

RETHINKING *BEZDÓNĖ*, *DARĪNĖ*, AND *İLMA*: CHALLENGING CURRENT ETYMOLOGIES, UNCOVERING COGNITIVE MOTIVATIONS

Naujas žvilgsnis į vietovardžius *Bezdonė*, *Darinė* ir *İlma*: esamų etimologijų
kvestionavimas, kognityvinių motyvų atskleidimas

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ABSTRACT

The article traces the historical development of Lithuanian onomastic studies, highlighting the importance of balancing tradition and innovation in the field. In Lithuania, onomastic studies traditionally adhered to the approach emphasising the etymological and derivational analysis of proper names, which was later expanded with fundamental works on the structural-grammatical and semantic classification of hydronyms. Currently, a new wave of onomasticians seeks to depart from traditional methods, exploring toponyms within the framework of Cognitive Semantics. Taking one potamonym, oikonym, and limnonym currently officially functioning within the borders of Vilnius County, this paper, using a multidisciplinary approach integrating linguistic analysis, historical research, and cultural studies, aims to illustrate how blending traditional and innovative approaches clarifies established etymologies and explains the origins, motivations, and meanings behind toponyms.

KEYWORDS: Lithuanian onomastics, Cognitive onomastics, Vilnius County toponymy, toponym semantics, oikonym, potamonym, limnonym, *Bezdonė*, *Darinė*, *İlma*.

ANOTACIJA

Straipsnyje aptariama istorinė lietuvių onomastikos raida, pabrėžiant tradicijos ir inovacijos pusiausvyros svarbą šioje srityje. Lietuvoje onomastika tradiciškai laikėsi požiūrio, pabrėžiančio tikrinių žodžių etimologinę ir darybinę analizę, kuri vėliau buvo plėtojama fundamentiniuose hidronimijai skirtuose darbuose kuriant jų struktūrinę-gramatinę ir semantinę klasifikacijas. Dabartinė onomastų karta tolsta nuo tradicinių metodų tyrinėdama toponimus kognityvinės semantikos rėmuose. Šiame straipsnyje, remiantis Vilniaus apskrityje šiuo metu oficialiai funkcionuojančiais potamonimo, oikonimo ir limnonimo pavyzdžiais, taikant tarpsritinį požiūrį, integruojantį lingvistinę analizę, istorinius tyrimus ir kultūrinius, siekiama parodyti, kaip tradicinių ir novatoriškų metodų derinimas paaiškina žinomas etimologijas ir vietovardžių kilmę, motyvaciją ir reikšmes.

ESMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: lietuvių onomastika, kognityvinė onomastika, Vilniaus apskrities toponimika, toponimų semantika, oikonimas, potamonimas, limnonimas, *Bezdonė*, *Darinė*, *İlma*.

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Introduction

The etymologies of officially used toponyms in Vilnius County, as examined in scholarly literature and lexicographic sources, often include interpretations that merit scepticism, particularly in today's digital age, when access to diverse data sources, maps, and archives has significantly expanded. The current **research aims** to question, revise, and clarify previously accepted etymologies by combining extralinguistic evidence (geographical and historical context) with in-depth linguistic analysis. The study highlights the evolving nature of toponomastics and emphasises the need for continuous reassessment. By linking traditional and modern approaches, this multidisciplinary investigation reveals deeper insights into the motivation and semantics of three selected toponyms (a potamonym, a limnonym, and an oikonym), the origins of which appear problematic in light of newly available data.

Research Methodology and Sources. The investigation relies on the factual data gathered from multiple sources (see Toponym Sources, Lexicographic Sources, and References). These materials form the foundation of the research, complementing one another and aiding the development of robust etymological and motivational interpretations of toponyms. The etymological, derivational, motivational, and semantic analyses of toponyms are grounded in the integration of both traditional and Cognitive Onomastics theoretical principles and methodologies established by scholars from Lithuania and abroad (see Section 1). The etymological analysis is based on the works of Kazimieras Būga (1961), Aleksandras Vanagas (1970; 1981), and others; the *Dictionary of Lithuanian Place Names* (LVŽ); and Lithuanian, Belarusian, Russian, and Polish (e-)dictionaries. The composition analysis of toponyms is based on, but not limited to, the hydronyms' structural-grammatical classification proposed by A. Vanagas (1970). As the research adheres to the principles of Cognitive Onomastics, we maintain that all onyms have meaning. We will further explore the idea that toponyms resulted from linguistic activities, originally held clear meanings, and were readily associated with their root lexical elements. In this paper, the selected toponyms are analysed both synchronically and diachronically¹.

In line with prior Lithuanian regional toponymic studies, this paper presents toponyms that adhere to the established criteria for presenting toponymic material in Lithuanian onomastics. Each toponym is provided with a reference to its geographical location, an explanation of its origin, a proposed hypothetical etymon, and its meaning. Only the currently officially functioning forms of the examined toponyms are highlighted visually in italics and boldface.

