

## Book Reviews

*House Names around the World.* By Joyce C. Miles. London: David and Charles, 1972. Pp. 136. Price £ 1.95 U. K.

This book reminds one that there was a time when students of language confined their attentions to a handful of "respectable" classical languages. On the basis of what their analysis revealed of these languages, they made general statements about the nature of language itself. They believed that they had established a framework into which all other languages could be fitted, and proceeded to force the English language, amongst others, into it. In retrospect we can see the appalling damage that was done. We are still trying to clear our minds of the absurdities that have been handed down by generation after generation as scholarly truths.

Students of names sometimes seem wilfully determined to follow the example set by the early philologists, even though they are often, by training, philologists themselves. They need the tools of that science to scrape away the layers of orthographic and phonetic changes that obscure so many place-names and personal names. The pity is that all too often the scraping seems to become the end rather than the means. Slowly, at any rate, evidence is amassed about a small number of naming systems, the planets of onomatology. No one seems willing to admit that the planets are surrounded by countless stars – or in onomastic terms, that lying beneath almost any generic term is a nomenclature. Not that house names are that small a star. Where British house names are concerned, at least, they follow the line of development admirably traced by Mrs. Matthews in her recently-published *Place Names of the English-Speaking World*. Just as American place-names extend the naming principles apparent in British place-names, so British house names extend those principles still further. There is a very direct line of descent.

All of which is to say that in reading Joyce Miles' book, the serious onomatologist ought to feel like Keats' "watcher of the skies, when a new planet swims into his ken." Here, without doubt, is a nomenclature worthy of study. Mrs. Miles, however, is not, and does not claim to be, an onomatologist. She is an intelligent layman, an amateur social historian, who is aware of the fact that many people notice and are intrigued by the names of houses. She has therefore collected a great many of them, and has had a lot of fun doing so, since wherever possible she took the names from the houses themselves. Having made her collection, she has set down her thoughts about them, and her thoughts are certainly not without interest. But this book, with its random collection of chapters, its less-than-primitive classification system, its puzzling lack of an index,

cannot be considered a true contribution to name studies. The best that can be hoped for it in purely onomastic terms is that it will help to rap some genuine onomatologists on the knuckles and say to them,

the materials for a study of this nomenclature exist and are readily available, e. g., in telephone and local directories,

the namers themselves are usually willing, if one publicises one's interest, to explain in a letter why they chose one name rather than another.

But then, the names, and the namers, are available for many other nomenclatures. When a serious study of them begins we may hope that just as linguistics sprang from philology, onomastics will spring from onomatology. We need both disciplines: they need each other. In the meantime Joyce Miles' book will please some members of the public with its collection of anecdotes about house names, but it does little to set the specialists on the paths they so clearly need to tread.

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*The Kassel Manuscript of Bede's 'Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum' and Its Old English Material.* By T. J. M. van Els. Netherlands: Van Gorcum & Comp. 1972. Price dfl. 79.00.

There is always room on the library shelf for research the most narrow in scope if the scholarship is broad and deep and if the thesis contributes knowledge and understanding to a recognized field of study. So it is that we welcome *The Kassel Manuscript of Bede's 'Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum' and Its Old English Material* by T. J. M. van Els, director of the Institute of Applied Linguistics at Nijmegen, Netherlands, who edits and discusses much of the Old English material, almost exclusively onomastic, of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*.

Essentially van Els makes possible a close comparison of the four main eighth-century manuscripts with the Kassel MS. by presenting place-names, river-names, and personal-names from all five manuscripts in parallel columns and by providing pertinent etymological and phonological material. He confronts the name material of the Kassel MS. directly with corresponding sections of the other major MSS. to establish as accurately as possible the oldest occurrences of specific names. A hazardous enterprise! But one whose dangers van Els is well aware of. He applies historical-phonological research carefully, even gingerly, for he recognizes the complex of factors to be reckoned with: stability of orthography, influence of Latin, attitude and dialect of scribe, etc.

