

In Memoriam

HENRI DRAYE (1911–1983)

When the Fourteenth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences met in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in August 1981, it was the first international gathering devoted to name studies to be held on this side of the Atlantic, after thirteen onomastic congresses in European countries in the previous forty years. That North America was so late in becoming a venue for such a conference was certainly not the fault of Professor Henri Draye, Secretary-General of the International Committee of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS). If he had had his wish, either the twelfth or the thirteenth international congress would have been held in this country in 1975 or 1978, respectively, but unfortunately American onomastic scholarship was not organizationally ready to prepare such a meeting in those earlier years. In 1981, Professor Draye had his wish and was delighted to cross the Atlantic with his wife to lend his scholarly status, his organizational talents and his prestigious presence to the success of the congress. Little did we know then that, although his heart had given him trouble for some time, only eighteen months later it would become necessary to write his obituary. It is now my sad duty to inform you that, having been predeceased by his wife in November 1981, Henri Draye died unexpectedly in his seventy-second year on February 2, 1983. The genial, paternal, committed force behind the drive for international co-operation among students of names is no more.

Born in Diest on June 11, 1911, Henri Draye began the study of Germanic philology at the University of Leuven, Belgium, in 1929 and obtained his doctorate in 1934 under the guidance of Professor Jozef Goosenaerts (1882–1963). Significantly, the topic of his dissertation, a contribution to the study of the linguistic boundary between Flemish and Walloon, a question so vital to the history and fortunes of his country, never let him go again, and as late as 1980 he published a state-of-the-arts overview entitled “Die Namenforschung und der germanisch-romanische Sprachkontakt im Frühmittelalter im heutigen Belgien” (*Norna-rapporter* 17, 1980, 211–227). Further periods of study in Gent (1935) and

Bonn and Leipzig (1937) brought him under the influence of such eminent scholars as F. Steinbach, A. Bach, J. Quint, H. Naumann, Th. Frings and W. von Wartburg, each in his own way a representative of what is best in Germanic philological tradition. His own career as an academic teacher began when, in 1942, he became a lecturer in the University of Leuven and ended in 1974 when he was awarded the status of professor emeritus, although he continued to hold colloquia and seminars for another four years.

Although he must have been aware of the importance of names as raw material in the investigation of linguistic history when he was writing his dissertation, his official connection with matters onomastic was established in 1935 when he became, at the young age of twenty-four, the collaborator, at the Instituut voor Naamkunde, of his great mentor, Professor H.J. Van de Wijer (1883–1968), whom he succeeded as Head of the Instituut in 1967, as Director of the International Centre of Onomastics in 1968, and as Secretary-General of ICOS in 1969. In his own ever-generous way, Professor Draye never ceased to point to the influence which Van de Wijer had had on him in well over thirty years, and it was only fitting that he should have succeeded him in so many capacities.

In his almost 150 publications, spanning almost half a century from 1934 onwards, name studies play an important and ever increasing role, usually in connection with the elucidation of problems of linguistic stratification and settlement history in Belgium and the southern Netherlands, and particularly relating to the question of Frankish colonization. In addition, he never tired to provide reports, bibliographies and other relevant information on the status and progress of name studies in his own country and elsewhere and, through the editorship of *Onoma*, to give the discipline of onomastics an international forum and visibility. As a university teacher, he directed several theses on onomastic topics, usually within the range of his own special interests.

When Henri Draye died so suddenly, he was not only in the midst of preparing another issue of *Onoma* but was also actively involved in the planning of the Fifteenth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences in Leipzig (DDR) in August 1984, having already visited Leipzig, always one of his favorite cities, to discuss details with the local organizers. When that Congress meets, Henri Draye will not be one of its participants, although his guiding hand will still be felt. It is difficult to imagine the course of international onomastics in the post-Draye era, but whatever we do we must not forget the immense debt we owe Henri Draye for furthering, to the best of his ability and without regard to his own health, the cause of the onomastic sciences in an international context. Only few

individuals ever have the opportunity and the privilege to leave their own indelible stamp on the field of study they serve – Henri Draye was one of them and we remember him with gratitude.

W. F. H. Nicolaisen
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