1. Lithuanian Onomastics from Tradition to Modernity: A Brief Overview

Place names play a significant and distinctive role in language, conveying information about landscapes, terrain features, flora, fauna, people, and more in a given area. They also provide insights into historical and cultural aspects, including social phenomena. The study of the grammatical function and semantic properties of proper names has been a topic of scientific research since ancient times, with various onomastic schools worldwide pursuing different research directions. Despite this, there is no unified theory of proper names. Historically, traditional onomastic research has concentrated on the etymology, linguistic elements, and historical context of proper names, occasionally extending its scope to the analysis of their semantic aspects: “<...> onomastics traditionally has largely focused on the etymology and typology of names” (Ainiala, Östman, eds., 2017: 3). It was not until 1990 that substantial efforts were made to investigate proper names within the multidisciplinary framework of Cognitive Linguistics. Ernst Hansack (1990) was the first to apply the results of cognitive science to proper names in his book *Bedeutung, Begriff, Name* (En: *Meaning, Concept, Name*). Thomas Hobbes' treatise *Of Names* (2002 [1655]), in which

¹ For a detailed description of our research methodology, see Pavel Skorupa (2021a: 259–260; 2023: 35–47).

he posits that names, as linguistic signs, evoke thoughts in both the speaker and the addressee, is considered the forerunner of the modern cognitive approach to proper name studies. Since E. Hansack's pioneering work in the field of Cognitive Onomastics, significant attention has been devoted to the meaning and conceptualization of proper names (see Coates 2006; 2012; 2015; 2016; Langendonck 2007; Karpenko, Golubenko 2015; Ainiala et al. 2016; etc.); the issues of name categorization and prototyping (see Sjöblom 2006; Bölcskei 2014; etc.); the problem of the origin, identity, and cultural-social motivation of names (see Brendler 2012; Brendler, ed., 2016; Slíz 2017; etc.); the issue of conceptual metaphors and metonymy in Onomastics (see Dobrić 2010; Reszegi 2012a; 2022b; 2022c; 2023; Aunga 2018; etc.).

In Lithuania, onomastic studies traditionally followed the approach to proper names established by K. Būga, specifically the "Comparative potamology" method, which he introduced in 1923 (Būga 1961: 510) and the toponymy comparative method referred to as "Comparative studies of land names", introduced in 1924 (ibid.: 736). Both methods involve comparing hydronyms with names of other rivers and lakes, or other toponyms with similar ones, whether within or outside Lithuanian borders. These studies primarily focused on the etymological and derivational analysis of proper names.

A more recent shift toward exploring the semantics and motivation of proper names emerged with A. Vanagas' *Structural-Grammatical Classification of Hydronyms* (1970) and the *Semantic Classification of Hydronyms* (1981). Dalia Sviderskienė (2006; 2016; 2017; 2019; 2022; 2024) applied these classifications in studies of Lithuanian regional toponymy and developed a transparent and obscure motivation classification model for local toponymy. A modern perspective on Lithuanian onomastic studies was introduced by D. Svidersnienė's works, which delve into the etymology and motivation of micro-toponyms. Additionally, the establishment of Prof. Grasilda Blažienė's onomastic school and her students' efforts mark a departure from traditional approaches. They explore toponyms within the framework of Cognitive Semantics, combining it with a traditional perspective on the etymology, motivation, and meaning of proper names².

Scholarly investigations into the Lithuanian onomasticon frequently demonstrate disparities between studies grounded in traditional methodologies and those conducted within the framework of modern theories of Cognitive Onomastics. As a result, the application of new research principles to the analysis of earlier works makes it possible to notice inherent inaccuracies in the previously carried out etymologies of toponyms.

2. Questioning the Credibility of Lexicographical Sources: Investigating the Origins of the Potamonym *Bezdonė*

When researching Lithuanian toponymy, particularly scrutinising the etymology and motivation of place names, the analysis often relies not only on contemporary records found in official documents and maps but also on archival materials such as the VK – the Catalogue of Lithuanian Place Names Written from the Spoken Language. Additionally, the researchers draw on scholarly works and lexicographic sources, such as the LVŽ. Those familiar with the dictionary will find it unsurprising that VK is its sole source of toponyms. But not all toponyms from the VK find their way into the LVŽ. The rationale behind this exclusion remains somewhat opaque. Among such toponyms is the potamonym *Bezdonė*³,

² For a more comprehensive overview of the development of Lithuanian onomastics, from its inception to the current state of the art, see P. Skorupa (2025).

³ Each analysed potamonym is accompanied by information on its geographical location, proposed etymology, and an explanation of its origin and motivation. For ease of reference, analysed potamonyms are presented in italics and marked with stress whenever possible. At their first mention, they are additionally highlighted in bold. Historical forms and other toponyms cited for comparative or explanatory purposes are given in italics only and retain stress marks where these are provided in the original sources. In subsequent references, analy-

which names an 8.6 km long tributary of the *Vilnia* (*Bezdonys* eld, V D). Originating in the marshy meadows between *Paskynai* and *Rokantiškės* forests, the stream meanders into the swampy *Bezdonys* fishing pond and through *Bezdonys* forests. It retains its primaeval valley, which is full of sloughs, ditches, fallen trees, and natural dams along its course.

