

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14559408>

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Annotation: *This comprehensive volume provides a detailed exploration of the field of onomastics, with contributions from various experts on topics such as the origins of personal names, surnames, place names, and the social and cultural roles names play in society. The article covers a broad range of geographical and cultural contexts, offering insights into the linguistic, historical, and social dimensions of naming practices worldwide.*

Keywords: *Onomastics, personal names, surnames, place names, cultural identity, historical context, linguistics, naming practices.*

Onomastics is the study of names—whether personal names (anthroponymy), place names (toponymy), or other categories such as animal names and celestial names. This field explores the origins, meanings, and historical significance of names, offering valuable insights into the cultural, linguistic, and social aspects of human society. Names are more than just labels; they carry deep significance, reflecting personal identities, familial ties, historical events, and geographical locations.

The study of proper names is vital to understand human history, social structure, and language evolution. Personal names often reveal cultural and religious values, while place names can uncover the historical and geographical influences on a particular region. Surnames, for example, can indicate a person's ancestral occupation, geographic origin, or familial relationships. Similarly, place names tell the stories of settlements, cultural encounters, and shifts in power.

Onomastics not only seeks to trace the linguistic origins of names but also examines the role names play in society, how they evolve over time, and the ways in which they are shaped by social, political, and cultural forces. In the globalized world, names continue to carry significance, influencing everything from individual identity to national and ethnic affiliations.

This literature list provides a selection of essential resources on the topic of onomastics, offering foundational knowledge about the origins of proper names and the academic study of naming practices. These works explore various aspects of onomastics, including historical development, linguistic analysis, and social implications, offering a comprehensive view of how names shape and reflect human culture.

Onomastics is the study of proper names, such as personal names (given names), family names (surnames), place names (toponyms), and more. This field explores the origins, meanings, and historical significance of names across various cultures and

languages. Below is an overview of the sections of onomastics and the origins of proper names.

1. Sections of Onomastics

Onomastics is a broad field that is divided into several sub-disciplines, each focusing on different aspects of names. The main sections of onomastics are:

a) Anthroponomastics

• *Definition:* This subfield focuses on personal names, including given names (first names) and surnames (family names). It looks at how names are chosen, their meanings, and their cultural significance.

• **Examples:**

◦ *Given Names:* These are names given to individuals at birth or baptism. They may have meanings related to religion, virtue, or natural elements.

◦ **Surnames:** These are family names that are passed down through generations, often reflecting the family's history, occupation, or geographical origin.

b) Toponymy

• *Definition:* Toponymy is the study of place names, such as names of cities, towns, mountains, rivers, and other geographical features. It investigates the origins, meanings, and linguistic transformations of place names.

• **Examples:**

◦ *London:* The name of the capital of the United Kingdom, which comes from the Old English and Latin forms related to a pre-Roman settlement.

◦ *Mississippi:* The name of the river in North America, originating from the Ojibwe language, meaning "great river."

c) Zoonomastics

• *Definition:* This subfield is concerned with names of animals, both domestic and wild. It investigates how animals are named and how those names can carry cultural or symbolic meaning.

• **Examples:**

◦ The name "Babe Ruth" (a famous baseball player) might be used metaphorically for an animal to symbolize strength or talent.

d) Cosmonomastics

• *Definition:* This branch of onomastics deals with the names of celestial bodies, such as planets, stars, and other astronomical entities.

• **Examples:**

◦ Mars, the Roman god of war, gave its name to the planet Mars.

◦ Andromeda, a galaxy, derives from Greek mythology.

2. Origins of Proper Names

Proper names have a variety of origins, often influenced by culture, geography, and history. Here are some common types of proper names and their origins:

a) Personal Names (Anthroponymy)

• **Given Names:** These names are typically chosen at birth or baptism and can have diverse origins, such as religious, cultural, or linguistic traditions. They may be derived from:

- Religious figures: Names like John or Mary in Christian traditions.
- Virtue names: Names like Grace or Faith.
- Natural elements: Names like Rose, River, or Sky.

• **Surnames (Family Names):** Surnames developed for practical reasons to identify individuals within larger communities. Common origins for surnames include:

◦ **Patronymic names:** These surnames are derived from the father's or an ancestor's name (e.g., Johnson meaning "son of John").

◦ **Occupational names:** Names that reflect a person's occupation, such as Smith (a blacksmith) or Baker.

◦ **Geographical names:** These surnames come from locations or landmarks, such as London (from the city of London) or Hill (referring to someone who lived on or near a hill).

◦ **Descriptive names:** These reflect physical or character traits, like Brown (referring to a person with brown hair or complexion).

b) Place Names (Toponymy)

• *Geographical Origins:* Place names can come from local languages or historical figures, reflecting the culture and history of the region.

◦ Rome: Derived from the legendary founder Romulus.

◦ New York: Originally named after the Duke of York in England.

• **Toponymic Evolution:** Place names often change over time as languages evolve or political boundaries shift.

c) Ethnonyms

• **Definition:** Ethnonyms are names that identify a particular ethnic group or nationality. These names are often based on language, culture, or region.

• Examples:

◦ English: Refers to people from England.

◦ Chinese: Refers to people from China.

3. Cultural and Historical Significance

Proper names often carry cultural, historical, and linguistic significance. The study of onomastics helps us understand:

• **Cultural identity:** Names are often tied to ethnicity, nationality, religion, and family heritage.

• **Historical events:** Place names and surnames can reflect historical figures or events that shaped the culture of a region.

• **Language development:** The evolution of names can show how languages have changed over time and how people have interacted with their environment.

Conclusion: Onomastics, the study of names, is a rich field that uncovers the meanings, origins, and evolution of proper names across different languages and cultures.

By examining names, we gain insights into personal identity, geographical locations, and cultural histories. The study of names, whether they are personal, place-based, or related to other categories, provides a valuable window into understanding human societies and their development over time.

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