

Original Research

Hispanic toponymy of Western Sahara: Stratigraphic and typological analysis

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The research undertaken was aimed at analysing place names of Spanish origin in the Western Sahara context. From Western Sahara's place names extracted from GeoNames electronic system via the continuous sampling method a corpus for the analysis was built. 132 toponymic units of Spanish origin or with Spanish allusions were analysed. The authors classified Spanish elements of Western Sahara's toponyms and categorised Hispanic toponymic patterns. The conclusion is that the originality of Western Sahara's place names is manifested in the Hispanic layer, which is a reflection of the country's contradictory colonial past, toponymic classes that are unusual for the embodiment of Spanish place names, in basic toponymic forms that are different from Hispanic geonaming traditions in other Spanish-speaking parts of the world.

KEYWORDS: *Western Sahara, Spanish, toponym, typology, motivation, classification*



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1. INTRODUCTION

As proper names, toponyms have a closer connection with the named object than nominal nouns. This has a direct impact on their linguistic characteristics. The close attention of linguists to proper names for many years and their numerous works allow subjecting different layers of onyms to a detailed distinction and thorough study. Our material dictates the selection (among these strata) of toponyms as the most numerous class of onyms. Scientists' appeal to onomastics has become a natural phenomenon over time, and the growth of works in this field is due to the increased interest of researchers from all over the world. Any toponymic study is inseparable from onomastics, as toponymy is one of the directions of this multifaceted science.

Place names, like other proper names, are a formally ordered lexical layer, i.e., they have a fixed structure and are formed according to certain morphological-syntactic models. The study of these models, the identification of toponymic formants or other unifying elements, and then the classification of toponyms according to these features reveals the modern organisation of the toponymic system. There are still debates among scholars about the essence and tasks of toponymy as a science. There is a widespread opinion that it is an integral, synthetic discipline, which is at the junction of and uses the data of the three fields of knowledge: geography, history and linguistics. An important aspect of toponymy is its lexical-semantic composition. The undoubted interest that the study of the

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semantics and etymology of toponyms has for the history of language, lexicology, dialectology, as well as for history, geography, historical geography, ethnography and archaeology does not exhaust its significance. Semantic categories of the toponymic lexicon, along with topoformants, are part of the inventory of formative means, i.e., they are elements of the system. The set of lexemes in toponymy, for all its apparent limitlessness, is in fact always limited, and, in addition to linguistic factors (which parts of speech and in what form, which words from a given grammatical category can become proper names), there are historical, geographical and social limitations (extralinguistic factors).

In recent years, new directions for toponymic research have been actively developed. Over the past 10 years there has been a kind of technical revolution in terms of GIS resources: new ways of collecting and processing spatial data have appeared, and the programmes already created have received strong development. Technical progress cannot be stopped in the field of scientific and translation electronic systems. All this can and should be turned in favour of toponymic studies, increasing their speed, reducing the energy costs of their implementation, expanding the bibliographic base for them and thus improving the quality of their content. In general, we find some modern electronic tools extremely useful for the identification, description, study, comprehensive analysis and systematisation of toponymic material.

Critical toponymy has become an important prism for reviewing geographical names and strategies for changing place names, which remind of the economic crisis, crime and urban degradation. Micro-toponyms, such as urbanonyms, also motivate the choice of their

names (Kozintsev, 2018). Hispanic toponyms are important symbolic markers in preserving or changing cultural identities, as well as in facilitating socio-political changes and relationships. This role cannot be realised and fixed without a careful study of the etymology, social meaning, and structure of place names, which critical-toponymic and political-toponymic approaches provide. Changes, particularly within the Hispanic toponymic stratum, entail a number of factors that are also studied from other angles: tourist tastes are shaped, the interest of national and international investors is aroused, an influx of financial and informational sector workers is formed.

New and powerful geographical names contribute to the marketing of urban space. The study of consequences of renaming oikononyms, hodonyms and urbanonyms constitute promising material for research in terms of critical and political toponymy, relatively new scientific directions.

