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#### TOPONYMICAL ETHNOCULTURAL CODES IN LEXICAL-SEMANTIC FIELD OF RELATEDNESS

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#### *Abstract*

Toponyms are a valuable language source of geographical, historical, ethnographic and other knowledge. The toponyms of Dagestan constitute the linguistic view of the world and serve as a means for the implementation of different ethnocultural codes in speech. The mentality of Dagestan language speakers is aimed at different types of ethnocultural information coding and determined by the ethnolinguistic nature of knowledge about the world. All this is reflected in certain language codes. The semantics of toponyms reflects cultural values of ethnic groups, the historical change in cultural and value-based stereotypes of the society. In recent years the cultural and historical aspects of toponyms received great scientific attention. They are treated as some ethnic culture text, containing information about the history and culture of a nation, about main geographical, etc. Consequently, our research seeks to analyse toponymic ethnic culture codes in six Dagestan languages that belong to Avar-Ando-Tsez, Lak-Dargin and Lezgin groups of Dagestan Languages. The research was carried out based on toponyms, collected by the authors in several districts of the Republic of Dagestan. The analysis of microtoponyms showed the presence of topomorphic, physical and geographical, emotional and characterological, colour, floral, fauna, temporal ethnic culture codes that reveal culturally marked and pragmatically important information. These codes are universal for the toponymic systems of all Dagestan languages. However, the toponymic spaces of each represented language is not a closed lexical system and are defined by the model of linguistic world view, existing in the mentality of a particular nation.

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## 1. Introduction

Dagestan languages have specific features in the area of research. However, their body of toponyms is formed of the syncretism of separate systems in 26 languages. This is a single system including constituent parts that change and enrich the common system of toponyms, characterized by the prevalence of identities.

The language material of Avar, Andi (Chamalal, Bagvalal, Tindi), Dargin and Rutul languages is studied using descriptive, comparative and structural methods that allow analysing and comparing the facts from Dagestan languages and finding the features of objectification of such notions as linear, vertical and territorially microtoponymy object, pragmatic significance and etc.

The study of toponymy and their constituents from the etymological point of view needs synchronous and diachronic research methods. It is necessary to account for chronological steps in the development of languages resulting from the loss of the original phonemic composition in the part of toponyms and the necessity for step-by-step reconstruction.

## 2. Problem Statement

Code is one of the main terminological and notional units of semiotics besides such units as sign and symbol. It is used to show the mechanism for the generation of every message meaning:

- it is a sign structure;
- it is a system governed by the rules creating a certain order or the combination of symbols i.e. a particular way to understand the world;
- it is a strictly occasional inverse correspondence of one symbol to one definition (Eco, 2006, 2007).

Culture codes, built on the ideas about the reality that surrounds people, are clearly reflected in toponyms, treated as constituent parts of a changing system and showing cultural perceptions of the society. The names of natural objects contain the past and present of a nation, its view, and perception of the world.

Modern cognitive researches treat this concept as more comprehensive and functional as it (the concept code) can be used to understand and organize not only verbal but non-verbal systems. It can be attributed to the ideas about synthetic constructs with their own internal and external conformity (this is where code is different from a natural language) (Nikonov, 2011; Arnold, 2004; Berezovich, 2000; Vezhbitskaya, 2001; Prokhorov, 2005; Toporov, 2005; Trubachev, 2004; Yurkenas, 2003; Eco, 2006, 2007).

## 3. Research Questions

The subject of this research is the modern toponymic lexis of rural Dagestan that is taken as a single subsystem of modern Dagestan onomasticon of a nation-wide language as well as language representation, and toponymic code in the mentality of Dagestan language speakers.

A famous American linguist and ethnologist Sapir (1993), who put forward the hypothesis about the impact of language on the system of human ideas about the world, compared a language with a guidebook that start to play even more importance as a guiding factor in the scientific study of culture. Being a means for communication a language absorbs the spirit of an ethnic group, its mental features. It also accumulates

the concepts and trends in culture and reproduces them in the mentality of the nation, influencing its world view.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this research is to describe the combination of cultural codes, represented in the toponymy of Dagestan. For the comprehensive analysis of toponymy in the territory of Dagestan where people speak several dozens of languages, we used the material from six related languages.

The importance of this research is defined by the great interest in the communication sphere of language and culture. It was formed in the science of the XX century and currently continues to develop. The object of this interest is onomastic lexis considered in the “aspect of language participating in the creation of intellectual culture and intellectual culture taking part in forming a language” (Postovalova, 1999, p. 26).

#### **5. Research Methods**

A descriptive method is one of the main methods used in this research besides general scientific methods. The analysis of toponyms was carried out using etymological and comparative methods. Traditional methods, such as continuous sampling and synchronous comparative methods, areal and statistical methods were also used. They helped to compare obtained results with the findings of other scientists on the same topic.

