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Staffan Nyström*

Uppsala University, Sweden

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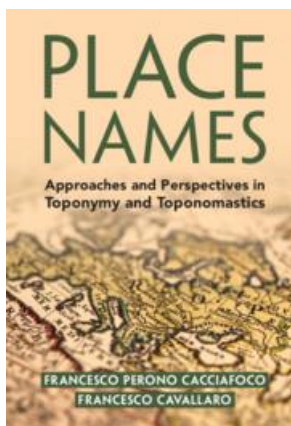
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* Contact: staffan.nystrom@nordiska.uu.se.



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A new textbook on place name research is a rarity! In the preface, the authors F. Perono Cacciafoco and F. Cavallaro – active in China and Singapore respectively – comment on the book’s background: they simply could not find a coherent text of the kind needed to teach a course on the subject. The preface, which contains an overview of the book’s content and structure, signals the authors’ ambition to demonstrate the great potential of place names as sources for historical and linguistic studies as well as for current conditions in modern society. They argue convincingly and passionately about the role and importance of place names in our lives.

The book consists of ten chapters, a 22-page reference list, an index and a full glossary of terms used, from *Alor-Pantar languages* to *zonym*. I found this glossary very helpful since the text contains a large number of terms: some terms were new to me, others could be difficult to distinguish between while reading. As a Scandinavian, I noted for example the frequent use of so-called “-nyms,” such as *dryonym*, *insulonym*, *odonym*, and *potamonym*, where we prefer to use the Scandinavian equivalents to the English terms *forest name*, *island name*, *street name* and *river name*.

In the book, the authors present many different aspects and approaches to place names as well as different methods to study and work with them: *historical toponomastics*, *historical-linguistic reconstruction*, *diachronic toponymy*, *landscape archaeology*, *historical geography* etc. However, it is not entirely easy for a reader to keep these concepts apart and understand which research activities should be placed under one or the other label. But basically, I suppose, the goal is as always to identify, analyze and understand both the linguistic and the factual, non-linguistic side of the names, regardless of how you choose to label your activity. It is not only a matter of finding the linguistic components of the names (past and present) but also of clarifying why something bears a certain name and how this name can be linked to the society and the environment in which it has been created and used. The authors emphasize this strongly throughout the book. To this end their text is generously supported by concrete examples and case studies from virtually all over the world.

Chapter 1 introduces and comments on certain basic terms and concepts. Among other things, the authors show different ways of dividing and categorizing place names. They discuss, for example, the two dichotomies *micro-* and *macrotponymy* and *intensive* and *extensive* toponymy. The latter describes two different ways of approaching names: either in depth one name

at a time or more superficially in search of patterns and structures in a group of names. Names can also be classified according to what type of object they refer to, or according to the naming “method”: *descriptive names*, *associative names*, *evaluative names*, *occurrent names* etc. Several previous classification attempts are presented in tabular form, including one with seven main categories and a large number of subcategories. It goes without saying that in practice it is very difficult to apply such a model due to borderline cases and overlaps. It is also interesting that the authors very clearly and deliberately distinguish between the two disciplines of *diachronic toponymy* and *historical toponomastics*. In both of these, place names are studied over time, but the first concerns only undocumented and endangered languages and language families, while the latter deals with the history and prehistory of place names through written (and other) sources. This distinction is clarified and developed further in later chapters. The term *toponymic system* is also introduced here. It refers to a group of related place names that revolve around a common denominator, e.g., a linguistic root, a meaning, a geographical phenomenon or perhaps a certain event.

The book’s second chapter is entitled *Language Change* and is devoted to how language changes through internal and external factors. Anyone who studies the development of place names over time must of course take into account underlying language development and language shifts. The comparative method, i.e., language comparisons with the aim of finding so-called cognates, is introduced in this chapter and returns in many contexts in later chapters. The authors show how place names, in their capacity as linguistic fossils, tend to be more stable than language in general and thus play a key role in our understanding of earlier stages of languages. This is illustrated with a case study where preserved place names played a decisive role in deciphering signs in the enigmatic Cretian writing systems Linear A and B.

