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# HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SLAVIC HYDRONYMS

## Povzetek

### ZGODOVINSKA IN OZEMELJSKA RAZPOREDITEV SLOVANSKIH HIDRONIMOV

Analiza starodavnih hidronimov iz Evrope in Azije kaže, da so bili Slovani široko razširjena ljudstva že dolgo pred 6. stol. po. KR. Pravzaprav lahko celo slovansko topografsko terminologijo najdemo v antičnih delih različnih avtorjev.

## Introduction

It takes at least few centuries before a hydronym is accepted in a certain area, but on the other hand, once accepted the hydronym stays steady in the vocabulary. This peculiarity allows us to track down the movements of people in different areas and ages. If we study carefully old historical sources we will see that river names of Slavic characters are to be finding in large area in the Antiquity, not only in Europe, but also in Asia Minor and Central Asia. Many data about Slavonic names of hydronyms in Greek and Roman Antiquity are at internet [1].

## Examples

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD Procopius described the ancient Roman province Macedonia and mentioned river **Ρεχίος (Rechios)** [2]. Its name has no meaning, neither in Latin, nor in Greek language. However, Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian etc. offer good explanation. **Ρεχίος (Rechios)** is in the matter of fact the common Slavic name for a river – **reka**. The closest modern hydronym to **Ρεχίος (Rechios)** is Slovene river **Reka**, called also **Notranjska Reka**. Related are also the Bulgarian **Byala Reka, Luda Reka, Voynska Reka**.

Hydronym with similar name we find even in the Central Asia, that is **Araxes river**, mentioned by Herodotus in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC [3]. There lived the Massagetae, who according to Jordanes were branch of Getae [4: X-61], same Getae are called Slavs by Th. Simocates [5: 14-15]. Except **Araxes** in Central Asia, there is another **Araxes** in Ancient Armenia [3: IV-40]; the modern name of the river is **Araks**. The name **Araxes** is corrupted Slavic word **reka**, which has also dialectal variant **rjaka** (Russ. Blg. **ряка**). Related to **Araxes** is also the mentioned by Ptolemy **Tamuraka** [6: III-5-8]. The name of this settlement on the Coast of Azov Sea means *dark-river*. **Tamu** corresponds to **tama-dark, darkness (tama-darkness** Blg.dial. **taman-dark** Croat.) and **raca** corresponds to common Slavic **reka, rjaka – river**.

It is clear that the basic Slavic words for *river* are to be found in ancient hydronyms in some of the earliest historical accounts (Herodotus). The dispersal is enormous – from Central Asian, **Araxes** till **Ρεχίος (Rechios)** on the Balkans.

Another Slavic word for *marshy, muddy-river* is also to be found from the deep Antiquity. Herodotus mentions river **Ναπαρίς (Napolis)** – tributary of Danube [3: IV-48]. **Ναπαρίς (Napolis)** is Graecized Slavic **Na bari** (*at the river, at the rivulet* – Locative), **barje** means *marsh* in Slovene, **bara** is Bulgarian word for *small river*.

The particle **bara** is to be found even in the Indian river **Barbara** [7: 187]. In Pakistan – home of the Vedic Aryans there is river **Bara**. Ptolemy mentions **Zyro bara** in Dacia (Rumania) [6: III-8-4], and Procopius wrote about **Temonbari (temni bari** – *dark, marshy rivers*) in Thrace (Bulgaria) [2: IV-11]. The name of these toponyms came apparently from the dark rivulet flowing near by. In the case with **bara, barje** we see again that the Slavic term is documented in several places the Antiquity - from India till Illyria.

Other interesting ancient hydronyms are **Arsa** in Illyria [8] III-xviii-129 (modern **Raša**), **Erasinos** (modern **Rasino**) in Greece [9: 254]; Thracian **Orosines** [6: IVxi-45], and the mentioned in Rig Veda river **Rasa** [10] p. 78. Their names are connected to common Slavic word **rosa-dew**, and the adjective **rosna, orosena** – *dewy, covered with dew*. Just like in the case with **reka, rjaka** and **bara, barje**, the term **rosa** (with ancient from **rasa**) is to be found from Middle Europe till Central Asia.