Although van Els in *The Kassel Manuscript* makes no broad assessments linguistically or onomastically – indeed, he does not attempt to solve major problems concerning phonological features of Old English – he does help the reader further to deal onomastically with a historical period of Old English for which very little language material is in evidence. We are grateful, and we make room for his volume on our library shelf.

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*Reverse Acronyms and Initialisms Dictionary*. Edited by Ellen T. Crowley and Robert C. Thomas. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1972. Pp. x + 485. Price \$ 27.50.

Since the companion volume (AID-3, or *Acronyms and Initialisms Dictionary*, 3rd ed.) to this one has already been reviewed (*Names*, 19:218–220), little remains to be said, other than to describe the arrangement of the entries and give the reason why the editors have decided that a “reverse” listing is needed.

AID-3 listed all acronyms and initialisms in strict alphabetical order, regardless of the “meaning” of the items, which caused some difficulty in finding the commonly accepted abbreviation. RAID helps this difficulty by listing “alphabetically all the acronyms in AID-3 by the name of the organization, technical term, or other phrase which has been acronymized.” It works simply: American Name Society, abbreviated to ANS, will be found before American Nuclear Society, which has the same abbreviation. Confronted with the acronym or the initialism, however, the researcher will need to use AID-3.

The format of RAID is the same as that of AID-3, with the exception of containing five pages less of front matter and one more page of text. It is also priced five dollars higher, which may merely indicate that we need to take “acronomics” seriously. The volumes are attractive and certainly will dress up a reference shelf in a library. In addition, the proliferating of acronyms, initialisms, and letter symbols makes these reference books necessary.

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*A Standard Romanized Dictionary of Chinese and Japanese Popular Surnames.* Compiled by Charles K. H. Chen. New York, Oriental Society, 1972. Pp. 681. Price \$ 8.00.

This work consists of five lists of names: alphabetical list of Romanized Chinese surnames, Chinese surnames in Oriental stroke-order, alphabetical list of Romanized Japanese surnames, Japanese surnames in Oriental stroke-order, and Chinese and Japanese Chronological chart with Era names (from A. D. 1001).

In a short foreword the compiler points out that the "Pai chia hsing" (*A Hundred Family Names*) is not enough for Oriental studies. Dr. Chen has collected more than eight thousand Japanese surnames, and observes that they are more complicated and difficult than the Chinese.

This work will be of great help to all engaged in Oriental studies.

Elsdon C. Smith

*The Name for Your Baby.* By Jane Wells and Cheryl Adkins. Richmond: Westover Publishing Company, 1972. Pp. v, 113. Price \$ 1.95.

After commencing with a few remarks on how to choose a suitable name for the baby, the authors devote 12 pages to illustrating the signs of the zodiac. Birthstones and birth flowers are next given for each month.

The main body of the work consists of two lists of Christian names in alphabetical order, the first of girls' names and the second of boys' names. After each name is a short explanation of the meaning, usually in one or two words followed by the language from which the name is derived. The authors in a few cases were apparently unable to make up their minds as to the proper meaning. As an example, for Mary they say, "New Testament form of Miriam," and for Miriam they note, "Original name for Mary."

Elsdon C. Smith

*English Ancestral Names.* By J. R. Dolan. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1972. Pp. xvi, 381. Price \$ 10.00.

Who is not interested in the origin and meaning of his own name or in the odd names of others? The study of names is not only of interest to one who has curiosity about his own identification, but to the anthropologist, ethnologist, philologist, biographer, historian, student of literature,

genealogist, and lexicographer, for names help to check and verify knowledge in many areas. The field is vast, but J. R. Dolan in *English Ancestral Names* has wisely limited himself to English names and to the evolution of surnames from medieval occupations.

Many are not aware that we did not always have surnames, but just a look at the Bible will show that the authors of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, had no second names; they were known only by their first names. So it was in England at one time, but today everyone has a family name, as is true of civilized people in most parts of the world. The author attempts to explain when, how, and why this change occurred in England.

In the Old English period the Anglo-Saxon parents selected an original name for the child, one entirely different from any other in the community or from that of any ancestor, and one that would inspire the child as he grew up, such as *Æthelsunu*, meaning "noble son," if nobility of character was important to the parents.

