Oppositions in Toponymy

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Abstract
The paper is focused on semantic oppositions occurring in both settlement and non-settlement names from the territory of Bohemia. The "oppositions" are understood more broadly, comprising not only the antonymic semantic relationship, but including all distinctive toponymic elements (typically distinctive attributes, but also, for example, distinguishing components in compound names). We will analyse the individual elements both formally (indicating their role on the syntactic and/or word-formation level) and semantically (the semantic analysis will include also the account of the type of "opposition", distinguishing especially between the antonymic relationship and the other types of semantic relationships). The typical semantic relationships expressed by the pairs of distinctive elements refer most often to the extent, position, colour, age or owner of the named object. However, we will devote a great deal of attention also to some less typical cases of oppositions, for example pairs of distinctive elements in compound place names based on the original nicknames of inhabitants.

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0. Numerous toponyms include distinctive elements of various forms and syntactic roles. These elements often create a field of opposition relationships. The term 'opposition' can be defined more broadly than 'antonymy'; it can be understood as any relationship between two elements that have a clear distinctive function.

This paper is focused on an analysis of oppositions created by distinctive elements in the toponymy of Bohemia (part of the Czech Republic). The analysis is based on both settlement names (cf. Profous 1947–1960) and non-settlement names.[1] The initial part is devoted to formal and syntactic features of the elements studied; the core of the paper is formed by their semantic analysis.

1. Form and syntactic role

A majority of distinctive elements in Czech toponyms are formed by distinctive attributes (modifiers) – autonomous words placed either before or after the modified name. Pre-modifiers (attributes in agreement – e.g., **Dolní** *Bousov* × **Horní** *Bousov*, **Mladá** *Boleslav* × **Stará** *Boleslav*) are more frequent than post-modifiers, which are most often realised by prepositional phrases (*Libice* **nad Cidlinou** × *Libice* **nad Doubravou**, *Černá* **u Bohdanče** × *Černá* **za Bory**). A special type of opposition formed by post-modifiers is based on the use of numbers or letters for distinctive purposes. For example, in the Kolín region (Central Bohemia) there are a number of pairs such as *Bohouňovice I* × *Bohouňovice II*, *Radovesnice I* × *Radovesnice II*, where numbers are used (starting from the 20th century) to distinguish between two identical names.

The most frequent formal type of oppositions, i.e., oppositions formed by pre-modifiers, creates a number of semantic categories, the most usual of which are analysed in part 2 of this paper.

Oppositions can be created also by (usually first) elements of compound names, whose syntactic role is similar to congruent attributes. These formations can be illustrated by three interesting examples:

a) In the south-western corner of Central Bohemia we can find two villages: *Vševily* and *Pročevily*. The second element of both names is formed by the Old-Czech noun *vila* 'fool'. The element *Vše-* means 'all', the meaning of the name *Vševily* is therefore 'all fools'. The name of the neighbouring village *Pročevily* creates an opposition to this name. The element *Proče-* is connected with the Old Church Slavonic adjective *pročь* 'other, another' (Profous 1947–1960, vol. III: 488). Both names originated from comical, playful nicknames of the inhabitants of both villages.

b) The next example is also based on an opposition found originally in the names of the inhabitants of the given villages. The name of a former village, nowadays a part of Prague, is *Čertousy*. The original form of the name was probably **Trčúsy*; the later form *Črtúsy > Čertousy* came into existence by a metathesis, supported by an association with the noun *čert* 'devil'. The first part of the name is based on the verb *trčet* 'stand, be spiky'; the second element is *ús* (*vous* in Modern Czech) 'beard' (Profous 1947–1960, vol. I: 299–300). Some 20 kilometres from Čertousy we can find a village called *Tlustovousy*. The second element of this name is *vous* 'beard', the first one is formed by the adjective *tlustý* 'thick, fat'. Similarly as is the preceding example, these names were originally comical, playful nicknames of the inhabitants; the first element in these names had not only "comical", but also an important distinguishing function.

c) The following example is a little different. In this case, one toponym was created additionally, analogically according to another name. The name of a little town of *Senožaty* in South-Eastern Bohemia is formed by the noun *seno* 'hay' and the form of the verb *žnout* 'mow'. It is therefore interpreted as 'village of people mowing grass and drying hay'. Near this little town, founded in 14th century, a new village was founded in 1730 by the manorial nobility from Senožaty. It received the name *Otavožaty*; the first element *otava* means 'aftermath, rowen, second harvest of grass'. In the historical document concerning the founding of the new colony it is stated: "Like after the first hay harvest comes the second harvest – *otava* 'aftermath', similarly after *Senožaty* their new colony of *Otavožaty* came into existence" [translated by the author] (Profous 1947–1960, vol. III: 304–305).

In some cases an opposition can be formed even by affixes, especially diminutive suffixes. On one side of this type of opposition there is a diminutive suffix, which is opposed to a zero suffix. The opposition of this type competes with the opposition realised by pre-modifiers expressing the extent of the given objects (see 2.1). These two competing types of opposition can be sometimes combined together: for example the name *Lesnůvek* derived by the diminutive suffix *-ek* from the toponym *Lesnov* is opposed to the toponym *Hrubý* ('big') *Lesnov*.