Several historical forms of this potamonym are known, cf. the VK records (hereinafter, our translation and explanations of entries in other languages will be given in brackets): *Bezdánka* up. į Nerį [*Bezdánka* stream into the Neris]; 1965 *Bezdanaliésia* žečka į *Bezdaną* [the *Bezdanaliésia* stream into the *Bezdaną*]. *Bezdóné* is also mentioned in other historical materials, cf.: 1604, 1609, 1730, 1782 <...> село над р. *Безданкою* [<...> village upon the river *Bezdaną*: над р. *Безданкою* – the locative case ← the nominative case *Безданка*] (GU 15); 1811 <...> nad rzeczką *Bezdaną* [<...> upon the *Bezdaną* stream] (NKPRS 34). It is obvious from these records that the forms of the potamonym are Slavic. According to Vykintas Vaitkevičius, the stream was earlier called the *Juodupis*: “z *Bezdan* – *Jodupis*, 1784 m., TVD 382” [from *Bezdaną* [Pol form] – the *Juodupis* <...>] (Vaitkevičius 2012: 111). Whereas Jonas Jurkštas (1985: 19) claims that both the potamonym *Bezdóné* and the oikonym *Bezdonys* are not authentic, the genuine form of *Bezdonys* could have been **Bedugniai*, derived from a similar hydronym. J. Jurkštas posits that in the 1516 source, the potamonym is written as *Besdenayta*, *Besdanayta*, and *Besdonayta* (ibid.), but gives no reference to the mentioned document in his work. The document, more precisely, a copy of the privilege prepared in 1775 based on the original dating back to 1516, is archived in the funds of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. The privilege was granted by King Sigismund I the Old (Pol Król Zygmunt I Stary) in 1516, following the feast of All Saints and delineates the boundaries of the *Bezdonys* (Pol *Bezdaną*) estate (cf. VKF). In this document, the potamonym *Bezdanayta* is mentioned several times. At this point, it is necessary to correct J. Jurkštas’ reading of this potamonym, as it consistently appears as *Bezdanayta* throughout the text, rather than variations such as *Besdenayta*, *Besdanayta*, or *Besdonayta* cited in J. Jurkštas (ibid.). This is evident when comparing the instances in the document, cf. (our translation from Polish is given in brackets):

*Granica Dobr przereczonych Wsi Bezdán początek swój miec ma od granic i Rol czterech poddanych naszych Łuczniiki nazwanych rozciągając prawdziwą granicę Rzeką Bezdánayta nazwaną, i tyj Rzeki obadwa brzegi granicom wsi Bezdán przytączyć In korporuić. [The borders of the estate granted to the Village of *Bezdaną* shall have their beginning from the borders and Ploughlands of our four subjects named Łuczniiki, extending the true border with the river called *Bezdanayta*, and both banks of that River shall be incorporated within the borders of *Bezdaną* village.]*

*Przytączyć także do tej wsi ziemię i rolę, która graniczy z gruntami wsi Punżam zatąż Rzeką Bezdánaytą i między tąż wielką Rzeką Wilią leżącą do wsi Bezdán z dawna przynależącą. [We should also annex to this village the land and ploughland that borders with the lands of the village of *Punżam* across that River *Bezdanayta* and between that great River *Wilia*, which lies towards village *Bezdaną* and has long belonged to it.]*

*Postępując wyżej tąż Rzeką Bezdánaytą aż do tego miejsca wnią druga Rzeka Trynkucifzka nazwana wpada <...> [Moving up along that River *Bezdanayta* up to this place, where the second River called *Trynkucifzka* flows into <...>]*

sed potamonyms continue to be presented in italics and marked with stress, but are no longer highlighted in bold.

*Daley kontynuując granicę też Rzeką Bezdanytą aż do Drogi. Która z miasta Użlan[?] przez wieś Bezdany ku wsi Pundziany idzie <...> [Continuing the border further along the river *Bezdanyta* up to the Road. Which goes from the town of *Użlan*[?] through the village of *Bezdany* to the village of *Pundziany* <...>]*

The potamonym forms found in this document exhibit a Suf *-ayta*, resembling the Lith Suf *-aitė*. Drawing on this similarity, J. Jurkštas (1985: 19) concludes that the potamonym is of Lithuanian origin and reconstructs its authentic form to **Bedugnaitė*, derived from the hydronym (be it lake or swamp) **Bedugnis* or **Bedugnė*. This etymology is potentially linked to Lith *bedūgnė* ‘great depth’ (LKŽ_e). This version of the hydronym’s origin also seems to be approved in the LVŽ, in which the origins of the related oikonym *Bezdonys*, which names the town on the *Bezdonė*, are interpreted as an allusion to the historical toponymy (cf. LVŽ I 466).

