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СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ГЕРМАНСКОЙ И  
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**АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ  
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## **STRUCTURAL-SEMANTIC FEATURES OF THE NAME FORMATION OF BRITISH PLACE NAMES**

The study of place names plays an important role in linguistic, archaeological and historical research. As for linguistic culture of toponymy it has the structure of semantic, lexical and grammatical meaning.

Toponymy has attempted to answer questions for each place name: What is it? Where is it? Who named it? When was it named? And why was it given that name?

The first question refers principally to the form of the generic element, which is influenced by the geographic feature term that applies. The classification of the generic elements can be outlined by the following distinct requirements:

□□to discern a set of semantic components relevant to topographic features;

□□to produce each of the feature sets within the catalogue by a logical sequence of those components;

□□to find out which feature terms are included within each feature set.

The where/who/when questions relate to the toponymic form as a whole and respond to historical and linguistic research methods.

The final question focuses on the specific element of the place name and can be the most problematic to answer, since the motivation for the naming process is not often documented and the name's reasoning for the naming is a thought question [1, p. 67 – 75].

The problem of the name formation of British place names has been researched by numerous prominent linguists and philologists, among whom we can single out G. Adams, K.

Cameron, J. Field, A. Mills, D. Parson, P. Reany, A. Room, J. Spittal, D. Stuart, T. Styles, V. Watts and others.

The aim of the article is to analyze the origin, meaning, classification of British place names and the motivation for their naming.

A toponym is a place name or a word coined in association with the name of a place. The study of such place names is known as toponymics or toponymy. The word “toponymy” is derived from the Greek words “tópos” and “ónoma”. Toponymy is itself a branch of onomastics, the study of names of all kinds. Toponym is the general term for any place or geographical entity.

Related more specific types of toponyms include *hydronym* (the name of a river, lake, sea or any other body of water), *agronym* (the name of a field or pasture), *dromonym* (the name of a transportation route), *drymonym* (the name of a forest or grove), *econym* (the name of a village or town), *limnonym* (the name of a lake or pond), *necronym* (the name of a cemetery or burial ground), etc.

In modern linguistics there are various classifications of place names. In particular, Selishchev points out the following groups by lexical-semantic structure and word formation: 1) names derived from people’s surnames/names; 2) names connected with profession and occupation; 3) names which reflect the social-property status; 4) names associated with the administration and authorities; 5) names reflecting the ethnic character of the population; 6) names indicating the local peculiarities of landscape, types of dwellings; 7) abstract names [2, p. 211].

There are a lot of different classifications of place names in the world. Special attention deserves the one proposed by D. Stuart which consists of ten categories: 1) descriptive names and compass-point names; 2) associative names; 3) incident names, also names connected with animals and calendar holidays; 4) possessive names: a) names which

include proper names; b) names which comprise ethnic names; c) the so-called mythological names associated with objects of a religious cult; 5) commemorative names which cover the names connected with prominent people; 6) commendatory names, selected due to attractive features of the geographic object; 7) folk etymologies – the name derived from the false etymology; 8) manufactured names – artificially formed names; 9) mistake names, that emerged accidentally as a result of various misprints and transcription mistakes; 10) shift names – based on the original name, transferred subsequently to a number of nearby objects [3, p. 118].

The names given to early settlements in the British Isles were once truly descriptive of the places, but because the languages from which these names were coined have died or changed beyond recognition, many place-names have lost all meaning as words. Some of the place-names in the British Isles are older than the earliest written history are of the same historical significance as many archaeological finds.

It is not too difficult to discover the relative chronology of place-names, although it is rarely possible to assign an absolute date to individual names or name types. Their analysis and interpretation requires expert linguistic knowledge.

