

## Book Reviews

*Mexico — The Name.* By Gutierre Tibón. Published by Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences, Onomastica No. 17, Winnipeg, 1959. Pp. 32.

This study of the name Mexico by Professor Tibón, our member in Mexico City, is a scholarly piece in the Onomastica Series edited by Professor J. B. Rudnyćkyj.

After a discussion of early tribal names for the country and city we now know as Mexico, Professor Tibón examines the various theories for the etymology of Mexico, and the various Indian names for the city and country of Mexico. His conclusion as to the meaning of the name is: "Mexico comes from the Náhuatl *Metzxiheco*, that is *Metz(tli)xih(tli)co*, 'in the navel of the moon.' "

Those who are familiar with the other scholarly works on names from the pen of Professor Tibón will immediately have confidence in his conclusions in this short work, and they will not be disillusioned.

Elsdon C. Smith

*The Use of Names by Micronesians.* Edited by John E. deYoung. Anthropological Working Papers, A Series Issued from the Office of The Staff Anthropologist Trust Territory of The Pacific Islands. Guam, M. I. Number 3. Second Edition, 1960. Pp. 124.

This is a group of six articles by various anthropologists on Yapese, Palauan, Ponapean, Trukese, Marshallese and Mariana names. As studies of the acquisition of surnames by primitive peoples this work is most interesting. Other name practices are discussed, and it may be observed that the various peoples did not follow exactly the same name customs.

The younger generation first began to adopt surnames for official record purposes, and the practice gradually spread. Influence of the German, Japanese, and American administrations are apparent ;

early contact with English whalers and missionaries influenced names. In most of the groups use of the father's birth name as a family name is common.

Other family names originated in various ways. The lot on which a man resided had a name and this name might become the man's surname as long as he lived there. Clan titles, from a position of responsibility and prestige, were sometimes hereditary and identified the bearer. The Christian, or church, name, i.e. the baptismal name which was different from the given or birth name, sometimes became the surname. As in other parts of the world, nicknames often became the permanent family name. Clan names could be used as surnames.

Elsdon C. Smith

*The American Counties; A Record of the Names of the 3,067 Counties, Dates of Creation and Organization, Area Population, Historical Data, Etc.*

By Joseph Nathan Kane. viii and 500 pp.; tables. Scarecrow Press, Inc., New York, 1960. 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches. \$11.00.

This useful reference work will be of particular interest to students of onomastics and American historical geography or to anyone who has occasion to make much use of county data. After a brief preface and an introductory chapter analyzing the sources of American county names, we find a lengthy (251-page) table listing each of the 3,067 present day counties alphabetically and stating the date of its creation, its land area, 1950 population, county seat, and the origin of its name. In those cases where the aboriginal term or person after whom the county was named is obscure, there is a brief, but enlightening, biographical or etymological statement. Five shorter tables — those listing the counties by states and chronologically by date of formation, the former names of counties that have undergone name changes, and the alphabetical lists of county seats and of individuals after whom counties have been named — are basically re-arrangements of the master table, except for the introduction of material on name changes and citations of the statutes organizing the counties.

As the best single compendium of basic facts concerning the American counties, this volume merits space in any reference library; and Kane appears to have performed an exemplary job within his stated aims. Unfortunately, some major deficiencies must be noted. There are no maps or bibliographical citations; there is no information on the numerous, and often baffling, boundary changes various counties have undergone; and some dozens of extinct counties are left unmentioned. Consequently, it will still be necessary for anyone concerned with shifts in the names, identities, and boundaries of many of our American counties to leaf through an imposing stack of older Census bulletins in order to track down the elusive facts.

Wilbur Zelinsky

Southern Illinois University

*Nebraska Place-Names* by Lilian L. Fitzpatrick. New edition, including selections from *The Origin of the Place-Names of Nebraska* by J. T. Link. Edited, with an introduction, by G. Thomas Fairclough. Bison Books, 107. University of Nebraska Press, 1960.

This attractive paperback is a reprint of two earlier monographs; Miss Fitzpatrick's work originally appeared in the University of Nebraska *Studies in Language, Literature, and Criticism* in 1925; Mr. Link's, which is only partially reprinted in the present volume, was first issued in 1933 as a Bulletin of the Nebraska Geological Survey. In his introduction, Mr. Fairclough expresses the hope that the reprinting of these two studies at this time will stimulate interest in placename research in Nebraska. This review, therefore, will consider the works in terms of their utility as models. It is, after all, hardly fair to hold the late authors of works already a generation old responsible for techniques that have been developed in more recent times. On the other hand, if this re-issue of *Nebraska Place-Names* is to be used as a point of departure by future researchers, now is surely the time to point out its avoidable flaws along with its retainable virtues.

Of the two authors, Miss Fitzpatrick is, on the whole, to be preferred as a model. She had the wisdom to take as her province a

do-able segment on the place-names of Nebraska; her research was limited to community names, which she classed as those belonging to "places of human settlement and government divisions." Her results appear in an orderly dictionary style, arranged according to counties. Mr. Link sought to investigate the origins of every name then on existing state maps; the four chapters of his work which comprise Part II of this book represent, says Mr. Fairclough, the bulk of what has been done on Nebraska natural features. It is unfortunate that a man of Mr. Link's abilities and interests lacked the compulsion to precision that is the very fibre of sound research; he seems not to have felt the obligation to give full and specific information on one problem before leaping on to the next challenge. It is the stated intention of the editor to call the attention of scholars to what remains to be done, and to point out the availability of information on which future studies may be based. The future researcher might be well advised, however, to avail himself chiefly of the bibliographies, files, and maps assembled by Miss Fitzpatrick and Mr. Linder; he should avoid attempting to read their minds. He should seek to take fullest advantage of what work has been done without jumping to conclusions — *pro or con* — about its reliability or inclusiveness. He owes himself a *tabula rasa* on which to work out his own conclusions according to his own methods.

