

Book Reviews

Gentse Naamkunde van ca. 1000 tot 1253. Een Bijdrage tot de kennis van het oudste Middelnederlands. Bouwstoffen en Studiën voor de Geschiedenis en de Lexicografie van het Nederlands, XI. By C. Tavernier-Vereecken. (Brussel:) Belgisch Interuniversitair Centrum voor Neerlandistiek, 1968. Pp. (VII-) XXI, (3)-(625). Price 1000 Belgian *franken*, or about \$20.

This work on the onomastics of Ghent from about 1000 to 1253 is a welcome and needed compilation of most known names of oldest Middle Dutch. It is a temporal follow-up of Professor J. Mansion's *Oud-Gentsche Naamkunde* of 1924. He leads us through the world of Dutch names as recorded in East Flanders' metropolis (Ghent), but only until the turn of the millennium, after which his guide's staff is taken up by *Mevrouw* Tavernier-Vereecken. At the turn of this decade she told me at the University of Ghent that the book here being reviewed was forthcoming. It was indeed worth waiting for.

Fellow students of names can learn much that is methodologically sound from Tavernier-Vereecken's *Gentse Naamkunde*. The book has an air of solid traditional scholarship about it; its text portion appropriately ends with a short systematic treatment of spelling and phonology (pp. 561-596) and contains a valuable section (pp. 176 to 191) on personal name declension and derivation. Sometimes, however, when a single authority is named in support of an interpretive statement, I am left with the thought that such backing seems like a device whereby things are conveniently left pretty much at the surface, without due critical consideration being given to the possibility that a favorite authority might have been mistaken.

Lying almost midway between Bonn (on the Rhine) and London, Ghent enjoys a central location within the heartland of Western Europe. Understandably therefore "personal names," nicknames – with occupational names – and place-names written at early Ghent have, e.g., great relevance for students of English names. Such students who have learned to read German will, with the occasional help of a Dutch-English dictionary, find the writer's style lucid and straightforward. Here is a general reference work that deserves wide distribution within Western Christendom, for medieval Ghent in

Flanders bestrode, in all cardinal directions, primary onomastic crossroads of Western Europe. Needless to say, it is an indispensable source of reference for those working up any Germanic or French names of the Middle Ages or later. What makes the book so valuable as a reference work is the great knowledge brought to it by the writer, including specialized bibliographic references. She is deftly competent in the field of Romance as well as in that of Germanic philology, obviously the right kind of person to have extracted from Middle Latin texts names written by Germanic-speaking burghers of Ghent (who are not known to have begun writing in their own Middle Dutch until 1253).

As to the categories set up for "foreign names" (pp. 144-175): "Latin," "Greek," "Biblical," "Celtic," "French," "English," "German" and "Literary," these do not match each other well on the basis of examples given. Means could have been found to match categories and/or examples better. It is noteworthy that *Mevrouw* Tavernier-Vereecken regards *Karolus* "Carl/Charles" as a German name. In connection therewith she does mention *Karel de Grote* Charlemagne and *Karel Martel* (p. 169), illustrious Frankish rulers whose homeland, having been the Aachen-Limburg area, entitles "*Karolus*" to be historically deemed common German-Dutch property.

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Die Ortsnamen der Ainu. Beiträge zur Japanologie, IV. By Alexander Slawik. Wien: Institute für Japanologie an der Universität Wien, 1968. Pp. (i-iv) 210. Price: 90 Austrian *Schilling*, or about \$3.50.

The Ainu are well known in the Western world as the hirsute, wavy-haired "white" folk of Northern Japan who practice a kind of bear ceremonialism. Photographs of Ainu reveal *Doppelgänger* among them of prominent Western "whites" like Darwin, Tolstoy and President Nixon. Although the bear reckons prominently in the naming of places in Ainu (pp. 109-112), it is inland fishing (pp. 97-105) that, more than anything else, may be demonstrated by toponymic evidence to be the number-one traditional economic

activity of the Ainu. In this connection it is noteworthy that the word and place-name element *chep* can mean not only "fish" or, regionally, "lox," but "food" (in the sense of German *Nahrung*) as well (p. 97).

