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CLASSIFICATION OF PLACE NAMES

Annotation

In this article highlights of place names provides a classificatory scheme, which includes: (1) descriptive names, (2) possessive names (3) incident names, (4) commemorative names, (5) euphemistic names, (6) manufactured names, (7) shift names, (8) folk etymological names, and (9) mistake names.

Key words: Classification, toponyms, typology, onomatologist, place-name, commemorative names.

КЛАССИФИКАЦИЯ МЕСТО НАЗВАНИЙ

Аннотация

В этой статье основные моменты место названий представлена классификационная схема, которая включает в себя: (1) описательные названия, (2) притяжательные имена, (3) названия инцидентов, (4) памятные названия, (5) эвфемистические названия, (6) искусственные названия, (7) названия смен, (8) народные этимологические названия и (9) ошибочные названия.

Ключевые слова: Классификация, топонимы, типология, ониматолог, топонимика, памятные названия.

JOY NOMLARINING TASNIFI

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada diqqatga sazovor joy nomlari tasnifi sxemasi yoritilgan: (1) tavsiflovchi nomlar, (2) egalik nomlari (3) voqea nomlari, (4) esdalik nomlari, (5) evfemistik nomlar, (6) sun'iy nomlar, (7) o'zgarish nomlari, (8) xalq etimologik nomlari va (9) xato nomlar.

Kalit so'zlar: Tasnif, toponimlar, tipologiya, onomatolog, joy nomi, esdalik nomlari.

Introduction. In writing on place names various categories of names are generally assumed, e.g., descriptive names, incident names, etc. This present study attempts to set forth the matter systematically, and thus to present, with an attempt at consistency and completeness, the classes into which place names may be divided according to their manner of origin, which is in general the matter of primary interest and importance to the onomatologist.

The classification might also be said to be with respect to the means or mechanisms by which places are named. These means or mechanisms have, furthermore, a relationship to the psychological processes (i.e. the motives) of the original namers in distinguishing one place from another by various methods, but any adequate study of the psychological processes of naming would have to be conducted at a much deeper level than is here proposed.

Materials and methods. The essential field of the onomatologist seems, however, to be the mechanisms of naming, rather than the motivations of the namers, except in so far as the former at times reflect the latter. Study of names will probably progress better if this distinction is kept clear. Since almost any conceivable stimulus, conscious or unconscious, may be working on the namer at the time of naming, a study of the motivations of naming would scarcely be able to stop short of a whole treatise on human psychology. On the other hand, the mechanisms of naming are comparatively few, and at the same time yield a useful classification of the names themselves.

Nine classes of names are here postulated: 1) Descriptive names, 2) Possessive names, 3) Incident names, 4) Commemorative names, 5) Euphemistic names, 6) Manufactured names, 7) Shift names, 8) Folk etymologies, 9) Mistake names. In addition it is recognized that borderline cases may occur. I have some confidence that this classification is practical and is as nearly all inclusive as can be expected. I worked it out some years ago, and have tested it pretty thoroughly since that time.

Result and analysis. 1) Descriptive names. A descriptive name is one that originates from some permanent or semi-permanent quality of the place itself. The practical test of a descriptive name may be said to be that a traveler coming to the

place of naming should be able to recognize the reason for the naming. The majority of descriptive names perpetuate a quality of the place that can be appreciated by one of the senses, most commonly sight. Hearing, smell, and other senses may serve. More intellectualized or fanciful descriptions are possible, as in Pliocene Ridge, and Matrimony Creek — so named because it was hard to get out of. It should be remembered that description may apply only to the particular place picked upon by the namer.

1a) Pure description. This specifies a quality genuinely and inalienably connected with the thing named, e.g., Black Butte, Long Island, Crescent Lake, Granite Mountain, Roaring Run, Echo Rock, Stinking Spring, Bayport, Horse Heaven.

1b) Associative description. This specifies a trait rather loosely connected with the thing named. It might be said not so much to describe the thing itself as to identify it by means of something associated with it. Thus a stream may be identified merely by the fact that certain plants or trees happen to be growing near-by (Pine Creek, Onion Creek).