In the Highlands of Scotland, Ireland and Wales, where the names are almost all Gaelic (Cymric), and in the Lake District where Norse names predominate, less doubt need be felt as to the correctness of the interpretations than in parts of England and Scotland where Celts, Romans, Scandinavians, Anglo-Saxons, and Normans have all had a share in forming the present nomenclature. Many names have been changed to such an extent that their original form is no longer recognizable, and some words of different origin and meaning have become identical in form. In such cases the true derivation of a name can frequently be ascertained only by finding its earlier forms in old records. When the name appears to contain the appellation of some permanent natural object,



such as a hill or any part of it, a river, or ford, mistakes may often be avoided by seeing whether such an object occurs on the map in the neighbourhood of the place [4].

A basic technique of toponymic studies is the recognition of significant word-elements, or “motifs”, such as the Welsh and Cornish “caer” (fortress): Cardiff – “fort on the river Taf”, Caernarvon “fort in Arfin”; “aber” (river mouth): Aberdeen – “Don-mouth”; Anglo-Saxon – “tun” (enclosure, village): Everton – “boar farm”, Chesterton – “village near a fortification”; “ing” (from ingas, denoting groups of people): Hastings – “Haest’s people”, Reading – “Reada’s people”; “ham” (homestead, estate): Shoreham – “homestead at a steep slope”, Faversham – “Faever’s estate”; “ingham” (“ingas” and “ham” combined): Birmingham – “estate of Beornmund’s people”, Nottingham – “estate Snot’s people”; Scandinavian “by” (farm, village): Coningsby – “king’s village”, Derby – “animal farm”; “toft” (homestead): Bratoft – “broad homestead”, Wigtoft – “homestead on the creek” [5].

It is important to notice that outward resemblance and impression can be deceptive:

- a place name which appears to be significant in Modern English language may be derived from words with absolutely different meaning (Redmire has nothing to do with “a red mire”, originally it meant “a lake or mere where reeds grew”);

- names which seem to be the same in Modern English may come from different roots (Aston means “eastern village”, but Cold Aston stand for “ash tree farmstead”);

- names of identical origin may now have different spellings (Heathfield, Hadfield, Hatfield are all descended from the same root words – “heather” and “land”).

The long-interest attracted by place names can be clarified not only by their functions, interesting and odd origin of most of them, differences of their grammatical features from the other word class, but, also by the fact that they are rich in

information we need to solve ethnogenetic problems. Place names (or toponyms) as well as other phenomena of the people's spiritual culture, i.e. beliefs, folklore, rites, etc. reflect peculiar national features, history and mentality. On the theoretical side, they can tell us a great deal about the physical geography, culture and history of a place as well as about the people connected with the particular area. Places are named not only for their physical properties, but also after local events, important personalities, ethnic, literary or religious sources, etc. Linking geography and language, toponyms are material and metaphorical, while being substantive and symbolic at the same time. They are read, spoken, mapped, catalogued and written in the everyday life and can be found in numerous names of cities, villages, rivers, road signs, street names, etc. The study of toponyms can be a window to detailed local knowledge and inclusive versions of belonging. Each of them contains different information – historical, geographical, linguistical [6].

Although the official language of Great Britain is English, but place names of this country are partially English. Influence on formation of English place names was rendered by historical conquests.

The names of the most well-known and old English cities are results of a long-time development. They have roots in Celtic, Old English, Old French, Latin, Greek and many other languages. But at the same time there are a lot of places in Great Britain the names of which have foreign origins, mainly Latin, Scandinavian and French.

In British toponymy one can find a specific group of roots, suffixes, prefixes which are common for some place-names. In the present-day English language a number of common roots and affixes are used in forming place-names. These word-parts have different origins.

In general, place names in Great Britain have three broad elements: personal elements, natural features and

settlement functions. These elements derive from ancient languages, and the combination in a single name may not date from the same period or same language. As the names lose their original meaning, due to a new or modified language, they change or drift to new forms. For example, in Torpenhow Hill (Cumbria) the first syllables “tor” and “pen” are of Brittonic origin, while “how” is derived from the Old Norse “haugr”, but all three mean “hill” [7].

