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FACTORS AFFECTING THE TRANSLATION OF TOPONYMS

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Introduction

Toponyms are place names. The term 'toponym' is derived from the Greek words *tópos* (τόπος) ('place') and *ónoma* (ὄνομα) ('name'). Toponyms are a kind of proper names and therefore there are some similarities between the translation of toponyms and the translation of other proper names which is why they are often discussed together (e.g., Chrobak 2024) but there are still some significant differences.

The translation of toponyms has been studied from various perspectives, including their acquisition and the mechanisms and types of transposition and adaptation in diachronic terms (cf. Wolnicz-Pawłowska 2014), their translation in various types of texts, for example historical texts (Szcześniak 2000), literary texts (Cieślikowa 1996; Stalmaszczyk 2000), nonfictional texts (Szczęsny, Kozłowska 2018). Catalogues of translation techniques and recommendations on how to proceed when a proper name appears in a text are developed (e.g., Hejwowski 2004, who discusses them in the broader context of culturally marked elements, Ermolovič 2005, presented in Szczęsny 2011; Chrobak 2024).

The opinion of philosophers and linguists about the meaning of proper names is divided. Some of them claim that proper names are meaningless (Mill 1985; Algeo 1973), and others insist that although proper names have no lexical meaning

in the sense in which common names do, they are not semantically empty (Gajda 2004: 24). New research suggests that various types of meaning – such as categorical, associative, emotive, and grammatical – linked to proper names are inherently presuppositional (Langendonck 2007). I share the view of Stanisław Gajda (2004: 24) that the meaning of proper names is richer than the meaning of common names because of their narrow scope of meaning.

In this paper I want to reflect on the factors which influence the translation of toponyms because I agree with Albert Péter Vermes who asserts that:

> […] not all proper names are mere identifying labels – in fact, most of them turn out to carry meaning of one sort or another. This will entail, then, that the translation of proper names is not a trivial issue but, on the contrary, may involve a rather delicate decision-making process, requiring on the part of the translator careful consideration of the meanings the name has before deciding how best to render it in the target language (Vermes 2003: 90).

The translation of toponyms as a non-trivial issue is affected by a number of factors. The aim of this article is to identify some important factors influencing the translation of toponyms and to discuss them using specific examples drawn from Polish-German and German-Polish literary translations. Additionally, illustrations of certain phenomena have been taken from other types of texts (including non-translated ones) as well as from translations from and into English.

The reliance in this study primarily on literary texts stems from the fact that, as Marzena Chrobak rightly observes, in literary texts, stylistic devices are more intensified and condensed, and there is also a greater variety of functions assigned to proper names (Chrobak 2024: 45). In literary works toponyms exhibit a higher degree of semiotic density. Greater semiotic density means a higher concentration of signs that carry meaning on multiple levels. In a literary context, this can imply:
– multifunctionality of toponyms – they can serve multiple functions simultaneously: referring to a real-world place, evoking cultural associations, carrying symbolic or emotional significance (e.g., *Jerusalem*, *Danzig*, *Jasna Góra*);
– condensation of meanings – a short passage may encode multiple layers of information, such as historical, social, or stylistic references (e.g., *Targowica*, *Marszałkowska Street*, *industrial*, *working-class Łódź*);
– intertextuality – references to other texts, mythology, or history enrich the semantic dimension (e.g., *Babel*, *Babylon*);
– increased role of stylization – linguistic play, metaphors, and cultural allusions enrich toponyms in terms of meaning (e.g., *Duppa*).
What determines then the translation of toponyms?

The Speech Genre (Type of Text)

Different speech genres are used in various communication situations. Toponyms that appear on a birth certificate or in a historical or geographical monograph would be translated in a different way than toponyms in a joke or in a literary text. The translation of toponyms mainly depends on the type of text where they occur.

In non-fiction texts (e.g., professional, administrative, utility, scientific texts) the translator will basically have a fairly limited choice between exonym and endonym (possibly in the appropriate chronological variant). The situation is different in the case of literary texts, although in this case the translation also depends primarily on the genre.

Czesław Kosyl (2004: 219–227) correlates the literary genre with the kind of proper names used there. According to his findings, names in the realistic stream of literature are often authentic and refer indirectly to objects known from actual reality (e.g., *Poznań, ul. Roosevelta* [*Poznań, Roosevelt-Street*, my transl.] in the novels by Musierowicz or in Kurek's novel of manners *Grypa szaleje w Naprawie* [*Flu raging in Naprawa*, my transl.]).

Names used in the expressionist stream of literature are rather rare names, not very representative.

The conventional stream features a special selection of names, they refer to other texts, build ensembles of associations with a particular literary genre, indicate the model of literary fiction.

In the etymological stream, authentic names are etymologized jokingly or dramatically. They are often the axis of work construction. In the semantic stream names directly characterize objects, the meaning of the motivational word is essential for them (e.g. *Biadolin ~ Whimperston*, *Krzywdzice ~ Harmston*, my transl., see also the German translation by Karl Dedecius further below).

The grotesque-ludic stream is similar to the semantic stream, but the names have here a large expression, because they should attract the attention of the reader.

The specificity of fairy-tale fiction lies in the fact that the objects of the world presented are fantastic, they have no connection with reality, therefore in this kind of fiction artificial, asemantic names often occur. In the pseudo-onomastic stream common names are used in the function of proper names (Kosyl 2004: 224). An example may be *Rzeka* in Olga Tokarczuk's novel *Prawiek i inne czasy* (Tokarczuk 1998: 7), translated into German as *Fluss* (Tokarczuk 2000: 7).

Depending therefore on genre and literary stream, the translator decides what will be the right strategy and the appropriate technique of translation. A toponym which occurs in the realistic stream of literature can be sometimes transferred in an unchanged version from the source text into the target text, but sometimes the translator has to select one of the existing variants (an exonym or an endonym):

[…] było to na pięć miesięcy przed moim wyjazdem do **Mentony** i wielkie mrozy. […] Mama wracała z **Podola**. […] Bal w **Mogilczanach** – trzydzieści (Gombrowicz 1987: 195).

[…] denn das war fünf Monate vor meiner Abreise nach **Menton**, und es war starker Frost. […] Mama kam aus **Podolien** zurück. […] Der Ball auf **Mogilczany** – dreißig (Gombrowicz 2004: 241).

Wieśniak z **Paryża** pod koniec osiemnastego stulecia miał dziecko […], a ostatnie dziecko jako champion świata grało mecz tenisowy na korcie reprezentacyjnym **paryskiego** Racing Klubu […] (Gombrowicz 1987: 183).