Such interpretations regarding the origin of both the potamonym and the associated oikonym are highly questionable for several reasons. Firstly, the available historical sources indicate the Slavic form of *Bezdonė*, recorded in Polish and Russian as *Bezdanika* and *Безданка*, respectively (see above), and the oldest available form is *Bezdanyta* with apparently a Slavic root *Bezdan-* and probably Lith Suf *-ayta* (→ *-aitė*). Therefore, it remains highly dubious to restore the authentic form of the potamonym to **Bedugnaitė* solely on the basis of the suffix. We believe this suffix merely indicates significant language contact, resulting in a hybridised form of the toponym that integrates a Slavic root with a Lithuanian suffix (for more cases of hybrid toponyms in Vilnius County, see Skorupa 2021c). Secondly, and most importantly, there are no records of a lake or swamp named **Bedugnis* or **Bedugnė* in the vicinity of *Bezdonys*, neither historically nor contemporarily. Such names have not been documented in any of the available sources accessible to us. The only record of a marshy area in the vicinity comes from the VK: 1965 *Bezdański roist* raistas, miškas, *Bezdonys* [*Bezdański roist* [Pol] marsh, forest, *Bezdonys*]. However, the exact location of this marshy forest is not known. Thirdly, the historical data concerning the town of *Bezdonys* (*Bezdonys* eld, V D) and this oikonym’s historical forms suggest its origins to be if not Lithuanian, then Slavicized, i.e., likely adopted by the Slavs (Poles, Belarussians, or Russians) residing in the settlement and its environs, cf.: 1744 *Bezdany* (SDV 40); 1775 *wsi Bezdanych* [in *Bezdany* village] (VVDL 35); R1872 *Безданы*; 1784 *Bezdany* (VS95 44); 1795 *Bezdany* (VAPRS 27v); 1804 *Безданы* (SŽ 43v); 1811 *Bezdany* (VAPRS 246); 1873 *Безданы* (SVg 35); 1874 *Безданы* (ibid.: 48); 1880 *Bezdany* (SGKP I 162); 1887 *Bezdany* (SGKP VIII 410); 1895 *Безданы* (KKg); *Бездануы ст.* [station], *Бездануы, д.* [village] (VG 1905: 58); 1917–1918 *Bezdany* (AO 14); 1932 *Bezdany* (SAV 476), 1974 *Bezdonys* (SV 728). The indication that the population of the vicinity has not always been predominantly Lithuanian is further supported by a remark found in one of the VK entries, which suggests that Lithuanians settled in the area relatively recently, cf.: 1965 *Bezdańy mstl ~ Bezdonys, Bezdonių, į Bezdonis* (kaip taria atsikėlę čia gyventi lietuviai) [*Bezdańy* town ~ *Bezdonys, Bezdonių, į Bezdonis* [the nominative, genitive, and accusative forms, respectively] (as the Lithuanians who moved here say)]. Fourthly, the potamonym’s form written in the historical sources can be compared with the name recorded in the VK: 1982 *Bezdanà*, akis miške (gili vieta) – Alytaus raj., *Obelnykėlių k.* [*Bezdanà*, pool in the forest (deep place) – Alytus District, *Obelnykėliai* village]. The Suf *-ka* is probably Slavic, although the potamonym is accented in the Lithuanian manner, at the end. This stress pattern is typical in this region when the accent is placed on the final syllable, making the potamonym sound Lithuanian. In the LVŽ (I 466), this name is related to Bel *бяздонне* ‘depth, pit, morass’, Pol *bezdeny* ‘bottomless’, etc.

Considering the above, the potamonym *Bezdonė* is most probably a Lith inflexion *-ė* derivative from Rus *бездонный* ‘bottomless; extremely deep’ (cf. Rus *бездна* ‘abyss’) (SRYA_e) or Pol *bezdeny* ‘bottomless’, *bezdeń* ‘whirlpool: a rapidly rotating mass of water in

a river into which objects may be drawn' (PSPR 34). But regarding its historical forms *Bezdana* and *Безданка*, it is most likely a derivative from Bel *бездань*, *бяздонне* 'abyss, deep place' (SBG I 180; Skarnik.by). Hence, it is plausible to suggest that the potamonym *Bezdoné* exemplifies the metonymic naming model DEPTH FOR RIVER, where a distinct characteristic of the riverbed (its depth or perceived bottomlessness) is used to name the entire watercourse. In this case, the concept of an "abyss" or "deep place" serves as the defining feature that motivates the hydronym: Bel *бяздонне* (depth, pit, morass) → a deep stream → *Bezdoné*. This name may have been motivated by associations with depths or abysses, as evidenced by Pol *bezdeny* and Bel *бяздонне*. The older forms of the name directly reflect this etymological lineage, suggesting continuity in the association of the stream with a notable feature of its riverbed. The stream's name may have been reinforced by local lore, where the stream is described as "bottomless" in certain places. This belief could stem from its deep, marshy stretches or its dark and seemingly impenetrable waters in swampy areas, as the stream's course is characterised by sloughs, ditches, and natural dams, all of which contribute to the perception of depth.

The absence of this potamonym from the LVŽ, despite its presence in the VK, may reflect editorial decisions or selection criteria that were not made explicit. Possible factors include the form in which the name was recorded or the absence of the current official version in the VK. Similar discrepancies between the VK and LVŽ indicate that not all documented place names were included in the dictionary.

3. Exploring the Underexplored: Towards the Origins of the Oikonym

Darìnė

One of many toponyms that, in our assessment, has not received adequate attention, has not been thoroughly researched, and has not been properly etymologised is the oikonym *Darìnė*. This oikonym designates two former settlements within Švenčionys District: *Darìnė* (steading, *Švenčionys* eld) and *Darìnė* (steading, *Pabradė* eld). Despite this, in the LVŽ, these names are presented without differentiation, although there are several entries for both settlements in the VK. In addition, in the LVŽ, these two oikonyms are presented alongside other toponyms sharing a common root *dar-*, cf. (our explanations are given in brackets; boldface and italics are from the source):

Darìnė of. [official name] || *Darỳnė* k., vs. [village, steading] Švnč; *Darìniai* plv. [folwark] Pbrd; *Dāriškė* krm., pv., sod. [bushes, meadow, country seat] Jdr; *Dāriškės* gn. [pasture] Jdr; sod. [country seat] Kv; *Dar-ò-polis* dv., vs. [estate, steading] Ldk (LVŽ II 136).