A comprehensive method of studying toponymic units within the framework of a cognitive-matrix analysis of geographical names in combination with statistical analysis, historical and geographical reconstruction, descriptive method and GIS-mapping method contributes to the scientific solution of a number of general and private problems of applied toponymy. In a mental system with holistic thinking, language and, within language, toponymic representations, which are part of the mental lexicon, are interconnected with spatial representations. Cognitive toponymy studies the embodiment of information in geographical names, as well as the peculiarities of the use of toponymic vocabulary in comparison with other forms of information actualisation.

The synthesis of ecolinguistics and toponymy as branches of linguistics is extremely effective. As a consequence of this synergy, it becomes clear that within the framework of the scientific, theoretical, methodological and terminological unification of different directions, linguistics ceases to be a single-segment discipline. The main knowledge that toponymy carries is the information about the interaction between man and nature in the linguistic environment. At the same time, ecolinguistics can offer various methodologies, analysis tools and a clear framework for naming. The ecolinguistic approach highlights not only the effectiveness of the structural analysis of place names, but also emphasises the cultural and environmental parameters that should be taken into account when studying such onomastic units.

The Hispanic toponymic layer currently has thousands of objects around the globe. Due to certain historical events, by the beginning of the 21st century the main regions of the accumulation of Hispanic toponymic units are mainly Spain, Latin America, the United States, the Caribbean, as well as Equatorial Guinea and some other countries. However, due to the euphony of the language, Spanish geographic names appear in the urban nomenclature of almost every state.

Spanish or the pluricentric Ibero-Romance language, which originated in the medieval kingdom of Castille and became widespread in other regions of the world during the Age of Discovery (primarily in South and Central America), is today the second most spoken language in the world after Chinese (and, of course, English as an international lingua franca).

A special intralinguistic and linguocultural variety of national variants of the Spanish language is manifested in Latin America. A lot of research is devoted to Mexican, Colombian, Bolivian, Argentine and other national variants (see Guilherme, 2019; Jett, 2019; Díaz-Torres et al., 2020; File-Muriel et al., 2021; Nuzzo & Cortés Velásquez, 2020; Sessarego & Rodríguez-Riccelli, 2018; Tkachev, 2020; Fábregas et al., 2021; Rona, 2015). The linguistic situation in Equatorial Guinea, where Spanish is still one of the official languages, is also being carefully researched (see Lipski, 2019; Gomashie, 2019; Smith, 2020).

Thus, the choice of the topic of this article was determined by the urgent need for systematisation and scientific analysis of the accumulated factual material, and its relevance – by the development of toponymic research and the lack of any systematic description of the Spanish toponymy of one of the most ethnolinguistically original territories of the globe.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. Access to geodata

In recent years, geographic information systems and geospatial databases have begun to play an increasing role in toponymic research. The focus of scientists on high-quality topographic data is mainly due to the fact that it has become much easier to use them online. In the context of globalisation, informatisation, and the development of Internet technologies, prompt access to reliable spatially distributed information is of paramount importance. In general, with the development of information technologies, toponymic research has acquired a new format, characterised by new approaches to the collection and processing of geodata.

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Widespread informatisation, development of high-speed Internet, the availability of purchasing and using portable computers and mobile devices, increasing the computer literacy of the population cover most countries of the world, which is reflected in qualitatively new approaches to the study of toponymic vocabulary.

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Among those currently used in practice and the most popular electronic resources for scientific toponymic research, we single out specialised sites, online toponymic dictionaries, electronic maps, scientometric databases, geographic databases and electronic translators.

2.2. Online toponymic dictionaries

Obtaining information from a toponymic dictionary requires effort: it takes time to search, money to buy a book, time and effort to work with a publication in a library. Sometimes toponymic dictionaries become an alternative, giving the etymology and the year of creation of the toponym online. The advantages are obvious:

ease of search, instantaneous results, no financial costs. But, at the same time, arising questions on the authorship and of the dictionary, if data provided can be trusted, if the data obtained was collected using crowdsourcing and if the information contained can be considered folk etymology, require attention. In addition, once the data are taken from other published sources, it should be checked whether the references to them are indicated.

To be reliable, the online dictionary data should be compared to the published edition of the region's place names dictionary by someone else's authorship. It is in this way that several etymological versions are often identified and compared, and conclusions are drawn about their plausibility.