Gegen Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts hatte ein **Pariser** Bauer ein Kind […] und das letzte Kind spielte als Welt-Champion ein Tennismatch auf dem repräsentativen Platz des Racing Club **de Paris** […] (Gombrowicz 2004: 226).

In the last example, we can see that the use of both an endonym and an exonym of the same toponym in one sentence can serve to stylistically diversify the translation. However, this is not a common practice.

Sometimes the translator will replace the toponym with another toponym which is better known in the target culture. In K. Dedecius's translation of Jan Twardowski's poem *Niewidoma dziewczynka* (*Blindes Mädchen*) the base of the adjective derived from toponym was changed – *Jasna Góra* was replaced with *Tschenstochau* (*Częstochowa*), as it was more recognizable to a German-speaking audience: "tak Cię sumiennie zasuwają na noc w jasnogórskie blachy pancerne" (Twardowski 2005: 46) – "so gewissenhaft riegeln sie Dich für die Nacht mit dem Tschenstochauer Panzerblech ab" (ibid. 2005: 47).

This strategy is particularly often used in children's books. An example of this are the changes in the Polish translation of Erich Kästner's novel *Emil und die Detektive* (Kästner 1990) by Dawid Lazer, where the toponyms and other proper names were adapted to the Polish realities (Kästner 1933). The action of the novel originally takes place in Berlin. In the translation the hero Emil Nodzyński travels from Nowe Miasto to Kraków. The novel features a number of Krakow streets and squares like ulica Długa, Starowiślna or Plac Matejki (cf. Sławski 2013: 317; Kästner 1933).

Another example could be the change of *Kielce* to *Hungary* in the German translation of Jan Brzechwa's *Akademia Pana Kleksa* (*Die Akademie des Meisters Klex*) by Curt Pradow:

[…] Albert pomieszał **Kielce** z Chinami, zaś Anastazy wziął Afrykę za Morze Bałtyckie (Brzechwa 2024: 43).

[…] Albert verwechselte **Ungarn** mit China, und Anastasius bezeichnete die Ostsee mit Afrika (Brzechwa 1975: 50).

If the translator has to deal with toponyms which represent the semantic stream, then the best solution for the translation problem is to create a new toponym motivated by a word with the same meaning:

[…] Kalkulator stworzył nie kolonię, lecz państwo, zwane przez jego mieszkańców **Wspanialia** […] (Lem 1999: 31).

[…] der Kalkulator nicht eine Kolonie, sondern einen Staat gegründet habe, der von seinen Bewohnern als **Wunderbarien** bezeichnet werde […] (Lem 2007: 59).

Transfer without translation of telling names may result in the loss of such values as the ludic function:

O królowej Vandzie, która utopiła się w rzece **Duppie**, bo nikt jej nie chciał (Sapkowski 2011: 150).

Von der Königin Vanda, die sich im Flusse **Dupp** ertränkt hat, weil keiner sie wollte (Sapkowski 2016: 202).

Translating the name of the river as, for example, *Aarsch*(*e*) would preserve the qualities arising from its phonetic resemblance to a well-known vulgarism (*dupa – Arsch*, *Duppa – Aarsche*).

Sometimes the translator will adapt the toponym phonetically to make the same sound connotations etc. This type of adaptation can also appear in a rendering bearing the features of a homophonic translation like in the Polish version of Boney M's hit *Rivers of Babylon*[1], *Babi Ląd*, adapted by Jan Gałkowski and performed by Halina Kunicka: "By the rivers of **Babylon**, there we sat down// Ye-eah we wept, when we remembered Zion" (Boney M) – "Za morzami jest **Babi Ląd**,// Królestwo dam, mężczyznom tam,// Wzbroniony wstęp surowo" (Gałkowski).

Ontological Status of Toponyms (fictitious or real Toponyms)

The translation of toponyms is affected by their ontological status. The translation strategy will depend on whether the toponyms are authentic and refer (in)directly to reality or whether they are fictional, created by the author.

If the toponyms are authentic the possibilities to translate them are much more limited because, paraphrasing the poet Szymborska, there are well-known mountains and rivers of the map. However, in each case the translation depends on the function of a toponym in the text. Hence the function of the toponym should be thoroughly investigated (see next section).

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1   In the original there is a direct reference to Ps. 137, 1–2, which of course is not present in the Polish adaptation in this case.

When rendering fictitious place names, translators have much more freedom when choosing the most appropriate method of translation. However, in this case the translation is also not arbitrary. It depends on various factors like *inter alia* the text genre and the function of the toponym.

The Function

In the previous two points, function has been already mentioned. The translator must determinate the main function of the toponym before they decide what the best translation solution is.

Proper names can have different functions. The main function of proper names is generally speaking the identification of an individual referent. However, in literary work proper names can have a variety of other functions. Aleksander Wilkoń developed a basic classification of proper name functions in the literature (Wilkoń 1970: 83):

1) the locating function – the location of the plot in a particular area or time;
2) the sociological function – indicating social, environmental and national membership of a literary character;
3) the allusive function – the use of names as a more or less encrypted allusions to specific people or places;
4) the content function – the characterization of the literary character or the place of action in accordance with the metaphorical or literal meaning of the proper name;
5) the expressive function – the use of proper names as signs that express the emotional attitude of the author and co-create the characters and the atmosphere of the literary work or its fragments. Czesław Kosyl notes, moreover, that the role of proper names with the expressive function is to attract the reader's attention (Kosyl 2004: 225).

This classification can be completed by a number of further functions like the impressive, the poetic, the affective function, etc. A detailed overview of the various functions of proper names can be found in Chrobak (2024: 21–22).

In the case of authentic place names, the functions of identifying and locating may extend to the fore. The readers of a text can identify the place which is meant by the author and if they do not know the place, they can search for it and locate it on the map.

The affective function of authentic toponyms is a function that seems to be very noteworthy, since some place names can activate memories and positive or negative emotions. Peter Jordan indicates this function in reference to the reading the names on the map, but his remarks are also true when authentic place names appear in other texts:

> Users acquainted not only with the place name, but also with the place, especially persons with emotional ties to a certain place, i.e. in the first line inhabitants, people having been socialized in a certain place or people, who have acquired a close relation to a certain place in their later life (e.g., as frequent vacationers), feel a certain emotion, when they read the name on the map. Reading the name consciously makes them not only recalling their factual concept of the place (as with the function before), not only recalling their memories of the place as it looks like, but also memories of persons and events they are associating with it. Reading the name activates their emotional ties, their "feel of a place" (Tuan, 1977, pp. 183f) (Jordan 2009: 6).