All of these place names, as indicated in the LVŽ entry, are of obscure origin and may be derived from PN *Daras*, *Dārius*; Bel *dap* or Pol *dar* 'gift; donation'; or there is even a possibility to further associate these toponyms with the toponym *Dārai* that is derived from Lith *darýti* 'to produce, to work (on/with a specific object)' (LVŽ II 128, 136). In our view, none of the versions regarding the origin of *Darìnė* presented in the LVŽ can be deemed reliable. Thus, drawing on historical, current linguistic, and extralinguistic data, we refute the etymology of the oikonym *Darìnė* proposed in the LVŽ and advance our interpretation of its origin.

Before delving into the etymology of this oikonym, it would be helpful to provide background on the settlements it designated. *Darìnė* (*Švenčionys* eld) was situated near *Dvarikščiai* forest. Approximately 0.4 km northeast of the former settlement lie swampy areas, while just 0.5 km to the north are lakes *Beržinis* and *Mergežeris*. Between these lakes, there is *Jauros* village, deriving its name from the plural form of Lith *jáura* 'swampy place; wetland', indicating the settlement's proximity to a marshy, wet environment. On the other hand, *Darìnė* (*Pabradė* eld) was located amidst now meliorated fields in the valley of the

Skerdyksna stream. Near this settlement, one finds the *Naujašilis* forest, beyond which lies *Baltasamanė* (*Skeimis*) pelkė (swamp) just 1.9 km to the east. To the southwest, approximately 2 km away, is *Eitūniškės* pelkė on the edge of *Baluoša* forest, while to the northwest, on the edge of *Kulniškės* forest, lies another unnamed swamp (see the maps at GP; UETK). The current maps (GP; UETK) vividly depict the extensive network of melioration channels surrounding this former settlement. By contrast, the historical R1872 map indicates that the present-day meliorated fields in the *Skerdyksna* valley were marshy forests in the second half of the 19th century.

Both settlements were relatively old. Various historical forms of these oikonyms have been documented (our explanations are provided in square brackets). *Darìnė* (*Švenčionys* eld) is recorded as R1872 *Дарубы*; 1932 *Darynia* (SAV 506); 1968 *Darìnė* vs. [steading] – lenk. [Pol] *Darynie* zaśc. [steading] and *Darìnė* k. [village] – lenk. *Darynie* II zaśc. (VK). A related entry dates back to 1669 sianozėc [Pol, mowed field] *Darymes*, *Darymey* (CVIA. SA. 4228b. 3660l., 366l.). *Darìnė* (*Pabradė* eld) is recorded as 1795 *Darym* (ŠPRS 82); R1872 *Подаруны*; 1880 *Darynie* (2.) [two settlements] (SGKP I 907); *Даруня* (VG 1905: 273); 1932 *Darynia* (SAV 510); 1968 *Darỹnė* (lenk. [Pol] *Darynia*) (VK). The oldest form for *Darìnė* (*Švenčionys* eld) is Rus *Дарубы*, which is a transliteration from Lith **Darybos*, related to Lith plural form *darybos* ← *daryba*, further related to Lith *dārymas* ‘swamp, puddle’ (LKŽ_e), which is also reflected in the form 1669 *Darymes* (the authentic form probably was **Darymas*). The same etymon could serve as the basis for the oikonym *Darìnė* (*Pabradė* eld), considering its oldest form, 1795 *Darym* (the authentic form was probably **Darymas*). The examination of both historical and contemporary linguistic and extralinguistic data (including recorded oikonym forms, the environmental characteristics of the named settlements, and the types and names of nearby features) reveals that the oikonym *Darìnė*, with a high degree of likelihood, is a derivative of Lith *dārymas* ‘swamp, puddle’ and denotes two former settlements in or near marshy areas. Thus, it can be argued that this oikonym is likely motivated by a prominent landscape feature in its vicinity, namely, a swamp or marshland, which served as the salient characteristic in the naming process. This corresponds to the metonymic naming model LANDSCAPE FEATURE (OBJECT) FOR SETTLEMENT. The derivation may be reconstructed as Lith *dārymas* (swamp, puddle) + Suf *-inė* → a settlement in the vicinity of a swamp, marshland → *Darìnė*.

4. Challenging Traditional Interpretations of the Etymology of *Īlma* Through a Cognitive Lens

Another case that, in our view, needs clarification regarding its origins and etymology is the toponymic opposition formed by *Īlma Didžióji* (*Pabradė* eld, Švėn D) and *Īlma Mažóji* (0.06 km east of *Īlma Didžióji*). These composite limnonyms may be considered to have unclear origins, resulting in vague semantics and motivation. According to A. Vanagas (1981: 129), the component *Īlma* might be linked to the Lithuanian potamonym *Elmė* or limnonym *Elmis*, both of which are associated with the potamonym *Almė*, deriving from Lith *almėti*, *elmėti* ‘to slowly leak, drip, seep; to slowly flow’ (LKŽ_e). The scholar also suggests that the component *Īlma* may be related to the Lithuanian limnonym *Īlmėdas* and further compares it with Latvian potamonims *Īlmade*, *Īlmāde*, *Īlmede*, *Īlmatu-straits*, oikonyms *Īlmat* and *Īlmete*, and the agronym *Īlmātes*, which, just as the Lithuanian *Īlmėdas*, may be of Finno-Ugric origin (ibid.). It is noteworthy that LVŽ (IV 34) does not question this version of the limnonym’s origin, including the Finno-Ugric one proposed by A. Vanagas. Nevertheless, the proposed origins of the component *Īlma* raise questions.

