

Polish toponomastics: Its history, current state, and research perspectives

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Abstract: The article is intended to serve as an overview of the history and current state of toponomastic research in Poland. Its aim is to introduce the main achievements of Polish toponomastics in the 20th and 21st centuries to the international onomastic community. The author characterizes the theoretical and methodological frameworks and approaches developed by Polish onomasticians, influential researchers and schools, and the most significant studies dedicated to oikonymy, hydronymy and anoikonymy. The concepts and methodological foundations of various national and regional dictionaries of geographical names are presented, including two connected with the Kraków onomastic centre: *Nazwy miejscowe Polski. Historia. Pochodzenie. Zmiany* [Place names of Poland. History. Origin. Changes] and *Elektroniczny słownik hydronimów Polski* [Electronic dictionary of hydronyms of Poland]. Considerable space has been devoted to methodological changes in the elaboration of toponyms in the 21st century, and

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examples of monographs that have successfully applied the methods of socioonomastics and cultural onomastics have been described. The final part of the article contains reflections on the future of toponomastic research, the degree of the openness of toponomastics to the achievements of other scientific disciplines, and its interdisciplinarity.

Keywords: Geographical names, toponomastic methodology and theory, toponomastic lexicography, interdisciplinarity.

La toponymie polonaise : histoire, état actuel et perspectives de recherche

Résumé : L'objectif de cet article est de donner une vue d'ensemble de l'histoire et de l'état actuel de la recherche sur la toponymie en Pologne et de présenter les principales réalisations de la toponymie polonaise au cours des XX^e et XXI^e siècles à la communauté onomastique internationale. L'auteure y présente les cadres théoriques et méthodologiques, les approches développées par les onomasticiens polonais, les chercheurs et écoles influents ainsi que les études les plus significatives de l'oïkonymie (noms de lieux habités), de l'hydronymie et de l'anoïkonymie (noms de lieux non-habités). Les concepts et les fondements méthodologiques de divers dictionnaires nationaux et régionaux de noms géographiques y sont également présentés, y compris deux dictionnaires liés au centre de recherche onomastique de Cracovie : *Nazwy miejscowe Polski. Historia. Pochodzenie. Zmiany* [Noms de lieux de Pologne. Histoire. Origine. Changements] et *Elektroniczny słownik hydronimów Polski* [Dictionnaire électronique des hydronymes polonais]. Une attention particulière a été consacrée aux changements méthodologiques dans la compilation des toponymes au XXI^e siècle. Des exemples de monographies qui ont appliqué avec succès les méthodes de la socio-onomastique et de l'onomastique culturelle y ont été aussi mentionnés. La dernière partie de l'article contient des réflexions sur l'avenir de la recherche sur la toponymie et son ouverture aux acquis d'autres disciplines scientifiques soit son interdisciplinarité.

Mots-clés : Noms géographiques, méthodologie toponomastique, théorie de recherches toponomastiques, lexicographie des toponymes, interdisciplinarité.

Polnische Toponomastik: Geschichte, aktueller Stand und Forschungsperspektiven

Zusammenfassung: Der Beitrag soll einen Überblick über die Entwicklung und den derzeitigen Stand der toponomastischen Forschung in Polen bieten. Der internationalen onomastischen Gemeinschaft werden die wichtigsten Errungenschaften der polnischen Toponomastik im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert vorgestellt. Die Autorin beschreibt die von polnischen Onomasten, einflussreichen Forschern und Schulen entwickelten theoretischen und methodologischen Rahmenwerke und Ansätze sowie die maßgeblichsten der Oïkonymie (Ortsnamenschatz), Hydronymie (Gewässernamenschatz) und Anoïkonymie (Flurnamenschatz) gewidmeten Studien. Weiterhin werden die Konzeptionen und methodischen Grundlagen verschiedener nationaler und regionaler Wörterbücher geographischer Namen vorgestellt. Darunter sind zwei mit dem onomastischen Zentrum in Krakau verbundene Werke: *Nazwy miejscowe Polski. Historia. Pochodzenie. Zmiany* [Ortsnamen Polens. Geschichte. Herkunft. Veränderungen] und *Elektroniczny słownik hydronimów Polski* [Elektronisches Wörterbuch der Hydronyme Polens]. Breiter Raum wurde den methodischen Veränderungen bei der Untersuchung der Toponyme im 21. Jahrhundert gewidmet, und es werden