1c) Relative description. This specifies a relationship of the place to something else, e.g., Fourth Crossing, Lake Superior. Here also may be included compass-point names (North River, South Island), and mile-post names (Ten Mile Creek). Although, in a sense, relative description may be said not to describe at all, yet it cannot be surely distinguished from other descriptive names.

2) Possessive names. Many names have been applied because of the feeling that some person or group of persons owned that particular place. The ownership, of course, need not have been legal, because the mere residence of a squatter would supply an equally good title for this end. In fact, the "ownership" might rest upon mere right of discovery. In English, these names are generally marked, in their original forms, by the use of the possessive case. These names resemble associative-descriptive names so closely that they could well be classified with them on purely theoretical grounds.

2a) Personal names. These are very common, and most parts of the habitable world are studded with such names as Culp's Hill, and Smith Creek.

2b) Ethnic names. These names merely do for a group what the personal names do for an individual, e.g., Mohawk

River, Chinese Camp, American Fork. The term ethnic has not been much used by American scholars, but seems better than the more common tribal, which is hardly fitting for such names as Chinese and American. Gentile has also been used as a technical term in this sense, but it is likely to cause even more confusion.

2c) Mythological names. Names are sometimes given to places under the belief that they are "possessed" or haunted by some supernatural being or beings. The occurrence in Siouan place names of the element *-wacan*, meaning spirit, is an example.

3) Incident names. These identify the place by means of some incident which has occurred at or near it. As opposed to descriptive names, incident names record only a temporary characteristic or association of the place. This is a very important distinction. For instance, most animal names (Wolf Creek, Antelope Spring) fall into this category. They do not mean that the animal was unusually plentiful at that spot or especially characteristic of it, but merely record a particular occasion upon which the animal was encountered.

Calendar names generally record the incident that someone was at this particular place on a particular day. Thus Independence Rock was named because some early travelers celebrated the Fourth of July there. Even the common use of saints' names among the Spanish explorers, although it is usually attributed to piety and thus considered commemorative, could just as well be considered a mere attempt to record a particular day. Many names may arise from either description or incident.

4) Commemorative names. These arise by the process of taking an already established name and giving it a new application, for honorific ends. In this instance the secondary motive, i.e., commemoration, or at least a desire to perpetuate the old name for some reason, may be considered essential. A body of water in Vermont, for instance, is called Caspian Lake because its outline resembles that of the Caspian Sea. This should, it would seem, be classed as a descriptive name. The namer presumably had no interest in re-applying the old name, but was merely noting that the lake in question was "like the Caspian Sea." In the same way a California town is named Sebastopol, not — it is believed — from any interest in the Russian city, but because of a local squabble that was humorously compared to the famous siege of the Crimean War. Sebastopol has here become really a symbol or a common noun, as if we should speak of "a sebastopol." Thus Cambridge, England, was transferred to Cambridge, Maryland, and then to Cambridge, Ohio.

Transfer name is not, however, synonymous with commemorative name. Most transfer names are commemorative, but not all of them, e.g., Caspian and Sebastopol, in the examples given above, would seem to be transfers but not commemoratives.

Saints' names should doubtless be separated from those of famous men, especially since they include St Michael and certain others who presumably never were men. As noted under incident names, the application of a saint's name on the calendar-day of that saint can possibly be included under the head of incident.

5) Euphemistic names. These are names, comparatively few in number, given with reference to the future, rather than with reference to the past or present. They picture the place by means of an idealization, and are therefore to be distinguished from descriptives, which picture the place, in essence, realistically. The name Greenland — given by Eric the Red, "because men would the more readily go there if the county had a good name" — may serve as a type-example. As with commemoratives, the secondary motive must be considered with euphemistic names. On the whole, this is the most uncertain and probably is one of the smallest of the classes.

6) Manufactured names. These are names constructed, to form new words, from recombined sounds or letters, out of fragments of old words, from initials, by backward spellings, by reversal of syllables, and so forth. Saybrook, Connecticut, formed in 1635 from the titles of Lord Say and Sele and Lord Brook, is probably the earliest example of such a name in the United States. As typical examples we may note Tesnus (from Sunset), Romley (from Morley), Somerange (from Summer Range), Alicel (from Alice L.), Ti (from the reversed initials of Indian Territory), and Michillind a (from the abbreviations of three state names, with an

added a.) Boundary names (Calexico, Texarkana) form a sub-division.