In Chapter 3, *Historical Toponomastics*, the authors aim to show how, with access to historical evidence and sources, the distant etymologies of place names can be reconstructed based on well-known languages and language families. The chapter contains a description of the interpretation process itself where the analysis of both linguistic and non-linguistic elements step by step lead to a result. The authors also present well-chosen illustrative examples of so-called *paretymologies* (i.e., false etymologies, folk etymologies). In their summary of the chapter, the authors conclude: “In this chapter, we have presented how historical toponomastics makes use of readily available data from historical and well-documented sources to reconstruct possible roots and proto-forms and, ultimately, the origins and the original meanings of place names.” I wonder, however, if this really is the case. In, for instance, their study of the name *Squaneto*, we learn that a hamlet in the village of Spigno Monferrato in northwestern Italy bears this name. However no older evidence is presented. How was the name *Squaneto* written in earlier times? In what sources does it appear? How long has it been documented? Instead, the authors

present a complete (albeit reconstructed) naming process with the present-day name *Squaneto* broken down into its supposed Indo-European components. The process starts in Indo-European times and extends to the present. It seems to be taken for granted that since the village of Spigno Monferrato is considered to be from Neolithic times, then so is the name *Squaneto*. Is this a valid assumption? As I see it, there is an underlying problem here in that the authors do not clearly distinguish between the use of words/appellatives and the use of names (or at least problematize this). A word or a root can be ancient, while a name created using this word or root may be much younger.

In this chapter the authors also present a type of general prehistoric naming order. This would mean that names connected to the orientation towards and access to primary natural goods, i.e., names of localities necessary for life (especially in connection with water) must have been coined first. Only later – when society had stabilized and people had found life’s bare necessities – was there room to create more aesthetic and emotional names. This reasoning seems to me slightly oversimplified and somewhat speculative considering that we know very little about how naming was done in Neolithic and Mesolithic times. I also wonder whether the etymological reasoning and manner of graphic presentation might be rather too advanced if the book is intended as a (first) textbook for students.

Chapter 4 is entitled *Toponymy and the Historical-Linguistic Reconstruction of Proto-Languages*. A *proto-language* is, so to speak, the mother tongue, the common proto-language of several later individual languages, while *pre-languages* refer to the even more unknown and distant languages that in a certain place preceded the proto-language. A much studied example of this is how Proto-Indo-European came to Europe with the first Indo-Europeans and how this led to the disappearance of the Pre-Indo-European population and languages. Or did it? In the chapter, the authors comment on some previously presented theories regarding the arrival and origin of the Indo-Europeans, and on possible remnants of what existed in Europe prior to their arrival. Basque in particular has figured in these discussions as a possible Pre-Indo-European language. The authors highlight three Indo-European roots – **alb-* (**~ albh-*) ‘water’, **kar-/kal-* ‘stone, rock’ and **borm* ‘warm, hot’ which represent three toponymic systems (see above) and believe that these may possibly bear testimony to a pre-Indo-European state. Through language contact, roots like these can survive and sometimes be reused and refunctionalized. Toponyms are one of the few windows we have to explore this distant linguistic world, they say.

In this chapter, the authors again point to the possibility of chronologically arranging the emergence of older names based on their semantic content and their interaction with reality. Table 5.3 (p. 124) is entitled *A summary of historical semantics criteria...* and consists of questions and answers. One answer reads: “This question allows the toponymist to infer the possible ‘age’ of the toponym, because the ‘poetic’/descriptive imaginative interpretation of the landscape and the directional spatial description of the settlement could mean that a place

name is less ancient than those linked to primary goods for survival.” Admittedly the authors write “could mean” here but I find their accentuation of this chronology somewhat overplayed. I think the different name types can co-occur both in ancient times and in the present.