The toponyms in Günter Grass's or Czesław Miłosz' novels have such an emotive function for the authors themselves and for those readers of the novels for whom the places described are the lost homeland. Thus, it is not simply neutral which name will be used in the translation if different name versions for a place are possible. Sometimes more than two names, endonyms and exonyms, past and current place names can compete (e.g., German: *Königsberg*, Polish: *Królewiec*, Russian: *Kaliningrad*; Polish: *Lwów*, Ukrainian: *Львів*, *Lwiw*, Russian: *Львов*, *Lwow*, German: *Lemberg*, Latin: *Leopolis*, Yiddish: לעמבערג *Lemberg*, לעמבעריק *Lemberik*, Armenian: Լվով *Lwow*). The choice in such cases can be significant. In the biographical note included in the German translation of Stanisław Lem's *Dzienniki Gwiazdowe – Sterntagebücher* – we read:

> Stanisław Lem, geboren am 12. September 1921 in **Lwów**, lebt in **Krakau** (Lem 2007: 2).

The author of the note indicates that Lem was born in the city, when it was Polish. There is no need to emphasize this in the case of Krakow, so the German equivalent was used. Such an emotive function, and additionally an educational and memorizing one, is fulfilled by the name *Königsberg* in the following passage from G. Grass's novel *Die Rättin* (cf. Kubaszczyk 2018: 204). For this reason, it would be worthwhile to use the German endonym in at least one occurrence:

> Im Jahr 1913 wurde unser Maler in der ostpreußischen Stadt **Königsberg** am Fluß Pregel geboren. […] Die Familie Malskat […] wohnte in Königsergs Flinsenwinkel. […] Heute heißt **Königsberg Kaliningrad**, und auch der Fluß heißt anders (Grass 1999c: 105).

> W roku 1913 urodził się nasz malarz we wschodniopruskim mieście **Królewcu** nad rzeką Pregołą. […] Rodzina Malskatów […] mieszkała w królewieckim Flinsenwinkel. […] Dzisiaj **Królewiec** nazywa się **Kaliningrad**, a i rzeka nosi inne miano (Grass 2001: 92).

Choosing the name, the translator should take into account that the target text audience ought to recognize the name and identify the place. The identification can be demanding if the translator chooses a toponym version which currently no longer exists on the map. But on the other hand, it is also a bad solution to translate

a historical name directly or to replace it with a present name which did not exist at that time.

The translator will use a different strategy if the main function is the semantic function (content function) or the allusive function. Theo Hermans asserts that "insofar as a proper name in a source text is enmeshed in the lexicon of that language and acquires 'meaning', it can be *translated*" (Hermans 1988: 13). An example would be the translation of place names in the poem *W drodze* written by Stanisław Młodożeniec. In this poem there are village names such as *Biadolin*, *Nędzowo*, *Krzywdzice*: "To se trajda niedorajda-koślawina// do Nędzowa przez Krzywdzice z Biadolina" (Dedecius 1989: 104). K. Dedecius who created the translation into German decided to translate them. In the German rendition of the poem, entitled *Unterwegs*, the places are called *Jammerhausen*, *Elensdorf*, *Unrechtkirchen*: "Also humpelt er zur Elensdorfer Jause// über Unrechtkirchen bis von Jammerhausen" (ibid.: 105).

In conclusion, the translation of place names depends largely on their function(s) in the source text and this function or these functions must be carefully investigated before a decision will be made on which procedure should be chosen to translate the toponym.

The Universality resp. Locality of the Place Name

The translation of toponyms will largely depend on whether the universal aspect of meaning or the national-cultural component of the meaning is in the foreground. The term 'national-cultural component of the meaning' was introduced by S. Gajda (2004). In his view, the national-cultural component of meaning "expresses social-cultural knowledge, characteristic for a nation and reflected in its language; at the same time, it is the prism through which the national cultural community sees a marked object" (ibid.: 24, my transl.).

If the place name has strong, local connotations, its understanding beyond the local community can be difficult without providing additional information. For example, a square in Poznań, Poland, which is called *Plac Ratajskiego* [Ratajski's Square] is generally associated by city residents with prostitution. The following note in the local press is referring to this common knowledge:

> W Poznaniu prostytutki upodobały sobie już od lat okolice pl. Cyryla Ratajskiego, nazywanego powszechnie 'pigalakiem' (Stachowiak 2003).

> In Poznan prostitutes have taken for years a liking for places around the Ratajski's Square commonly called 'pigalak' (my transl.).

This local meaning will probably be unclear to residents of other Polish cities if only the square name is used. In that case it needs additional explanation. Therefore, it is not directly related to general knowledge of language.

At the same time, the intralingual translation of the name into a more universal name with similar connotations, means the use of the common name 'pigalak' which is derived from the name (*Place*) *Pigalle* makes it possible for those who are not familiar with the social context to reconstruct the additional meaning of the toponym. This is due to the fact that Place Pigalle is commonly known as a place where many brothels once existed and various forms of prostitution have been practiced there until now. In contrast, other connotations with Place Pigalle in Polish culture are not universal, namely the association of the square with the resistance movement and the French anti-fascists by the password 'In Paris, the best chestnuts are on the Place Pigalle' which appears in a popular Polish television series *Stawka większa niż życie* (*More Than Life at Stake*). The response is: 'Susan likes them only in the autumn', and the counter-response: 'She is sending you a fresh batch'. Hence, translators will use different techniques to translate place names depending on whether the universal meaning of a place name is in the foreground or the local, national-cultural sense of toponym comes to the fore in a text.

An example of this is *ul. Marszałkowska* (*Marszałkowska Street*). While many Polish cities have a street named Marszałkowska, for a Polish speaker, there is likely only one culturally significant Marszałkowska – a toponym referring to one of the main arteries of Warsaw, located in the very heart of the city. It is a street characterized by heavy traffic.