A separate category is composed by so-called *gazetteers* – online geographic directories (see Victorian Places, 2015; Queensland Place Names, 2022; Elvis Place Names, 2022; Gazetteer of British Place Names, 2022; Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names, 2022). They are often used in conjunction with a GIS and generally contain a list of place names along with data about their location or other spatial reference systems. But such directories, depending on the quality of the work done on them, may also contain other data, such as the type of object, its naming options, and sometimes even the etymology of the name.

2.3. Internet sites dedicated to toponymy

Recently, a number of toponymic web resources have been attracting attention by the completeness and brightness of their content. Many of them are professionally oriented blogs run by experts in the field of onomastics. Here are some typical examples:

- Toponímia de Lisboa (2022), a very informative site dedicated to Portuguese toponymy offering access to a lot of publications in scientific and periodical press about Portuguese geographical names;

- Arqueotoponimia (2022), a blog in Spanish by the philologist Dolores González de la Peña operating since 2008. The site contains a lot of publications about Spanish geographical names and provides an opportunity to comment on them;

- Neotoponymy (2022), a similar French-language site devoted to considering toponyms from a political point of view;

- Toponymio (2022), Bulgarian website offering an extensive range of toponymic publications, including articles on the geographical names of the American Indians and the description of the 1939 map of Lithuania.

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With the advent of electronic systems, such as Google Maps, Apple Maps, Yandex Maps, Bing Maps and the like, toponymic research has acquired a new character. Research at the level of microtoponymy has become clearer and more detailed. It became possible to see not only the streets, but also urban objects, with a description of the direction of their activities. Currently, the inconvenience in this case lies in the imperfection of electronic maps. In the case of Russian resources, toponyms on the same map are often given in both Russian and English, the same type of Hispanic toponyms can be depicted on the same map with graphic icons (emphasis, tilde) and without them. All this introduces heterogeneity into the corpus of data presented.

2.5. Geographic electronic databases

Such instruments, in our opinion, are a necessary source of information for authors studying particular geographical names. GeoNames geographical database covers all countries and contains more than eleven million place names, information about which can be obtained free of charge. GeoNames is a project of the Swiss company Unxos GmbH. Unfortunately, the resource does not provide data on the etymology of the names, however, it gives other accurate information about a geographical object. It's possible to search both within a certain country and around the world, one just needs to indicate the required settings in the corresponding window. So, upon requesting *Toledo*, for example, the search engine returned 2,828 objects at the macro- and microtoponymic level around the globe. At the same time, each line contains information about the country and region of the object, exact coordinates (latitude, longitude, altitude, population, postal code) and its class (administrative division of the first / second / third order, airport, railway station, hill, etc.).

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In 2013-2014 an additional 35,000 records of historical names were added to GeoNames (Aucott & Southall, 2019). Thus, the resource is very convenient, especially for identifying metonymic chains. It is important to note the fact that, just like on Wikipedia, entries in GeoNames can be edited and corrected, and new names can be added by users.

Regarding Western Sahara, the GeoNames electronic system produces a corpus of 2,280 toponymic units. From this corpus, using the continuous sampling method, we were able to identify 132 toponyms containing Spanish components, which is 5.79% of the total amount. For comparison: in Equatorial Guinea, where the Spanish toponymic heritage is just as strong and multifaceted, this number corresponds to 11% (Martynenko, 2021, p. 37).

At the same time, it is necessary to emphasise that the traditional etymological analysis presented is directed to the past: what, when, and how became a toponym; historical analysis reveals the path of a word from a noun to a proper name, and within proper names from one type to another.

The main purpose of this article is to conduct a linguo-historical analysis of the Hispanic place names of Western Sahara, and to offer its typology, which is important both theoretically and practically for the study of Romance philology, applied linguistics and foreign language teaching.

In the toponymic research of any region in terms of synchrony, the paramount aspects are linguistic and chronological stratigraphy, territorial distribution and the scale of toponymic features, as well as identification of a structural models complex that determines its organisation (Chloupek, 2018). A typology of place names is a flexible and developing entity (Blair & Tent, 2021; Iaroshenko, 2021) and the main questions are the primary motivation, the intention of the naming, and its linguistic expression (Blair & Tent, 2021, p. 34).