Historical changes in language and culture influenced on the diversity of British place names.

In about 700 BC the Celts appeared in the British Isles. They may originally have come from eastern and central Europe. The tribes called the Britons settled in the southern part, the Picts and the Scots penetrated into the mountains of the north; some settled there and some crossed over to Ireland. It was the tribe of Britons that gave its name to the whole country. Celtic languages appear to have been spoken in the British Isles at the time of Roman conquest; so many places names have Celtic origin. The Celtic languages are divided into two families: Brythonic/Brittonic (Cornish, Cumbric and Welsh) and Goidelic (Irish Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic). For example, Avon (Brittonic) – “river”, Devon (Brittonic) – “district of the Dumnonii”, Dundee (Scottish Gaelic) – “fort of Daigh”, Oban (Scottish Gaelic) – “little bay”, Strathclyde (Scottish Gaelic and Brittonic) – “little valleys by the cleansing river” [5]

After the Roman conquest of Britain (c. 43 – 410 AD) many Roman place names appeared and they were associated with military settlements. The Roman occupation had very little influence on place names. “Chester” or “caster” is from the Latin word “castra”, which means “a camp or fort”. Some settlement names dated back to that period survive, such as Manchester (Mammucion) – “place on the breast-shaped hills”, Cirencester (Corinon) – “town on the river Churn”. In Wales and Cumbria “caer” has the same derivation, e.g. Caerdydd

(Cardiff), Carlisle. Roman “pons” (bridge) survived in Welsh as “pont”, e.g. Pontypridd. The second part in Lincoln (Lindum colonia) is Latin, and the first part in Portsmouth and Portland derives from the Latin “portus” which means “harbour”. The shortage of Latin place names may be explained by the Roman practice of latinizing native names, e.g. Verulamium for Verlamion, Derventio for Derwent [7].

After the fall of the Roman Empire the language of this region became Anglo-Saxon/Old English, which was the language of the Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons and Jutes) that invaded the British Islands in the fifth century AD. It continued to be used till the French Norman invasion of England in 1066 AD. As a language, it was very different from modern English. It had grammatical gender, declensions, conjugations, tense-forms and case-endings. Old English existed in a number of forms such as West Saxon, Kentish and Anglian. With the founding of Anglo-Saxon settlements in the 5th century the first Anglo-Saxon names appeared, which later became English. For example, Suffolk – “land of the South folk”, Essex – “land of the East Saxons”, Bristol – “the site of the bridge”, Liverpool – “pool with thick water”, etc.

In the subsequent centuries Anglo-Saxon tribes spread throughout England and parts of Scotland and Wales, it was a period of migration. Many of the early Anglo-Saxon place names are thus the personal names of the people who came to live in these places.

During the period of 850-1050 AD the north and east of England, the islands and coast of Scotland were settled by Norse and Danish Vikings. Many place names in these areas are thus of Old Norse origin [8].

Middle English language, the vernacular spoken and written in England after the Norman Conquest (1066) until the late 15th century and it was the descendant of the Old English language and the ancestor of Modern English.

The history of Middle English is often divided into three periods: 1) Early Middle English, from about 1100 to about 1250, during which the Old English system of writing was still in use; 2) the Central Middle English period from about 1250 to about 1400, which was marked by the gradual formation of literary dialects, the use of an orthography greatly influenced by the Anglo-Norman writing system, the loss of pronunciation of final unaccented -e, and the borrowing of large numbers of Anglo-Norman words; and 3) Late Middle English, from about 1400 to about 1500 [9].

