Proper names, including place names, have long been considered as violators of traditions. Being ready to substantiate any part of speech, phrase and sentence, these full-fledged units of the language system have always been studied on special grounds. However, with all the specificity of proprial lexis it has always been studyable by linguistic means. What were the amendments to toponymic identity?

Traditionally, linguists refer to the need to examine proper names of geographical objects on a toponymic level pointing to the stratum of lexis which is actively involved in establishing a system of signs such as benchmarks on the ground (other proper names) and which are important for the study of names. When creating new names of geographical objects a word from common vocabulary, and another proper name (either the name of a person or the name of a nearby object) can serve as a derivational basis: AmE. Beaver Swamp, Aaron Swamp, Boeuf River Marsh, Blr. Yasien’, Torbalava, Chervien’skaje Balota.

On the one hand, this circumstance lets some linguists talk about a broader semantics of onyms compared with appellatives. It is able to accommodate a heterogeneous group of units (a systematic approach). On the other hand, it raises reasons to consider proper names as a subclass of the language system in which all the features of the previous stages of word existence are leveled. The peculiarities lose their identity and the name becomes “a tag” or “a label” (an individual approach). There is a third way to address the problem, which lies in the idea that “the name lives several phases, each with its own semantics” [3, p. 140] which is an anthropogenic approach.
The first approach is characterized by attention to all possible types of motivation, the second takes only the present existence of a sign into account, the third approach is based on the ability of the human mind to find an understandable basis for obscure or misunderstood words. All these approaches make it possible to highlight three main points to the existence of place names: a) elective interest to object features while naming, b) further asemantic being of a toponymic sign in the space of language, and c) the ability of the names of geographical objects to lose connection with their derivative bases and to restore it by using a familiar but not associated (with a) genetically original feature. Thus, the problem of semantics of proper names is generally confined to the problem of motivation which could be potential, not significant at this time, or adapted to a new state of consciousness of people living in this area. The latter perspective is the most promising if a synchronic approach is applied because it can note only the connection of a name with the knowledge that is relevant to man in a particular location at this time.

All geographical names are secondary in origin, i.e. derived units. The secondary status of helonyms suggests that they are formed by transferring names from one class of words to another one: AmE. *a panther* > *Panther Swamp*, *Abe Emerson> Abe Emerson Marsh*; Blr. *liebiada* > *Liebiada*, ppl. *Yuchavičy* > *Yuchavicki Moh*. The derivative status of the names of geographical objects let us regard them as two-element signs. All names of objects are motivated and, consequently, derived from a certain source of naming. Transferring from the appellative or proprial part of vocabulary to a helonymic subsystem of hydronymy can be implemented with the help of material components (affixes, geographical appellatives, etc.) as well as through assigning a new function to a naming unit, but a place name is always based on the names of other units. The structure of a name combines a categorical status of an object (basis / initial sign) and a differentiator (new feature) whereby the first undivided basis is given the nature of novelty and fixation of a new particle of knowledge [2, p. 84]. Consequently, the onomasiological structure of helonyms like derivative appellatives consists of the onomasiological basis and the onomasiological attribute.

Despite the fact that place names are often considered meaningless units not bearing any conceptual content, we cannot but mention their ability to generalize within a toponymic line: AmE. *Eagle Hill* > *Eagle Hill River* > *Eagle Hill River Marshes*, Blr. *Slabada* > *Slabadske Balota*, etc. In this context, D. I. Rudenko is absolutely right noting that “proper names are the words of natural language, and in this sense they cannot but have at least partially generalized nature” [4, p. 234]. Place names of a certain microsystem in a specific area reflect objects located on it rather describing
them by turning to the surrounding objects and their names then adding meaningless labels. Moreover, this context includes extralinguistic proprial and appellative sources of naming: AmE. Bear Swamp, Bird Swamp, Blr. Kulik, Vouchae Balota.

It should, however, be emphasized that this generalization is by no means conceptual as in appellative lexis. Denotative generality is presented in proper names, which is caused by one of the broadest potentially possible range of features characterizing objects. The reasons for this are fully described by N. D. Golev: “A concrete representation is naturally richer in content than a common one, but its content is more diffuse, harder to split up to a certain minimum number of features ... so the selection of a criterion in place names is only relatively due to content. Hence, a great ability of a proper name to be deetimologized” [1, p. 97].

It follows from the previous paragraphs that the onomasiological structure of a place name and a derivative common name, in general, is the same. It differs only in the fact that the latter reflects a concept that is carried by a derivative while the former gives a spatial reference to the objects of the territory in most cases.