exemplarisch einige Monografien vorgestellt, in denen mit Erfolg sozioonomastische und kulturonomastische Methoden angewendet wurden. Der abschließende Teil des Beitrags enthält Überlegungen zur Zukunft der toponomastischen Forschung, zum Grad der Offenheit der Toponomastik gegenüber den Ergebnissen anderer Wissenschaften sowie zu ihrer Interdisziplinarität.

Schlüsselbegriffe: geographische Namen, toponomastische Methodologie und Theorie, toponomastische Lexikographie, Interdisziplinarität.

Polish toponomastics: Its history, current state, and research perspectives

URSZULA BIJAK

1. Introduction

In my paper I would like to present the history of Polish toponomastics, its theory and methodology, as worked out by Polish onomasticians (methods of analysis, classifications of geographical names), influential researchers, and centres, the most significant works, and to show the perspectives of toponomastic research in Poland. Presenting a general overview of Polish toponomastics is a challenging task in itself. I focus primarily on the recent period of the development of Polish toponomastics – on toponomastic lexicography and the interdisciplinary approach in toponomastic research.

Onomastic research in Slavic countries has a long tradition and has also become one of the impulses for the development of this discipline in other countries. The progenitor and creator of Slavic onomastics was Franc Miklošič/
Franz Miklosich (1813–1891) – a Slovene linguist, educated in Austria, a professor at the University of Vienna and a member of the Academy of Sciences in Vienna. His research and publications became the basis for theoretical and analytical research in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia. The importance of his works is undeniable, and in the context of toponomastics it is worth mentioning his monographs entitled *Die Bildung der Ortsnamen aus Personennamen im Slavischen* (1864) and *Die slavischen Ortsnamen aus Appellativen* (1872–1874); references to these publications also appear in contemporary toponomastic studies.

In the research of proper names in Poland three periods can be distinguished: prior to World War II, from the end of World War II to the 1970s and 1980s, and the last four decades. The 1970s and 1980s were the time of a “sociolinguistic breakthrough”. In my opinion, however, there was no clear breakthrough in toponomastics itself at that time. Methodological changes were and are still taking place more slowly than, for example, in anthroponomastics. A certain turning point was the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

2. Polish toponomastics prior to World War II

Toponyms were first analysed in historical grammar books of the Polish language as an exemplification of phonetic and morphological phenomena, in

etymological dictionaries, and they also became a source for research on the history of settlement. In the early 20th century, research on water names was undertaken by Jan Michał Rozwadowski (1867–1935), an Indo-European scholar from the Jagiellonian University.¹ There were two onomastic centres in interwar Poland: in Poznań, where Mikołaj Rudnicki (1881–1978) was active, and in Lvov, where Witold Taszycki (1898–1979) worked, both former graduates of the Jagiellonian University. Witold Taszycki, considered by many to be the founder of Polish onomastics, gathered in Lvov, later eminent linguists who contributed to the development of toponomastics, such as: Stanisław Rospond (1906–1982), Przemysław Zwoliński (1914–1981), Zdzisław Stieber (1903–1980), Stefan Hrabec (1912–1972) and Jarosław Rudnicki/Jaroslav Rudnyćkyj (1910–1995). In Lvov the theoretical and methodological foundations of toponomastics were created: [Taszycki](#) made a semantic and etymological classification of Slavic place names (1946), and research on the toponymy of border areas was carried out: of the Lemko region by [Zdzisław Stieber](#) (1949), of the Hutsul region by [Stefan Hrabec](#) (1950), and of the Boyko region by [Jarosław Rudnicki](#) (1939). Rudnicki's work was published before World War II, with the others emerging after the war despite the research having been carried out before.