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3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Western Sahara is a disputed territory on the north-west coast of Africa and in the Maghreb region to the north and beyond. About 20% of the territory is claimed by the self-proclaimed Sahrawi (transliterated into Spanish as 'Saharawi' or French as 'Sahraoui'), Arab Democratic Republic, while the remaining 80% of the territory is considered occupied and administered by neighbouring Morocco. It is one of the most sparsely populated areas in the world, consisting mainly of desert plains and extremely rich in minerals and fish.

Arabic is currently the most widely spoken language of Western Sahara. Its inhabitants speak, like the population of neighbouring Mauritania, a special dialect, *Hassānīya* (Qasmiyeh & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020).

In Africa during the 14th and 16th centuries Spain captured the Canary Islands (1478) and the cities of Melilla (1492), Mazalukwir, Oran (1509), Algiers (1510), Bejaia (1510), Tripoli (1511 to 1551), and Tunis (1535 to 1569). In 1580-1640 the Spanish colonial empire also included Portuguese colonies: Tangiers, Guinea, Angola, Mozambique, and the Cape Verde Islands. In 1668 Portugal ceded to Spain the city of Ceuta on the Moroccan coast.

By the beginning of the 20th century, however, Spain owned much less territory in Africa: Spanish Guinea, Spanish Sahara, and Spanish Morocco. Spain left Morocco in 1956 and granted independence to Equatorial Guinea in 1968. When Spain left the Spanish Sahara in 1976, the colony was immediately annexed by Morocco and Mauritania, and then in 1980 by Morocco entirely, although technically the territory remained under the control of the Spanish administration by UN decision. Today in Africa the Spanish flag is flying only over the Canary Islands and two enclaves on the North African coast, Ceuta and Melilla, which are administratively part of Spain.

European expansion in the territory of Western Sahara began in the 15th century, when the Portuguese created their strongholds on its coast, mainly for the ex-

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port of black slaves and gold. From the beginning of the 16th century, the Spaniards began trying to establish themselves in the country. Spain's initial interest in the Sahara was centred on using it as a port for the slave trade. However, by the 1700s Spain had refocused economic activity on the Saharan coast towards commercial fishing (Besenyő, 2009, p. 49). Precisely at that time, the Spaniards began the colonisation of the region, attracted by the opportunity to control the trade in gold, salt, and slaves, as well as local fish resources throughout Western Sahara (Vizcaya, 2019).

The Spanish protectorate over the coastal part was officially established only by the decision of the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. Spain pursued a number of goals, one of which was to protect its owners in the Canary Islands from the raids of African peoples (Porges, 2019). The detachment of Emilio Bonelli took up the settlement of *Villa Cisneros* (now *Dahkla*, founded by the Spaniards in 1502 but abandoned by the end of the 19th century, where the Spaniards erected a fortress as a base for further advance deep into the mainland. This initial garrison had only 25 soldiers, who, due to the hot climate, were replaced once every three months, when a ship arrived from the Canary Islands. Bonelli had lived in Morocco for more than six years. He spoke Arabic fluently and was the leader of communications with the Western tribes. The captain made a proposal to the Spanish government to establish additional coastal strongholds (*Angra de Sintra*, *Cabo Blanco* and *Río de Oro*) (San Martín, 2010).

The borders of *Río de Oro* were defined by the Treaty between France and Spain of 1900. According to the Treaties between France and Spain of 1904 and 1912, Spain joined the *Río de Oro* territories to the north of the *Cabo Bojador* (now *Cape Boujdour*): *Saguia el-Hamra* and the southern part of Morocco (the so-called Spanish Morocco). Spain completed the capture

of the Western Sahara territory only by 1934. After 1939 and the outbreak of World War II, this area was under the control of Spanish Morocco.

In the mid-1930s, under pressure from the French, dissatisfied with the raids of the Sahrawi tribes on the French possessions, the Spaniards took control of the interior of the Sahara, establishing a series of forts with permanent garrisons. In 1940, in a convenient valley 25 kilometres from the ocean, the city of *El Aaiún* (*Laayoune*) was founded, which became the administrative centre of the Spanish Sahara.