**Danube** is the second longest river in Europe. According to Strabo its older name was **Matoas**, which he translates with Greek word **αἰσιος** – *with muddy waters*. [11: VII- fragm. 65]. **Matoas** corresponds to Slovene **motiti** – *to disturb* or *môten muddy*.

Bulgarian **мътѝа** – *do disturb, to make turbid* etc. In its delta Danube is large and slow, with turbid, dark waters, so the name **Matoas** is quite logical. The better known ancient name - **Danubius** is also Slavic one. It corresponds to O.Blg. **dunovenie** – *movement, blow of the wind*. The connection water – wind-movement, we find even in Latin word – **ventus**. It means *wind*, but also *changing current, flow...*

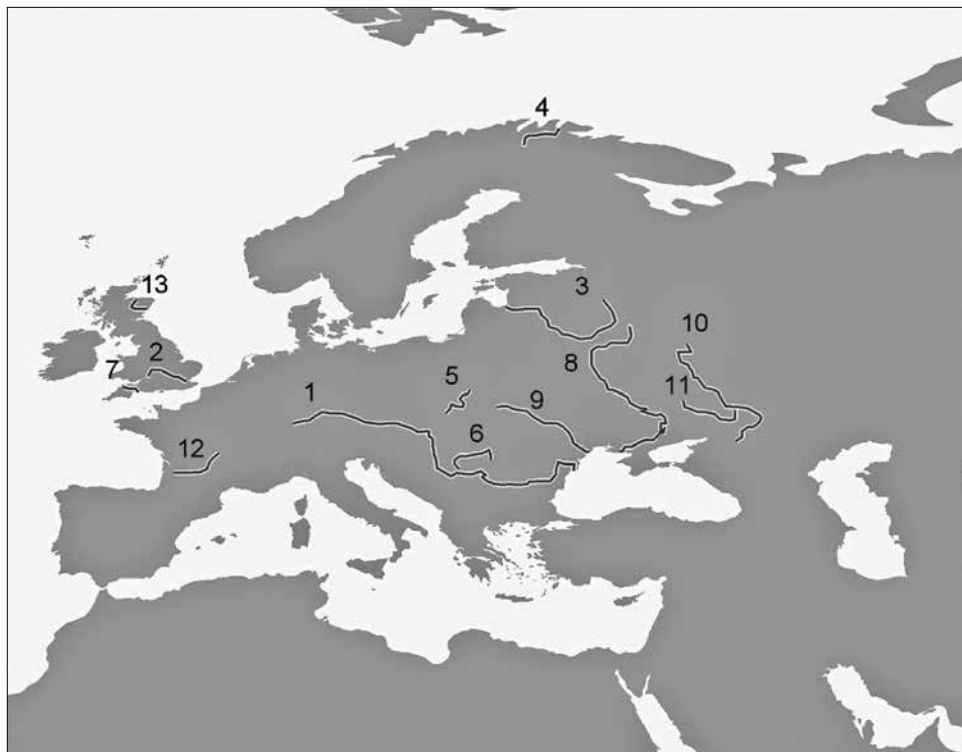
Another explanation for Slovene name **Donava**, Slovak **Dunaj** is root **don** or **dun** which means *doneti* – sound that are river noise in upper part of river. Spreading of such names is numerous in Europe that is shown in next figure [12]:

**Colapis** was the Latin name of Slovene river **Kolpa**. Its meaning we can find in O.Ch.Sl. **клопотъ** (klopot) – *noise*. **Colapis** had the meaning *noisy river*. It could be also explanation with Croat name **Kupa**, the river for bathing, while in summer it is quite warm. There could be toss of letters LAP to PAL and give **Kopalis**. Croats **kupati** and Slovene **kopati** means *take a bath*.

