

American Toponyms Derived from Given Names as Records of Language, Culture and History

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Abstract: This paper presents the study of the US anthroponymic astionyms, i.e. names of cities or towns derived from personal given names. This type of toponyms carries different linguistic, cultural and historical information. It is very common, but it has received relatively little systematic analysis. This study will categorize them at several levels and will try to show how the coinage of anthroponymic astionyms from given names helps to preserve the cultural and historical memory of the American people in a uniquely individualistic way, i.e. in terms of specific people at diverse social levels as well as in terms of mythological heroes, religious and other culturally meaningful categories.

Key words: Anthroponym • Anthroponymic astionyms • Culture • Given name • Language • Naming
• Personal name • Toponym.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, the US toponymic stock is studied in terms of language, culture and history which, of course, cannot be divorced. When we concentrate on the first element of this type of the study, *language*, we pay attention to structural and semantic features of names. When we take *culture* as a separate specific parameter of the study, we see that a toponym is the result of a particular cultural environment. Culture can be further classified as a personal culture, a family culture, the culture of the community and the culture of the whole nation. We also need to consider *the history* of toponyms, meaning the ways names came into the culture of a particular ethnic group. In many ways, the USA and Americans demonstrate a unique intersection of names and cultures. The purpose of this study is to illustrate the cultural and historical background contained in names and to correlate some surface linguistic structures with their underlying signification.

The result will also illustrate the importance of individuals as name-givers at all levels of the American society and of the value of individualism as an idea in the context of language, culture and history. Their role in the formation of the US toponymic system is of great interest to researchers in view of the fact that, on the one hand,

the system is quite young and the stages of its evolution can be clearly traced and, on the other hand, it was created by settlers from different countries who brought their toponymic patterns and associations characteristic of their original language and culture to a new cultural soil. Naming was particularly important in the development of a new American society: its history began with the problem of a name and, first and foremost, with that of naming geographical places of the country.

This paper will not consider all the toponyms characteristic of the USA. It will focus instead on the names of towns or cities. I shall refer to this type of toponym as *anthroponymic astionyms* from the Greek *asteios* meaning *of the town* + *-onym* [1]. This study is further limited to anthroponymic astionyms derived from given names rather than family names. It is a specialized stratum of toponyms that is studied here.

This particular toponymic material has been chosen because anthroponymic astionyms reflect a broad range of social interests, e.g. the economic, political and cultural life of the society. Accordingly, the extralinguistic conditionality of anthroponymic astionyms is manifested more clearly than in the names of most natural and physical objects. Furthermore, in view of people's interest in astionyms, they are the category of names that undergoes the most frequent renaming.

The number of books and articles on US toponymy is great. However, a simple counting of those works shows that anthroponymic astionyms, of which given names are a subset, do not receive the most study although they account for about 50% of the total number of the US astionyms. The fact that anthroponymic astionyms rank high in the whole toponymic system of the country can be explained, to a certain extent, in the following way. If the first settlers had some difficulties in giving a name to a geographical place, there was always an individual who was prominent in this place and whose family or given name had not been used before in that area. It is interesting to point out that even the name of this country began as a given name. Also, out of the fifty names of the US states, ten of them include anthroponyms: Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Washington, Virginia and West Virginia [2].

In view of the above, it may be observed that relatively little scholarly attention has been given to the interrelation/interpenetration of toponyms and given names. However, the evidence of such interrelationships is abundant. One striking example with a long history is the name of Washington given by the British onomatologist C.M. Matthews: "First there was a man named Wassa (or something like it), one of the uncivilized Angles who invaded Britain in about the fifth or sixth century. The place where he settled became known as the farm or *tun* of the Wassing, or Wassas' folk and so Washington. Long afterwards a family who lived in that village began to use its name as a personal surname and many centuries later again one of them migrated to America, where his grandson became the first president. Then America's new capital was named in his honour, Washington. So it had gone from a man to a place, from a place to a family and from one of that family to a place again (a very different one), the whole process taking over a thousand years" [3].

