

Reviews

Toponymy: The Lore, Laws and Language of Geographical Names.
By Naftali Kadmon. Vantage Press Inc., 516 West 34th St., New York, NY 10001. 2000. Pp. x-333. \$14.95.

This is it—the book that explains in clear and fully comprehensible English almost all aspects of geographical naming from both national and international perspectives. Without doubt this is an ideal manual for post-secondary courses in both geography and cartography—especially cartography, where students learn the fundamentals of map making, including the important elements of accurate identification of populated places and natural and cultural features on maps.

The only previous book in English that dealt with some of the details of geographical naming at the international level was Marcel Arousseau's *The Rendering of Geographical Naming* (1957), but Kadmon makes only a fleeting comment about it in a footnote. More could have been said about Arousseau's contributions, based on his service as the former secretary of the United Kingdom's Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use. (It should be noted here that, contrary to Kadmon's statement on page 204, the British committee deals exclusively with foreign names for official use in the United Kingdom, which has no domestic names authority other than the Ordnance Survey).

During my active involvement from the early 1970s to the late 1980s with the development of naming policies, programs, practices and procedures, both in Canada and at the United Nations, I yearned for a reliable and comprehensive manual in English. I believed then that a UN delegate/expert from a country where English was a primary language of communication was in the best position to compile such a volume. As it has turned out, Kadmon, who has participated in UN names meetings since 1977, has all the required credentials to produce this magnificent book on toponymy. After earning a master's degree in topographic science in 1968 from the University of Glasgow, and a doctorate in computer cartography in 1973 from the University of Wales in Swansea, he became a senior cartographer at the Survey of Israel. At the

international level, Kadmon chaired the International Working Group on Graphic Quality in Computer Maps of the International Cartographic Union, 1981-84, and has been, since 1992, the chair of the United Nations Working Group on Toponymic Terminology and the editor of the recent United Nations multilingual Glossary of Toponymic Terminology.

The book is attractively laid out in an orderly arrangement, divided among 18 chapters in five parts, beginning with the theory and practice of naming places and ending with the development of toponymic data files. Part I deals with the basics, such as the recording and storing of names, making gazetteers, creating digital storage, and defining nominal, ordinal and qualitative scales of measurements to various grids and coordinates. For the toponymist, the brilliant presentation of the semantics of toponyms in the fourth chapter is well worth the price of the book, with Kadmon's review of the meaning of "meaning," names as labels, descriptive meaning, simplex and composite names, true and false generics, synchronic treatment of names, diachronic semantics, names in extinct and revived languages, connotative meaning, and nicknames. The final chapter of Part I treats the grammar of toponymy.

The four chapters of Part II investigate geographical names as cultural phenomena, such as names in fantasy, mythology, commerce, food, drink, music and humor. The chapter on place names as political tools reminds us that they will often "raise passions to a high level, and sometimes to the boiling point" (79).

The two long chapters of Part III are concerned with the linguistic transformation of geographical names. Kadmon has deftly explored the treatment of names in several languages and scripts used around the world, with special attention given to the Chinese, Japanese and Inuktitut writing systems.

In reviewing the meaning of 372 generics in 33 languages, Kadmon has provided a valuable list with their definitions in English. He then assessed transplanting of names, handling of generic and specific elements of names, respect for local names (endonyms) rather than the traditional foreign forms (exonyms), translation of names, transliteration of names from one script to another, and the production of pronunciation guides. Although Kadmon has urged the development of guides for

pronunciation, in practice many names authorities shy away from making pronouncements on pronunciation.

Almost half the book (Part IV) deals with the standardization of names. As the issues and benefits of standardizing names are explored, the tasks and functions of a national names authority are described, the principles of naming features are identified, and the necessity for toponymic guidelines to be developed by national names authorities is explained. Standardization at the international level requires extensive cooperation. Such cooperation has been achieved since 1967 through the convening of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names held every five years. The actual work of standardizing names at the global level is performed by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, usually meeting twice between conferences.

Part V presents valuable information on identifying populated places and physical and cultural features on maps, and developing digital data bases. Kadmon's vast experience and knowledge of cartography, toponymy and data bases shine through with great brilliance. "It must be remembered," he wrote, "that cartographic symbols and verbal toponyms belong to two completely different languages of communication, and both (to employ another analogy from married life) must cohabit the same bed, namely the map space" (248).

There are three appendices. Appendix A sets out Resolution No. 4 on "National Standardization," endorsed at the First Conference (1967). The resolution emphasizes five recommendations: the requirement of national names authorities to contribute to international standardization; the methodology of how to collect names; the principles and practices of treating names in the office; the handling of names in multilingual areas; and the necessity of making official lists of names available to map makers and the public.

Appendix B presents the current statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, approved by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1993. UNGEGN now has 22 linguistic/geographical divisions. Each country may decide which division it wishes to join, and may join more than one.

Appendix C comprises the Glossary of Toponymic Terminology, beginning with “acronym” and ending with “writing system.” Since 1967, the glossary has been modified and augmented several times. The present version was approved by the Seventh Conference held in New York in January 1998. There are 375 entries, but after subtracting the cross references, and adding the secondary definitions within single entries, there are in fact 254 distinct definitions in the glossary. Although UNGEGN has struggled with the development of a lexicon of terminology relating to geographic naming, the present glossary is still quite inadequate. Many useful words and phrases are missing, such as hagnonym, initialism, geographic term, transfer name, and transplant name. At the same time, the present glossary is inflated with words and phrases with no direct connection to place naming, among them being: *address*, *default value*, *firmware* and *hardware*, all specific to computer programming. Some of the explanations are opaque, the worst example being *choronym*: “Toponym applied to an areal feature.” Choronymy (not in the glossary) should be viewed as embracing toponymy and, in addition, non-toponymic names describing seasonal features (e.g., winds names), migratory features (e.g. ocean current names), and single event features (e.g., hurricane and typhoon names).

Toponymy: The Lore, Laws and Language of Geographical Names is scientific and academic in tone, yet is balanced here and there with wit and whimsy. Its strengths are revealed in the author’s well honed knowledge of toponymy all around the world coupled with his empirical grasp of cartography, geography and linguistics. Many of the 36 illustrations are photographs that he had taken over the years to illustrate various aspects of naming. Although there is no bibliography, there is a multitude of references at the end of each of the five parts. The soft-cover book sells for \$14.95, and is truly a bargain for those involved in mapping, collecting names in the field, and writing about toponymy. I ordered my copy at a Falls Church, Virginia bookstore on a Monday, and retrieved it the following Saturday. No shipping charges! No taxes!

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