кутел*), *Хвати́-рек*, *Черпи́-вир*.

8. Terms designating objects from the material culture 'sokay' women's headwear, *воз* 'cart', *са́ни* 'sledge': *Звъни́-град*, *Вий-вене́ц*, *Търси́-сока́й*, *Пази́-мост*, *Копа́й-кошара*, *Вари́-бо́б*, *Вали́-воз*, *Гори́-град*, *Дери́-диса́г*, *Дери́-кожух*, *Дери́-га́щи*, *Заби́й-кли́нье*, *Захапи́-коне́ц*, *Звекни́-сърп*,*Залеви́-цървул*, *Претурни́-са́ни*, *Разби́й-гърне́*, *Теглѝ-кука*, *Суши́-кутел*, *Стърчи́-кла́денец*, *Тънти́-буна́р*, *Чукни́-тъпан*, *Търколи́-гърне́* etc.

9. Words with particular and abstract semantics connected with the mental and physiological state of man (God, prayer, spirit, soul, hope, suffering, hunger, fatigue, rest and suchlike): *Види́-Бог*, *Моли́-Бо́га*, *Помози́-Бог*, *Спаси́-ка́мен*, *Прости́-ка́мен*, *Изми́-дух*, *Изми́-душа́*, *Вади́-душа́*, *Мъчи́-душа́*, *Лъжи́-душа́*, *Сбери́-душа́*, *Стани́-мъка*.

10. Memorial toponyms with the structure of a remark and connected with certain incidents and historic events that happened in the area – *Проща́вай драги́нко*, *Плати́-тига́н*, *Плати́-дро́мос*, *Изда́й-гла́ва*, *Трай Дянко*, *Не бой се куло*, *Пази́-стена́*, *Неха́й-град*, *Свети́-град*, *Звъни́-град*, *Гори́-град*, *Трати́-чалма́*, *Захапи́-коне́ц*, *Търси́-сока́й*. The dictionary entries of each of these names provide a legend of a historic event or some incident of everyday life that motivated the coinage of the toponym.

Nowadays, interdisciplinary research is becoming more and more popular in modern linguistics, especially in the new scientific field of linguistic culture. In theoretical and practical, applicable terms, it is observed that linguistics begins to interact with other established fundamental sciences, such as history, ethnography, archeology, folkloristics, sociology, historical geography and archivistics. Closely connected with the above- mentioned areas of knowledge and science, linguistic culture is turning into an exponent of the century-long material and spiritual culture of the Balkan Slav, of his patriarchal world rich in metaphorical imagery of nature. Through linguistic interpretation, it develops in the mind of a person a special cognitive and philosophical-pragmatic concept of natural phenomena, human activities and work, religious disposition and outlook, as well as figurative and imaginative thinking. Linguistic culture reveals the emotional-psychological perception of the natural environment in which the Slavic peasant lived for centuries in the Balkans. The language of the metaphorical geographic names reflects in a very vivid way this mentality of the people in all its dimensions – historical memory, spiritual values, work and creative activities, keen observation and a sense of immediate perception of the living and non-living nature, reflected in a figurative and imaginative way in the structure of imperative toponyms. According to Apresyan, expressiveness is ethnolinguistically and ethnoculturally marked because of the linguistic and non-linguistic motivation of the evaluation contained in it, which is directly connected with the feature of the denominated object (Apresyan, 1988: 8-16, 1995: 156-160;

BDD-A3891 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-18 20:52:11 UTC)

Vachkova, 2002: 6-9).

Many imperative toponyms, in their inner form, reflect the social and cultural originality of the Slavic way of life, formed by the living conditions and specifics of the historical development of each Balkan Slavic people. A similar phenomenon can be also observed in the semantics of the phraseology of the language, which V.N. Telia also considers 'a system of images' fixed in the phraseological units of the language, in one way or another connected with the material, social and spiritual culture of a certain linguistic community, evidencing its cultural and national experience and traditions' (Telia, 1996: 215).