3. Polish toponomastics after World War II – Onomastic schools and regional studies

After World War II there was a rapid development of onomastics in Poland. The researchers who had previously been based in Lvov created new onomastic and linguistic centres elsewhere: Taszycki in Kraków, Hrabec in Łódź, Stieber and Zwoliński in Warsaw, Rospond in Wrocław, and Rudnicki/Rudnyćkyj in Canada. New university research institutes were established in Białystok, Gdańsk, Kielce, Lublin, Olsztyn, Opole, Szczecin, and Cieszyn, also at the Polish Academy of Sciences: at the Institute of Slavic Studies in Warsaw and at the Institute of Polish Language in Kraków. From these, four main onomastic establishments emerged: “the Kraków school” of Witold Taszycki, “the Silesian school” of Stanisław Rospond and later Henryk Borek (1929–1986), “the Gdańsk school” of Hubert Górniewicz (1922–1986), and the “Slavic onomastic school” in Warsaw (see [Rzetelska-Feleszko 2003: 27](#)). Onomastics became a subdiscipline of linguistics and the philological-historical method, etymological analysis, and the structuralist paradigm predominated. In the Kraków centre, regional monographs were created using Taszycki's semantic and etymological classification of geographical names, which is, a division into topographic, cultural, possessive, diminutive, patronymic, ethnic, family, servant, foreign and unclear names ([Taszycki 1946](#)). In Wrocław

¹ His studies were collected and published as a posthumous work by Tadeusz Lehr-Spławiński and Jan Safarewicz after World War II, see [Rozwadowski \(1948\)](#).

and Opole, structuralist concepts and onomastic stratigraphy (presenting the geography and frequency of individual word-formation types) were developed, and the structural and grammatical classification by Rospond was used, which is a division into primary – non-derivative, secondary – derivative, compound, foreign, and hybrid names (Rospond 1957). In the works of the “Gdańsk school”, the methods of German onomastics – the Leipzig school of Ernst Eichler – were adapted. In both hubs, comprehensive monographs of counties were developed, containing documentation for all geographical names – settlement, field, and water names. In *Pomorskie Monografie Toponomastyczne* [The Pomeranian toponomastic monographs], both semantic and structural-grammatical classifications were used (a compromise approach) (cf. Rzetelska-Feleszko 2003). From 1974 to 2000, a total of 15 volumes of this series were published.

Settlement names were described in several ways:

- in monographs on historical regions: *Nazwy miejscowe północnego Mazowsza* [Place names of northern Mazovia]² by Karol Zierhoffer (1957); *Nazwy miejscowe południowej części dawnego województwa krakowskiego* [Place names of the southern part of the former Kraków Province] by Władysław Lubaś (1968); *Nazwy miejscowe północnej części dawnego województwa krakowskiego* [Place names of the northern part of the former Kraków Province] by Kazimierz Rymut (1967), and *Nazwy miejscowości dawnej ziemi sanockiej* [Place names of the former Sanok Land] by Władysław Makarski (1986);
- in monographs on specific semantic types: *Patronimiczne nazwy miejscowe na Mazowszu* [Patronymic place names in Mazovia] by Witold Taszycki (1951); *Rodowe nazwy miejscowe Wielkopolski, Małopolski i Mazowsza* [Family place names of Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, and Mazovia] by Hubert Górniewicz (1968); and *Patronimiczne nazwy miejscowe w Małopolsce* [Patronymic place names in Lesser Poland] by Kazimierz Rymut (1971);
- in monographs on word-formation types in specific regions: *Nazwy miejscowe z suf. -ov-, -in- na obszarze Wielkopolski i Małopolski* [Place names with suffixes -ov- and -in- in the area of Greater Poland and Lesser Poland] by Franciszek Nieckula (1971); and in parts of the Slavic region, such as: *Zachodniosłowiańskie nazwy toponimiczne z formantem -ьн-* [West Slavic place names with the suffix -ьн-] by Henryk Borek (1968); and *Słowiańskie nazwy miejscowe z sufiksem -ьск-* [Slavic place names with the suffix -ьск -] by Stanisław Rospond (1969).