In the context of pre-war Warsaw, Marszałkowska Street was associated with elegance – it was home to luxury shops, tenement houses, and cafés. As a symbol of urban life, modernity, and sophistication, as well as a place to be seen, it appears in various literary works. However, since in this case we are dealing with a local, nationally and culturally specific meaning, as discussed above, translators render the name differently in translation – either by supplementing it with a name evoking similar associations in the target culture, as Robert Stiller did in his translation of Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński's poem *Strasna zaba* – *The howwible fwog*, or by omitting the name entirely and instead referring to the concept of a crowd and urban congestion, as done by Walter Tiel in *Ferdydurke*:

Jak różne od ulic miejskich i tłumów na **Marszałkowskiej**! (Gombrowicz 1987: 198).

Wie verschieden von den Straßen der Stadt und dem **städtischen** Gedränge! (Gombrowicz 2004: 244).

Pewna pani na **Marsałkowskiej** // kupowała synkę z groskiem (Gałczyński 1995: 362).

Mrs X was buying ham'n'peas with her Mr, //a wuffian gloomy and sinister, // In **Marshalkowska, Warsaw's Piccadilly** (Gałczyński 1978: 270).

The Point of View

The choice of a particular alternative of the place name is also affected by a viewpoint. Depending on whether the city name *Królewiec*, *Königsberg* or *Kaliningrad* will be chosen, the translator decides in favor of a specific point of view. This may be of importance in texts, in which the author opts for a particular point of view. For example, s/he wants to emphasize the Polish character and history of Lviv and Vilnius and uses the names *Lwów* and *Wilno*:

> Wir sind alle von **Wilno** rausgemußt, wie Sie sind von hier weggemußt alle (Grass 1999a: 18).

> My wszyscy musieliśmy wynosić się z **Wilna**, jak wy wszyscy musieliście wynieść się stąd (Grass 1999b: 16).

Elsewhere it is explained that *Wilno* is the Polish equivalent of the German *Wilna* or the Lithuanian *Vilnius*:

> […] habe Alexandra […] von ihrer Kindheit und den Jugendjahren in **Wilno** erzählt, wie **Vilnius** oder **Wilna** auf polnisch genannt wird (Grass 1999a: 23).

> Aleksandra […] opowiada o swym dzieciństwie i latach młodzieńczych w **Wilnie**, jak zwie się po polsku **Vilnius** czy **Wilna** (Grass 1999b: 20).

Taking into account the point of view several possible situations can be identified:

First, the point of view is clearly marked (*Polish Lwów*, *Polish Wilno*, *German Breslau*, *German Danzig*, etc.); an example of this (one-sided) point of view is the exclusive use of Polish names on the maps depicting historical Silesia or East Prussia in the period when these lands were not Polish. Another example is discussed below concerning the name of the battle place *Schlacht bei Grunwald* that strongly marks the Polish point of view.

The action of the novel *Pornografia* (*Pornographie*) by Witold Gombrowicz takes place during World War II, when Lwów (today Lviv) was under German occupation. The name *Lwów* emphasizes the Polish point of view. The use of the German exonym allows for the identification of the place, but the Polish point of view disappears[2]:

> […] wczoraj nadjechała niespodziewanie rodzina spod **Lwowa** […] (Gombrowicz 1990: 60).

> […] gestern war unerwartet eine Familie aus der Gegend von **Lemberg** eingetroffen […] (Gombrowicz 1998: 76).

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2   See also Stalmaszczyk (2000: 145–146) and Kubaszczyk (2018) for further examples of shifts in point of view in translation of toponyms. Both authors demonstrate how changing a toponym or replacing an exonym with an endonym affects the author's point of view.

Second, the point of view is neutral. An example which represents the neutral point of view is bilingual village boards on areas where minorities live like *Bautzen / Budyšin*. Another example is historical maps, where in addition to the administratively prevailing names in a historical period, the variants of toponyms used at that time parallel (by the part of the local population) are also given or where their contemporary exonyms are listed. The effort of translators to keep the neutral point of view can be observed in the rendition of Hans von Lehndorff's diary *Ostpreußisches Tagebuch. Aufzeichnungen eines Arztes aus den Jahren 1945–1947* translated by Piotr and Andrzej Sulikowski into Polish (Lehndorff 2010). The translators transferred the former German names which had been in use at that time (before and during the Second World War) into the Polish target text and provided the current names in the square brackets, so the audience can identify how the places are named at the present time in Polish.

A dual, neutral point of view appears in G. Grass's novel *Unkenrufe* where the main character arbitrarily uses the German and Polish names and the narrator thus justifies the inconsistent use:

> […] Bau des Hauptbahnhofs, alle von **Danzig** oder **Gdańsk** nach Westen führenden oder aus westlicher Richtung nach **Gdańsk** oder **Danzig** laufenden Eisenbahngleise überwölbt. Da in des Witwers Notizen **polnische und deutsche Schreibweisen willkürlich wechseln**, folge ich seinen unentschlossenen Benennungen, sage nicht **Brama Oliwska**, sondern: Die Witwe führte ihn aus der Stadt hinaus zur Straßenbahnstelle **Olivaer Tor**, dann auf der links abzweigenden Chaussee nach **Kartuzy** […] (Grass 1999a: 18).

An attempt to establish a neutral point of view is evident in Adam Krzeminski's article *Die mythische Schlacht* [*The Mythical Battle*]. The author laterally uses the names *Schlacht bei Tannenberg* (*Tannenbergschlacht*) which represent the German point of view and *Schlacht bei Grunwald* (*Grunwaldschlacht*) that represent the Polish point of view (Krzemiński 2010). The same strategy can be observed in *Wikipedia* in an entry about the battle, where the Lithuanian point of view is included too:

> The Battle of Grunwald, First Battle of Tannenberg or Battle of Žalgiris, was fought on 15 July 1410 during the Polish–Lithuanian–Teutonic War. The alliance of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, led respectively by King Władysław II Jagiełło (Jogaila) and Grand Duke Vytautas (Witold; Vitaŭt), decisively defeated the German–Prussian Teutonic Knights, led by Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen (Battle of Grunwald).

Third, the point of view is 'external' vs. 'involved' (engaged in one party of a controversy). From the external point of view, it may be not so important if the translator uses a place name which is currently the official name of a territory or common

name which has been used in a language for ages. However, the use of the non-official place name can be interpreted as a partial involvement that supports one group of interests against another. An example is *Burma* vs. *Myanmar*. The *Longman dictionary of contemporary English* indicates the problem with these names where it is said that *Myanmar* is "a country in southeast Asia, to the east of India and Bangladesh, and to the west of China and Thailand. Many people around the world still call it 'Burma' even though its name officially changed in 1989" and that Burma "is the name preferred by the National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi" (Longman). The official name *Myanmar* was given to the country by the military junta to highlight a new stage in the history of the country. Therefore, for political reasons, there has long been a problem with the name[3]. The name *Myanmar* (*Mjanma*) is used in Polish diplomatic correspondence, but after several years of Myanmar, still hardly anyone knows the name and slowly arguments are appearing for the free use of the name *Burma* (*Birma*) as equally relevant in Polish (Michałek 2015)[4]. However, in some official documents the use of the name *Burma* could entail suspicion of being biased and siding with the National League for Democracy.