There are some difficulties in interpretation of British place names, among them are:

a) back-formation: the process of forming a new word by extracting actual or supposed affixes from another word, shortened words created from longer words, whereby names are derived from one another in the opposite direction, for example, rivers with an obsolete/forgotten names are often renamed after a settlement on its banks, but not vice versa. The river running through Rochdale (North West England) became known as the 'Roch'. Cambridge illustrates both normal and back-formation. Originally Grontabricc (Old English), a bridge on the river Granta, the name became Cantebruge and then Cambrugge, from which the river was renamed as Cam;

b) element order: In Old English and Old Norse place names, the substantive (noun) element is generally preceded by its modifier, such as “good creek”, “waterhole”, “spring”, e.g. Bakewell was originally Badecanwelle formed from Badeca + wella = “Spring or stream of a man called Badeca”. In Celtic place names, the order is usually reversed, with the thing being described as the first element, such as hill, valley, farm etc., e.g. Tregonebris –“settlement of Cunebris”, Aberdeen – “mouth of the river Dee” (aber = rivermouth + Dee, a name);

c) translation: place names in the Danelaw (Old Norse and Old English) were often simply norsified, e.g. Askrigg (England) means “ash ridge”, but the first element is

undoubtedly the Norse “asc”, pronounced as "ask"; “ask” could easily represent a norsification of the Old English element “æsc”, pronounced as "ash". Both “asc” and “æsc” mean the same – “ash tree”;

d) false analogy: sometimes, the place names were changed to match their own pronunciation habits without reference to the original meaning, e.g. Skipton should be “Shipton” (Old English scipetún – sheeptown, town/ tún = farm, enclosed field). However since “sh” (/sc/ in Old English) was usually cognate with “sk” in Old Norse, the name was changed by false analogy to Skipton, in this way losing its meaning, the Old Norse for sheep was entirely different from the Old English);

e) multiple meanings: some elements can have a variety of meanings, for example – “wich”/“wick”. They indicate a farm or settlement (e.g. Keswick "a cheese farm"). However, this element in some place names of Roman origin means “place” (from Latin – “vicus”). On the coast, “wick” is often of Norse origin; which can be translated as “bay” or “inlet” (e.g. Lerwick);

f) lost reason: sometimes it is difficult to interpret some names because the reason for the name is no longer evident. Some names originally concerned to a specific natural feature (a river, ford or hill) that can no longer be identified; for example, Whichford means "the ford of the Hwicce", but the location of the ford is lost;

g) confusion between elements: pairs of original elements can produce the same element in a modern place name, for example, the elements of Old English origin “den” (valley) and “dun” (hill) are sometimes confused: Croydon is in a valley and Willesden is on a hill [10].

Thus, Great Britain has a varied system of place names due the different settlement patterns, political and linguistic histories. In addition to the old and modern varieties of English, Scottish and Irish Gaelic and Welsh, many other

languages and cultures have had an impact on geographical names including Anglo-Normans, Anglo Saxons, Romans and Vikings, etc. Ultimately, most of the place names derived from the Celtic, North and West Germanic and Italic branches of the Indo-European language family. There are some difficulties in interpretation of British place names, among them are: back-formation, element order, translation, false analogy, multiple meanings, lost reason and confusion between elements.

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**Некрутенко Е. Б., Кисель В. С. Структурно-семантические особенности образования британских топонимов.**

В статье проанализировано происхождение, значение, классификация британских топонимов; показаны трудности в их интерпретации. Охарактеризованы исторические изменения в языке, которые повлияли на разнообразие топонимов, имеющих кельтское, староанглийское, латинское, древнескандинавское и нормандское происхождение.

*Ключевые слова:* топоним, Великобритания, происхождение, интерпретация, классификация топонимов, исторические завоевания.

**Nekrutenko E.B., Kisel V.S. Structural-semantic features of the name formation of British place names.**

The origin, meaning, classification of British place names is examined in the article; the difficulties in their interpretation are indicated. Historical changes in language are described; they influenced on the diversity of place names which have Celtic, Old English, Latin, Old Norse and Norman origin.

*Keywords:* place name, Great Britain, origin, interpretation, classification of place names, historical conquests.