To sum up, we can state that with their spirited functional figurativeness and imagery, and expressive vividness, imperative toponyms resemble phraseological lexical structures. They, however, do not tally with the real linguistic phrasemes, which are distinguished by their syntactic and idiomatic integrity, and have a complete desemantisation of their constituents.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Андрейчин, Л., *Основна българска граматика*, София, 1944.

Апресян, Ю.Д., *Интегральное описание языка и системная лексикография*, М., 1995.

Балтова, Ю., *Сложните същ. имена в българския книжовен езмик от епохата на Възраждането*, канд.дис, София, 1977.

Бояджиева, И., *Транспозициите на императива*, in *Български език*, *год*, XXXIII, 5/1983, с. 384-389.

Булаховский, Л. А., *Акцентологическая проблематика древнейших славянских сложений типа имен существительных*, Изв. Акад. Наук, Отд. Литер. И яз. Т. XVIII/1959, вып. 2, с. 107.

Eichler, E., Naumann, H., Walther, H., *Komposition in Ortsnamen*, in *Materialen zum slawischen onomastischen Atlas*, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin, 1964.

Георгиев, В.И., *Основни проблеми на славянската диахронна морфология*, София, 1969.

Георгиева, Ел., *Сложни съществителни имена в съвременния български книжовен език*, Изв. на Инст. за бълг. език. Кн. XIII/1967, с. 157-202; ГрСтбЕ – Граматика на старобългарския език, Фонетика, Морфология, Синтаксис, Колектив (гл.ред. чл.-кор. проф. Ив. Дуриданов), София, БАН, 1991.

Гсбке, *Граматика на съвременния български книжовен език*, Т. II. Морфология, София, 1983.

Jagić, V., *Die slavischen Composita in ihrem sprachgeschichtlichen Auftreten* in *Archiv für slav. Philologie*, Bd. XX, 1, Berlin, 1898-1899.

Кошелев, А.К., *Одна синтаксико-морфологическая модель в славянских языках*, Год, Соф.унив., Филол. фак. Т. 58, 2, София, 1964.

Lalcev, D., *Lexikalische und morphologische Hybriden in der Toponymie einiger Ortschaften in Südostthrakien*, in *Linguistique Balkanique*, XXXIV, 3-4/1991, София, с. 39-42.

Лалчев, Д., *Лексикографски традиции при съставянето на Български топонимичен речник*, "Състояние и проблеми на българската ономастика". Т. 2. В. Търново, 1994, с. 86-191.

BDD-A3891 © 2013 Editura Sitech

Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-18 20:52:11 UTC)

Miklosich, Fr., *Vergleichende Grammatik der slavischen Sprachen*, Bd. II. Wien 1875.
Mladenov, St., *Geschichte der bulgarische Sprache*, Berlin und Leipzig, 1929.
Попов, К., *Българският повествувателен императив* – В: Известия на Института за български език. Кн.XVI, 1968, с. 609-615.
Rospond, S., *Klasyfikacja strukturalno-gramatyczna slowiańskich nazwgeograficznych*, Wrocław, 1957.
Русинов, Р., *Правопис на сложни думи, чиято първа част е повелителна глаголна форма*. – Български език и литература, 1962, кн. 2, с. 64.
Стоянов, Ст., *Словообразуването в българския език*. С., 1977; Граматика на съвременния български книжовен език. Т. II. С., 1983, с. 28-81.
Шанский, Н., О *соединительной гласной как словообразовательной морфеме*, Рус. язык в школе, 5/1958, с. 30-35.
Телия, В.Н., *Русская фразеология, Семантический, прагматический и лингвокультурологический аспекты*, М.: Языки руссской культуры, 1996.
Василева, Л., *Българско словно богатство*, София, 2009.
Вачкова, К., *Конотацията като лексикографски тип в многотомния Речник на българския език*, Палеославистика, лексикология, лексикография. Тезисы международной научной конференции, посвященной памяти Р.М. Цейтлин (27-29 ноября 2002), Москва, 2002, с. 6-10.

BDD-A3891 © 2013 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-18 20:52:11 UTC)