

# Onomastics in Other Countries

## The Study of Names in South Africa

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There are three primary bodies in South Africa which deal with names. They are the South African Centre of Onomastic Sciences (SACOS), the National Place Names Committee (NPNC), and the Names Society of Southern Africa (NSA). There is a measure of co-operation between them. For instance, research staff members of the SACOS serve on the NPNC and are members of the NSA; members of the NPNC are members of the NSA, and so forth. The aims, scope, composition and functions of these bodies differ, however.

In addition, onomastic research is undertaken at various levels at several universities, as well as by private persons.

### 1. The South African Centre of Onomastic Sciences (SACOS)

This Centre is a sub-division of the Human Sciences Research Council, an autonomous, statutory research organization. Established in 1970, SACOS concerns itself with the study of all proper names, and with all aspects of names: semantic, syntactic, morphological, phonological, sociological, psychological, etc. Cognizance is taken of theoretical developments elsewhere in the world, but the emphasis is on names within the Republic of South Africa and in South West Africa/Namibia.

#### (a) Research Projects

The primary function of SACOS is to undertake research. Research projects on Khoekhoen (Hottentot) place names and names of regions have been completed. These projects were undertaken first because Khoekhoen place names are among the oldest names in the country, while regions are the largest geographical entities. Currently, research is in progress on Herero place names, Hottentot tribal names, German place names in South Africa and South West Africa, and theoretical aspects of proper names. At the request of the State Department of National Education, the Centre is also engaged in the compilation of a Dictionary of Geographical Proper Names. This will include all place names in the country derived from all of the languages spoken by the various peoples of the country. In addition to English and Afrikaans, there are place names derived from Dutch, German, French, Portuguese, Greek, Italian, San, Khoekhoen, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Western Sotho, Venda, Tsonga, Xhosa and Zulu. This dictionary will include, among other things, the origin or etymology of the names where possible. In view of the magnitude of this project and the diversity of languages from which the place names are derived, sub-projects will possibly be undertaken by researchers outside the SACOS.

## (b) Publications

Another function of SACOS is to publish research findings. Shortly after the establishment of the Centre a publication series, entitled the Onomastics Series, was started. To date ten volumes have been published in this Series, viz:

P. E. Raper: *Streekname in Suid-Afrika en Suidwes* (Regional names in South Africa and South West Africa), 1972.

P. E. Raper: *Onomastics Source Guide Part 1, 1970, 1972.*

E. J. Du Plessis: *Oorsprong en betekenis van Suid-Afrikaanse Berg- en Riviername* (Origin and meaning of names of rivers and mountains), 1973.

P. E. Raper: *Toponymical Practice*, 1975; 2nd (improved) ed. 1977.

P. E. Raper: *Source Guide for Toponymy and Topology*, 1975; 2nd impression 1976.

G. S. Nienaber & P. E. Raper: *Toponymica Hottentotica A*, 2 vols., 1977.

T. J. R. Botha: *Watername in Natal* (Zulu hydronyms), 1977.

P. E. Raper & L. A. Möller: *Onomastics Source Guide Part 2, 1971–1978*, 1981.

G. S. Nienaber & P. E. Raper: *Toponymica Hottentotica B*, 1980.

Outside the Series was published: P. J. Nienaber: *Suid-Afrikaanse Pleknaamwoordeboek*, 1972 (2nd. edition).

In addition to this type of publication, periodical articles are written, some strictly scientific, others more popular, with a view to stimulating interest in onomastics.

## (c) Data Base

Since its inception SACOS has been developing a data base of onomastic material comprising relevant books, periodical articles, newspaper cuttings, theses and dissertations, questionnaires, and so forth. To enable the Centre to undertake the above-mentioned Dictionary of Geographical Place Names, the National Place Names Committee has put at its disposal its archives comprising questionnaires on place names submitted over the past forty-two years. In addition, the chief Director of Surveys and Mapping has made available some 60,000 questionnaires completed in the field in respect of geographical features. These data are currently being computerized.