Methodology: My toponymic data come from the very well-known reference books listed below. I conducted hand searches of the reference sources that were available at the time of this writing. As has been mentioned above, the list of the toponyms obtained was restricted to those derived from given names. Each anthroponymic astionym was analyzed in terms of its linguistic structure, meaning, etymology, ethnic and linguo-geographic aspects, cultural and historical loading, semiotics and associations [4]. I also applied the inductive, deductive and comparative methods of research.

To show the rich diversity of linguistic, cultural and historical information in the toponymic system of the United States of America, I shall discuss examples of the anthroponymic astionyms in terms of six categories: 1) transfer names; 2) names from literary sources; 3) royal names; 4) religious names; 5) Indian names; and 6) citizens' names.

Categorization of Anthroponymic Astionyms

Transfer Anthroponymic Astionyms: Early in the history of the country, the first settler was an individual who left the Old World and transferred everything that was important for him in his old life to a new territory. It is no coincidence that some of the first toponyms which appeared on the US map were transfer toponyms. Such practice began at the time of founding the first settlements. It may have been initiated by John Smith, the first leader of colonists, who wrote the words *New England* on his map. Thus, he transferred the name of his home country to the new hemisphere, having added the prepositional attribute *new* to this name. Subsequently the toponymic stock of England served as an inexhaustible source for names in the colonies; its use may have helped to mitigate feelings of both nostalgia and strangeness that would have been natural for most colonists in a new and different land. Therefore, the transfer of place-names from one cultural context to the other was, first and foremost, made for the purpose of domesticating and identifying with the new territory.

A basic feature in the transfer of anthroponymic astionyms is a loss of original meaning. That is to say, the meaning of the name as it developed in reference to the original feature becomes less important or forgotten as the name is used to refer to a new feature. Although a new set of social associations becomes the basis of a new meaning, many transfers come from names derived from given names. For instance:

Allerton (Massachusetts), named after the English city of Allerton: Allerton < Old English given name *Ælfræd* (< *Ælf*, Elf + *Ræd*) + *tûn an estate, a town*;

Buxton (Michigan), named after the English city of Buxton in the county of Norfolk: Buxton < Old English given name *Bucca* + *tûn*, etc.

When using such anthroponymic astionyms, various associations related to "the social life" of a name come to the foreground. What is preserved as a given name in the historical memory of the English, in the other nation's memory, in this particular case, in that of Americans, it is a mere transfer of the toponym by association with a socially meaningful context of a name, but not the given

name as it is. This process confirms the general tendencies of the development of semantics of any anthroponymic place-name- the loss of direct associations with the name in the initial meaning of the word [5]. For example, modern Americans may not remember/not know the names of the first settlers, explorers, landowners, etc, which were used for coinage of anthroponymic astionyms in the USA; the problem of the etymology of such place-names does not exist for them: it should be referred to the original English anthroponymic astionyms but not to the American ones. Only special dictionaries keep this information.

I shall give one example in detail and that is *Boston* (Massachusetts). It was founded in 1630 as a basic settlement of the colony “Massachusetts Bay” and became one of the centers of Puritanism in New England. It was named after the English city of Boston in Lincolnshire, a religious centre of Puritanism (there were a lot of followers of this religious doctrine among the first settlers). In the English cultural context the anthroponymic astionym Boston is etymologically originated from St Botolph: Boston < a given name Botolph (Botulf + Old English stan *a stone, a mile*) [6]. After the transfer of the anthroponymic astionym to the American cultural soil, having become a US toponym accordingly, its etymology in terms of a given name is not important to its use. The associations evoked by its use are to the Puritans and their culture.