After the Norman Conquest in 1066 by William the Conqueror, a succession of political and economic events took place which resulted in the development of surnames. King William not only brought over nobles and near-nobles from Normandy to whom he gave large estates, but being a practical man he offered inducements to the skilled craftsmen who poured in – the potters, tanners, coopers, weavers, dyers and smiths. Within 20 years or so, about 40 percent of the population had some trade or occupation besides farming.

Soon the king began to wonder about the land he had given away and wanted to know exactly to whom he had given it and whether he was collecting the amount of taxes to which he was entitled. Thus arose the Domesday Book in 1086, containing the most thorough census to be found in any nation until the beginning of the nineteenth century in the United States, according to Robert S. Hoyt in his *Europe in the Middle Ages* (1957). The Domesday Book names are virtually all Norman and refer to nobles and gentry, for they were the only ones with taxable property. One finds names, such as *Geoffrey de Mandeville* from Mandeville in France, which in modern times changed to Manvill; *Beauchamp*, which became Beecham; and *D'Aubigny*, which soon became Daubeny, and later Dabney and even Dobney.

The names of the Norman dukes and barons referred to a place or locality, either the name of the castle they came from or the village they had inhabited in Normandy or the Anglo-Saxon manor house which had been given to them. These names, therefore, fall into the address classification. For each nobleman, there were hundreds of lowly peasants, farmers, tradesmen, and mechanics. In any village one might find several

Johns, Roberts, or Williams and one had to be distinguished from the other in order to collect regular tax payments for the king. A short description was then applied to each man to indicate which John or Robert was meant. It might be an address name, such as "John at the gate," finally resulting in John Gate with the dropping of the preposition and the article. Some other landmark, such as a church, a tower, a hill, a marsh, or a brook might have been used, giving the surnames Church, Tower, Hill, Marsh, Brook, respectively.

Instead of an address name it may be a relationship name, as, for instance, "John's son," giving Johnson; or a nickname, usually describing a physical or mental characteristic or action of the person designated, as, for instance, Swift for a fast runner; or a name derived from the occupation or status of the individual, such as Baker, Brewer, or Knight.

The vast majority of surnames in the Medieval Period were derived from what the person did, that is, from his occupation. Mr. Dolan has limited himself to these names. He includes over 5,000 names in 189 groups in 22 chapters, beginning with potters and ending with engineers. He covers such names as those derived from the textile and leather industries, smithing, farming, the various building trades, household arts, entertaining, sports, the courts, the church, and the university.

The reader not only learns about the origin of a name but gets a good picture of medieval life and realizes how different it was from modern times. A good portion of each chapter is devoted to describing the particular occupation being discussed. At the end of the discussion a list of names is conveniently given so that one can easily find the name for which he is looking. For instance, as a man who made shears came to be called Shearsmith or Shearman, his descendants may be called Sersmith, Sharman, Shear, Sheara, Shearer, Shears, Sheer, Shaere, Sheeres, Sheers, Sher, Shere, Sherman, Sherr, Shurman. At that time there was no standard system of spelling. It is not likely that most of the bearers of these unusual names realize that they have a common ancestor.

This book was written primarily for the layman, not for the scholar, but the author should have been more careful in his statements and should have realized, for instance, that a name like Gatesby does not mean "by the gate," as he states on p. 11, but is due to Scandinavian influence, *by* being the Danish word for "town," shown in many names in England, such as *Derby*, *Rugby*, *Grimbsby*. It is from the Old Norse *by-r*, "farm, estates, settlement." Allen Mawer pointed out in 1932 in his excellent article in *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* (Vol. VII, pp. 1-30), "The Scandinavian Settlements in England as Reflected in English Place-Names," that during the 25 years of Danish rule from 1017-1042, many Scandinavians came into England and settled, the result of which