7) Shift names. These are names that are placed upon places by the mere shift of the specific from one generic to another in the vicinity. Thus from White Mountain may spring White Lake, White River, and Whiteville, although none of these may be white. The resulting group of names is often called a name-cluster. I have been forced to coin the term shift-name. Transfer name has sometimes been used. This term, however, more commonly indicates a name transferred from one place to another, not merely from one generic to another in the same region.

8) Folk etymologies. A well-recognized process is that of folk etymology, e.g., Purgatoire to Picketwire, Cayo Hueso to Key West, Chemin Couvert to Smackover. Objection may be raised that this does not originate a new name but merely results in the transformation of an old one, and that it therefore cannot be considered basic. Although this may be granted theoretically, the transformation is often so great as to result in what is something wholly new, and for practical purposes the onomatologist will do well, I think, to recognize it as independent.

9) Mistake names. These result from a mere mistake. In some instances, the mistake may result only in a somewhat changed name, e.g., in a variation of spelling. In many instances, however, the mistake means that the name shifts from one word to another having a different meaning, or else to a linguistic combination having no meaning at all. A mistake may also be said to be involved in folk etymology, but folk etymology always rests upon some kind of logic, even if false logic. Mistake names, however, arise from what might be called the operations of chance and mischance, e.g., typographical errors, illegible handwriting, careless copying, faulty enunciation, faulty hearing.

Discussion. Although the great majority of names will be found, if their manner of origin can be determined, to fall clearly into one or other of these nine classes, there also exist a certain number of borderline instances. Some of these — such as descriptive euphemistic and commemorative-euphemistic have already been discussed. A few others may also be illustrated.

a) Descriptive-incident. An incident, if recurring, may become characteristic and therefore descriptive. Roaring Creek, for instance, might have been named at a time of an exceptional flood (incident); Rattlesnake Lake, because a man came upon a single rattlesnake there. Yet the creek may roar for enough of the time to make the name properly descriptive, and the lake may be the location of a den of rattlesnakes, and therefore have many rattlesnakes at the end of every hibernation-period.

b) Incident-possessive. Since possessive names are so closely connected with associate-descriptive, they also are naturally connected with incident names. The test is chiefly the length of time involved in the connection of the man and the thing named for him. A typical incident-naming was the result, in frontier times, of some man being killed by Indians near a nameless stream, which was thereafter either formally named after him by his comrades or merely remembered for the incident and thus called by his name. On the other hand, if a man lives on a stream for a week and starts to build a cabin there and then is killed — is this a possessive or an incident name that results? Obviously we pass from one to the other at some point.

c) Euphemistic-manufactured. Although names may be manufactured in different ways, the product is usually submitted to a euphemistic test before finally being adopted. Obviously, if a certain scrambling of syllables or a certain chance combination of vowels and consonants should yield an obscene or ridiculous result; it would probably not be used. Experimenters with combinations of sounds generally have two interests — to avoid association with the past, and to attain euphony. Both of these have euphemistic suggestions. Borderline cases can, in fact, be probably found lying between most of the classes.

Conclusion. Theoretically, one might assume that a single motive and therefore a single mechanism is always predominating, but even when a namer gives us two reasons for the naming, he does not always state, and doubtless he cannot always know, which was the predominating one. Thus Herrera declares that Ponce named Florida because of its flowers

(descriptive) and because he discovered it at the season of Pascua Florida (incident). Although he necessarily states one before the other, he gives no indication as to which was the more important. Actually, statements by namers that they gave a name for two reasons are rare. This must be attributed partly to the mere trouble of writing both reasons down. Even the recording of a single

reason is by no means common. Finally, it should be stated, as a special warning, that this classification does not mean that any particular word used as a name falls always under one heading. Doubtless a considerable majority of names using this adjective will be found to be descriptive, but this is no excuse for throwing all such names into that omnibus classification.

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