"Fish"/"food" was thought of by the Ainu as entering the *petpar* (etc.) (*pet* "stream, river" + *par* "mouth, estuary, opening") into what (following the work in Japanese of 1956 by the Ainu Chiri; see p. 19) was conceptualized, in typical Ainu anthropomorphic fashion, as analogous to your own body: the main body of the stream. Building on this analogy, the intake of *chep* through the *petpar* means that a river would not be viewed as flowing upstream and "uphill." Ainu compound place-names bear out the rightness of this interpretation (p. 17): *Rikoman-pet* "higher lying areas" (*rik*) + "ascending" (*oman*) + "stream, river" (*pet*); *Sinoman-pet* "straight ahead" (*sin*) + "ascending" (*oman*) + *ibid.*

Forty out of 45 of the sources making up Slawik's bibliography (pp. 205-210) are in Japanese. His work stands out as the one repository of information, in a Western language, of Ainu place-name knowledge and research from the sixteenth century onward. On p. 5 he announces a forthcoming work on eighth-century evidence throughout Japan of apparently kindred place-names. In the present work (p. 39) we are told that Ainu is no longer a living language, which is the same as saying that Ainu place-name elements have ceased to be productive. The Ainu toponymic landscape, which the Japanese traditionally leave largely intact (p. 3), would therefore hold little etymological meaning except for the old among the Ainu (p. 5). And even they cannot provide us with all of the answers we seek; otherwise Chiri's attempt at reconstruction found in the preceding paragraph would not have been necessary.

When Slawik talks about the more marked assimilation of the Ainu in recent decades to the culture of their colonizing Japanese neighbors (p. 3), one would not question this for the "Ezo-Ainu" (p. 11) of Hokkaido. But what of the South Sakhalin (South Karafuto) and Kurile Island groups? Their homeland was ceded to the Soviet Union after World War II. On the nationality map of the U.S.S.R. in the 1951 edition of that land's official geographic atlas for secondary schools, the Kuriles are shown as solidly Russian, whereas much of the middle third of South Sakhalin, with the adjoining western coastline, is shown as Ainu in nationality.

Slawik's reproduced typed manuscript gives a thoroughgoing and systematic treatment of every imaginable category in relation to Ainu place-names. It is hard to believe that much could have been left out. Some 12 diagrammatic and more detailed regional maps provide valuable illustrative material. Four toponymic case studies are appended to the work from pp. 175 through 203. Aside from an occasional syntactic Slavicism and more than one proofreading flaw, the reader should be ready for much Austrian German. For most English-speaking readers more than a pocket-sized German-English dictionary is advised.

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Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, University College London, July 3-8, 1966. Edited by H. Draye. Louvain, International Centre of Onomastics, [1969]. Pp. 504, 23 plates, 24 maps. Price \$20.00.

Now, three years after the Congress in London in 1966, the papers read at the meetings are published, with the assistance of the U.N.E.S.C.O. on the recommendation of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies of the Belgian Government and of the "Fondation Universitaire" (Belgium), being compiled and prepared for press by J. McN. Dodgson and A. D. Mills. This is in contrast with the practice adopted by the Tenth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences in Vienna, in 1969, of printing all the papers submitted in time before the Congress meets and presenting them to the members so that they could read them and discuss them intelligently at the meetings.

The papers at the Vienna meetings were photographed from the typewritten copies in order to produce the books in time. Those papers not submitted in time to be included will be produced in a supplement to be published soon. Those attending the Tenth Congress appeared to be pleased with the opportunity to examine the papers before the meetings, and it is to be hoped that this practice can be followed at the Eleventh Congress in Sofia in 1972.