Works on water names focused on research into the basins of major rivers: *Nazwy wodne dorzecza Sanu* [Water names of the San River basin] by Janusz Rieger (1969); *Nazwy rzeczne dorzecza Warty* [River names of the Warta River basin]

² For settlement names (*nazwy miejscowe*) in Polish onomastic literature we often used the English term *place names*, which is not in accordance with ICOS terminology.

by Janusz Rieger, Ewa Wolnicz-Pawłowska (1975); and *Nazwy rzeczne Pomorza między dolną Wisłą a dolną Odrą* [River names of Pomerania between the lower Vistula and the lower Odra] by Ewa Rzetelska-Feleszko & Jerzy Duma (1977). All of the monographs written at that time were diachronic and, as a rule, consisted of a historical-etymological dictionary and a synthetic-interpretative part.

Then minor place names, field names were dealt with less frequently. Whilst thicker and less voluminous regional studies were published, these were usually characterised by a synchronous, or less often diachronic, approach. Examples are: *Terenowe nazwy orawskie* [Field names of Orava] by Teresa Gołębiowska (1964), *Terenowe nazwy własne Lubelszczyzny* [Field names of the Lublin region] by Michał Łesiów (1972); *Nazwy terenowe ziemi sądeckiej* [Field names of the Sącz Land] by Eugeniusz Pawłowski (1984), *System mikrotoponimiczny Śląska Cieszyńskiego XVIII w.* [The microtoponymic system of Cieszyn Silesia in the 18th century] by Robert Mrózek (1990), *Mazowieckie nazwy terenowe do końca XVI wieku* [Masovian field names until the end of the 16th century] by Adam Wolff & Ewa Rzetelska-Feleszko (1982), and *Toponimia południowej Warmii. Nazwy terenowe* [Toponymy of southern Warmia. Field names] by Anna Pospiszyłowa (1990).³

4. Toponomastic lexicography – Nationwide and regional dictionaries

The turning point in post-war research on toponymy (and not only this subdiscipline) was the 1st Polish Onomastic Conference in 1979. It gave rise to a series of conferences that have been taking place biennially ever since.⁴ During this first conference, the most urgent tasks in the field of onomastic lexicography were outlined, and the concepts and methodological assumptions of various dictionaries of proper names were presented, with four toponomastic ones including settlement names, water names, field names, and urban names from all over Poland. Since then, in addition to research on the toponymy of large and small regions, systemic work on nationwide dictionaries has been carried out (cf. OKO I). Unfortunately, a dictionary of field names and urbanonyms has not been completed despite the established rules and programme articles, but regional research in this area is still ongoing. Monographic studies of urban names and historical dictionaries of urbanonyms are available in: Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań, Łódź, Kielce, Szczecin, Elbląg, and Rzeszów.⁵

³ On onomastic research from that period, see also: *Recherches sur les noms de lieux et les noms physiograph en Pologne* by Kazimierz Rymut; *État des recherches dans le domaine de l'hydronymie polonaise* by Janusz Rieger; *L'onomastique d'après-guerre à Cracovie* by Stanisław Urbańczyk; *L'onomastique en Silésie* by Henryk Borek and *Les recherches onomastique du centre de Gdańsk* by Hubert Górniewicz in *Onoma* 22 (1978), pp. 720–727, 739–775.

⁴ In 2023, the 23rd International and National Onomastic Conference will be held in Opole.

⁵ A description of the research on Polish urbanonyms is omitted here. They require a broader,

Work on the Polish oikonasticon and hydronasticon is slowly coming to an end. These two nationwide dictionaries, *Nazwy miejscowe Polski. Historia. Pochodzenie. Zmiany* [Place names of Poland: History. Origin. Changes] and *Elektroniczny słownik hydronimów Polski* [Electronic dictionary of hydronyms of Poland] are directly connected with the Kraków onomastic centre and with Kazimierz Rymut, who was the founder of these projects and coordinated them until his death in 2006.⁶