Some place names are signs of sovereignty, and other names symbolize its absence. This aspect should be kept in mind, especially in the case of relatively young states, and those who liberated with difficulty from foreign influences. Karol Zierhoffer and Zofia Zierhofferowa pay attention to this issue too:

> Successive layers of different pre-colonization of their territories and changing supreme authority reflected in the nomenclature, causing it to adapt to the current administration. The new States have sought to cleanse their areas of foreign naming accretions to confirm their sovereignty. However, in the historical layer these foreign

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3   The complicated naming situation is well described in the following explanation: "Die demokratische Opposition, und mit ihr San Aung Suu Kyi, sagten am Anfang, sie würden die Bezeichnung Myanmar aus Gründen der Missbilligung des Regimes nicht verwenden. Inzwischen hat sich ihre Haltung diesbezüglich jedoch geändert [...]. Die UNO und zahlreiche Staaten wie etwa Frankreich oder Japan nahmen die neue Namensgebung Myanmar an, so auch die Schweiz. Die USA, Australien und viele andere Staaten und NGOs hielten dagegen als Zeichen ihrer Ablehnung des Militärregimes am Namen Burma fest. Nicht nur bei den Staaten, auch bei den Medien ist die Handhabung unterschiedlich. Bei den Deutschschweizer Medien verwenden die meisten, wie etwa *NZZ, Tagesanzeiger* oder *SRF* die Bezeichnung Burma. Die *Aargauer Zeitung, Watson* und *Blick* hingegen verwenden Myanmar. Bei den Westschweizer Medien wie *RTS* oder *Le Temps* ist ebenfalls Burma – beziehungsweise die französische Variante Birmanie – üblich. Die *New York Times* wiederum verwendet Myanmar. Die *Washington Post* verwendet oft beide Bezeichnungen, «Myanmar – auch bekannt als Burma». *The Guardian* verwendet inzwischen auch Myanmar. Beim *Frontier* wird übrigens auch Myanmar verwendet" (Hirschi 2018).

4   The *Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland* recommended first collateral use of both short names *Mjanma* and *Birma* (Czerny, Zych 2013). In the most recent, updated 7th edition, it is stated that the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs recommends the use of the name Mjanma in official and administrative contexts (Czerny, Zych 2023: 27).

names remain as options that are also present in the Polish language (Zierhoffer, Zierhofferowa 2004: 155, my transl.).

Hence, when selecting a place name translators should bear in mind that names can bear traces of annexation and supremacy, since their use is therefore not always axiologically neutral.

In the case of an external point of view, when choosing one of the options, the ease or difficulty of pronunciation can play a role.

It can be also important the way through which the names came into a language (e.g., chronicles, Latin as a lingua franca or via the language of the occupant, the superpower in the region etc.)[5].

Fourth, the decision for a particular point of view can involve conscious manipulation. For example, using the name *Oświęcim* instead of *Auschwitz* may be deliberate to strengthen the false claims about the 'Polish' nature of the Nazi concentration camps[6]. Therefore, the use of 'Auschwitz' rather than 'Oświęcim' in the translation of Susanne Batzdorff's poem about Edith Stein, rendered by Justyna Łukaszewicz, was the appropriate solution: "Cztery dekady temu// zabili cię w **Auschwitz**.// Zostawiłaś po sobie// książki o świętych" (Batzdorff 2011: 36). That's also the reason why Sławomir Błaut introduces one toponym twice in his translation of G. Grass's *Unkenrufe*: once as a contemporary Polish endonym and once as a German exonym:

Ich nehme an, daß sie nicht weiter nach **Stutthof** und zur Gedenkstätte des gleichnamigen Konzentrationslagers gefahren sind (Grass 1999a: 134).

Przypuszczam, że nie pojechali dalej do **Sztutowa** i do muzeum na terenie dawnego obozu koncentracyjnego w **Stutthofie** (Grass 1999b: 105).

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5   Some names came into Polish via Russian like Phenian or Erewań (Yerevan). According to the publication of the Central Office of Geodesy and Cartography (Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland) (Czerny, Zych 2023: VII), the correct spelling of the name of the Armenian capital is currently in Polish Erywań. The form Erewań, frequently used especially in the 80s of the twentieth century, popularized in jokes about Radio Yerevan, is derived from the Russian name and was in use until the fall of the Soviet Union. After the Armenia became independent the name used in Polish till the end of the 1930s was restored. So the spelling Erywań is connected with independence of Armenia and the spelling Erewań with the time of occupation. The name *Phenian* was incorrect translation of the Russian name of the city, which, in fact, is called *Pyongyang*. The misnomer was recently corrected and the name *Phenian* disappeared from the Polish media (Michałek 2015).

6   The camp is officially named, in accordance with the UNESCO resolution on naming conventions, *Auschwitz-Birkenau German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp*.

The Context

The translation of toponyms depends on the context in which they occur. Different types of context should be taken into account:

The historical Context

Place names are historically changeable. The translation should avoid anachronisms. The city of Immanuel Kant bore in its history different names: *Tuwangste – Regiomontium – Königsberg – Kaliningrad*. It is an anachronism to say that Kant worked in Kaliningrad, because he was born and lived in Königsberg. It is appropriate, however, to use the Polish name *Królewiec* in this context when rendering a text into Polish, and the name *Korolewiec* (Королевец) in Russian texts because these names were used at that time in Polish or Russian to denote the former Prussian city. Another Polish name of the city, *Królówgród*, is earlier, and therefore, when we talk about the time of Kant, is also anachronistic.

Another example could be the Russian *Volgograd*, which has had various names throughout its history, including *Tsaritsyn* and *Stalingrad*. It would be an obvious mistake to translate the name *Stalingrad* in the following passage, referring to the famous World War II battle, as the *Battle of Volgograd*, even though that is the city's current name: "unbekümmert um die Schlacht von Stalingrad" (Grass 1999c: 111). The correct solution is: "nie zważając na bitwę pod Stalingradem" (Grass 2001: 96), as translated by S. Błaut[7].