#### **6. Findings**

Toponymy is an unchangeable layer of lexis that reflects the national culture and contains information about traditions, characterizing a certain language society. The semantics of toponyms reflects cultural values of ethnic groups, the historical change in cultural and value-based stereotypes of the society. “Culture is a system of historically developing supra-biological programs of human activities, behaviour, and communication that exist as a condition for reproduction and changes in social life” (Stepin, 2001, p. 183). The social experience is transferred from generation to generation in the form of signs, as the content of different semiotic systems that can vary from simple signal systems to natural languages and formalized languages of science (Lakhutin & Finn, 2001). “Toponymic lexis ... is a systematic organization, where pragmatic factors, such as geographic conditions, ethnic composition, historic events and the view of the world play a major role” (Otsomieva-Tagirova, 2017, p. 152). As Magomedov (2008) notes “The toponymy of south-west Dagestan where Avar people live, especially Khunzakh, Untsukul, and Gumbet districts as well as Gergebil, Schamil, and Gunib districts to some extent is comprised mostly of proper names the meaning of which is not clear for Avar speakers. This toponymy is etymologized using Andi languages and not Avar language” (p. 120). Also, this is totally different in respect of toponymy in Kazbek district, where Avar and partially Turkic toponymy is present.

The analysis of Dagestan toponymy shows that it reflects the following cultural codes:

– topomorhic code that is expressed in geonims such as names of roads and paths indicating another object used for the creation of a toponym. This can be any microtoponym e.g. the names of small objects

(tilled soils, farming areas, hayfields, pastures, forests and etc.) usually known to a limited number of people living in a particular area: Avar *Нухлуцобил габурлѳи* “A hill pass with a road”, *КІудияб хІамузул нух* “Big donkey road” (Gonoda village, Gunib district), *Зайирбегил кѳохъан нух* “A road over the Zayirbega bridge”, *Цияб кѳохъан нух* “A road over the new bridge” (Kazbek district);

Andi languages: Bagv. *МѳкІали* “A road through tilled lands”, *Чунтѳб гъан//минѳла* “A road through a destroyed village” (Gemerso village, Tsumada district);

Darg.: *Дякѳурбаццела* “A road with paths”, *Алагъла ккубе гъуни* “A road through the bridge of Allah”, *Ахъил ккубе гъуни* “A road through a high bridge”, *БиштІа ккубе гъуни* “A road through little bridge” (Kharbuk village, Dakhadaev district).

In the names of such objects, “the big role belongs to the definition that indicates the location of an object (lower, upper, middle, last) or the name of a place where the object is located (slope, hill, etc.)” (Yusupov, 2018, p. 179).

– physical and geographical code. This code is expressed in names that characterize a toponymic object in terms of size, configuration, physical and geographic features of its appearance: Avar, *Кѳокъисса нух* “Short road”, *БитІаранух* “Direct road”, *Шагъранух* “Broad road”, *Ххалата нух* “Long road” (Amushi village, Khunzakh district);

Andi languages: Cham. *Сераліе мѳкъабе* “Sandy roads” (Low-Gakvary village, Tsumada district), Bagv. *Беххелѳ анча* “Long stone” (Tlibisho village, Tsumada district), *ГъинкІ’ар илгъва* “Big lake” (Tlondoda village, Tsumada district), *Къану гъун* “Thick low hill” (Khushtada, Tsumada district);

Darg.: *Хула бял* “Big slope”, *БалкІа къячІив* “Curved turning”, *Акил гъуни* “Short road”, *Бухъен хъу* “Long field” (Kharbuk district, Dakhada district);

Rut.: *АкъуІрдѳы чІуб* “Broad valley” (Khnyukh village, Rutul district), *ХулаІхды майданбыр* “Long meadows” (Kiche village, Rutul district), *Аады раІхъ* “Lower road” (Rutul village, Rutul district).