Since 1996, 16 volumes of the dictionary entitled *Nazwy miejscowe Polski. Historia. Pochodzenie. Zmiany* [Place names of Poland: History. Origin. Changes] have been published. These include the existing and lost oikonyms from the territory of contemporary Poland starting with the letter *A* and ending with *Sy-*. Based on the materials collected by the authors of the dictionary, they have also developed monographs on the oikonymy of individual regions of Poland. Examples are: *Ortsnamen baltischer Herkunft im südlichen Teil Ostpreussens* by Rozalia Przybytek (1993); *Adaptacje niemieckich nazw miejscowych w języku polskim* [Adaptations of German place names in the Polish language] by Barbara Czopek-Kopciuch (1995); *Nazwy miejscowe południowej części dawnego województwa mazowieckiego* [Place names of the southern part of the former Mazovia Province] by Urszula Bijak (2001); and *Nazwy miejscowe dawnego województwa rawskiego* [Place names of the historic Rawa Province] by Urszula Wójcik (2001). Among the toponomastic monographs published in Kraków, the important work is the study entitled *Najstarsza warstwa nazewnicza na ziemiach polskich* [The oldest naming layer in Polish Lands] (2001) by Zbigniew Babik, a researcher associated with the Jagiellonian University, in which the author has critically analysed the existing etymologies and proposed new ones for several hundred archaic toponyms (oikonyms, hydronyms, and oronyms).

From 1985 to 2005, in cooperation with the Academy of Sciences and Literature in Mainz, 20 volumes of the *Hydronymia Europaea* series (1985–2005) were written by Polish onomasticians (Aleksandra Belchnerowska, Maria Biolik, Ewa Bilut, Hubert Górniewicz, Jerzy Duma, Henryka Mól, Janusz Rieger, Kazimierz Rymut, Ewa Rzetelska-Feleszko) and published in German⁷ according to principles modelled uniformly on the *Hydronymia*

separate discussion due to their specificity and the use of slightly different research methods.

⁶ In 1974, on the initiative of Prof. Kazimierz Rymut, at the Institute of Polish Language, Polish Academy of Sciences the Toponomastic Department was established and work on the preparation of a great historical-etymological dictionary of Polish place names began. Prof. Rymut headed the Toponomastic Department until 2005, later prof. Barbara Czopek-Kopciuch. In 2015, the anthroponymic and toponomastic units were merged into the Department of Onomastics. Currently (since 2020) the position of head is held by Urszula Bijak.

⁷ The editor of the series was Wolfgang P. Schmid, and Polish texts were translated into German by Jürgen Udolph, who is the author of the valuable monographs on Slavic and Polish hydronymy: *Studien zu slavischen Gewässernamen und Gewässerbezeichnungen* (1979) and *Die Stellung der Gewässernamen Polens innerhalb der alteuropäischen Hydronymie* (1990).

Germaniae series. The *Hydronymia Europaea* was supposed to have a wider range, as evidenced by the title, but it covered the area of Poland which unfortunately excluded the Noteć River basin and the upper and middle Oder River while including small areas of neighbouring countries within the basins of, for example, the Bug and Poprad rivers. The monographs of this series are etymological and historical dictionaries which compile the names of flowing waters and, separately, the names of standing waters within a given basin, along with rich toponymic material, genetically related to specific hydronyms. Based on the monographs of this series, other studies published in Polish⁸ and additional excerpts, the first Polish electronic onomasticon entitled *Elektroniczny słownik hydronimów Polski* [Electronic dictionary of hydronyms of Poland] was created. It was made available online in 2015, and thanks to its electronic format, it is open, constantly updated and supplemented. It currently contains around 40,000 entries.

Both nationwide onomasticons, the paper dictionary of oikonyms and the electronic dictionary of hydronyms, are diachronic, with a similar structure and method of elaborating entries. Each entry includes all names, also in other languages, that refer to a given object. The title of each entry is a modern, standardised form of the name and is followed by the location of a given object. Various forms of the name are then written from its oldest to its most modern form, followed by its etymology and literature. The description of the name is not based on a semantic classification, while the basis of the toponym and the type of name formation are indicated. The diachronic perspective used in the presentation of toponyms in often documents their variability, instability, and the existence of lexical variants.⁹