**Timachus** and **Timavus** are mentioned by Pliny [8] III-XXV-144, III- XXVI-151.

The particle **tim** was translated by Geogiev as *darkness* and corresponding to O.Blg. **тъма** – *darkness*. [7: 34]. Slovene **tema** or dialectical **tima** means *Dark*. Similar hydronyms we find in Old Britain, that is **Thamesis** – modern **Thames**. Other related names are the mentioned above **Tamuraca** and the Phrygian **Tembrogios**. [8: VI-I-4].

Herodotus wrote about river **Hypanis** in Europe [3: IV-47]. Its name corresponds to Vedic river **Kubha** [10] 78. The etymology can be offered with O.Ch.Sl. **kupati** se – *to take*



1 Danube, 2 Thamez, 3 Dvina, 4 Tana, 5 Dunajec, 6 Timis, 7 Tamar, 8 Dneper, 9 Dnester, 10 Don, 11 Donec, 12 Dordogne, 13 Don [12]

a bath, Blg. word **кърпане** -*bathing*, Slovene word **kopanje** – *bathing* (in river). In ancient times the rivers were natural place to take a bath.

Not only ancient rivers have Slavic names, but also few seas. Strabo testifies that the **Adriatic Sea** received its name from a river **Adria** [11: VII-9], called **Atrianus** by Ptolemy, who puts its delta at the coast of Venetic lands [6: III-1.21]. **Adria** and **Adrianus (Atrianus)** correspond to Slovene word **jadorn** – *quick* and to O.Blg. **јандръ** –*quick*. So the meaning of river **Adria**, which gave the name of the **Adriatic** Sea, was *quick, fast*, and it is perfectly explainable from Slovene language. It could be also possible meaning **jadro, jadrati** – *sail*, while the sea give good surface for sailing which is efficient and quick, so the meaning is the same. Similar river name is the mentioned by Herodotus **Athrus** [3: 4-49] – modern **Jantra** (Bulgaria).

Another sea with Slavic name is the mentioned by Pliny **Morimarusa** – the Baltic [8] IV-xiii- 95. It is northern sea and of course cold one. G. Sotiroff explained **Morimarusa** as **More moroza** – *sea of the frost, sea of the cold* [11: 11]. **More, morje** is common Slavic word for *sea*, and **mrzaz, moroz** -common Slavic word for *cold, frost*.

Pliny gave another interesting name of the Sea. The ancient author mentioned that in the language of the natives Azov Sea is called **Temarunda**, which translated into Latin is **Matrem maris** – *mother of the sea* [8] VI-vii-20. Because Azov Sea flows in Black Sea it

is called in this case – *mother of the Black Sea*. **Temarunda** means exactly –*mother of the Black Sea* in Slavic. The original form must have been **Tem morem da**. **Tem** corresponds to Slovene **tema**- darkness, O.Blg. **тъма** – *darkness*, **morem** – Instr. of **more** – *sea*, and **da** - **dati** means give. **Dati** corresponds to **dajati** - *dojiti*, **dojilja**, **dojka** – *nurse* ( Slovene, Bulgarian).

## Conclusion

Judging by the fact that even in the Antiquity Slavic hydronyms are to be found on two continents, points out that the Slavs were numerous people and dispersed over enormous area – from India till Britain. The division of the Old Slavs must have begun before Vedic era, judging by the fact that Vedic rivers (**Barbara**, **Rasa**, **Kubha**) have Slavic names.

This data shows that the accepted in the past model of the emerging of Slavs just in the Late Antiquity should be regarded as incorrect. The researchers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century did not have a lot of important information at their disposal and inevitably that lead to their mistakes.

## Sources

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## Abstract

Analysis of ancient hydronyms from Europe and Asia shows that long before the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD the Slavs were already dispersed people. In the matter of fact the whole Slavic topographical terminology can be found in the documented in the Antiquity works of different authors.