In 1946, Ifni and the Sahara were united as a single colony – the Spanish West Africa. In the Sahara itself, there were not more than 100,000 people, but in Ifni nearly 50,000 citizens lived, one-fifth of whom were Spanish colonists.

The colony received income only from fishing, but not even a tenth of it covered the colony's expenses. The situation began to change only after World War II. In the late 1940s, Spanish geologist Manuel Alia Medina discovered the first phosphate deposits in Bu Kra. Saharan phosphate was characterised by a high degree of enrichment (up to 85%), which made its development commercially viable.

In March 1956, France granted independence to its part of Morocco. Following this, Spain also gave up its protectorate over Spanish Morocco. But it did not intend to give up power over the part of its colonial possessions that were not part of the protectorate. The Moroccans, on the other hand, considered Ifni and the Spanish Sahara (as well as Ceuta and Melilla) as original Moroccan lands taken over by the colonisers. This led to the Ifni War.

After the independence of Morocco in 1956, its government announced its claim to Western Sahara. In 1958, Spain agreed to the reunification of Spanish Morocco with the Kingdom of Morocco. In December 1965, the UN General Assembly called on the government of Spain to immediately take measures for the decolonisation of the territory and the organisation of a referendum under the control of the UN with the aim of providing for the population of Western Sahara the necessary conditions for their self-determination (Camprubí, 2015).

In 1974, Spain agreed to hold a referendum on the fate of Western Sahara, which was opposed by Morocco and Mauritius, considering themselves historically and ethnically connected with this territory. By decision of the UN General Assembly, the issue was referred to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

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In October 1975, the International Court of Justice recognised that by the time the Spaniards appeared in Western Sahara, it was not 'anyone's territory' (*terra nullius*), and confirmed the existence of historical, geographic and ethnic ties of local tribes both with Morocco and with the tribes of Mauritania (Zunes & Mundy, 2022). Morocco eventually secured *de facto* control over most of the territory, including all major cities and natural resources. Meanwhile, in Spain there is a powerful movement of solidarity with the opposition *Polisario Front*, and pro-Saharan sentiments are predominant in society. Thus, 10,000 Saharan children spend their summers with Spanish families every year. The Spanish public is showing solidarity with its former colony, which is expressed in significant humanitarian assistance provided to refugee camps (Cherkasova, 2012, p. 38). Now-adays, according to the Cervantes Institute annual survey, there are 22,000 Spanish-speaking residents in Western Sahara (Fernández Vítóres, 2020).

4. STUDY AND RESULTS

The geographical position and climate of the country dictate their conditions for geonominations on its territory. So, *wadi* (also *wādī*, *wād* or *Oued*) is the Arabic lexeme for 'river', but it also means the 'river valley' and in general any elongated deepening of the soil, which turns into a stream during the rainy season. The Arabic word for 'river' – *Wadi* or *Wad* – passed into Spanish language as *Gwadi* or *Gwad*, where the names of many Spanish rivers come from (e.g., *Guadalquivir*, from the Moorish name of the river *Al-wādī l-kabīr* 'Great River', *Guadiana*, *Guadalete*, *Guadarrama*, *Guadalajara*, etc.). In general, *Wadi* is an integral part of the names of many rivers, valleys, countries and localities, for example, *Wadi Muza* town (Valley of Moses) in southern Jordan. As a common noun, this lexeme used to refer to river valleys of temporary or periodic water flows, filled, for example, during heavy rains. In Western Sahara, a number of *wadis* are called in Spanish: *Canal Central*, *Punta Blanca*, *Punta del Estante*.

Also, due to the climatic conditions of the country, one of the toponymic classes is a *waterhole*. This is a water source in the desert, a natural depression in the ground in which water can collect. In Western Sahara, waterholes have names, and one of them is Spanish: *Canal de La Hoja Llamera*.

In the desert, water is worth its weight in gold, which is why, we suppose, the toponymy of this territory linguistically reflects much respect for its smallest sources and traditions of use. Since Western Sahara is washed by the Atlantic Ocean, *anchorage*s are not uncommon in the country. They also have names, such as *Güera*, *El Monito*, *Fondeadero de La Monja*, *Fondeadero del Médano de Santiago*. It's worth mentioning that '*fondeadero*' literally means 'anchorage' in Spanish.