At this point, onomasticons with a smaller territorial range are also worth mentioning. On the initiative of Stanisław Rospond, a historical and etymological dictionary entitled *Nazwy geograficzne Śląska* [The geographical names of Silesia] has been regularly published since 1970. This 17-volume dictionary, which was first published in Wrocław and then in Opole (1970–2016), covers the entire geographical names of Silesia within the borders of Poland (Polish, German, Czech, and Lusatian), settlement names, names of water bodies, field names, and oronyms. It is a dictionary of names, so the homophonic toponyms that identify various objects are grouped within one entry. Historical and contemporary names are presented, and a structural classification is employed: primary (non-derivative), secondary (derivative), complex, foreign, and hybrid names. Within the first two groups a semantic classification is also used, and the naming basis is indicated. During the several decades of creating this dictionary,

⁸ Apart from this series, but according to the same rules, the hydronyms of the Warta River basin by Jerzy Duma (2010) and Ewa Wolnicz-Pawłowska (2006) were published in Polish.

⁹ For more about these two dictionaries and other Polish toponomasticons see Bijak (2014: 107–119).

the rules laid down in the first volume by Rospond evolved. For example, the structural classification, which was critically assessed, has been abandoned.

Another valuable lexicographic undertaking is the two-volume dictionary of historical minor place names entitled *Nazwy terenowe Pomorza Zachodniego zawierające elementy słowiańskie* [Field names of Western Pomerania containing Slavic elements] by Ewa Rzetelska-Feleszko & Jerzy Duma (2008–2013). It is of a special character as it presents lost Slavic (Pomeranian) field names reconstructed based on foreign-language records and is a continuation of many years of research by both authors on the Slavic toponymy of Pomerania.

5. Achievements and new methodologies

At the end of the 20th century, prominent Polish onomasticians from many academic centres summarised twentieth-century onomastic research in the encyclopedia *Polskie nazwy własne* [Polish proper names] (1998). Based on the current state of research, the authors have made the syntheses of: settlement names – E. Rzetelska-Feleszko; field and mountain names, which have been studied the least – Robert Mrózek; water names – Kazimierz Rymut; urban names – Kwiryna Handke; names of border areas: the western borderland, where there are Polish-Czech, Polish-Lusatian, Polish-Pomeranian, and then Polish-German linguistic contacts – Jerzy Duma; the north-eastern borderland with Polish-Baltic and later also Polish-German contacts – Maria Biolik; the eastern borderland with Polish-East Slavic contacts; the southern borderland with Polish-Czech and Polish-Slovak contacts – Ewa Wolnicz-Pawłowska; and historical exonyms – Karol and Zofia Zierhoffer. These syntheses are rooted in the tradition of philological, historical-comparative, etymological, structuralist and, to some extent, sociolinguistic and cognitive research developed in twentieth-century linguistics. This encyclopedia is a certain turning point in toponomastic research and also a point of reference for most of the studies in this field in the 21st century.

Among the toponomastic works conducted in the 21st century, a dozen or so monographs have included a new methodological approach.

The first full proposal for a socio-onomastic description of microtoponyms was by Mariusz Rutkowski in his *Mikrotoponimia przestrzeni wspinaczkowej* [Microtoponymy of climbing space] (2001). The unique nature of sociolectal nomenclature, which is the domain of a specific environment (here that of mountain climbers in the Tatras), has encouraged the use of a different methodology: instead of ordering names according to traditional classifications, the material has been systemised in relation to the properties of this names, presenting the functional and motivational interpretation of names (descriptive, memorial and allusive, expressive, impressive, and poetic functions). The main schemes of name creation have been indicated: realistic and artificial name creation, as well as the selection from an existing name system with translocation.

The study by Ewa Rzetelska-Feleszko entitled *W świecie nazw własnych* [In the world of proper names] (2006), which concerns various sub-categories of names, is a monograph in which the methodology of cultural linguistics has been consistently employed. The author resigned from describing the origin and etymology of names in favour of exploring their cultural content. She has traced the way in which the baptism of Poland influenced the oldest names (the emergence of toponyms such as *Biskupice*, *Świątniki*, *Popowo*, *Cerkiew*, *Święty Krzyż*, *Raj*, and names derived from Christian anthroponyms), the native-foreign relation, for example, in the names of ethnic and linguistic borderlands, toponyms in relation to politics (replacement of foreign names with native ones when changing national borders or the current ideology), as well as connotative meanings of selected toponyms.

