

Reviews

Arabic First Names. Hippocrene Books. 171 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. 1999. Pp v + 121. \$11.95.

Hippocrene Books has offered its readers an informative glimpse of the very rich world of Arabic names in their concise compendium, *Arabic First Names*, a companion volume to *French First Names* and *Jewish First Names*. This slim volume serves a special purpose since it provides those who are unfamiliar with the richness of Arabic language and culture a direct, easy to access source of many of the most popular Arabic given names and their associated meanings.

Like the other books in this series, *Arabic First Names* is divided into two sections, with female names (333 entries) in the first section and male names (351 entries) in the second. The entries are listed alphabetically in an English spelling that is a simple yet intuitive transliteration of the original Arabic. Each name is given in the Romanized form only and represents an English nativization of the Arabic name; for instance, in the name *Khalisa* (f)/*Khalis* (m), meaning 'pure', the initial *kh* represents the Arabic voiceless velar fricative [x], the medial *a* represents a long, low back vowel, and the *s* represents a velarized alveolar fricative. These graphic representations are likely to be pronounced as they are in the English word *callous*. Variants, which may reflect differences in pronunciation in the original Arabic or more simply alternative English spellings are provided within each entry, as are corresponding masculine and feminine forms, such as *Habib* (m)/*Habiba* (f). Where appropriate, an English equivalent of the name is provided as well, e.g., *Butrus* = *Peter*, *Musa* = *Moses*. Since no Arabic script accompanies an entry, no familiarity with written Arabic or the sound system of Arabic is assumed. Arabic sounds that do not occur in English are usually represented by the English vowel or consonant that most closely approximates the sound, a practice that is common in non-technical texts concerning Arabic. *Arabic First Names* does not distinguish the pharyngeal consonants 'ayn and Haa', the emphatic or velarized consonants Taa' and Saad, and the glottal stop hamza. Including such sound differences along with the complete Arabic script for each name might provide greater information important for an

accurate pronunciation of the Arabic name, but additional symbols and diacritics would unnecessarily complicate the intended presentation aimed at intelligent general readers.

Practically all Arabic names have relatively transparent meanings, a characteristic at odds with most English names and thus often surprising to English speakers encountering Arabic names for the first time. Typically, an entry includes a simple, literal meaning of the name, or related words from which it may be derived, and well-known people of historical, religious, literary or cultural significance who bore the name. A sample entry is:

Salima

Feminine form of the name Salim, meaning 'faultless.' Alternative spellings: Saleema. Variants: Salma, Selma.

Famous bearer of the name: Salma Hayek,
Mexican actress of Lebanese origin (born 1968)

Although multiple names may be derived from a single Arabic triconsonantal root, *Arabic First Names* creates a separate entry for each name and its meaning according to its unique English spelling. Thus, *Basma* 'smile', *Bassama* ~ *Bassima* 'smiling', *Ibtisam* 'smile' and *Bassam* 'smiling' all derive from the triconsonantal root, *b-s-m*, are given separate entries, as are *Ahmad* 'the most praised', *Hamd* 'praise, thanks', *Hamid* 'praised' and *Muhammad* 'highly praised', all of which share the root *h-m-d*. An academic dictionary, such as that of Wehr and Cowan (1976), would be needed to provide the detailed information needed to connect the individual names to the universe of meaning of the root. *Arabic First Names* does not pretend to be a scholarly contribution to the study of Arabic names. For anyone seeking more detailed information about traditional names and the propriety of altering such names for present day use, I would suggest Ahmed (1999) or Hakeem (1997). Ahmed lists common Muslim names which originated in Arabic or Persian and gives an explanation of their meaning and use. Hakeem offers advice on the proper selection of names and the appropriate naming of children according to accepted Muslim practice. An authoritative account of the linguistic classification and analysis of Arabic names is Schimmel (1996).

As one of the most recent and accessible publications in English on common Arabic given names, this concise volume is a welcome addition to the available sources of information on non-Western names and naming and the connected cultures and peoples who choose Arabic names. This small but handsome volume provides a convenient source of popular Arabic given names and their analyzable meanings. *Arabic First Names* will be of interest to anyone interested in names in general, as well as to those parents who are searching for a suitable Arabic name for their son or daughter. It should appeal to anyone looking for information about given names in standard, or dialectal, Arabic. For others, this basic onomasticon will motivate and encourage study in Arabic and in Arabic culture.