The study of such anthroponymic astionyms allowed singling out some associations by which their transfer was made:

- by the associations with the settlers’ native places: Reading (Pennsylvania), St. Petersburg (Florida), etc.;
- by the associations with the places of life and death of famous people: Chalfont (Pennsylvania), “for Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire, England, burial place of William Penn” [7]; Chalfont < Old English given name Ceadel + funta *a spring, a stream*, etc.;
- by the religious associations: Salem (Massachusetts and Oregon), Jerusalem (North Carolina), etc.;
- by the associations with classical literature and history: Arcadia (California, Florida and Louisiana), Athens (Alabama, Georgia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas), Alexandria (Indiana, Kentucky and Louisiana), etc.;
- by the associations with natural resources: Carlsbad (California), etc.;
- by the associations with the success in the field of industry: Birmingham (Alabama), Charleroi (Pennsylvania), etc.

Anthroponymic astionyms have been transferred to the US map generally as whole forms and do not usually evoke the meanings of the elements included in their original structure and content. The whole form carries the cultural associations of a new person to his or her new land, which is the essence of the new meaning.

Anthroponymic Astionyms Derived from the Names of Literary Sources: Later anthroponymic astionyms derived from the names of literary sources of settlers’ countries emerged on the US map. The immigrants tried to signalize their extraction, language and cultural heritage by coining this type of toponyms. Such geographical names should be seen as the category of associative naming because they do not bear a direct relation to the exploration of the territory of the country or to its economic and political development but reflect the cultural history and ideals of its people. Some symbolic and pragmatic features were assigned to them and they provided the basis for these names to be included in the place-name stock. Literary anthroponymic astionyms are etymologically originated from:

- classical literature writers’ names: Homer (Louisiana, New York), Ovid (New York), Dante (South Dakota, Virginia), etc.;
- literary characters’ names of the Old World’s writers: Othello (Washington), Medora (Illinois, Indiana and Kansas), Romeo (Michigan), Orlando (Florida), etc.;
- names of Roman and Greek mythological heroes: Concordia (Kansas), Minerva (New York), Eros (Louisiana), Calypso (North Carolina), etc.

In the 19th century literature of the USA began to develop considerably. American writers and characters of their books were reflected in the anthroponymic place-name stock of the country. The romantic poet Henry W. Longfellow was the most popular at that time. He reconstituted the vanished world of the American old times and Indian folklore. The characters’ names of his poem “The Song of Hiawatha” were used widely for coinage of anthroponymic astionyms. Borrowing the anthroponymic material from the characters’ names of the poem, Americans paid homage to the poet’s works and in this way a romantic attempt was also made to preserve the elements of the American Indian original culture, which was in reality falling into neglect and oblivion. The US map has about one hundred place-names derived from characters’ names of the poem: Hiawatha (Iowa, Kansas, Utah, West Virginia), Nokomis (Florida, Illinois), Bena, Keewatin, Mahnomen, Ponemah, Wassabo, Waubun (Minnesota), etc [8].

Anthroponymic Astionyms Derived from the Royal Persons' Names: The first settler was loyal to the King or the Queen and due to this fact the practice of derivation of anthroponymic astionyms from the royal persons' names became widespread and was most frequent in their currency in the colonial period of the country. That was such a period of time, when the feeling of patriotism towards England was at its zenith. It was manifested in displays of devotion to the sovereigns, no doubt out of some genuine admiration for them as well as hope for political favour. Most of such place-names were coined not by the royal persons, but colonists themselves, who in this way declared proudly their political affiliation with the sovereign. The first settlers of other countries also followed the same practice, but not so actively as the English did. For instance, Spaniards showed a special devotion to the Catholic Church, "and among their names in America there are at least twenty of religious character to one referring to their royal family" [9]. Of course, displays of allegiance to the Catholic Church were encouraged by the Spanish monarchs.