The derivation of this limnonym from Est *ilm* ‘weather; (poetic) worlds’ or Finn *ilma* ‘air; weather’, both continuing Proto-Finnic **ilma* (← Proto-Uralic **ilma*) that initially conveyed the additional meaning of God (cf. WSD), is open to doubt. Such an interpretation raises questions concerning the emergence of this name in Lithuanian territory, its semantic motivation, and the meanings associated with it. Furthermore, the

chronology of the limnonym remains uncertain, making it difficult to determine whether it can genuinely be considered evidence of a Finno-Ugric linguistic adstratum in the Lithuanian onomasticon.

For a limnonym to be of Finno-Ugric origin, the component *Ìlma* must not only convey the meaning but also be motivated by the lake's relatively elevated position in the area in comparison to other nearby objects. Such observation was made by Maks Vasmer (1986: 128) in the etymology of the limnonym *Ильмень* (Lake *Ilmen*, Novgorod Oblast, Russia) and other cognate lake names found in the northern regions of Europe and Russia. M. Vasmer derives these names from Finn *Ilma-järvi*, translating to 'lake of (bad) weather' or 'heavenly (upper) lake'. Irma I. Mullonen (2018: 16–17) supports a similar viewpoint, suggesting that the limnonym *Ильмень* originates from the widespread Baltic-Finnish stem **ylä-* 'upper' in the region. The scholar claims that this name, as well as similar forms, may reflect variants such as *Ylä/järvi*, *Ylämä/järvi* ('Upper Lake') and *Ylimäine*, *Ylimmäinen* ('Upper') that coexisted in ancient times. The upper position in space concerning other objects is not a characteristic feature of lakes *Ìlma Didžióji* and *Ìlma Mažóji* or any other object in the vicinity. Both lakes are located within a range of 1–2 km from various landmarks, including *Baliulių pelkė* (swamp) to the northwest, *Baltasamanė (Skeimis) pelkė* to the south, *Mėrionių pelkė* to the north, and lake *Skeimis* to the southeast. All these objects share an elevation of 152–154 meters above sea level, as determined by measurements taken using tools available on the GP website. However, this marginal difference in vertical elevation is practically imperceptible. Hence, it is unlikely that the component's *Ìlma* semantics are of Finno-Ugric origin. Additionally, archaeological evidence suggests that language contact with the Finno-Ugric people is historically improbable, as they did not inhabit the territory of Lithuania. This assertion is supported by archaeological findings (cf. Jovaiša 2012; 2014; 2016; 2020a; 2020b). Consequently, it is improbable that the Balts named their water bodies using a foreign language. The oldest records of this name available are 1784 *Ilma*, ež. [lake] (cf. VS95 52), or R1872 Rus *Ильмь большой (Ìlma Didžióji)* and *Ильмь малой (Ìlma Mažóji)*. The VK features this record: *Didžióji Ìlma, Didžiōsios Ìlmos, Didžiqjq Ìlmq*, ež.⁴ (prie pat Piorkų k.) [*Didžióji Ìlma, Didžiōsios Ìlmos, Didžiqjq Ìlmq* [the genitive and accusative case inflexions, respectively], small lake (near Piorkos village)].

This Baltic version of the limnonyms *Ìlma Didžióji* and *Ìlma Mažóji* origin raises an important question: What motivated the naming of bodies of standing water with a word that conveys the idea of water movement or flow? After all, a name derived from Lith *almėti, elmėti* 'to slowly leak, drip, seep; to slowly flow' would seem more fitting for a larger river or stream. Given the environmental conditions, the named lakes neither receive inflows from streams nor discharge to other water bodies. There are no connecting channels that could allow water to flow in or out of these lakes. Additionally, in terms of linguistic considerations regarding the naming of these objects, the initial vowel changes are scarcely explained or understood, cf. *a, e → i*: Lith *almėti, elmėti → Ìlma*. These aspects lead us to doubt the versions of the limnonym's component *Ìlma* origins proposed by A. Vanagas.

Considering the limnonym form written in R1782 Rus *Ильмь большой, Ильмь малой*, our theory is that the component *Ìlma* may be related to and derived from Rus *ильм (илим, илем)*, old *f ильма* or Bel *ільма, ільмак* 'large deciduous tree with valuable, durable wood, common in Europe – elm, wych elm (*Ulmus*)' (DRLKŽ I 791; SBG II 342; SRYA.; TSRJ I 1191). In various regions of Lithuania, particularly in central districts such as Prienai, Kaunas, Raseiniai, Kėdainiai, Širvintos, and Kaišiadorys, at least three tree species in the family *Ulmaceae* thrive. These trees are commonly found in larger river valleys, on the slopes surrounding certain lakes, and in shaded areas (TLE II 16). The area surrounding these two lakes is wooded, featuring rare trees from the *Ulmaceae* family. Another indication, albeit indirect, of the Slavic origin of these limnonyms is the presence of Slavic-origin

⁴ In the VK, this refers to Lith *ežerėlis* 'small lake'.

oikonyms in the vicinity, such as *Piorkos* and *Vispa* (for the origin of these oikonyms, cf. Skorupa 2021c). Additionally, historical records mention now non-existent oikonyms of Slavic origin, such as Rus *Московка*, *Дольники*, and *Сорокполь* (cf. R1872). Moreover, Lithuanians had continuous cultural and linguistic contacts with Slavic peoples, particularly Belarusians, Poles, and Russians (cf. Būga 1961: 493–550; Garšva 2019; 2020a; 2020b; Skorupa 2021b; 2021c). These interactions could have played a role in the emergence of the name in question.