## (d) Research Support

The above-mentioned data base is intended for use not only by SACOS itself, but also by researchers outside the Centre, since one of the functions of SACOS is to support and facilitate research. Thus lists of names with relevant data may be made available to serve as a foundation for research. To acquaint researchers with methods and techniques in collecting and treating toponymical material, a manual entitled *Toponymical Practice* was published. This guide also serves as an aid to persons and bodies entrusted with giving and changing place names. Furthermore, conscious of the time, energy and money wasted by researchers in searching the same printed material for relevant data, SACOS has compiled onomastic source guides which give bibliographical information on books, periodical and newspaper articles, covering the period 1824 to 1978.

In addition, the research staff of SACOS have given, and are still giving, expert advice and guidance to university students undertaking onomastic research at post-graduate level.

This particular aspect of making data, expertise, advice and assistance available to researchers, is receiving greater prominence, for it is by this method that external researchers are involved in projects of SACOS with a view to co-ordinating research and

covering the field. For this reason collaboration is sought with related bodies, the cooperation of interested persons is being enlisted, and interest in onomastics is being promoted.

(e) International collaboration

To become *au fait* with methodological and theoretical developments it was considered essential to take cognizance of what is being done elsewhere in the world. The Head of SACOS accordingly undertook visits in 1972 and 1981 to onomastic institutes in Belgium (the International Centre of Onomastics and the Instituut voor Naamkunde), Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Sweden, The Netherlands and The United States of America. Not only was he able to apply in the SACOS the relevant and most suitable techniques and methods he learned there but, possibly of even greater importance, friendships were formed and the foundations laid for future exchange of ideas and publications.

Since 1970 the Head of SACOS has been the collaborator for South Africa on the international onomastic bibliography published in *Onoma* by the International Centre of Onomastics. He had the privilege of reading papers at the XIIIth and XIVth International Congresses of Onomastic Sciences held in Cracow and Ann Arbor in 1978 and 1981 respectively, and had the honor to be elected by the Board Meeting of ICOS in Ann Arbor as member of ICOS to represent South Africa.

At the Ann Arbor Congress the Secretary-General of ICOS expressed the wish that a future international congress be held in South Africa. The Head of the SACOS has received approval from the relevant South African authorities for funds to be made available for this purpose. It is his intention at the XVth International Congress of Onomastics to be held in Leipzig in 1984 to extend a formal invitation to the International Committee of Onomastic Sciences with whom the ultimate decision rests.

(f) South African Plan for Research in the Human Sciences (SAPRHS)

The Human Sciences Research Council has as one of its functions the implementation of this plan, which is designed to enlist the collaboration of the necessary persons and organizations in undertaking and co-ordinating research in such a way that the field is covered and unnecessary duplication eliminated. By means of seminars, think-tanks and so forth, problem areas are identified. These are sub-divided into operational programmes, projects and sub-projects, which are awarded by contract to persons, teams or institutions which are best qualified or have the required expertise to undertake them.

As stated above, the SACOS is a sub-division of the Human Sciences Research Council and has the task of implementing the South African Plan as far as onomastics is concerned. With this in mind active co-operation is being sought with the NSA, universities, municipalities, etc.

An example of the functioning of this co-operation is the Dictionary of Geographical Proper Names. The Department of National Education requested that this project be undertaken, and has made available for the purpose its collection of questionnaires on official place names, while the Office of Surveys and Mapping has made available its questionnaires on topographical features. This data is added to the onomastic material of the SACOS, the entire data base being computerized. From this data base lists of names, with information, are made available in print-out form to researchers, to serve as a basis for research. Data collected by the researchers are returned to the SACOS and included in its data base, this mutual exchange of data serving to increase the data base for use by yet other researchers. In this way SACOS facilitates research while at the same time monitor-

ing progress in covering the field, identifying areas requiring further attention, and so forth. Each participating researcher may also utilize the computer facilities of the SACOS to make analyses, select individualized items, or whatever his particular project requirements are.

## 2. The National Place Names Committee (NPNC)

The NPNC is attached to the State Department of National Education. Its primary function is to consider the orthography and styling of official place names and to advise the Minister of National Education accordingly. By official place names is meant the names of cities, towns and townships, railway stations, sidings and stopping places, post offices, airports, and the like. Proposals for official place names are submitted on a prescribed questionnaire which makes provision for the entering of sufficient relevant data to enable the Committee to base its advice on sound scientific principles.