2. Semantic categories

Not all oppositions in toponyms can be considered creating an antonymic relationship. The term "opposition" can be understood more broadly than "antonymy", though antonymic oppositions are most typical. Antonymy can be thought of exclusively in the case of appellative elements. It is not relevant to think of an antonymic relationship in the case of attributes derived from proper names (anthroponyms or toponyms), though even cases such as ***České Budějovice*** × ***Moravské Budějovice*** ('Czech' × 'Moravian') definitely create an opposition.

Even appellative elements create an antonymic relationship only in some cases of oppositions. We can find many examples of pairs of distinctive elements that clearly form an opposition but their semantic relationship is not antonymic. For example, two former villages, nowadays part of the city of České Budějovice, are called ***České*** *Vrbné* ('Czech') and ***Suché***

Vrbné 'dry'. The attribute *Suché* 'dry' describes the terrain in the given locality in contrast to the other village also called *Vrbné*, where several ponds are found. However, the other distinctive attribute creating the second part of the opposition belongs to a different semantic category.

2.1 Extent

The opposition reflecting the size or extent of the named object belongs to the most frequent semantic categories of oppositions found in both settlement and non-settlement names in Bohemia. Most oppositions belonging to this semantic category are based on the pair of attributes *velký* 'big, large' × *malý* 'little' (e.g., *Velká Bukovina* × *Malá Bukovina*, *Velký rybník* × *Malý rybník*). The adjective *velký* is sometimes replaced by the expression *hrubý* (*Hrubá Skála* × *Malá Skála*), used in the same meaning.

2.2 Position

The most frequent semantic category occurring in the analysed oppositions is based on the relative position of the given object. These oppositions can be divided into two semantic subcategories: horizontal position (pairs of attributes *přední* 'front' × *zadní* 'back', *levý* 'left' × *pravý* 'right'), and vertical position (pairs of attributes *horní*/*hořejší*/*hoření* 'upper' × *dolní*/*dolejší*/*dolení* 'lower', *vrchni* 'top, upper' × *spodní* 'bottom, lower'). However, position can be expressed not only by pre-modifiers, but also by post-modifiers, realised typically by a prepositional phrase (*Ústí **nad Labem*** × *Ústí **nad Orlicí**, Bažantnice **u vinice** × Bažantnice **za pazdernou***).

2.3 Age

The opposition *starý* 'old' × *nový* 'new' is frequent in names referring to settlement and to other objects created by man (cf. place-names *Starý Knín* × *Nový Knín*, *Stará Paka* × *Nová Paka*). In case of natural objects, this opposition is usually not relevant. In several cases the attribute *nový* 'new' is replaced by *mladý* 'young': *Stará Boleslav* × *Mladá Boleslav*, *Staré Buky* × *Mladé Buky*.

2.4 Owner

Both settlement and non-settlement names are often distinguished according to their owner or founder. The owner can be either (most often) a person (*Růžkovy Lhotice* × *Vraždovy Lhotice*, *Bartošova paseka* × *Pupsova paseka*), or an institution (community, church, etc.). Names including pre-modifiers derived from names of towns and villages can belong either to this semantic category (if certain community owned pieces of lands, colonies or villages), or to the category 'position'. Sometimes it is not easy to decide which of these two naming motives is dominant in the given case.

2.5 Colour

The most frequent 'colour' opposition (on 'colour' oppositions in toponyms see also Maas 1990 and Pohl 1966) in Czech non-settlement names is *černý* 'black' × *bílý* 'white' – for example: *Bílý rybník* 'white pond' × *Černý rybník* 'black pond', or *Bílý kříž* 'white cross' × *Černý kříž* 'black cross' (names of two wooden crosses, the first of which is made of fresh, light wood, whereas the wood of the second one is older, and therefore darker).

The colour oppositions in settlement names are of a different character, which is caused by the absence of black colour in (primary) settlement names. This absence can be logically explained, though it could be argued that dark or black colour used to be typical of a majority of village houses made of wood. The very fact that the dark colour was typical here is actually the cause of the absence of the black colour in settlement names, because toponyms were usually motivated by some extraordinary, marked traits, not by the qualities that were common, usual and

unmarked. This is why red and white colours are most frequent in names of towns and villages. The opposition between the adjectives *červený* 'red' and *bílý* 'white' is most frequent in names of towns and villages (e.g., *Červené Poličany* × *Bílé Poličany*, *Červená Třemešná* × *Bílá Třemešná*). The adjective *červený* 'red' refers to roofs made of red roofing tiles, occurring on some prominent building (often a chateau) in the village; the adjective *bílý* 'white' is always connected with the white coating of masonry buildings (cf. Štěpán 2004: 30–31).