One of the earliest anthroponymic toponyms on the North American continent is *Virginia*, the place of the first permanent European settlement (1607). That territory was named after the English Queen Elizabeth I (1558- 1603), using her nickname *Virgin Queen*. This anthroponym is an example of how semantics of a name can become complicated and how its various components can be understood in it. Although it is a female nickname on the one hand, but one can suppose that it reminds us that those were beautiful, new and virgin lands which had to be upturned and developed on the other hand. The importance of land as a cultural value and as a sign of social status was carried over from the Old World and at the time new territories were being tamed, colonists made them less strange and more familiar with the help of names from their native tongues. The fact that there was also Virgin Mary in the first settlers' ordinary religious consciousness and culture must not be ruled out either. In this particular case, the notions of Virgin Queen, virgin land and Virgin Mary sharing a common component-*virgin*- matched each other well. The world perception of the people of that time consisted in the fact that they set foot on virgin land and Virgin Mary led them as the Bible was always with them; besides, the Queen was also Virgin. The first settlers used not only Elizabeth's nickname *Virgin* for giving names to settlements, but also her given name Elizabeth: Elizabethtown (North Carolina, Illinois, New York and elsewhere).

The similar anthroponymic tendency continued by using the names of other sovereigns: Jamesburg (New Jersey), Charlestown (Rhode Island), Georgetown (South

Carolina and Georgia), etc. Americans also coined anthroponymic astionyms from the names of the royal persons who were not on the throne at the time of opening up the new lands of the North American continent. In this case, certain cultural and historical associations related to specific persons came to the foreground when choosing a name: Alfred (Michigan, New York), St. Louis (Missouri), etc.

The settlements reflected a national-ethnic character of new communities: in the place, where there were natives from a certain country, they tried to transfer/to bring some associations related to the life of their home country to a new soil. In this connection, anthroponymic astionyms derived from the names of royal persons belonging to different countries began to appear on the US map: Christiana (Delaware), Fernandina (Florida), Haakon (South Dakota), etc.

The pioneers tried to preserve not only the royal persons' names but also the members of his/her family in the cultural memory: Fredericksburg, Louisa (Virginia), Charlottesville (North Carolina), etc.

Anthroponymic Astionyms Derived from Religious Given Names: The first settler was also a religious person. The influence of a religious culture is reflected widely in the US toponymic system having a great many anthroponymic astionyms derived from religious given names, namely:

- saints' names: St. Marys (Idaho, Kansas), St. Peters (Missouri), St. Joseph (Idaho), St. Mathews (North Carolina, Kentucky), etc.;
- religious figures' names: Brigham City, Morgan, Duchesne, Randolph (Utah), San Angelo (Texas), Charleston (Arkansas), etc.;
- names from the sources of religious doctrines: Ammon (Idaho), Lehi, Nephi (Utah), etc.

The place-names connected with Roman Catholic culture were coined by missionaries who used the names of saints on whose holiday a territory was discovered or a town was founded: San Bernardino, Santa Barbara (California), Santa Rosa (New Mexico), San Carlos (Arizona), etc.

Many pioneers founded towns giving them saint patrons' names. One of the specific features of religious anthroponymic astionyms is the fact that on the US map there exist astionym-doublets, coined from different languages, for instance, those of Spanish and English: San Andreas (California) and St. Andrews (North Carolina), San Mateo (California) and St. Mathews (South California and Kentucky), San Carlos (Arizona) and St.

Charles (Illinois), etc. The prepositional formants *San*, *Santa*, *Saint* and *Sainte* determine a religious and cultural character of anthroponymic astionyms having similar elements: San Antonio (Texas), Santa Clara (California), Sault Sainte Marie (Michigan), Ste. Genevieve (Montana), St. Paul (Minnesota), etc. In this particular case, such anthroponymic toponyms become “talking” ones: they have clear religious significance in their original pronunciation and pragmatic associations come clearly to the foreground. In due course, such toponyms underwent desemantization. Being connected to a name, they form an indivisible whole. In most cases this integrity is determined by the spelling of these elements (Saint > St.), the dropping of a vowel sound (St. – [snt], [sʔnt] as well as the loss of stress (St. Charles [sntʔa:lz]).