Chapter 5 deals with what the authors call *Diachronic Toponymy*, i.e., place names and place name research relating to languages without established writing systems and written sources. The goal for a toponymist within this field is the same as for those who work in historical toponomastics, namely “to explain the possible development of a place name and of its naming process over time” (p. 132). However, the etymology and meaning of the names must instead be based on recent studies of the onomastic environments, the history, customs and myths of the places investigated as well as on an intense interaction with current speakers of the language(s) concerned. This approach is required in many cases where the place names belong in aboriginal and/or indigenous languages around the world. A methodological step-by-step model is shown here, a parallel model to the one presented in the chapter on historical toponomastics. Detailed case studies help the reader understand how researchers actually work in the field with methods partly drawn from more general field linguistics and language documentation. Several illustrative examples are given of how oral histories, myths, and legends can be used to help us understand and explain place names in such distinctly oral societies.

In chapter 6 the terms *landscape* and *landscape archeology* are in focus. The authors display a very broad view of the concept of *landscape* taken here to refer to not only the physical, topographical surroundings but also for instance the social, mental and religious environment. Factual and linguistic explanations of the place names are combined in a very convincing manner in this chapter. By digging into people’s history and living conditions throughout the ages, researchers can understand the place names in an area, or by starting from the place names instead, they can find clues to older natural and social conditions. Several case studies from different parts of the world describe the connection between natural landscape formations and certain place names or between the presence of certain plants and place names. The authors also show how incorrect folk etymologies can be revealed through meticulously conducted landscape archaeology. Also in this case I find it a little surprising how readily the authors link certain still existing place names in, e.g., Italy to Proto-Indo-European roots.

In the seventh chapter, entitled *Historical Toponomastics and Historical Geography*, the authors continue to show how toponymists and linguists can extract diachronic information from the physical landscape itself and from available written sources in their quest to understand names and reconstruct their etymology. Examples from Bucharest and Singapore illustrate how both ancient settlement names in rural environments and more contemporary names of streets and squares in urban areas can be studied in this manner. Changes in the physical, social and political milieu affect the names.

The book's first seven chapters essentially cover approaches and methods within diachronic toponymy and historical toponomastics, where place names as linguistic fossils should be analyzed down to their original constituents and meanings. Chapters 8 and 9, on the other hand, are devoted to the study of contemporary naming processes and naming practices. A synchronically oriented toponymist collects place names, categorizes them and looks for common patterns at a particular time or in a specific situation. This links back to the opening chapter which commented on the connotative meanings of place names including their social, mental, emotional and cultural ingredients. The authors note how people tend to value and appreciate their place names, and relate to them so that they often become part of their identity. The authors use, among other things, illustrative examples from three stages in the history of the young country of Singapore. This leads to an introduction to the relatively new discipline called *Critical Toponymies*, which seeks to combine place names with political and socio-economic factors that exert an influence on how names are created, used and perceived during a given time. Toponymy, ideologies and power relationships are discussed from different aspects, in particular in connection with colonialism. The authors use examples from the USA, Australia, and South Africa.

The final chapter concerns *Toponymy and Cartography* and shows the decisive role place names play on maps. It starts with a concentrated exposé in both text and images of cartography's development from Ptolemy to today's cartographic technology with, e.g., satellite images and GIS use. Of course, the main function of the names on a map is to locate a place and to help the map user orientate himself in reality. But this is just one function. The map and the names are also a means of power, an instrument with which the authority or person commissioning the map producer can show supremacy and make cultural, social and political claims to a certain territory, e.g., in the context of colonization.

All in all, this is a very impressive book. Its great strength lies in its breadth. It is very rich in content and covers ancient as well as modern place names from many places and different environments around the world. It discusses names from a great variety of aspects and angles. Place names are primarily linguistic entities, but in the book names are always discussed, commented on and valued in relation to the surrounding society and milieu in which they are created and used. Prevailing aesthetics, ideologies, needs, demands and desire for power are all factors that affect the place name stock. I cannot recall having read a textbook on name research – or any similar overview – that succeeds so well in showing how place names are a product of our shifting minds, emotions, and ambitions.