

## **CENTRE OF BULGARIAN ONOMASTICS (CBO), VELIKO TURNOVO, BULGARIA**

The Professor Nikolai Kovachev Centre of Bulgarian Onomastics (CBO) at Veliko Turnovo University was founded in 1963 as the Archive of Bulgarian Onomastics with the Department of Linguistics at the Faculty of Modern Languages. In 1985 it expanded into a Research Laboratory of Bulgarian Onomastics at Veliko Turnovo University, following a decision of the Ministry of Education and Science. The laboratory was transformed into the Laboratory of Bulgarian Onomastics in 1987 and in 1990 into the Centre of Bulgarian Onomastics. After the demise of Professor Nikolai Kovachev in 2001, the Centre was named after its founder – a scholar of multifaceted interests, incredibly energetic and well-organized, a person who possessed the undoubted gift to design and carry out large-scale promising research projects and to find like-minded people for their execution. It is not accidental therefore that the majority of his former students have developed a lasting interest in the field of onomastics. Among the prominent scholars of onomastics we encounter the names of so many of his former students that we feel we have every right to talk of a Turnovo wave in Bulgarian onomastics.

In its essence and in the design of its founder, CBO is most comprehensive national archive in onomastics in the country. The Centre is a true pioneer in the creation of electronic data bases which it purposefully expands and complements, while also planning their utilization. The wealth of the archive are materials in anthroponymy, toponymy (over 79% of Bulgarian toponymy) and other areas (zoonymy, cosmonymy, ventonymy, urbanonymy, chrematonymy, phytonymy) from across the country's territory. The golden fund of the archive contains audio tapes and video tapes which have on record the several scholarly forums on onomastics held at Veliko Turnovo University (1989 - 2006). These events turned the Centre into an integrating link for Bulgarian onomasts.

The creation of electronic data bases began in 1994. Data bases have been built for family names of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (on a project funded by Science Fund), for proper names (1981-2000), and partly for lineal names.

The foundation of a National Electronic Archive in Toponymy was laid from 2001 to 2008 with two projects funded by Veliko Turnovo University.

The Centre of Bulgarian Onomastics, run by Professor Maria Angelova Atanasova, received the real opportunity for the accomplishment of this goal at the end of 2008, with the research project “Thesaurus of Bulgarian toponymy – an inexhaustible source of information about the cultural and historical past and about national identity”. The funding of this project was provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth following a competition organized and held by the Science Fund in the section “Promoting research in State Universities”.

The development of the Centre of Bulgarian Onomastics is closely linked to the original goals set by its founder: archive enrichment and its up-to-date presentation; training specialists through study groups and specialized seminars; integration with related research units; assisting the research conducted by specialists and people who do regional studies; linguistic interpretation of the collected material; carrying out projects of national and international significance to utilize the archive wealth and the creation of significant research products such as dictionaries, reference books and monographs. At a university whose management supports the development of science because this ensures high professionalism in students’ training, it is more than natural to expect maximum efficiency of the projects carried out. The advantage of a research unit at a university is that it is not necessary to have many staff associates in order to carry out projects which have been financed. At a humanities university where dozens of eminent linguists, historians, geographers, ethnologists and folklorists work and teach, as many specialists can be recruited as are needed, if they are motivated to cooperate.

The Center’s expanding contacts with related units and distinguished scholars abroad – Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Ukraine, Russia and others with which we exchange books and information, testify to its high reputation, as do the published collections of research (*State and Problems of Bulgarian Onomastics*, v. 1 - 9), monographs by our associates (9 on toponymy and 5 on anthroponymy) and dictionaries (of the utmost significance so far is *Frequency and Etymology Dictionary of Proper*

*Names* by Nikolai Kovachev – V. Turnovo, 1995). The six manuscripts of monographs on toponymy that have been tracked down and published, as well as the few ones that have been prepared for publication but have been doomed to oblivion so far, undoubtedly show that there is no centre or periphery when it comes to genuine research, and also that the university can be a school for young researchers.