The socio-political Context

The change of a place name is often associated with annexation, appropriation, usurpation, colonization, border displacement, etc.[8] A reference to names which functioned in the past but not now may be interpreted, therefore, as an attempt to change the status quo, for example the (persistent) use of some former place names could be associated with revisionism. Hence, not every option is axiologically neutral in the specific context.

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7   Another example of a city that has changed its name in recent history is *Chemnitz* in Saxony, which was called *Karl-Marx-Stadt* from 1953 to 1990 before its old name was restored. The former Polish exonym, *Kamienica Saska*, is rarely used today.

8   This is well illustrated by a passage from *Kwiaty polskie* by Julian Tuwim: "…Była uliczka od Piotrowskiej,// […]// Co zwała się 'Pasaż Majera', // Potem Chopina (— a jak teraz// Przezwały ją piekielne zbiry,// Co z Łodzi Litzmannstadt zrobiły?// Ale nam dawną ŁÓDŹ oddacie// Po strasznej rzezi w Litzmannstadtcie!" (Tuwim 2014: 24).

Another problem is the politicization of a place name – the name becomes a symbol of a new political order, a new world. Examples are *Karl-Marx-Stadt* (*Chemnitz*), *Stalingrad* (*Volgograd*), *Leningrad* (*Saint Petersburg*) and renaming of numerous streets names in the communistic times and their re-renaming afterwards.

The literary Context, the textual Context

The genre of a text has already been mentioned. However, the specific meaning profiled in a place name can be also affected by a micro context in which the name appears in the utterance. For example, in the poem *Rozpoczęta opowieść* Wisława Szymborska uses the toponym *Zabierzów* (Szymborska 2005: 38). The name really exists, referring to a small village in Poland, in the Malopolska province, in the district of Kraków [Cracow]. The toponym could be theoretically replaced with any name of a (small) village because everywhere and always is mentioned in Szymborska's poem and not the here and now[9]. In contrast, the concrete 'here' is important in the case of the town name *Braunau* in the poem *Pierwsza fotografia Hitlera* (*Hitler's First Photograph*), by the same author, because Braunau an Inn is the town in Austria where Hitler was born (Szymborska 2005: 116).

The Intersemiotic Context

The interpretation / the decipherment of a toponym meaning can be supported by a visual context like a picture, a map, a film, etc. For example, the name *Torgau* in the context of the film *Barbara* by Christian Petzold (2012) does not require further explanation to interpret the toponym, because the film images show clearly enough that the name relates to the re-education labor camp for young people in the former GDR.

Intertextual Interrelationships and Associations

When using toponyms the author can create intertextual connections between their text and the text(s) of other authors. The toponym can be the only marker of such interrelationships. Therefore, in fictional texts where the use of some place names can seem to be coincidental, caution should be exercised, as they can be used intentionally to create associations with a certain text.

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9   And indeed, it was changed to Kórnik in the Swedish translation of the poem by Anders Bodegård. Szymborska suggested her hometown Kórnik as an easier name to pronounce (cf. Neuger 2017: 435).

Let me give an example. The poem *Rozpoczęta opowieść* [*~Launched story*] by Szymborska comes from the year 1986. Two years earlier (1984) the Italian band Ricchi e Poveri created a song *Acapulco*. In the text of the song words occur "Acapulco Domani è tutta un'altra vita" (Ricchi e Poveri), which can be translated as *Acapulco, tomorrow is a completely different life*. The passage from Szymborska's poem, *Dopiero w Acapulco wszystko zaczniemy od nowa* [Only in Acapulco we will start everything again, my transl.], should be interpreted as a direct intertextual reference to the text of the world-famous hit-song.

Hence, in this particular context the name of Acapulco should be transferred into the target text, although in the context of the whole poem the choice of place names seems to be relatively coincidental. The translation of this passage into German reads: "In Acapulco erst// beginnen wir alles aufs neue" (Szymborska 2005: 39), which allows the audience to reconstruct the intertextual interrelationships.

However, the construction of false intertextual associations and connotations is to be avoided. The novel *Prawiek i inne czasy* by Tokarczuk (1998) is entitled *Ur und andere Zeiten* (Tokarczuk 2000) in the German translation. The problem is that Ur was an important Sumerian city-state in ancient Mesopotamia, which is well-known from the Bible. So the use of the name *Ur* in the title can create false intertextual associations which are not present in the source text. The English translator, Antonia Lloyd-Jones, uses the nominalization of the adjective 'primeval': *Primeval and other times* (Tokarczuk 2010) which unfortunately can be associated with the film title, *Primeval*.

Recognizability

If there are synonymous toponyms as exonyms and endonyms, a critical factor, apart from the other factors discussed above, may be which of them is more recognizable in the target culture. The nature of recognizability is not fixed, since it can alter with the change of language use and generation, a higher or lower educational level of a society etc. It seems that Polish names of German towns such as Regensburg, Speyer, Aachen (Polish: *Ratyzbona*, *Spira*, *Akwizgran*) are becoming less recognizable for the younger generation, the students are not able to identify and locate the towns if the exonym is used. This assumption is confirmed by a survey conducted by me on a group of 26 students studying in the fifth semester of Applied Linguistics for BA in Translation Studies. The students were asked to give the location, associations and possible translation (endonym or exonym) of 60 Polish, German, Russian and Ukrainian toponyms (mainly town names). One of them was *Budziszyn* (Upper Sorbian: *Budyšin*). Only 4 students knew that the town lies in Germany, and 2 of them located the town correctly in Saxony and were able to give the German name of the town which is *Bautzen* (7%). The town name should

be familiar to Polish students because of the Peace of Budziszyn (or the Peace of Bautzen), which was signed in 1018 between the Polish prince Boleslaus I (Bolesław Chrobry) and the German king Henry II, but only 4 students knew that. 7 out of 26 students (26,9%) knew that the Polish name of Speyer is *Spira* (English: *Spires*). A better result was achieved in case of Köln (English: *Cologne*). 22 respondents gave the correct answer, knowing that the Polish exonym for Köln is *Kolonia*.

Another example would be the Battle of Grunwald already mentioned that functions in the consciousness of Germans essentially as the first *Schlacht bei Tannenberg*. Although the name *Schlacht bei Grunwald* can be also encountered in the literature here and there, it is far less recognizable and reveals the Polish point of view (see above). Only 3 students of the whole group interviewed (11%) knew that *Tannenberg* can be translated as *Grunwald*. The Polish name *Bitwa pod Tannenbergiem* (*Battle of Tannenberg*) means the second Battle of Tannenberg which was fought between Russia and Germany in August 1914.