Papers by members of the American Name Society included in the collection under review are: Y. E. Boeglin, "La rivière Lab de

Serbie"; D. J. Georgacas, "The name Asia for the continent"; E. P. Hamp, "Early Welsh names, suffixes and phonology"; I. Lutterer "Chronological value of suffixes in the Czech place-names"; W. F. H. Nicolaisen, "Some problems of chronology in southern Scotland"; J. P. Pauls, "Type, structure and usage of surnames in the Brest-Litovsk region"; J. S. Ryan, "Chronology of Australian place-names with special reference to Aboriginal names"; Y. Slavutych, "The Russianization of Ukrainian place-names"; E. C. Smith, "Influence in change of name"; F. L. Utley, "A survey of American place-names"; and W. T. Zyla, "The name Dnieper and the names of some of its tributaries"; truly a representative list. The papers are all in either the English, German, French, or Spanish languages.

Preceding the papers is a list of the Committee of Patrons and the members of the International Committee of Onomastic Sciences, together with the organizing committee headed by Professor A. H. Smith. Professor Smith died May 11, 1967, and there is included a comprehensive sketch of his life and work. Also preceding the papers one finds the general program of the Congress. All in all this is a very valuable reference and source book.

Elsdon C. Smith

GENEALOGICAL PUBLISHING COMPANY REPRINTS

The following eight reprints may be ordered from the Genealogical Publishing Company, 521-23 St. Paul Place, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. They all concern family names and changes of family names in the British Isles. Readers particularly interested in this area may, therefore, wish to check the list carefully for any items missing from their bookshelves.

- Barber, Henry. *British Family Names. Their Origin and Meaning.* London, 1903. Pp. xii, 286. Reprinted, 1968. Price \$8.50.
- Baring-Gould, S. *Family Names and their Story.* London, 1910. Pp. xii, 432. Reprinted, 1968. Price \$10.00.
- Ewen, C. L'Estrange. *A History of Surnames of the British Isles.* London, 1931. Pp. xx, 508. Reprinted, 1968. Price \$12.50.
- Guppy, Henry Brougham. *Homes of Family Names in Great Britain.* London, 1890. Pp. lxvi, 601. Reprinted, 1968. Price \$15.00.

- Harrison, Henry. *Surnames of the United Kingdom: a Concise Etymological Dictionary*. 2 vols. in 1. London, 1912. Pp. 332. Reprinted, 1968. Price \$15.00.
- Matheson, Rob't E. *Special Report on Surnames in Ireland (together with) Varieties and Synonymes of Surnames and Christian Names in Ireland*. 2 vols. in 1. Dublin, 1909. Pp. 94. Reprinted, 1968. Price \$7.50.
- Phillimore, W. P. W. and Edw. Alex. Fry. *An Index to Changes of Name under Authority of Act of Parliament or Royal Licence and including Irregular Changes from I George III to 64 Victoria 1760 to 1901*. With Introduction on the Law of Change of Name. London, 1905. Pp. xxxii, 357. Reprinted, 1968. Price \$12.50.
- Sims, Clifford Stanley. *The Origin and Signification of Scottish Surnames with a Vocabulary of Christian Names*. Albany, N. Y., 1862. Pp. xi, 122. Reprinted, 1968. Price \$7.50

Barber's work contains a short section on British surnames as derived from nicknames, clan or tribal names, place-names, official and trade names, and Christian, foreign, and foundling names, plus Old Norse and Frisian names. He lists names appearing in the Domesday Book, both those of landholders and of tenants. The major part of the work is an alphabetical list of British surnames, beginning on p. 79 and running to p. 283. This list, however, is barely satisfactory to a student of onomatology, not only because of its solecisms and over-conciseness, but also because it has largely been amplified and superseded by the works of Harrison and Ewen, which are probably the most valuable of the entire group herein reviewed.