References

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Oregon's Names: How to Say Them and Where are They Located?
By Bert Webber, M.L.S. Medford, OR: Webb Research Group. 1995.
viii + 109. Paper. \$9.95.

A pronunciation guide for Oregon's place names has been needed for quite some time. This is the first pronunciation guide to Oregon's placenames since Monaghan's *Pronunciation Guide of Oregon Place Names* appeared in 1961, to which the present book seems to owe much. Webber's book is intended for "the general public." However, given the number of recent immigrants to Oregon, newcomers were surely in mind

as well. Most of the entries, which are listed alphabetically, are the names of cities and towns, but bodies of water and mountains are included as well. The book begins with a page of teasers on the order of "what do you say?" This is followed by a table of contents, a map of Oregon with counties, rivers, and a few cities; a list of the counties, a pronunciation key, an introduction, and the entries. Each of the 1200 or so entries contains the placename, its pronunciation, and map locations. Interspersed throughout the book are small maps, black and white photographs, and postmarks from various places. For some entries short notes on pronunciation or history are given. This booklet should be welcome, as it would seem to fit the need for an authoritative guide to the pronunciations of Oregon's placenames. However, it has many flaws that limit its suitability as an all-purpose guide. Of a number of criticisms, I would point to the following in particular:

First, the pronunciation key, which is more or less the same as Monaghan's, is difficult to use. As the book is intended for the lay reader, it naturally avoids the IPA and employs symbols that should be easy to use. However, such is not the case. The first problem with the pronunciation key is that not all the symbols used in the book are listed. This is not a great omission, as any speaker of English will interpret <t> as [t], but do we need to be told that <k> and <s> represent [k] and [s]? For the sake of consistency, all the symbols used in the book should have been listed and discussed in the pronunciation key. The second problem with the pronunciation key is that many of the symbol combinations or their examples are confusing. For example, <eye> is given for the vowel in *fly*, *miner*, and *sight*, i. e., [ai]. Why not [ai]? (The short front vowels are represented by <a>, <e>, and <i> and stress is indicated by capital letters.) Also, <gh>, <zh>, and <you> represent [f], [z], and [u], respectively. Why not <f>, <z>, and <u> since <u> and <o> are only used in combinations.

Some of the examples are questionable in that there are variant pronunciations or the pronunciations indicated are just plain wrong. *Citizen* and *zither* as examples of words containing [z] are not good choices. *Citizen* often has [s], not [z] for <z>. *Zoo* and *zebra* would have been better choices. Although there are indeed some people (obviously the author) who have [š] in *sumac*, it really does not belong with *sugar* and *sure* as examples of <sh>. As an example of <hw>, *who* does not belong with *what*, *why*, and *when* in any case.

Second, the difficulty in using the pronunciation key makes itself manifest in the main entries. There is inconsistent use of <zh>; some entries have <zh>, others only <z>. Since <th> is not covered in the key, should the consonant of A-thee for *Athey* be voiced or voiceless? The pronunciations for *Arlington* and *Armitage* are given as AHR-ling-tuhn and ARM-i-tij. Does the author really mean to suggest that the initial vowels are different? Both words should begin with AHR. Are we really to believe that *Igo* is really pronounced igg-ough and *Barlow* as BAR-lough? The pronunciation key suggests that these would be something like [ɪg əf] and [bɑr ləf], respectively. What is wh-EYEMER supposed to represent since <wh> does not appear in the pronunciation key? The pronunciations are further clouded by the periodic use of words or even letters that are to receive the pronunciation of their names. For example, we find Adair as a-DARE, Eddeeloe as ee-D-loh, and Fogerty as fawg-er-t. This technique is convenient, but it is used inconsistently and is thus misleading. In addition, the initial vowel in a-DARE does not have its value as indicated in the pronunciation key. Why is *Alfalpa* given as AAL-fal-fa? Is the initial vowel extra long? The list of problems could be continued, but let these examples suffice.