In Western Sahara, even the dunes have names. The dunes nominated in Spanish are *Boca de Jarro*, *Falso Cabo Blanco*, *La Mancha Blanca*, *Las Ballenas*, *Las Matillas*, *Médano de Santiago* (*médano* means 'dunes' in Spanish).

The Hispanic toponymy of Western Sahara is very special from linguistic and cultural points of view. Its originality is manifested, along with toponymic classes that are unusual for the embodiment of Spanish place names, in basic topoformants that are different from Spanish geonaming traditions in other parts of the world. In Western Sahara we have identified several distinctive features of the Spanish toponymic vocabulary.

1. The use of the *Bajo* 'low' formant not as an adjective, but as a noun in the meaning of 'shallow water, spit': *Bajo Ahogado*, *Bajo Aprieta Primo*, *Bajo Arcila*, *Bajo de El Carenero*, *Bajo de La Galeota Grande*, *Bajo de La Pared*, *Bajo del Marrajo Chico*, *Bajo del Marrajo Grande*, *Bajo del Medio Golfo*, *Bajo del Puertito*, *Bajo El Tortugo*.

2. The use of the *Morro* formant (Spanish for 'knob', 'hill', 'impudence') in the meaning of 'cape' for the ends of the land: *Morro Ancla Sur*, *Morro de San Pedro*, *Morro del Ancla Chica*, *Morro del Ancla*, *Morro Falcon*. It should be noted that the Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, among other meanings of the word, defines the lexical unit *morro* as '*a steep promontory or cliff that seafarers can use as a landmark*' (Diccionario de la Lengua Española, 2022). In addition, Litvin (1983a) in the Dictionary of Toponymic Vocabulary of Latin America, among others, also indicates the meaning of '*high cape*' (Litvin, 1983, p. 138).

3. Frequent discrepancy between the nominated object and the semantic core of the toponym used. This trend turned out to be characteristic not only for some countries of Latin America, but also for Western Sahara: the shipping channels *Bajo de El Carenero*, *Bajo de El Tablero*, *Bajo del Centollo* (*bajo* is Spanish for 'shallow water, spit'); the dunes of *Boca de Jarro*, the rocks of *Boca de la Aguada*, *Boca de Sotavento* (*boca* is Spanish for 'mouth'); wadi *Punta Blanca* (*punta* is Spanish for 'cape'), *Río de Oro* bay (*río* is Spanish for 'river').

4. Non-contraction of the *de* preposition with the masculine definite article in some nominations: *Bajo de El Carenero*, *Bajo de El Tablero*, *Ensenada de el Puertito*, *Punta de El Aargub*.

5. Frequent use of the Spanish diminutive suffixes *-ito*, *-illa*: *Bajo del Puertito*, *El Camellito*, *Ensenada de el Puertito*, *Las Cuevecillas*.

Among the Hispanic place names of Western Sahara, except for the dunes of *Médano de Santiago* and the anchorage of *Fondeadero del Médano de Santiago*, we did not find the names with religious allusions, or the nominations by the names of saints, indications of Catholic holidays, names of missionaries which are very typical for Spanish geographical naming in the New World.

However, we conclude that the reference topoforment *Arciprés* is a transformed unit from *Arcipreste* (Spanish for 'archpriest'), since the lexeme orthographic form *Arciprés* does not occur in any other language. Thus, capes *Arciprés Chico*, *Arciprés Grande* and lighthouse *Arciprés Grande Light* stand out on the map of Western Sahara.

The hybrid toponymy of Western Sahara with Spanish components consists of names supplemented with formants from Arabic (Wadi *Punta Bu Talha*, shore *Las Matas de Alí*, cape *Punta de El Aargub*), English (lighthouses *Cabo Barbas Light*, *Cabo Peña Grande Light*, *El Cabino Light*, cape *Punta Durnford*) and Portuguese (bay *Cabo Corveiro*, mount *Hierro Gorrei*, cape *Morro de Gorrei*) languages, which illustrates the linguistic affiliation of the conquerors of the region.

Among the toponymic hybrids with components from other languages, we find the *Playa de Pikín* beach and the springs of *Pozo Auhafrit*, *Pozo Boxibia*, *Pozo Bu Guffa*, *Pozo Laiafa*, *Pozo Yelua*.