Harrison begins with a two-page "forespeech" or author's introduction, telling of his materials, sources and *modus operandi*. Then he begins his list, quite complete and very readable, with entries nicely set in bold-face and with frequent cross-references. Ewen's work, on the other hand, is of a historical nature, beginning with the origin of language and names, and containing chapters of early Gothic, Norman and Breton names, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth century names, and with an extensively developed section on the origin of surnames from nicknames. This theory, incidentally, has undergone considerable criticism and, in the opinion of some scholars, mars the work. As I read through it, I also noted a some-

what recurrent anti-Semitism evident in such forced remarks as "... our representatives of the Semitic race" (in discussing sobriquets, p. 149) and "... there are said to be more Jews in London than in Palestine. It follows that considerable numbers of the names which grace our directories are of Jewish origin" (p. 213). Aside from the above, however, the work contains much valuable information on the history of surnames in the British Isles. It concludes with a historical summary on the legal status of surnames and the changing of surnames and forenames.

Guppy's *Homes of Family Names* attempts an investigation of the distribution of names in Great Britain in respect to their bearing upon "the antiquities, the history, and the racial division of Great Britain." Its two main sections deal with names in England and Wales; a third section, appended and 25 pages in length, covers briefly the five geographical groups of Scottish names.

Baring-Gould, a quasi-historical work, depends somewhat upon Guppy, and from this fact, derives much value. It covers totem and tribal names and the development of trade- and place-names; moreover, it does not confine itself to the British Isles, having chapters on French and Scandinavian names as well. One entertaining curiosity is its chapter entitled, "Name Stories," a short collection of humorous anecdotes about names which verges more upon folklore than upon onomatology.

About Phillimore and Fry there is little to say. This is an index of name changes gleaned from the London Gazette and Dublin Gazette lists during the years 1760-1901. Its long title is self-explanation enough.

The works of Matheson and Sims are the shortest of this group, being concerned with Irish and Scottish surnames, respectively. Matheson is of some value and includes much basic data, the greater part of which is arranged in tables and derived from the Registrar-General of Marriages, Births and Deaths in Ireland. Sims' book, however, is of the least value, giving only the most common surnames, with little or no philological analysis in many cases. I find little here which has not been included in one or more of the other, more competent works above.

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American Surnames. By Elsdon C. Smith. Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1969. Pp. xx + 370. Price \$9.95.

Diffidence seldom appears in reviews of books; humility never does. Nevertheless, I confess a certain timidity and a lot of humility in my attempt to present – not necessarily review in the usual sense – Mr. Smith's book to the readers of *Names* and the members of the American Name Society. Only a few onomastic studies of its caliber have been published in recent years. In England, perhaps, some scholars have written and published books of comparable worth. The late P. H. Reaney, *The Origin of English Surnames* and *A Dictionary of British Surnames*, can hardly be surpassed as a scholar in the study of personal names. In the United States, George R. Stewart's *Names on the Land* remains a landmark of scholarship and suggestiveness, as well as actually the germinal catalyst for place-name study in the United States. Finally, Mr. Smith's work admits maturity to American scholarship in personal names.

Mr. Smith is modest enough in his introduction: "Preparing a book on American surnames with all their forms and different national derivations is not quite so difficult as trying to eliminate the oceans by dipping the water out with one hand, a teaspoonful at a time, but both tasks seem to be endless." Anyone who has tried to interpret American surnames can appreciate this. Although a name is a label and has ostensibly no other meaning, curiosity leads all to speculate on "what my name means." Genealogists may erect fanciful family trees, but the etymological squirrel squeezes against the bark of the crotch, leaving a liveliness that embarrasses.