– floral or botanical code that is created using the names of toponymic objects, indicating the character of vegetation landscape or separate parts of vegetation. This type of nomination is based on the names of flora that is characteristic for the territory. The toponymicon of Dagestan contains the names connected to the names of plants: Avar. *Гечул гъотІокъ* «Under the apple tree», *ГенугъотІохъ* «Near the pear tree» (Amushy village, Khunzakh district), *ГенукІкІалахъ ицц* “A spring-well in the gorge where pear trees grow”, *Собо мезІер* “The cherry mountain” (Dilim village, Kazbek district);

Andi languages: Cham. *Чалѳхебела* “A wash with lush vegetation” (Low-Gakvary village, Tsumada district); Bagv. *СІеланѳль байдан* “A meadow of globe thistle” (Khushtada village, Tsumada district);

Darg.: *Хурмар хъяб* “A mountain pass with lindens”, *Гялила бирмела хъар* “The lower part of the Ali asp’s region”, *Суссанла бял* “The slope of wild leek”, *Буйрела бял* “The slope of horn beech trees” (Kharbuk village, Dakhada district);

Rut.: *Шыдкъыд вах* “Mint deech”, *ТебирІанмыд мѳри* “The river of foalfoot” (Rutul village, Rutul district), *Макъалды чІуб* “A valley with locoweed” (Khnyukh village, Rutul district), *ИкІма* “Among the sandthorn tress” (Khnov village, Akhtyn district), *НухъІрихед дам* “Pine forest” (Khufa village, Rutul district).

– fauna code, that is expressed using fauna names, characteristic for the territory. Fauna-based names of toponymic objects are common only in the territories where they are found: Avar. *Гагудал гохI* “Cuckoo hill”, *Макказул нохъо* “Pigeon cave”, *Куйдузул парас* “Sheep gorge”, *Гъве рехуле кIкIал* “The gorge where dogs are thrown”, *Царанохъо* “Fox cave”, *БацIул рохъ* “Wolf forest” (Ingishi and Mekhelta villages, Gumbet district);

Andi languages: Cham. *БацIулI йаишал* “The mountain pass of a wolf”, *ГезIуцI* “At the cuckoo’s”, *ГъагъулI бIасс* “Partridge rock”, *КъанчIал букъалаби* “A place where hares are caught” (Low Gakvary village, Tsumada district); Tind. *БацIа-Бакъахъа* “At the wolf’s loins”, *Гъунгъа-лълъенлла* “At the water of pigeons” (Tindi village, Tsumada district); Bagv. *Жужука тIандо гъачIчI* “A lowland where woodlice are thrown” (Tlibisho village, Tsumada district), *ГIамIа-гъара* “Donkey creek” (Tlondoda village, Tsumada district);

Darg.: *Синкала диркъа* “Bear meadow” (Deybuk village, Dakhada district), *Хъерхъала шурме* “Jackdaw rocks”, *БецIла курме* “Wolf pits”, *Хургъела хъяккурц* “The gorge where dogs are thrown”, *Тумала хIулбе* “Owl eyes” (Kharbuk village, Dakhada district);

Rut.: *Гъулдирды мири* “Partridge river”, *БарицIилере хал гъыгъыд джиза* “The place where worms built a house” (Kiche village, Rutul district), *ГIараиды къуIджел* “Snake alpine meadows” (Khnyukh village, Rutul district), *ЛыкъаI дам* “Eagle forest” (Khufa village, Rutul district).

All the given fauna nominations are based on the names of animals, including those that are not common for a particular territory:

Avar. *Аздагъо бахъара нохъо* “The cave with a dragon picture”,

Darg.: *КъапIа къялше бяхI* “The slop of tiger’s paw” or “The slop with tiger’s paw marks”.

– emotional and characterological codes. These codes are represented in toponyms that act as sources of emotional influence, expressed in particular features of toponymic objects: Avar. *ЦIцIороницц* “Cold well-spring” (Amushi village, Khunzakh district), *ЦIцIороницц* “Very cold well-spring” (Butsra village, Khunzakh district), *ЦIцIорораб лъим* “Very cold water”, *Бахъинлъар* “Warm, calm, beautiful river” (Khunzakh village, Khunzakh district);

Andi languages: Cham. *ЗIлI гъадачI* “At the freezing river” (Gadiri village, Tsumada district); Tind. *Гъугъунаб* “Chilly” (village) (Tindi village, Tsumada district); Bagv. *Зарххими* “Ice” (mountain), *Заруб инсс* “Cold well-spring”, *Къасануб инсс* “Motley well-spring” (Tlondoda village, Tsumada district);

Darg.: *ДугIяр ше гIиниц* “The well-spring with very cold water”, *Вана ше гIиниц* “The well-spring with warm water”, *ЛукIан ше гIиниц* “The well-spring with motley water”, *Къалайла ше гIиниц* “The well-spring with tin water”, *Гъяв-гъяв къатти* “Sleepy gorge” (Kharbuk village, Dakhada district).

This code is the least active in Dagestan toponymy.