The differentiating marker *Didžioji* indicates the size of the lake in comparison to its counterpart: cf. *Īlma Didžioji* is 0,061 km² whereas *Īlma Mažoji* is 0,021 km². The first component of *Īlma Mažoji* is a transposition from *Īlma Didžioji*. The second component of the limnonym is motivated by the lake's size, serving as an antonymic reference to the larger lake: *Īlma Mažoji* denotes the smaller lake in the vicinity of *Īlma Didžioji*.

Based on the information provided, the most probable origin of the component *Īlma* in the limnonym is Slavic, likely motivated by the local presence of *Ulmaceae* trees. It appears to be a transposition of the tree species name: Rus *ильм*, *ильма*, Bel *ільма* → the lake in the woodland where trees from the *Ulmaceae* family grow → *Īlma Didžioji*. This reflects the metonymic transposition of the tree species to the limnonym under the metonymic naming model TREE SPECIES FOR LAKE. The less likely origin of the limnonym is Lithuanian, primarily due to the lack of clear motivation behind the name. The version suggesting a Finno-Ugric origin is rejected because the semantic component of the limnonym does not align with Finno-Ugric language patterns.

Conclusions

The journey of Lithuanian Onomastics from tradition to modernity emphasises the importance of toponyms in conveying cultural and historical information. While traditional approaches focused on the etymology of toponyms, recent trends in Cognitive Semantics have broadened the scope of onomastic studies to include semantics and motivation, challenging established etymologies and integrating recent data. Through this multidisciplinary approach, inaccuracies in past toponym etymologies may be rectified, reflecting the dynamic nature of onomastic studies. The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the empirical data:

1. Some uncertainties in lexicographical sources and the interpretation of toponyms exist, as evidenced in the analysis of the potamonym *Bezdonė*. Despite its historical forms suggesting a Slavic origin, attempts to reconstruct this name as Lithuanian remain disputed. This highlights the need for critical evaluation of sources in onomastic research.

2. The study of the oikonym *Darinė* reveals overlooked toponyms and challenges proposed etymologies. Despite historical forms indicating distinct objects, toponyms are often grouped without differentiation. Through analysis of historical records and environmental characteristics, an alternative interpretation of this oikonym's motivation and semantics was advanced. This case highlights the importance of thorough research and critical evaluation in understanding underexplored toponyms.

3. The investigation into limnonyms *Īlma Didžioji* and *Īlma Mažoji* challenges traditional etymologies, offering new insights that emphasise the importance of thorough analysis and critical evaluation in understanding the origins of toponyms. While previous theories suggest a Finno-Ugric origin, the presented evidence points towards a Slavic origin.

ABBREVIATIONS

Bel – Belarusian; cf. – compare; D – district; eld – eldership; En – English; Est – Estonian; *f* – feminine; Finn – Finnish; *ibid.* – in the same source; Jdr – Judrėnai (Klaipėda D); km – kilometre; Kv – Kvėdarna (Šilalė D); Ldk – Lyduokiai (Ukmergė D); Lith –

Lithuanian; Pbrd – Pabradė (Švenčionys D); PN – personal name; Pol – Polish; Rus – Russian; Suf – suffix; Švčn – Švenčionys; V – Vilnius

TOPONYM SOURCES

- AO: *Alphabetisches Ortsverzeichnis der Verwaltungsbezirkes Litauen-Nord. 1917–1918. Aufgestellt und herausgegeben von der Militärverwaltung Litauen* [Alphabetical Directory of the Lithuania-North Administrative District. 1917–1918. Prepared and Published by the Military Administration of Lithuania] Abt. C. 7.
- CVIA SA4228b: *Vilniaus ir Kauno gubernijų žemdirbystės ir valstybės turtų valdyba*. LTSR Centrinis valstybinis istorijos archyvas. Fondas SA (senieji aktai), saugojimo vienetas [Board of Agriculture and State Property of Vilnius and Kaunas Governorates. LTSR Central State Historical Archive. Fund SA (Old Acts), Storage Unit] SA4228b, F. 525, ap. 1, bylos [files] 2, 31, 44, 52, 77, 83, 85, 96, 98, 100, 109, 110, 119, 159, 163, 186, 187, 190, 192, 193, 199.
- GK: *Gamtos katalogas: Lietuvos vandens telkiniai* [Catalog of Nature. Lithuanian Water Bodies]. Internet Access: <http://ezerai.vilnius21.lt/>.
- GP: *Lietuvos erdvinės informacijos portalas* [Lithuanian Spatial Information Portal]. Internet Access: <https://www.geoportal.lt/geoportal/>.
- NKPRS: *Nemenčinės ir kitų parapijų revizijos sąrašas: Revizskie skazki Nemenčinskogo, Moliatskogo u dr. prichodov Vilenskogo uezda za 1811 g.* [The Revision List of Nemenčinė and Other Parishes: Revision Records of Nemenčinė, Molėtai and Other Parishes of the Vilna District for 1811], LTSR CVIA, F. 515, ap. 15, b. 192., b. 25.
- R1872: *Russia 1872 Map*: Arcanum Maps – Historical Maps Online. Internet Access: <https://maps.arcanum.com/en/map/russia-1872/>.
- SAV: *Synodus archidioecisana Vilnensis ab excellentissimo illustrissimo ac reverendissimo domino domino Romualdo Jałbrzykowski* [The Archdiocesan Synod of Vilnius by the Most Excellent, Illustrious and Reverend Lord Romuald Jałbrzykowski], Vilno, 1932.
- SDV: *Synodus Dioecisana Vilnensis. Ab Illustrissimo, Excellentissimo ac Reverendissimo Domino D. Michaelae Joanne Zienkowicz* [Diocesan Synod of Vilnius From the Most Illustrious, Excellent and Reverend Mr. Michael Joanne Zienkowicz], Vilnae, MDCCXLIV (1744).
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- SGKP VIII: *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich* [Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and Other Slavic Countries] 8: *Per–Poz*, red. F. Sulimierski, W. Walewski, Warszawa: Nakł. F. Sulimierskiego i Wł. Walewskiego, 1887. Internet Access: http://dir.icm.edu.pl/pl/Slownik_geograficzny/.
- SV: *Lietuvos TSR kaimo gyvenamosios vietovės 1959 ir 1970 metais (Visasąjunginių gyventojų surašymo duomenys)* [Rural Settlements of the Lithuanian SSR in 1959 and 1970 (All-Union Census Data)], Vilnius: Centrinė statistikos valdyba prie Lietuvos TSR ministrų tarybos, 1974.