The method which the author used to gather pronunciations is itself questionable. Webber writes,

For this book, pronunciations suggested are based on the common traditional usage as tabulated after many reference sources were consulted (and a number of persons were asked). When several pronunciations turned up for a given name, we have selected what the majority suggested. This method guarantees that the final pronunciations appearing here are realistic. Of course, now and then there is a genuine split in opinions on how to say a name. When this happens, we show both and possibly add a few words about them. (11)

After looking over the bibliography, I fail to see how many of the books could have been of much help to gather pronunciations. It would also be important to know how many people were asked and under what circumstances. As far as I am aware, Webber conducted no formal survey. I suspect that he relied heavily on Monaghan's earlier survey. Choosing the "majority pronunciation" does guarantee a "realistic" pronunciation, but it does not guarantee a correct one. Conspicuous by its absence from the bibliography is Monaghan's book. Also, Webber's

claim (13) that McArthur (1992) does not include pronunciations is not totally accurate; he does, albeit sporadically.

Some placenames, as Webber states, have several pronunciations, both of which are considered correct. The author rightly discusses *Heceta*. The main entry gives he-SEE-tuh, and the note states that “locals say it ‘heck-ka-tuh’ in the face of the Spanish ‘Ay-thay-tah’.” *Almeda*, whose medial vowel can be either [i] or [ɛ], is also discussed. However, such notes should be included for *Coos Bay*. The original was probably [kus], but voicing assimilation of the [s] to the [b] is very common. When I taught high school in Coos Bay about 10 years ago, I asked one of my classes whether it is [kus bei] or [kuz bei]. The students were about evenly split. *Yoncalla*, according to a native, is stressed on the first, not the second, syllable. For many Oregonians, *Detroit* is also stressed on the first syllable. Some have told me that they make a distinction between the town in Oregon, which they stress on the first syllable, and the city in Michigan, which they stress on the second syllable. *Chemawa* (which is listed as being four miles north of Salem when, in fact, it is an Indian school on the northern outskirts of Salem) is given as chuh-MAW-wuh. A large portion, perhaps even the majority, of Salemites pronounce this word and the name of the local community college, Chemeketa (which is not listed in the book) with initial [ʃ], as with *Chewaucan*, she-WAW-can. The same applies to Chinook Bend. The flyer from Champoege State Park states: “Local residents call the park either ‘Sham-poh-eg’ or more commonly ‘Sham-POO-ee’.” Let us go with the latter. Uncertain myself about the correct pronunciation of *Wallowa* (County), I called the county courthouse and local sheriff’s office and spoke with two natives of the county. One person told me the pronunciation is [wəˈlɑ:wə]. “Any other pronunciations?” I asked. “No” was her reply. My contact at the sheriff’s office claimed the correct pronunciation is [wəˈlæ:wə] and added “Everybody says it.” Well, not everybody says it. There are many other places that have more than one pronunciation and there should be some discussion of them.

Finally, some pronunciations given are just plain wrong. *Gypsum* should be JIP-suhm, not gyp-suhm. *Yaquina*, in spite of its Spanish look, is named after a local Indian tribe. Its pronunciation, according to residents of the area and several employees at the local Oregon Coast Aquarium, is definitely yuh-KWIN-uh, not yuh-KEEN-uh. Also, al-LOH-huh for *aloha* is absolutely wrong. In spite of its Hawaiian-looking

name, it is named for a resort in Wisconsin and is of native origin. There is no [h]; the entry should be uh-LOH-uh. Similarly, *Bingham* should not be BING-huhm but BING-um. Bridal Veil (Falls/Village) should not be BRID-ul-vayl, but BREYE-dul-vayl. *Goshen* should be GOH-shun, not GOHS-un. An Oregon state trooper who grew up in Wallowa County and is familiar with *Sumac* (Creek) reported that he has never heard the pronunciation given in the book, shoo-mak. Monaghan (1961) has soo-mak. *Oregon* (City) is given as aw-re-guhn. Has it no stress? Easterners already have a difficult enough time pronouncing the name of the state correctly; let us not further confuse the matter. It should be AW-ree-guhn or, better yet, OHR-ee-guhn.

Some typographical errors must be mentioned. *Augusta Creek*, *Aurora*, *Austa*, *Avalon Park*, *Avery's* and *Goshen* are each listed twice. The pronunciation for *Arko* should be AHR-ko, not ahn-ko. In the locator for *Gurdane*, *Uktah* should be *Ukiah*. *Hazelia* should be hayz-el-EE-uh, not hayz-cl-EE-uh. The bibliography should have *Lewis* and not *Louis* McArthur.

In summary, this little book fails to meet the need for an authoritative guide to the pronunciations of Oregon's placenames. Perhaps Lewis McArthur will systematically include pronunciations for all of Oregon's placenames in a future edition of *Oregon Geographic Names*.

References

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