So it is with American surnames. The transliteration and transfiguring of names through assumed spellings, legal and extra-legal changes, and deviant pronunciations have made a mishmash of American surnames, crowding thousands over the edge of indecipherability. In addition, 20,000,000 black citizens have completely lost their ancestral names, often assuming whatever name that sounded respectable or ones from politicians or, occasionally, national heroes, but not often the names of the slave masters. The more one studies American surnames, the more he perceives that the melting pot motif is a naming one, not a mingling of ethnic groups. It is doubtful that any other nation has so many onomastic puzzles.

After surveying the history of hereditary surnames, Mr. Smith lists the 50 English surnames of the arrivals on the *Mayflower* in 1620. A comparison of these names with the 2,000 most common surnames in the United States as listed in 1964 by the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Social Security Administration, "Distribution of Surnames in the Social Security Account Number File," reveals that many of the *Mayflower* surnames are not among the most common now: Alden, Allerton, Billington, Britteridge, Browne (although Brown is no. 4), Chilton, Crackston, Fuller, Gardiner (although Gardner is no. 157), Holebeck, Howland, Langemore, Leister, Margeson, Rigdale, Samson, Soule, Standish, Tilley, Tinker, Trevore, and Winslow. An investigation into the reasons these names are not among our most popular ones would be a valuable addition to our cultural and social history. Those among the first 100 most common are Carter (38), Martin (13), Moore (11), Rogers (49), Thompson (14), Turner (40), and White (15). Clarke is no. 412 but the variant Clark is no. 18. Cooke is no. 791, while Cook is no. 48. If we eliminate the variant Brown, we find no *Mayflower* surname among the first ten most common names: Smith, Johnson, Williams, Jones, Miller, Davis, Wilson, Anderson, and Taylor. The remainder of the *Mayflower* names and their ranking in 1964 are Bradford (565), Brewster (1701), Carver (990), Dotey (1556), Eaton (575), Ellis (101), English (613), Fletcher (320), Goodman (327), Hopkins (246), Mullins (454), Priest (1395), Story (1550), Warren (141), and Wilder (887). An estimated number of persons with each name is also given.

The difficulties of tracing the origin of thousands of American surnames are amply illustrated. For instance, German *Weise* has several possible references: It may refer to the offspring of *Weise*, "wisdom"; or "to the educated or learned man"; or an orphan; or a descendant of *Wizo*, "a pet form of names commencing with *Wid* 'forest'." Another, *Wasson*, may be derived from either English, Swedish, or German. The variations on surnames are seemingly endless and compound the possibilities for interpretation.

Surnames come from many sources, the most usual ones from a father's name, an occupation or office, a description or action, or a place. Those most familiar are the patronymical ones formed by the elements *-ing*, *ap*, *O'*, *Mc-*, *-son*, *fitz-*, and *-sen*. These in general mean "son of" or "grandson of," and produce such names as *Brice*

(Ap Rhys), Whiting (son of Hwita), O'Leary (grandson of Laogh-
aire), and McCall (son of Cathal). From other countries and lan-
guages patronymical elements have contributed to names here.
Vice-President Agnew's father had the surname of Anagnosto-
poulos, "son of Anagnosto," a form of *Anagnostis*, which, according
to Mr. Smith, can be translated as "reader" or "ecclesiastical aco-
lyte," not "son of the unknown," as some with a smattering of
Greek claimed.

Surnames derived from occupation or office are common in the
United States. Most of these came from pursuits followed in the
Middle Ages when surnames began to be important identifiers. The
most common name in the United States is Smith, an occupational
name. Others include such names as Miller, Taylor, Clark, Walker,
Bright, Baker, Carter, Stewart, Turner, Parker, Cook, and Cooper,
all high frequency names. Names of this type occur in other lan-
guages and have been transferred to the United States.