- SŽ: *Statističeskaja vedomost gubernskogo zemlemera po Vilenskomu uezdu (1804 g.)* [Statistical Statement of the Provincial Land Surveyor for the Vilna District (1804)], LTSR CVIA, F. 526, ap. 1, b. 4.
- ŠPRS: *Švenčionių apskrities Švenčionių parapijos revizinis surašymas (1795 m.)* [Revised Census of Švenčionys Parish of Švenčionys County (1795)], LTSR CVIA, F. 515, ap. 15, b. 48, 215.
- UETK: *Lietuvos upių, ežerų ir tvenkinių kadastras* [The Rivers, Lakes and Ponds Cadaster of the Republic of Lithuania]. Internet Access: <https://uetk.am.lt>.
- VAPRS: *Vilniaus apskrities Gelvonų, Gervėčių, Inturkės ir kt. parapijų revizinis surašymas* [The Revision Census of Parishes of Gelvonai, Gervėčiai, Inturkė, etc. of Vilnius County], LTSR CVIA, F 515, ap. 15, b. 16, 14, 191, 192.
- VG 1905: *Vilenskaja gubernija. Polnyj spisok naseleennyh mest so statističeskimi dannymi o každom poselenii* [Vilna Governorate. The Full List of Settlements with Statistical Data], I. I. Goškevič, Vilna: Gubernskaja Tipografija.
- VK: *Vietovardžių, užrašytų iš gyvosios kalbos, kartoteka* [The Catalogue of Lithuanian Place Names Written from the Spoken Language], Lietuvių kalbos instituto Baltų kalbų ir vardyno tyrimų centro fondas, Vilnius.
- VKF: *Vilniaus kapitulos fondas F43: Bažnytinės valdos. Bezdony. Registr Dokumentow <...> na Dobra Bezdany [Rankraštis]* [Vilnius Chapter Fund F43: Ecclesiastical Estates. Bezdany. Documents Register <...> the Estate Bezdany [Manuscript]]. Internet Access: <https://www.epaveldas.lt/preview?id=MAB04-000051823>.
- VS95: *Vietovardžių sąrašas* [Toponyms List] (CVIA SA 19295) *Vilniaus vyskupystės dekanatų vietovardžių sąrašai* [Lists of Place Names of Deaneries of Vilnius Diocese], 1784. – *Lietuvos valstybinis istorijos archyvas*, F SA-19295.
- VVDL: *Vilniaus vaivadijos dūmų iliustracija* [Smoke illustration of Vilnius Voivodeship] I: *Tarryffa lustratorska Podatku Podymnego woiewodztwa Wilenskiego* [Inspector's Tariff of the Podymne Tax in Vilnius Voivodeship], 1775 m. LTSR CVIA, f. SA., b. 3337.
- GU: *Geografičeskij ukazatel vybornych dokumentov iz aktovyh knig Vilenskogo centralnogo archiva* [Geographical Index of Selected Documents from the Record Books of Vilnius Central Archive], Vilna, 1929.
- SVg: *Spisok volostej i selskuch obščevstv po mirovym učastkam Vilenskoj gubernii 1873 goda* [List of Volosts and Rural Societies by Land Parcels of Vilna Governorate in 1873], Vilna, 1874.
- KKg: *Karta Kovenskoj gubernii* [Map of Kovno Governorate], 1895.

LEXICOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

- DRLKŽ I–II: *Didysis rusų–lietuvių kalbų žodynas dviem tomis* [The Great Russian-Lithuanian Dictionary in Two Volumes] 1–2, O. Aleknavičienė, J. Kardelytė, L. Chackelis, D. Midvikienė, L. M. Sidarienė, Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos centras, 2011.
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- Skarnik.by: *Belorussko-russkij slovar* (na osnove akademičeskogo slovaria pod redakciej J. Kolasa, K. Krapivy i P. Glebki 1953: Russka belaruskij slounik) [Belarusian-Russian Dictionary (Based on the Academic Dictionary Edited by Y. Kolas, K. Krapiva and P. Glebka 1953: Russian-Belarusian Dictionary)] 1–3, el. versija, komp. A. Mazok, S. Lit, Minsk: Institut Movaznaustva AN BSSR. Internet Access: <https://www.skarnik.by/>.
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