

Ion Toma, *1000 de superlative și curiozități de cultură generală (1000 superlatives and general culture curiosities)*, Bucharest, Niculescu Publishing House, 2018, 136 p.

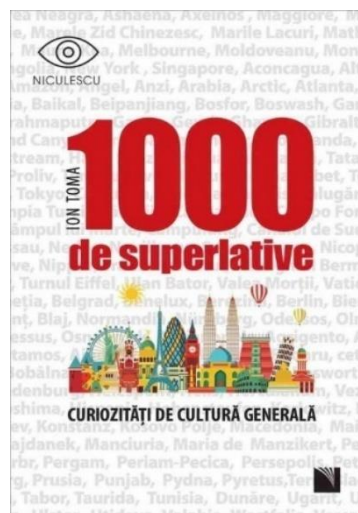
Published as sequel of the book *101 places names* (Bucharest, Humanitas Press, 2015), the present work displays the analysis of some toponyms, from the perspective of their national and international “notoriety”, notoriety due to the prestige they acquired in fields as: geography, history, sciences and arts, religion, mythology, etc.; the element that ensured the VIP status of these toponymics represents either a natural characteristic of them that puts them in opposition to objects geographically similar, or comes from sociocultural activity.

In his characteristic style, Prof. Ion Toma introduces us in the universe of place names, offering, in a concise manner, essential information aimed at understanding various aspects in the field.

The metamorphoses of place names (pp. 11–14) advances the idea that, after establishing the modalities of names appearance (from appellations or anthroponyms with toponymic, appellative role, or anthroponyms evidenced by the descriptive force of the topic and/or the distinctiveness of the chosen name, the extension, restriction or transfer of the name, the potentiation of individualization through modifiers or condensers etc.) and the way in which they related after the “birth” (toponymic homonyms, polynomy, toponymic tautologies, urban-onymic chains and trees, toponymic polarization, de-toponymisation, etc.), it is equally interesting to note “significant achievements in their becoming” (p. 14), where we encounter toponyms whose names have turned into “renown” and have (sometimes) far exceeded the boundaries of their “native places”.

The gradation of toponymic signification: from geographical individualization to socio-geographical notoriety and sociocultural imaginary (pp. 15–16) is the subchapter in which it is addressed the difference between the common words, identifying classes of objects, and their proper ones, which perform a deictic function; moreover, the latter, in this case the toponyms, in addition to the quality of geographical landmark “assume” the valence of a sociocultural landmark as well, “which equates to a metamorphosis of the purely objective image, into an objective and at the same time subjective image, involved in the culture and civilization of a space and an epoch” (p. 16).

The hypostases of the onimisation of the Romanian toponyms (pp. 17–22) present the stages that the toponyms go through – some mandatory in the process of their detachment from the “environment” of origin, others “optional”: a) the onimisant conversion (the passage of the appellation into the class of the proper names without formal changes), b) the inter-onymic conversion (the transition of an anthroponym without formal changes to the status of toponym), c) the inter-toponymic conversion (the transition of the place name on another referent than the one initially individualized, without formal modifications), d) the



combination with lexical-grammatical particular elements (modifiers and possessors that restrict the semantic sphere of the word), e) onimisant lexical-semantic condensation (the intersection of the conversion and the combination with lexical-grammatical particular elements), f) the toponymic derivation (from an existing toponym a new toponym is formed by derivation).

Some of the place names in the current inventory have been inherited from Latin or the substrate, others come from foreign populations, whom we have come into contact with, over time. The heteroglot doubling (the same topic received different names in different epochs and languages) and detoponymization (loss of the status of place name), is what the author approaches, in *Romanian place names inherited, borrowed, duplicated or de-onimised* (pp. 23–26).

Under certain circumstances, as a result of the exceptional qualities of a “physical, political-administrative, commercial, cultural, religious, mythical, symbolic, etc.” nature. (p. 27), a small part of the toponyms manages to overcome the horizon of local and regional individualization, becoming what the author qualifies as *Superlative Place Names* (pp. 27–29). In order to reach this status, from primary names to national, continental and international landmarks, the respective toponyms take a long way, going through various stages of topical onimisation, as well mentioned in the pages of this chapter.

How place names become landmarks of culture and civilization we learn from the chapter with similar name (pp. 31–32). The phenomenon is relatively simple. The history of culture and art, of science and technology, medicine, economics, etc. abounds today in onomastic landmarks – names of people and places. They represent the name or place of origin of personalities who imposed, in their respective fields, theories, laws, concepts, various works. Their role is not only to constitute milestones in the spaces in which they worked, but also to “form feelings of respect and spiritual attachment, to shape ideals and aspirations, professional, cultural, human options...” (pp. 31–32).