Nicknames provided many surnames. These often are difficult to
classify. For instance, a man named Bishop may have earned the
name because he looked like a bishop. Many nicknames quickly fall
from usage because of unpleasant connotations. We no longer find
such names as Piggessflesh, Pourfishe, Catsnose, Cocksbrain, Goose-
beak, or Bullhead. Names referring to the *membrum virile* are no
longer found, although they were in use earlier. Such names, how-
ever, do survive in other languages, Budalingam being an example
in Hindi. Hues of skin gave rise to such names as Brown, Black
(Blake), Murrell (Morrill), Bissett (brown), Swartz and variants
(very dark), Karas, Blount (blond), and White. A man with light
hair might have the name Fairfax in English; Gannon in Irish, Gelb
in German, Zanthos in Greek, Boyd in Irish, and Zlaty in Czech. The
decendants would not necessarily have light hair, however, and
probably do not know or worry about the origin of the name. Names
like Good, Bonney, Goodbody, Fair, Fairchild, Learned, Smart,
Bird, Pigg, and Moody, among hundreds more are rather obviously
derived from nicknames.

Another set of names are derived from places. Obvious ones are
Atwell, (whence Twell), Atwater, and Attridge, Overstreet, By-
water, Underhill, Hill, etc. Names like Noakes (*atten oakes*), Nash
(*atten ash*), Nelms (*atten elm*) and Nye (*atten ea* "stream") are ob-
vious only to those who are familiar with the phonological changes

that have taken place in English. Smith concludes, "Almost every object, natural or manmade, or contour of the land, has become a family name now common in America, especially the short descriptions, such as hill, ridge, slope, valley, dale, pit, rock, spring, stream, lake, pool, well, bank, bottom, island, ford, gate, corner, bend, bridge, wood, grove, shaw, heath, tree, bush, house, hall, field, meadow, way, and road."

A subclassification of surnames from place consists of a set taken from the generic *-ton*, from Old English *tun*, loosely translated as "a village," now ordinarily taken as "town." These are easily identifiable, although the specific element may be masked through phonological changes. Carlton, Clayton, Clifton, Compton, Morton, Stanton, Thornton, and Walton are examples. Towne comes from the generic only.

Names also come from changes for personal or public reasons. Entertainers seldom use public names that are the same as those shown on their birth certificates. Movie performers try to select names that will appeal to, or at least be easily remembered by the audience. Under such circumstances, Benjamin Kubelsky is changed into Jack Benny, Lucille Le Sueur into John Crawford, and Rodolpho d'Antonguolla into Rudolph Valentino. On the other hand, musicians and singers have been known to choose an "exotic" name that sounds "foreign."

American Indians did not need family names until after the white man came to this continent. In general they have conformed to the European practices of naming and have changed early names in favor of names that they consider have better connotations. Smith says, "The whites have not driven the Indians out of America; they have smothered their names." This is both true and sad, for the greatest puzzles in American onomastics, especially in place-names, belong to so-called Indian names.

One of the legal means of changing surnames in the United States is through marriage. Occasionally, the husband chooses to take the wife's maiden surname, usually for financial or social reasons. According to Smith, who is an attorney, most states do not compel a woman to change her name, although socially she is almost always known by her husband's surname. A few states do require the change, and their courts "have held that upon marriage a woman's surname by custom and law changes to that of her husband and

she cannot continue to use her former surname in certain cases where there is an apparent conflict with a statute." Smith notes cases in which women have suffered prosecution because of this rather strange tribal custom in our country. Someone will soon challenge the constitutionality of these decisions.

A small group consists of surnames arbitrarily coined by the persons who bear them. Writers who choose pseudonyms belong in this group: Mark Twain, Anatole France, de Stendhal, and a host of others. Russian leaders have chosen new names, such as Stalin, "steel," and Molotov, "hammer."

Perhaps this will give some intimation of the richness of the material in Smith's book. The cliché, "You can't put the book down," is almost applicable here. Specialists will find approximately 7,750 names to use for examples. Furthermore, the analyses of individual names are thorough and succinct, for Mr. Smith is probably the foremost authority on personal names and surnames in the world and is the dean of American onomastics. This book has to take its place as the major American work in the subject.

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