Other functions of the NPNC are to consider all cases where a change of name or the restoration of an old name is desired, and gradually to correct the spelling of all geographical names in the Republic of South Africa not yet dealt with by it.

The NPNC comprises experts in English, Afrikaans, Kohekhoen and the various Black languages, as well as the Head of SACOS, and representatives of the State Language Services, the English Academy of South Africa, the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (S. A. Academy for Science and Art), the Office of Surveys and Mapping, the State Departments of Posts and Telecommunications, Education and Training, and Transport Services.

The work of the NPNC resulted in the publications *Official Place Names in the Union and South West Africa* (1951), containing place names approved to the end of 1948, and *Official Place Names in the Republic of South Africa and in South-West Africa* (1978), containing names approved to 1 April 1977. The introductions to both of these publications are devoted *inter alia* to principles and guide-lines for prospective namers. To make these guidelines more readily available, the NPNC instructed three of its members, Dr. P. E. Raper, Prof. G. S. Nienaber and Mr. J. S. B. Marais, to compile an abbreviated manual. This was published in 1979 under the title *Manual for the Giving of Place Names*.

One of the tasks of the NPNC was to be the compilation of a list of geographical names in South Africa. For a number of reasons, i.e., the lack of a permanent secretariat, this task was never undertaken. Since the South African Centre of Onomastic Sciences has the necessary manpower, expertise and technical facilities, the NPNC requested it to compile not a list of geographical proper names, but a dictionary which will include situation, designation and, where possible, the derivation of the name.

## 3. The Names Society of Southern Africa (NSA)

The NSA was founded in September 1981 at the initiative of the research staff of the S.A. Centre of Onomastic Sciences.

### (a) Aims

The aims of the NSA are:

- To promote, in the Republic of South Africa and in neighboring states, the study of and research into place names, personal names, ethnic names and other proper names;
- To provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge and insights in the Society's field of focus;
- To establish contact with other societies which concentrate on names and Name Study

(Onomastics) and where possible to arrange joint activities and projects with such societies;

To organize regular congresses at which papers concerning the Society's field of focus will be read, symposia held and specialist contact between the congress delegates facilitated;

To issue a professional journal and other publications;

To compile and update a list of all persons actively engaged in the Society's field of focus;

To take any other initiatives deemed necessary for the advancement of the Society's field of focus;

To act as an advisory body when requested with due regard to the activities of the National Place Names Committee.

(b) Membership

Ordinary membership is acquired upon payment of an annual subscription determined by the Head Committee from time to time. Students may become members upon payment of 50% of the normal subscription.

Life membership is acquired upon the single payment of an amount determined by the Head Committee.

Donor membership can be acquired by a business firm, other body or an individual by contributing a minimum amount determined by the Head Committee from time to time. Donor members are recruited by regional branches for funding their own projects, or by the Head Committee for projects such as congresses, research, etc.

Institutional membership can be acquired by bodies such as libraries, other societies etc. upon payment of an annual amount 15% higher than the normal subscription.

Honorary membership can be conferred upon persons who have excelled themselves in the Society's field of focus, or who have made an exceptional contribution towards the activities of the Society. Honorary members are exempted from the membership fee but can be co-opted in any committee.

All members are entitled to vote at meetings, and receive the Society's journal free of charge, as well as other publications of the Society at a reduced tariff.

(c) Congress

On 20–21 April 1982 the First Southern African Names Congress was held in Durban. Nineteen papers were read on a wide range of onomastic subjects.

At a meeting of members, the first head committee was elected for a term of four years, namely Prof. T. J. R. Botha (Chairman), Dr. P. E. Raper (Vice-Chairman), Dr. R. K. Belcher (Secretary-Treasurer), Prof. W. Branford, Prof. J. G. H. Combrink and Prof. L. C. Eksteen.

Honorary membership of the NSA was conferred on Prof. G. S. Nienaber and Prof. P. J. Nienaber, pioneer researchers in onomastics.

Membership of the NSA stands at about 70 and is still growing. Included are linguists, historians, geographers, folklorists, specialists in African studies, ethnologists, cartographers and others. It is the policy of the NSA to establish regional or local branches in as many centres as possible, with a view to enlisting the collaboration of as many people as possible and thus obtaining locally data on names.