On the map of Western Sahara, we found a small layer of English place names. Historically, there was no political presence of the United States and Great Britain in the country, so the circumstances of the origin of these units have yet to be clarified. However, already

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now, along with Spanish-English hybrid place names, one can note the English names of *Virginia Rock Island*, *Sugarloaf Hill*, *Sahara Line Hotel* and *Garnet Bay*.

More recently, in the 20th century, Spanish troops carried out a number of punitive operations against the Saharan tribes. The armed struggle of the indigenous inhabitants of Western Sahara did not stop. Many tribes remained unconquered throughout the entire colonial period (Drury, 2018). However, despite the change in the winning language in the country's toponymy and the rejection of Spanish culture at all levels, including the toponymic one, Spanish orthographic norms in the studied toponymic units (stress marks, endings, tildes and other Spanish lexicographic features) are present in 90% of cases.

5. DISCUSSION

We are not sure about the naming language of the two bays of *Angra del Caballo*. From the morphological, and semantic points of view, the nomination *Angra del Caballo* (Spanish for 'bay of horse') definitely has a Spanish origin. However, the presence of the bay of *Angra de Cintra* strengthens our confidence in the Portuguese origin of the toponym, since *Sintra* is a city in Portugal, and it was the Portuguese who were the first Europeans to land on the shores of Western Sahara.

Geonames of Western Sahara containing the *El* article (*El Fersig*, *El Gaada*, *El Medna*, *El Aatf*, etc.) can be mistaken for Spanish-Arabic hybrid or blended toponyms. However, *El* is the Arabic romanised definite article *Al*. Thus, such nominations hardly have something to do with the Arabic language and the Spanish toponymic heritage.

The units *Güera* ('anchorage') and *Punta Güera* ('depression') attract attention with their unusual spelling. The conclusion suggests the presence of Mexican-

Spanish colloquial vocabulary for a fair-haired girl. *Güera* is a Mexicanism that is also used by the US Chicanos (the Hispanic population of the Southwestern United States who settled these lands in the 16th and 19th centuries during the period of Spanish colonisation). The name *La Güera* actually comes from the Spanish word *Agüera*, which means a ditch through which rainwater enters the crops. Note the presence of the ghost town of *La Güera* at the southern tip of Western Sahara. It is the southernmost city of the country, located south of the Moroccan Wall and technically abandoned.

The extended Russian Encyclopaedia (2022) points out that the city of *Río de Oro* (Spanish for 'golden river') was founded by the Portuguese in the 15th century. Our study results concur with the time of the foundation of the settlement. However, we support the idea of the Spanish etymology of the nomination, since the 'golden river' in Portuguese is graphically distinguished by one letter in each noun: *Río de Oro* vs *Río de Ouro*.

6. CONCLUSION

The structural and grammatical analysis of modern heterogeneous Hispanic toponymy in Western Sahara has made it possible to identify not only the most viable and productive models and toponym-forming means on the scale of the entire language system, but also rare forms of Spanish place names and hybrid toponyms.

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Stratigraphic and typological analysis of the Spanish layer in the toponymic system of Western Sahara shows the presence of diverse Spanish lexemes describing local geographic features. Spanish elements in Western Sahara's context manifest culturally the bond in the use of lexemes *bajo*, *morro*, and the discrepancy between the named place and the semantic core of the primary meaning of the toponym, the abundance of diminutive suffixes, proper rather for Latin American communicative strategies and linguistic world view, and special patterns for Spanish-Arabic blended place names.

The diverse Hispanic layer in the context of Western Sahara's toponymy is a reflection of the country's contradictory colonial past.

The results of lexical analysis are noteworthy: the transparency of the semantics of Hispanic place names makes it possible to trace the very process of the emergence and formation of names, their motivation, that is, the socio-psychological patterns of the nomination process.

The research into the linguacultural specifics of Hispanic place names in Western Sahara is significant for international relations between the Spanish-speaking and Arabic-speaking business partners, as well as for comprehension of the existing forms of Spanish, it being a semiotic and communicative system, and teaching Spanish language and culture.

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