is that more than 1,400 places have Scandinavian names. Among these names are those ending in *-by*. The *-by* at the end of a word is not a preposition. Had it been the first element, it might have been considered so, as may be easily confirmed from Henry Harrison's *Surnames of the United Kingdom: A Concise Etymological Dictionary*, published in 1969, under the names *Bysouth*, *Bytham*, *Byth(e)sea*, and *Bywater*. The first instance means "dweller by (the) south" [M. E. *bi*, O. E. *bi* + M. E. *suth(e)*, *soth(e)*, O. E. *súð*]. If, also, he had looked up *Appleby*, the first example with *-by* as the second element, he would have found the meaning "appletree farm or dwelling" [O. N. *eple*, appletree + *by-r*]. On the same page the author likewise states that Williamson shortened to Williams, then Wilson shortened to Wills and Willis, then Wilkinson and Wilkins, Wilkie, Willett, and many others. He needs to consult the dictionaries such as Harrison's and Elsdon C. Smith's in order to avoid a confusing, wild statement of that type, a statement not based on a knowledge of names. He needs to make a thorough study of these names.

I may likewise point out that on p. 152 *Middle of English* should read *Middle English; deriviers* (p. 171) should be *derives*; *can be become* (p. 189) should be *can become*; a period should be placed after *male* on p. 213; *exlusion* (p. 215) should be *exclusion*. Typographical errors can occur, but these are somewhat unusual.

At the end of the volume one finds a selected bibliography of books connected with names and with the history of England in the Medieval Period, a subject index, and an index of surnames mentioned in the book. Even though the serious student of onomastics may find much to criticize in this volume, the uninitiated will get a number of hours of pleasure from it. It is to be hoped that the introduction will lead the reader to a serious study of names or at least to the knowledge of the significance of name study.

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*Names from Africa, Their Origin, Meaning, and Pronunciation.* By Ogonna Chuks-orji. Edited with a Commentary by Keith E. Baird. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1972. Pp. vi, 91. Price \$ 4.95.

Here is a book to help parents in America in choosing African names for their children, and also to aid any individual who wishes to adopt an African name in place of his Christian name.

The author, born in Aba, Nigeria, and currently working for his doctorate at the University of California, reminds us that the giving of names in Africa is a matter of great importance. People, he writes, are named after such things as important events, great things, days of the week, and order of birth.

The principal part of the book consists of two lists, one of female and another of male African names in alphabetical order with their pronunciation, meaning, and the country and language from which the names are derived. For example, *Nkrumah*, pronounced 'n-KROO-mah, meaning "ninth born" comes from the Akan language as spoken in Ghana, and *Jumaane*, pronounced joo-MAH-neh, meaning "born on Tuesday" comes from Swahili as spoken in East Africa, both male names. A female name is *Ayobunmi*, pronounced ah-yoh-BOON-mee, meaning "joy is given to me," derived from Yoruba as spoken in Nigeria. About 390 female names are listed with about 630 male names.

Appended to the lists is an important and interesting commentary by Dr. Keith E. Baird, professor of humanities at Hofstra University, New York. Here he discusses the significant ceremonies associated with the naming of babies in Africa, and how names are formed. The Yoroba people of Nigeria say, "We consider the state of our affairs before we name a child," and when one studies the meaning of the African names listed in this work he recognizes the truth of the saying. After the naming ceremonies there is usually much feasting and dancing.

A baby is not considered a person until it has been named, and it is not named until it seems likely to survive, although sometimes a trial name is given to be replaced by a later real-life name if the child survives. The temporary name may be uncomplimentary, such as "I am dead" or "I am ugly," to avoid the jealousy of the ancestors who might wish to take a handsome child back for themselves. The final naming on the seventh day for females, and on the ninth day for male children, completes the act of birth in some African countries.

Dr. Baird gives some space to a discussion of given names in certain African countries. As many Africans are Muslims, many are given Muslim names not unfamiliar to us as the Biblical *Musa* (*Moses*), *Dauda* (*David*), and *Yusuf* (*Joseph*). Many Arabian names are found in Africa.

If books of this kind become popular in the black community, we may find many Negroes adopting African names in place of their "Christian" names. Dr. Baird mentions Muhammad Ali (formerly Cassius Clay) and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (formerly Lew Alcindor).

The work being reviewed closes with a brief bibliographical note and short sketches of the author and the writer of the commentary. On its subject this is an important book.

Elsdon C. Smith