– colour code is expressed in toponyms, connected with the manes of colours. Usually, it is represented by a universal cultural triad of white – black – red: Avar. *ХъахIаб нохъо* “White cave”, *ХъахIаб гIуро* “White soil”, *ХъахIаб кIкIал* “White ravine”, *ХъахIаб нохъодул кIкIалахъ* “At the ravine of white cave”, *БагIараб къури* “Red rock”, *БагIархIатIукIкIал* “The gorge with red clay”, *БагIаркIкIал* “Red gorge”, *ЧегIер гIор* “Black river”, *ЧегIер рохъ* “Black forest”, *ЧегIер тала* “Black meadow”;

Bagv.: *БигIиллI беса* “Red mountain” (Tlibisho village, Tsumada district).

Darg.: *Хинтлин ше бял* “The slope of red water”, *Цуба глянче бял* “The slope of white clay”,  
*Цуба гиниц* “White well-spring”, *Цяб инихъ* “dark cave” (Kharbuk village, Dakhada district);

Rut.: *Джагварды бэл* “White rock” (Khnyukh, Rutul district), *Къара Самур* “Black Samur”  
(Luchek, Rutul district), *Лыхды бег* “Black side” (Kiche village, Rutul district).

Such colour adjectives are quite common in the toponymy of Dagestan. However, the toponyms with other colours were also found:

Avar. *Гурчина хлор* “Green lake”, *Меседил гохл* “Golden hill”, *Меседил гьогьол* “Inside the pile of golden stones”, *Хъахлил къури* “Blue rock”, *Хъахлилаб нохъо* “Blue cave”;

Darg.: *Хъаңцл къаркъа* “Blue rock”, *Шиниш кла* “Green leaf”, *Мургъе муза* “Golden hill”  
(Kharbukh village, Dakhada district);

Rut.: *Хъылынды лецл* “Blue Samur” (Luchek village, Rutul district), *Месгеве къахъ* “Pink ravine”  
(Kiche village, Rutul district) and etc. They are very scarce.

– temporal code that indicates the lifetime of a toponymic object (long existing or new): Avar. *Цияб росо* “New village”, *Цияб ахикъ бакл* “In the new garden” *Алмахъалде цияб нух* “The new road to Almak”, *Басрияб росо* “Old village” (Dylim village, Kazbek district);

Darg.: *Ци къватл* “New neighbourhood”, *Ци ккуби* “New bridge”, (Kharbukh village, Dakhlada district);

Rut.: *Цинды гъал* “New bridge”, *Йисды рахъ* “Old road” (Luchek village, Rutul district),  
*Тезекент* “New neighbourhood” (Rutul village, Rutul district).

Usually, these names represent the binary opposition of old/new:

Avar. *Басриял хабзал* “Old graveyard” – *Циял хабзал* “New graveyard”, *Басрияб къо* “Old bridge” – *Цияб къо* “New bridge” (Gortkolo and Amushy villages, Khunzakh district);

Darg.: *Сагаси Дейбук* “New Deybuk”, *Сагаси Вихъри* “New Vikry” (Kayakent district).

One and the same meanings can be represented in different languages using different codes (Dagestan in this case). The factors that lie in the basis of toponymic objects nomination can be transformed semantically. One of the examples is Avar placenames *Ця Гъаницу* (officially *Цияб Гъамуциб*) “New Amushy” – *Басря Гъаницу* (officially *Басрияб Гъамуциб*) “Old Amushy” (Amushy village, Khunzakh district): the village of Amushy existed in Khunzakh district until 1972. When the settlement of New Amushy appeared in the locality of *Ах* “Garden”, the original placename was turned into Old Amushy.

## 7. Conclusion

There are different cultural codes in toponymy that reveal culturally marked and pragmatically important information. They include topomorphic, physical and geographical, emotional and characterological, colour, floral, fauna, temporal cultural codes. These codes are universal for the toponymic systems of all Dagestan languages. However, the toponymic spaces of each represented language are not a closed lexical system and are defined by the model of linguistic world view, existing in the mentality of a particular nation.

The language material of Avar, Andi (Chamalal, Bagvalal, Tindi), Dargin and Rutul languages showed that different nations living in Dagestan implement these cultural codes with different intensity. In a toponymic context, they are used for pragmatic reasons. Toponymy is used for the objectification of such

notions as a linear, vertical and territorial microtoponymy object, pragmatic significance and etc. which is related to a culturally marked concept of “toponymic address”.

The research results can be used in the mapping of toponymic objects. It also helps to identify the ways for future researches in toponymy and distinguish the most important territories for collection, conservation and scientific description of disappearing toponymic names given by native people of Dagestan.

The material used in this work can be utilised in linguistic works connected with studies of relations of Dagestan languages and in lexicography for creating special toponymic dictionaries. It will be of use for further studies of the toponymic objects nomination as well as the development and formation of toponyms.

The factors that lie in the basis of toponymic objects nomination can be transformed semantically. One and the same meanings can be represented in different languages using different codes (Dagestan in this case).

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