4. Municipalities, Universities and Private Researchers

The Pretoria City Council established an Urban Advisory Committee on Street and

Place Names in 1972. This Committee comprises city councillors, historians, linguists in English and Afrikaans, and the Head of the SACOS. Its function is to advise on the correctness of proposed new names for streets, parks and suburbs within the urban area, and, where no new names are proposed, to find suitable names. For this purpose a name bank has been initiated and an archives established. The SACOS publication *Toponymical Practice* serves as basic manual for the Committee.

Other municipalities seem to be following the lead taken by the Pretoria City Council, for example Roodepoort-Maraisburg, which has established archives of street names.

Since about 1944 students at several universities sporadically undertook post-graduate research into names, primarily place names. This tendency has proliferated in recent years, and at a number of universities courses in onomastics are offered, for example at the University of Natal in Durban and at the University of Stellenbosch. Students at various universities are currently engaged in research on onomastic themes for the degrees of Master and Doctor, while a departmental head of the University of Stellenbosch undertook a research tour of seven months in 1982, to investigate aspects of anthroponymy, primarily given names.

The Department of African Languages at the Potchefstroom University has embarked on a pilot study of Tswana place names in consultation with SACOS.

Then, too, a number of private researchers throughout the country are engaged in onomastic research.

## 5. Conclusion

From the above it may be seen that the study of names is gaining ground in Southern Africa. As the result of greater cognizance being taken of developments elsewhere in the world, more attention is being given to proper names themselves as onomastic entities, rather than to the entities bearing the names. In addition, not only are toponyms and anthroponyms receiving attention, but also other types of proper name.

It is hoped that the study of names in South Africa will go from strength to strength, that an increasing number of organizations and persons will become involved in onomastic studies, and that increased international co-operation will be fruitful to all.

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## RECENT ACTIVITY IN THE STUDY OF NAMES IN JAPAN

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Recently, it is recognized that the study of names in Japan has much improved, especially in the area of toponomy, both in the publication of books and the establishing of organizations. Also, scholars from Japan have participated in the last three meetings of the International Congress of Onomastics, four attending in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1981.

Japanese universities do not yet offer independent courses in toponomy and anthroponomy. The lectures by Dr. Suenori Ikeda at Nara University are probably the only special ones on toponomy in Japan.

Several organizations have been established. In March, 1978, many scholars and persons interested in onomastics organized Chimei o Mamoru Kai (Historical Place Names Protection Association). In April, 1981, a symposium was held at Kawasaki, Kanagawa Prefecture, titled "Thinking on the Age of Locality through Place Names," well attended by persons concerned with onomastics and history. Based on the success of this symposium, Nihon Chimei Kenkyûjo (Japanese Institute of Place Names) was established at Kawasaki, with Mr. Ken'ichi Tanigawa as the first President. In March, 1982, another organization was initiated, Chimei Kenkyû Kyôgikai (Toponymists Association), with Mr. Keiichi Yamaguchi as first President. Thus, several societies have become active, but it is yet to happen that a general organization on onomastics be established in Japan. This surely is a future goal.

Some recent publications include the following:

*Index Gazetteer of Japan*, edited by Hiroo Kanai, 2 vols., 2,288 pp., published by Abokku Sha, Kamakura, 1981. This gazetteer contains over 120,000 Japanese place names and arranges them in both Japanese alphabet order and in Chinese letter order, and indicates the locality of each name. It is the largest gazetteer in Japan.

*Chimei Kankei Bunken Kaidai Jiten* (Bibliography Introduction to Japanese Place Name Literature), edited by Akikatsu Kagami, Yûsuke Kushuhara and Sumio Sakurai, 539 pp., published by Dôhōsha, Koyoto, 1981. This bibliography contains all of modern Japanese toponomic publication, 1869–1979, and the literature is arranged chronologically and introduced by three editors. It is the first all-around place name bibliography in Japan.

*Seishi no Gogen* (Etymology of Family Names), by Motoji Niwa, 573 pp., published by Kadokawa Shoten, Tokyo, 1981. This is the first etymological dictionary on family names in Japan. Relations between family names and place names are carefully and fully explained.

Two major place name dictionary series are being published by Kakokawa Shoten, begun in 1978, and Heibonsha, begun in 1979. Both series deal with place names of each prefecture.

Okayama University (August 1982)