The adjective *černý* 'black' is present usually only in those place names that developed from the original hydronyms or oronyms (e.g., *Černá Voda* 'black water' – the original hydronym became a name of the village). We can find three exceptions to this rule among Czech place names. The village of *Černé Voděrady* is found in the complex of woods called in the past *Černé lesy* 'black woods'. The distinctive attribute *černý* 'black' refers to the location of the village in black, i.e., coniferous woods.[2] Some twenty kilometres from *Černé Voděrady* we can find a village called *Polní Voděrady*. The distinctive attribute *polní* 'field', referring to the location of the village in the middle of the fields, is obviously in opposition with the adjective *černý* 'black' in the name of *Černé Voděrady*. Thus it seems to be evident that the adjective *černý* in *Černé Voděrady* is used in a transferred meaning 'wood, located in the woods'. The same meaning is found in the name of *Černé Budy*, part of the town of *Sázava*, and in the older name of the town of *Černý Kostelec*, whose contemporary name is *Kostelec nad Černými lesy* ('in Black Woods'). All these localities are found in the same forest complex, formerly called *Černé lesy* 'black woods' (see Štěpán 2004: 31–32).

Many colour terms are used in some transferred, often symbolical meanings in toponyms. According to some theories, in many cultures colours were used symbolically for expressing the space orientation, namely the four points of the compass. It can be generally stated that in the Eurasian area, the North is symbolised by black, the West by white, the South by red and the East by blue or yellow colour. According to the usually accepted opinions, the original Chinese space symbolism of colours was transferred to Europe by Huns, Arabs, Turks and Mongols. However, this system of the space symbolism could undergo some changes in certain areas.

A system of space symbolism of colours can be found also in the Slavic territory. For example, the ethnonym *White Croatians* is interpreted as the name of the most western Croatian tribe by Trubačov (1974: 51), the colour adjectives in the names *White Russia*, *Red Russia* and *Black Russia* probably meant 'western', 'southern' and 'northern' respectively (Mańczak 1975: 19). Several attempts have been made to explain the meanings and functions of the colour attributes meaning 'black' and 'white' in river names. Rajčevski (1991) supposes that these attributes refer to the right and left affluents of rivers in Bulgarian hydronymy. Superanskaja (1970) also deals with this problem; she concludes, however, that no general regularity can be proved in the territory of the East Slavic languages, because the situation is very variable in different regions.

For this reason, it is also extremely difficult to provide an interpretation of Czech hydronyms with the opposition of the terms *černý* 'black' and *bílý* 'white' (see Štěpán 2004: 92–94). Moreover, the interpretation of these attributes is made even more difficult by the fact that these oppositions are not as numerous in the Czech Republic as in some other Slavic territories. We can find five pairs of black and white rivers here: *Černá Nisa* × *Bílá Nisa*, *Černá Desná* × *Bílá Desná*, *Černá Smědá* × *Bílá Smědá*, *Černá Opava* × *Bílá Opava*, and *Černá Ostravice* × *Bílá Ostravice*. In all these cases the names containing the colour attribute refer to the sources of the individual rivers (Nisa, Desná, Smědá, Opava and Ostravice).

It seems to be evident that the attributes meaning 'black' and 'white' do not have their primary "colour" meaning in these hydronyms. It is, however, almost impossible to arrive at any indisputable conclusion here and the question whether the colour adjectives had some space-

symbolical meaning (connected either with the points of the compass, or with the opposition right × left) in Czech river names will have to remain unresolved.[3]

Notes

1. Names of unsettled places are included in the Alphabetical General Catalogue of Non-Settlement Names, stored in the Archive of the Onomastic Department of the Czech Language Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. This catalogue has been created as excerpts from the lists of non-settlement names worked out by voluntary local co-labourers from the individual villages in the years 1963–1980. The catalogue consists of almost 450,000 items.

2. The word combination *černé lesy* refers to 'coniferous woods', which are usually darker. In older Czech, deciduous woods were called, by contrast, *bílé lesy* 'white woods'. This opposition no longer exists in contemporary Czech, but it can be traced in some toponyms (cf. Štěpán 2004).

3. One more hypothesis may be added to the issue of the black and white rivers: It is possible that these colour adjectives could have some symbolical meanings of another kind. According to Honl (1966: 87) the rivers *Tichá Orlice* (the attribute *Tichá* meaning 'quiet, mild') and *Divoká Orlice* (the attribute *Divoká* meaning 'wild') used to be called also *Bílá* ('white') *Orlice* and *Černá* ('black') *Orlice* respectively. Thus it can be assumed that the two colour adjectives symbolically expressed the opposition of 'quietness, mildness' × 'wildness' in this case. This kind of symbolism may occur, perhaps, also in some other pairs of black and white rivers. The symbolical meaning 'dangerous', which is semantically close to the meaning 'wild', can be found also in a number of other Czech toponyms, in some of which the 'danger' is also connected with water. There are several pieces of land, located at various localities in Bohemia, called *Černý vír* 'black cataracts'. All of these pieces of land are located near rivers that probably threatened with frequent floods. Also the place names *Černovír* and *Černvír* refer to villages near 'black' i.e., dangerous cataracts, where frequent floods occurred. It is interesting that near one of the localities called *Černý vír* there is also a piece of land called *Bílý vír*. This name was probably created analogically, as an opposition to *Černý vír* (see Štěpán 2004: 79, 81).

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