The classification of superlative place names (pp. 33–124) includes the inventory of the most relevant mega-toponyms, systematized on several areas: a) *Geographical superlative place names* (pp. 33–39) – there were included here general names, belonging to both natural objects and human constructions or settlements (*Aconcagua, Andes, Baikal, Dunărea, Galapagos, Geysir, Ierihon, Katrina, Cheops, Moldoveanu, Panama, Tibet, Vatican* etc.); b) *Toponyms that have become historical landmarks* (pp. 40–60) – characters, events, alliance treaties or peace conventions, social, cultural symbols, etc. (*Acidava, Actium, Adrianople, Albion, Alsatia, Apulum, Babylon, Bastilia, Borodino, Capitoliu, Field of Mars, Traian Column, Dalmatia, Delphi, Ephesus, Eleusis, Fanar, Hallstatt, Histria, Kuciuk-Kainargi, Little Entente, Nagasaki, Padeș, Poltava, Rubicon, Sarmizegetusa Regia, Tomis, Valul lui Traian, Verdun, Waterloo* etc.); c) *Place names with implications in different fields of science, philosophy, art* (pp. 61–71): *Acropolis, Agapia, Alhambra, Ararat, Byzantium, Capitol, Cernavodă, Cozia, Craiova, Cucuteni, Ephesus, Hamangia, Ionia, Magdala, Olympus, Ravenna, Ur, Wien* etc.; d) *Names of places reminiscent of personalities, events and cultural and artistic, sacred moments* (pp. 72–94) – natural or built by people monuments, in different historical epochs and in different areas (*Acropolis, Bethlem, Holy Grave Church, Colosseum,*

Gomora, Jericho, Jordan, Kyoto, Lhasa, Mecca, Medina, Olympia, Stonehenge, Tabor, Via Apia etc.); e) *Mythological toponyms* (pp. 95–104) – old names with a mythological aura, whose origins descend deep into history (*Arcadia, Athens, Atlas, Egypt, Europa, Ganges, Istru, Italy, Macedonia, Nil, Traian and Dochia* etc.); f) *Historical or mythological pseudotoponyms* (pp. 105–110) – place names whose origin has not been sufficiently studied, giving rise to inadequate place names, whose origin has not been sufficiently studied, giving rise to inadequate, fanciful etymologies (*Breasta* “it would come from the indication of the head of a group of Turkish invaders riding on top of a hill on the outskirts, and saying *Bre, asta!* (approx.: *Mates, that!*) must be conquered”, *Nămăiești* from *Nemo* is “nu e nimeni – it’s nobody”, *Slatina* from *Stella Latina* “Latin Star” etc.); g) *Re-named and renown by appellation descendants* (pp. 111–117) – includes names of places detoponymised by appellation, starting from one of the characteristics correlated with the topic denominated (*abrudeanca* – traditional dance, *americă* – cloth imported from America, *arabesc* – ornamental motif originally from Arabia, *balamuc* – hospice, from the locality of Malamuc, *canadiană* – wind coat imitating the vests of hunters in Canada, *coniac* – French region of Cognac, *limuzină* – elegant car after the name of the French province of Limousin, *palat* – palace, after the name of the Palatium hill in Rome, *penteleu* – variety of cheese from the Penteleu Mountain area, *sârbă* – traditional dance from Serbia, *siamezi* – siblings born with their bodies glued together, the first known case being in Siam, Thailand, etc.); h) *Re-named and renown through anthroponymic descendants* (pp. 118–124): *Apollodorus of Damascus, Constantin Argetoianu, Ștefan Mihăilescu Brăila, Ion Budai-Deleanu, Barbu Ștefănescu Delavrancea, Grigorie Râmniceanu, Ion Ionescu de la Brad, Leonardo da Vinci, Simion Mehedinți, Pavel din Tars, Toma d'Aquino, Tudor Vladimirescu* etc.

The notoriety of the place name is the result of the relationship between a toponym that stands out through a certain characteristic and the human environment that observes that characteristic. The name, thus, becomes “model' for other names, the basis of lexical-toponymic families, the polarizing nucleus of the toponyms in its 'field' of denominative reference” (p. 125). It is not necessary for this that the existence of the toponym to be a complicated one, very often the banal words benefiting from recognition over time. The author gives as an example a series of toponyms that are based on the appellations *plain, mountain, water, city*, etc., found in different languages. All these aspects are dealt with in the last of the chapters, *The correlation between the notoriety of the place and the reputation of the toponym that designates it* (pp. 125–130).

This book takes a step further in the research of place names, addressing the problem of mega-toponyms, names that have surpassed the hypostasis of simple local landmarks and entered the national and international circuit due to their own exceptional attributes converted by society into landmarks of culture and civilization.

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