It can be said that there has been a gradual cultural shift in toponomastics. The cultural aspect was also present in twentieth-century research, but nowadays there are more and more studies which, in addition to multifaceted formal and semantic analyses with the use of traditional methods, also take other methodologies into account to a greater extent.

One example is the study *Toponimia powiatu strzyżowskiego* [The toponymy of the Strzyżów County] (2006) by Agnieszka Myszka, who has subjected geographical names to a formal and semantic analysis, and applied elements of the cognitive approach, categorisation by prototype, and a reconstruction of the linguistic image of the world. The study of the linguistic image of the world established in toponymy is often either used as a supplementary methodology or as the main one, for example, in the series of articles on the oikonymy of Silesia by Danuta Lech-Kirstein (e.g. 2013, 2015) and in the studies of: potamonymy by Urszula Bijak (*Nazwy wodne dorzecza Wisły. Potamonimy odapelatywne* [Water names of the Vistula River basin: Appellative-derived potamonyms, 2013]; urbanonymy by Agnieszka Myszka (*Urbanonimia Rzeszowa. Językowo-kulturowy obraz miasta* [The urbanonymy of Rzeszów: The linguistic and cultural image of the city], 2016); anoikonymy by Tomasz Jelonek (*Językowo-kulturowy obraz wsi i jej mieszkańców utrwalony w mikrotoponimach* [The linguistic and cultural image of the village and its residents recorded in microtoponyms], 2018); and oronymy by Agnieszka Jurczyńska-Kłosok (*Nazewnictwo Tatr Wysokich. Konceptualizacja przestrzeni górskiej* [The names of the High Tatras: The conceptualisation of mountain space], 2020). The authors have reconstructed the manner in which the rural, urban, river, and mountain space was perceived and conceptualised from the point of view of the name creators and their users. They have often emphasised this way of looking at names in the subtitles of their monographs.

Apart from material studies on toponymy, a theoretical trend is developing in which toponyms are often used as illustrative material. Among the achievements of recent years, two monographs by Małgorzata Rutkiewicz-Hanczewska should be mentioned as they constitute an unquestionable turn in

onomastics. In her book entitled *Genologia onimiczna* [Onymic genology] (2013), she made a textological analysis of all onym groups and created their successful onymic genres theory. Her research has shown that toponyms or toponymic texts, from a textological point of view, are more homogeneous in terms of genres than anthroponyms, but there is a clear differentiation between historical texts, which are neutral and utilitarian, and texts created today (Rutkiewicz-Hanczewska 2013: 366, 369). Moreover, in her interdisciplinary monograph *Neurobiologia nazywania. O anomii proprialnej i apelatywnej* [The neurobiology of naming: On proprial and appellative anomies] (2016),¹⁰ she compared proprial and appellative anomies. Studies conducted on various groups of patients have revealed that the process of retrieving common words and onyms takes place in a different way, while retrieving geographical names is easier and less complicated within onymy itself than in the case of personal names.

It is also worth mentioning a monograph by Wojciech Włoskiewicz, *Uzus toponimiczny* [Toponymic usus] (2021), which has a purely theoretical character. The author presented “the conceptual apparatus of the theory of toponymic usus” based on the Polish geographical names of the Hutsul region.

Moreover, work is underway on the systematisation of toponomastic terminology (it is related to the work of the ICOS terminology group and terminology projects implemented in Slovakia) and on the standardization of the names of physiographic objects from the territory of Poland and exonyms – this is carried out by two committees: the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration and the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland affiliated to the Surveyor General of Poland.

6. The future of toponomastics

After the encyclopedia of proper names was published, a dozen or so review texts have been written in the 21st century relating to contemporary research and the future of onomastics, including toponomastics, by Aleksandra Cieślíkowa (2010), Barbara Czopek-Kopciuch (2014), Robert Mrózek (2014), and Katarzyna Skowronek (2009, 2013), among other authors.