Multiplicity of Associations (associative Density)

Some place names evoke many associations, they are very rich in content, and have become symbols of certain phenomena, of historical, political, cultural events, etc. Examples include names like *Hiroshima*, *Stalingrad*, *Waterloo*, *Katyń*[10], *Smoleńsk*[11], *Torgau*[12], *Pacanów*[13], *Weimar*, *Sulejówek*[14].

The greater the density of the symbolic content of a name, the larger the contribution of national-cultural component to the meaning of a toponym, the more difficult is a name to translate. Most of the names with a high associative density could be called erudite names, because, in fact, their specific meaning is known from history, literature, current events. Therefore, even persons speaking the same language, living in one culture, will cope with this kind of names in varying degrees. While one person will have plenty of associations with a toponym, another one will have no associations at all.

In the case of names that trigger a multiplicity of associations or represent expressive symbols that are very well-known in one culture, and less known or not known in another, it would be sometimes necessary to add some kind of explication

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10 Katyn massacre.

11 The crash of the military jet with the Polish President Lech Kaczyński near Smolensk on April 10, 2010.

12 The Elbe Day, the Fort Zinna prison, the Re-education camp for youth.

13 The European Capital of Fable because of the fictional character *Koziołek Matołek* (*Matołek the Billy-Goat*) who went to Pacanów. The fable was written by Kornel Makuszyński.

14 The place in Poland where Józef Piłsudski, the most important Polish statesman after the World War I, lived in the years between 1923 and 1926.

or explanation. An example might be Andrzej Wajda's film *Katyń* (2007), based on *Post mortem. Opowieść katyńska* [*Post mortem. The story of Katyn*] by Andrzej Mularczyk. The name *Katyń* is in the Polish language an expressive symbol of repression and genocide. The German title of the film is *Das Massaker von Katyn* where the meaning of the toponym as a place of mass murder is explicated.

Another example is *Bereza Kartuska*, which appears in Józef Wittlin's poem *Litania* (*Litanei*). K. Dedecius – rightly assuming a lack of knowledge among potential readers – uses an explanatory translation, adding the word 'Lager' (*camp*) in the target text to help the audience interpret the symbolically used name: "Milczę o biciu bezbronnych i słabych.// I o istnieniu Berezy Kartuskiej,// I o kajdanach na rękach poety" (Dedecius 1989: 132) – "Ich schweige vom Geißeln der wehrlosen Schwachen, // und von dem Lager Bereza Kartuska// und von den Fesseln an Händen des Dichters" (ibid.: 133).

Of course, the word 'Lager' does not fully encompass the rich connotations associated with the use of the name *Bereza Kartuska*. However, it guides the reader of the translation toward the appropriate interpretation, making it easier to understand why Bereza Kartuska appears in the poem in the context of captivity (shackles) and torture (beating).

Generally, real, authentic place names may be associated with a specific symbolic content. Nevertheless, the fictitious names can be fulfilled with such an associative content too.

The Origin of the Name

The next factor which can have an impact on the translation of a toponym is the origin of the name. Generally, Roman, Greek, ancient and Biblical names should not cause difficulties in translation, even if they are characterized by extensive symbolism and numerous associations. This is connected with the widespread knowledge of the ancient and Judeo-Christian culture which influences the universality of these place names, cf. *Niniwa* [*Nineveh*] in Szymborska's *Rozpoczęta opowieść* (Szymborska 2005: 38), the associations with Egypt and ancient culture in Szymborska's poem *Museum* (ibid.: 146) or "Sodoma i Gomora" (Gombrowicz 1987: 189) – "Sodom und Gomorra" (Gombrowicz 2004: 232).

In contrast, place names associated with less commonly known cultures may cause a lot more trouble to translators, especially if they contain the national-cultural component of the meaning that was mentioned above.

However, in the case of variants of the name, problems may arise. This can be illustrated by a fragment from Julian Tuwim's poem *…et arceo*: "Naród, gmina, rodzina, uczelnia, czytelnia –// Wszystko chaos i zgroza, i pustka śmiertelna.// […] Gdzie pustego kościoła krzykliwi papieże// Na gruzach Babilonu – babilońskie

wieże" (Dedecius 1989: 122). The last line was translated by Dedecius as follows: "Auf Babels Trümmern neue Babeltürme türmen" (ibid.: 123). The translation of *Babilon* as *Babel* is not entirely accurate. In German, both Babel and Babylon are used, but in different contexts. Babel – mainly refers to the Tower of Babel (*der Turmbau zu Babel*), the biblical story from the *Book of Genesis* about the confusion of languages. Babylon – is the name of the ancient city in Mesopotamia (*das antike Babylon*) and is often a symbol of chaos, sin, or downfall, for example in a biblical context (*das Babylon der Sünde – Babylon of sin*). Since the theme of the poem is destruction, chaos, and downfall, the appropriate equivalent would be *Babylon*. However, the fact that the poem is written in rhymed verses may have influenced the translator's choice.

Assumptions about Knowledge and the Needs of Recipients

Assumptions about knowledge and the needs of recipients can influence translators' decisions. In the worst-case scenario they eliminate the toponym and replace it with a generic name. Many examples can be fouound in literary texts. In the novel *Die Klavierspielerin* Elfriede Jelinek uses the name *Fünfhaus* which refers to a district in Vienna (Jelinek 2005: 134). The use of the name makes it possible to determine the origin of the locksmith and emphasizes the Viennese context of the novel. In the Polish translation of the novel – *Pianistka* – the translator, Ryszard Turczyn, uses the generic name *suburb*: "ein eiliger Schlosser aus Fünfhaus" (ibid.) – "szybki ślusarz z przedmieścia" (Jelinek 2004: 163). The translator probably assumed that Polish recipients will not have any associations with the name *Fünfhaus*. This procedure of the translator, however, results from a paternalistic attitude and prevents the accumulation of knowledge by the target audience.

Morphology of the Toponym (Explicitness of the generic Element)

The translation of toponyms can be influenced by their morphology. It can play a role on whether the place names are composed with a generic element or they are simple.