We may say that the number and variety of names with religious associations clearly indicate the religiosity of early American culture, the personal nature of that religiosity and the fading of that religiosity, as reflected in the desematization of the names.

Anthroponymic Astionyms Derived from Indian Given Names:

At the same time the first settler was a tolerant person: he had to accept, to a certain extent, the aboriginal culture. In the 19th century, the tendency to coin anthroponymic astionyms derived from Indian given names began to develop. Many given names of Indian origin were derived from appellatives, which were obscure or incomprehensible to white settlers. In most cases, it was the settlers from the Old World who used aboriginal given names to name geographical places because the Indians themselves seldom used personal names in this way – and certainly not for printed maps. By the end of the colonial period, white settlers had come, in many instances, to the accommodation with “the noble savage”; they had begun to understand that the names of the natives and the tribes were in some sense appropriate for their ancient lands [9]. The tendency to give aboriginal names to geographical places reflected concessions in order to preserve some elements of the previous original culture. Indian names fascinate modern Americans for a variety of reasons but often because of their unusual sounds or poetical associations. As the American writer Thomas C. Wolfe wrote in his novel “Of Time and of the River”, 1935: “Where you can match the mighty music of their names? – the Monongahela, the Colorado, the Tennessee; the Kennebec, the Rappahanock, the Potomac -these are a few of their princely names, these are a few of their great, proud, glittering names, fit for the immense and lonely land that they inhabit” [10].

The largest category of aboriginal anthroponymic astionyms is the ones derived from the names of tribal chiefs the white settlers came into direct contact with. For example, Seattle (Washington) founded in 1855 was named after Seattle (1786- 1866), a chief of the Suquamish tribe, recognized by the settlers as their helper; they called him “the great Indian friend”. All his life he was loyal to white settlers, tried to support them and render assistance and at the same time he was the honest and powerful chief of his people. Some other examples are as follows: Keokuk (Iowa), Hyannis (Massachusetts), Pontiac (Michigan, Illinois, Missouri), etc [11].

The white pioneers coined anthroponymic astionyms, using the names of a family circle of tribal chiefs: Tama (Iowa), Pocahontas (Arkansas, Iowa), Azusa (California), etc. The names of local Indians were also reflected in the toponymic system of the country: Anamosa (Iowa), Kewanee, Watseka (Illinois), etc.

The material studied suggests that certain qualities should be assigned to certain Indians, usually cooperation and, for women, beauty, but also and as a mark of American culture, individual integrity. These given names came to be used as anthroponymic astionyms because of the values of the new Frontier.

Anthroponymic Astionyms Derived from Citizens’ Given Names:

The winning of independence opened up some new sources of coining anthroponymic astionyms for Americans. That was already another period of life characteristic of a new perception of the world: a period of elections, democracy, presidency, a heroic service to the new independent country. If previously Americans regularly had turned to England for the material to coin place-names, then the situation changed. They began to use widely the names of their nation instead of those of the royal persons, their family members, ministers, etc. Anthroponymic astionyms derived from citizens’ given names emerged on the US map. In the 18- 19th centuries possessive anthroponymic astionyms began to appear everywhere. According to Wilbur Zelinsky, calling this type of place names “national-patriotic”, “such names were essential building-blocks in the construction of our novel nation-state, but they do serve admirably as clues to a remarkable mind-set” [12]. This category of names may be described in the following sub-categories:

- the presidents’ given names: Georgetown (Kentucky), Quincy (California, Florida, Illinois), Ulysses (Kansas, Nebraska, Pennsylvania), etc.;
- the political figures’ given names: Starke (Florida), David City (Nebraska), Edmundston (Nebraska), etc.;

- national/local heroes' given names: Dansville (New York), Lewisville (Arkansas), Solon (Ohio), etc.