What do the researchers focus on in the context of the future of research on proper names? According to Cieślíkowa, “it is difficult to define a boundary between yesterday and today, and also between today and tomorrow.” She predicts that theory and methodology from foreign studies will feature to a larger extent in Poland in the future, and that the standardization activity concerning geographical names (which has so far covered oikonoms and hydronyms) will be extended to include the names of other physiographic objects, namely minor place names. Barbara Czopek-Kopciuch, following Rymut,

¹⁰ The author is a linguist, onomastician, and a practicing clinical neurologopedist.

emphasises the importance of word-formation, inflective syntheses in historical and geographical terms, as well as analyses of toponymic bases, both deappellative and deonymic.¹¹ She stresses that “onomastic research of the future must combine material and interpretative threads with the development of toponymic syntheses in the diachronic and synchronous dimensions.” She postulates that material works should be collected on electronic devices (Czopek-Kopciuch 2014: 169, 170–171). Robert Mrózek supports a methodologically cumulative approach to the study of proper names, pointing out that in addition to the diachronic-stratigraphic, categorical-objective perspective, the following research prospects should be taken into account: the cultural-cognitive, confrontative, and communicative-pragmatic one (Mrózek 2014: 29). Katarzyna Skowronek, a representative of the younger generation of onomasticians, sees the future of onomastics quite differently. She points to the still strong onomastic “games with the past”, that is, the use of the etymological-historical and structuralist paradigms and the commonly declared interdisciplinarity, which is rarely consistently implemented in research practice. She defines interdisciplinarity as “an equal status of many humanistic methodologies as onomastic research procedures”, which is associated with the “dethronement” of linguistics (Skowronek 2009: 86, 93, 94).

Compared to other onomastic subdisciplines, however, toponomastics continues to be strongly rooted in linguistics, including in historical linguistics. The application of methods from other disciplines, with the exception of history, geography or archaeology with which it has been associated from the outset, is not frequent, and if it is, it is mainly an addition to traditional, historical-etymological, semantic or structural classification methods. Nevertheless, there appear elements, terms, and concepts of sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and cultural linguistics (ethnolinguistics). These new approaches neither prevail nor dominate the description of toponyms, but are a valuable supplement and extension to traditional methods.

How do I see the future of toponomastics? Judging by the number of speeches given on toponomastics at the 27th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS), interest in geographical names is not waning in the world. In Poland, on the other hand, a slight decline in toponomastic publications has been observed in recent years. This is not yet evident in *Bibliografia onomastyki polskiej* [Bibliography of Polish onomastics] from the last decade (2020, 2021) but it can be seen in the latest issues of the journal *Onomastica*, as well as in the papers for the 22nd International and National Onomastic Conference in Rzeszów in 2021, which were dominated by anthroponomastics and chrematonomastics. It is possible that this is only a temporary loss of

¹¹ The dictionary of topolexems was launched by H. Borek in the Opole centre, but unfortunately it was not finished. On the other hand, work on deanthroponymic oikonyms is carried out in the Kraków centre. The relations between oikonymy and hydronymy are also analysed, and work on the historical inflection of settlement names completed (see Nobis 2016).

interest in toponymy, but it might also be related to a generational change and the fact that younger adepts of onomastics choose more attractive research areas, such as chrematonomastics. In my paper, I only refer to the analysis of toponyms in their primary, identifying, and denotative functions. Meanwhile, the connotative meanings of toponyms and the mental maps they create have been explored with great success (e.g. [Chlebda 2002](#); [Rutkowski 2007, 2012](#)).

7. Conclusions

To sum up, I will repeat, after Kazimierz Rymut and Barbara Czopek-Kopciuch, that work in the field of toponomastic lexicography should be continued. Dictionaries are of value in and of themselves and the work started should be completed and disseminated in an electronic form. Activities should be focused on the digitisation and integration of dictionary resources. I am referring here to the integrated toponomasticon, including both oikonoms and hydronyms, and perhaps also already elaborated minor place names. Multi-paradigmatic and interdisciplinary syntheses should be created based on the material of the developed onomasticons. There is still much to explore in microtoponymy, urbanonymy, and oronymy. Finally, toponomastics should become more “open” to new methodological approaches. Will there be a “dethronement” of linguistics in toponomastic research in the future? Time will tell.

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