If the toponyms include a generic element, some relevant "information can be provided by the *generic element* of a composed place name, if the meaning of the generic is transparent" (Jordan 2009: 4). However, translators should be careful because the generic element can be deceptive. In the novel *Die Klaviespielerin* E. Jelinek uses the toponym *Wienerwaldsee* (Jelinek 2005: 96). The Wienerwaldsee (English: *Vienna Forest Lake*), located 20 kilometers west of Vienna, is a shallow artificial lake. Hence, this name of reservoir should be translated into Polish if the translation is necessary as *Zalew Wienerwaldzki* and not *Jeziorko Wienerwaldzkie* (Jelinek 2004: 117) as the translator did.

Sometimes it is necessary to complete the generic element in the target language to make it explicit, for example, Polish: *Byłem w Tatrach*, English: *I was in the Tatras*. German: *Ich war im Tatra**gebirge***. In some situations, if the generic component would not have been completed, names could be not clear for the target audience. A common practice is, for example, supplementing the elided and implied term *ulica* (*street – Straße*) in the case of street names, e.g., "U wylotu **Wawelskiej**" (Gombrowicz 1987: 187) – "Am Ausgang der **Wawelskastraße**" (Gombrowicz 2004: 230), "długi pas **Filtrowej**" (Gombrowicz 1987: 186) – "der lange Gürtel der **Filtrowastraße**" (Gombrowicz 2004: 229). If such a recovery of an implicit element does not occur, the identificatory function of the name may be disrupted, as seen in K.I. Gałczyński's poem *Noctes aninenses* – translated by K. Dedecius – where the name *Leschno* is unclear: "Theophil will in die alten Gassen// zum Geflüster und für dunkle Possen// und ein Tor in **Leschno** hinterlassen,// mit Neptun, der dort in Erz gegossen" (Dedecius 1989: 145). The first thought is that *Leschno* refers to the Polish city *Leszno*, but the German name of this city is *Polnisch Lissa* (other variants are *Lissa in Posen* and *Liessau*). The form *Leschno* is indeed historically recorded, but only in the 15th century (cf. Leszno). Only the confrontation with the original explains the enigma. The preposition used before the toponym helps us find the right solution, because in the original we read that the gate was "on" Leszno: "Teofilowi, gdy się w mieście zmierzchnie,// daję całą uliczkę do szeptów// oraz pewną bramę na Lesznie,// gdzie był kuty w żelazie Neptun" (Dedecius 1989: 144). Leszno was the historical name of a part of Warsaw located in Wola and Śródmieście, known for its Jewish district and important buildings such as the Lubomirski Palace and the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This toponym may also refer to the former Leszno Street in Warsaw (currently Aleja "Solidarności", cf. Solidarności). So, this toponym refers to the Leszno district or the Leszno Street. Therefore, a better solution would be to use an explication like *in der Lesznostraße* or *im Warschauer Leszno/Leschno*.

Political Factors (Censorship, Language Policy of a Country / an Area)

Sometimes translators have to pay attention to political factors which can affect the translation of toponyms. In some countries censorship might play a special role. Afterwards it cannot be often adjudicated whether a solution was the decision of the translator or if it was imposed by the Censor.

The same concerns the language policy of a country. The legal and administrative norms in force in Poland are described, for example, by Aleksandra Cieślikowa (2004: 235–238). In Poland, after World War II, the Commission for the Determination of Place Names was established, tasked with replacing German names with Polish ones: "German names were adopted, translated, historical names were restored, or new ones were assigned" (ibid.: 236, my transl.).

The topic of censorship requires separate research, and since it goes beyond the scope of this article, I only wanted to highlight it briefly. Censorship in cartography during the PRL period, using general-use maps as an example, is discussed by Beata Konopska (2007). It can therefore be assumed that the influence of censorship also extended to translations.

Conclusion

The considerations above show that the translation of place names is a non-trivial issue. On the other hand, it is related to plenty of factors which translators have to take into account when they make decisions how to translate a toponym. For this reason, the translation of toponyms is not a simple matter and even in the case of prominent translators, errors occur. Therefore, the translation of toponyms should be discussed in detail during translators' training so that the future translators are aware of the possible problems and the consequences of their decisions. These consequences can be different and range from the simplification of a text to serious political problems. An important issue in this context is the respect for minority rights, the awareness of complex historical processes, the understanding of the possible functions of place names in the literary work, and the acquisition of knowledge. If the proper name is replaced with the generic name the target audience may be deprived of the possibility to accumulate new knowledge, connotations and associations with a foreign name. The important thing is that the real toponyms not only allow us to identify a geographical feature on a map but they are signs of very complicated cultural realities, traces of history, media of national and cultural identity, and items of controversy. Translators have to take into consideration all of these factors before they can decide which strategy is the proper one to translate toponyms in a text.

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Factors Affecting the Translation of Toponyms
Abstract

In the paper the author assumes – agreeing with Albert P. Vermes – that the translation of proper names and especially toponyms is not 'a simple automatic process of transference' (Vermes 2003: 89) and analyzes factors which can influence their translation. The toponyms are not only a means of language to identify a geographical feature on a map, but they are signs of very complicated cultural realities, traces of history, media of national and cultural identity and items of controversy. The factors which must be taken into consideration by the translator include, *inter alia*, the ontological status

of a toponym, its origin, its recognizability, the function of the text, the political context and many others. These factors are discussed in detail in the article and illustrated with examples drawn primarily from Polish and German literary texts and their translations. The material is supplemented with examples from other types of texts, including English texts and translations.

Czynniki wpływające na przekład toponimów
Abstrakt

Idąc za z Albertem P. Vermesem, w artykule zakłada się, że tłumaczenie nazw własnych, a zwłaszcza toponimów, nie jest „prostym, automatycznym procesem przeniesienia" (Vermes 2003: 89), dlatego analizowane są czynniki, które mogą mieć wpływ na przekład toponimów. Toponimy są nie tylko środkiem językowym służącym do identyfikacji obiektu geograficznego na mapie, ale też znakami bardzo skomplikowanych realiów kulturowych, śladami historii, nośnikami tożsamości narodowej i kulturowej oraz przedmiotami kontrowersji. Do czynników, które tłumacz musi wziąć pod uwagę, zalicza się status ontologiczny toponimów, ich pochodzenie, rozpoznawalność, funkcję tekstu, kontekst polityczny i wiele innych. Czynniki te są szczegółowo omówione w artykule i zilustrowane przykładami zaczerpniętymi w przeważającej części z literackich tekstów polskich i niemieckich oraz z ich tłumaczeń. Materiał uzupełniony jest przykładami z innych rodzajów tekstów, także tekstów angielskich.