Such a personified style became widespread in the USA. The residents of any district of the country could revere the memory of their distinguished citizens and name one or another geographical place in their honour. Thus, an area of naming expanded and it reflected another sphere of vital interests- an individual devoting himself to the service of the society. In this context, anthroponymic astionyms were derived from:

- government and town clerks' given names: Corbin (Kentucky), Clintwood (Virginia), De Watt (Arkansas, Iowa), Georgetown (Delaware), etc.;
- industrialists', businessmen's and bankers' given names: Chardon (Ohio), Ansonia (Connecticut), Dunbar (West Virginia), Laurence Harbor (New Jersey), etc.;
- railway officials' given names: Ashley, Williston (North Dakota), etc.;
- postmasters' given names: Eugene (Oregon), Hugo (Colorado), etc.;
- lawyers' given names: Clinton (Oklahoma), Ashdown (Arkansas), etc.

A separate category is the anthroponymic astionyms traced back etymologically to the given names of wives, children, close relatives and friends of the first settlers, pioneers, state and military officials and others, i.e. those people were of no significance in the context of culture and history. Their derivation is the result of individual naming, representing some particular cases of "the social life" of a name; and such anthroponymic astionyms have not been changed for the other ones, showing the respect to a specific individual. These toponyms can be related to the emotional category of place-names: a desire to preserve not only a distinguished person in the cultural memory, but also his/her family members, relatives, etc., the essence of this tradition consisting in glorification of an individual. The settlers of the New World reproduced a sort of a family "copy", its conceptual field on the US map:

- wives' given names: Anna (Illinois), Alice (Texas), etc.;
- sons' given names: Ariel (Washington), Johtown (New York), etc.;
- daughters' given names: Electra (Texas), Ada (Oklahoma), etc.;

- fathers' given names: Roswell (New Mexico), Charleston (West Virginia);
- mothers' given names: Oakley (Kansas), etc.;
- brothers' and sisters' given names: Danville (Indiana), Hobart (Indiana), etc.;
- nephews' and nieces' given names: Clarinda (Iowa), Augusta (Arkansas);
- grandchildren's given names: Camp David (Maryland), Camilla (Georgia).

All that was going on in this way in order to make it easier for the settlers to assert and identify themselves in the New World at the level of the psychological adaptation on the new territories.

Freedom of self-expression and freedom of choice as characteristic features of Americans' national character were reflected not only in the use of full/hypocoristic names of family members and their manufactured forms as anthroponymic astionyms: Del City (Oklahoma), Robstown (Texas), Marianna (Florida), etc., but also in the use of friends' names: Mineola (Texas), Glenray (West Virginia), etc.

The above types of astionyms clearly demonstrate that much attention is paid to an individual in the American culture. In the formative period of this nation, any person who did not even show his worth in terms of culture and history of the country (as distinct from the first settlers, explorers, public figures, etc.) could deserve the right to be the basis of naming. Now the U.S. Board on Geographic Names requires that a person be dead for five years before his or her name can be used officially.

CONCLUSION

As a final summary, it should be pointed out that toponyms (astionyms) are important monuments of culture and history. They serve as excellent sociological and ethnographical sources, reflecting, for example, the economic conditions of people's lives at different times, their spiritual and religious outlooks and their linguistic creativity. In short, their choices of names depend upon many factors and provide us with a wealth of linguistic and cultural information. Each anthroponymic astionym has its own history. Even when the names of different towns and cities coincide in their orthographical forms, they have a different content and carry different cultural information related to the namers and their social contexts.

The coinage of anthroponymic astionyms as one of the ways to keep given names in the people's cultural and

historical memory clearly demonstrates the dynamics and evolution of an individual as a name-giver and the pragmatic potential of the place-names coined: intentions, personal motives, bilingualism, psychological, ethnic and cultural aspects, associations, different images in the name-giver's consciousness and all these are coded in the anthroponymic astionym itself. Such naming made it easier for individuals to assert and identify themselves in the New World and to leave their personal imprints on American culture and on the maps that describe it.

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