The Model A Ford was a perfectly splendid car, but it cannot fairly or realistically be compared with today's Thunderbird; placename research must also be viewed in the context of its times and of the methods and materials known to its authors. Following are some suggestions for today's scholar who finds the model of *Nebraska Place-Names* stimulates him to undertake some research.

FIRST: He should follow Miss Fitzpatrick's example and stake off for himself an area small enough so he can do it extremely well. He may not wish to restrict himself to one category of place-names; he may prefer to do all the place-names he can find in one town or, if he is more ambitious, in one county.

SECOND: He should avail himself of some of the excellent intensive studies that have been done in recent years; the work of the late Professor Robert L. Ramsay and his students at Missouri should be studied carefully, as should Professor Frederic G. Cas-

sidy's *The Place Names of Dane County, Wisconsin* (Publications of the American Dialect Society, 7, 1947) which employs Ramsay's methods in the main. Particularly desirable is the terse style of its entries, which give the essential information but avoid the copy-bookish prose which Miss Fitzpatrick sometimes used; for example, s.v. *Burbank*, page 20:

"This inland place was located in Snake Creek precinct, near Snake Creek. It was named after the local postmaster. The postoffice has been discontinued."

THIRD: Pronunciations, recorded in the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association, should be given for all but the most obvious names; the reader may then assume the customary pronunciation if none is given. Such might be the case with *Rice* or *Hillside*, but there are many unexpected variants in local usage that the researcher has an obligation to record. For example, *Athens*, Vermont is pronounced [eθənz], and *Gillett*, Wisconsin has the stress on the first syllable. Nebraska has many Indian place-names and many foreign imports; the reader of a modern report on them should expect to find out the local pronunciations of such names as *Danneborg*, *Nysted*, *Otoe*, *Saint Deroin*, *Doniphan*, and a host of others. He should not be left to guess whether it is safe to pronounce *Nemaha* on analogy with *Omaha*.

An excellent way to give place-name research a real utility and to undermine the arguments of those who would dismiss us as diletantes is to record accurately and scientifically the current local pronunciations of the names of the area under study. The investigator, often a native, is usually interested in or involved with the territory in which he is working, and should consider it vital to do field work to assemble pronunciations and local traditions. Some of the fanciful local legends on the origins of names he may and must reject, but for the pronunciations, the inhabitants are unassailable authorities. (There is, for example, a shibboleth here in the Connecticut Valley by which the natives may be separated from the "others." Outlanders pronounce *Holyoke* as if it were a sacred tree; natives make it the entire yellow portion of an egg.) Many of this land's names appear in its literature, and aside from the pleasure of providing readers with authentic local pronounci-

ations, the investigator will also do a great service to compilers of dictionaries, gazetteers, geography books, and histories, to say nothing of radio, television, and news-wire services whose pronunciation guides, especially domestic ones, are not always reliable.

FOURTH: The entries should give as much information as diligent research can discover; the loving care and exquisite detail of the *English Place Name Society Publications* entries is perhaps impractical for the average American publication, but the scholar should certainly have in his files a bulk of comparable information which would be available to anyone seeking further detail. Ambiguities and fragmentary statements should be avoided; this is not always done in the book under consideration. First names should be given rather than "... *Hansen* was named for a civil engineer by that name..." or *Spragg* "... probably named for a local resident." In the latter instance the reader is left in double doubt: were there people named *Spragg* there at one time and if so was the town named for them? This frustration is frequently repeated by Miss Fitzpatrick, for example s.v. *Lynch*, *Winfield*, *Nesbit*, and *Thurman*; more complete information is given at some entries, but there is more sketchiness than is desirable.

Other fragmentary explanations and etymologies that the new researcher should avoid are exemplified by *Altai* and *Nacora*. The former town, situated on a watershed and — presumably — on high ground is derived, we are told, from Latin *altus*; *Nacora* is said to be "formed from the Spanish *nacio* which means 'I am born.'" In neither case is an explanation for the current form of the name offered; no philologist worth his salt will be content with partial explanations of this sort. To this reviewer, both of the etymologies cited above seem suspect; the similarity just doesn't go far enough to explain the forms. One might as readily claim *Altai* as a "corruption" of the Biblical name *Adlai*, and *Nacora* could as plausibly be said to wear an Indian look.

FIFTH: The new generation of place-name scholars in Nebraska, or practically anywhere else in the United States must also look into the wealth of scholarship that has been published about the Amerind languages in recent years. Good bibliographies are available, and the files of the *International Journal of American Lin-*

*guistics* alone will provide a research scholar with numerous leads on which American Indian languages are being worked on and by whom. The explanations of Indian words repeated in naive out of 19th century local history books should not be endured in a modern work unless they coincide with the best explanations that modern linguistic science can produce.

This review has given most of its attention to Miss Fitzpatrick's work because Mr. Link's, though interesting, seems to have little potential as a model on which to build future research. The flaws in Miss Fitzpatrick's work would, one feels certain, most surely have been righted by the author herself had she lived into our own times and been able to do a new edition. Her early and untimely death has made this the task of others, and it has been the intent in this discussion not to discredit Miss Fitzpatrick and her efforts but to point out ways in which her work can best be used by the author or authors of the new *Nebraska Place-Names*.

Mr. Fairclough and those who aided him are to be thanked for placing this work before us again; the University of Nebraska Press deserves a compliment on the attractive format and reasonable price. Perhaps other university presses may take a cue from this handsome Bison Book and publish or re-issue more place-name studies in their growing paperback series.

Audrey R. Duckert

University of Massachusetts