

PROPER NAMES IN MULTICULTURAL CONTEXTS¹

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The book *Names and namings:² multicultural aspects* is a collection, organized by Romanian professors Oliviu Felecan and Alina Bugheşiu, comprising twenty-nine chapters in its nearly five hundred pages written by researchers from a number of countries. Its chapters describe and analyze current and past namings in contexts of linguistic and/or cultural diversity from 21 countries. At the end of the introductory chapter, the organizers make a description that really matches the content of the collection: “the studies in this book offer for consideration in-depth synchronic and diachronic analyses of multiculturalism and its implications for names and naming in various (monolingual, bilingual and multilingual) countries of the world in cross-borders contact areas” (FELECAN; BUGHEŞIU, 2021, p. 5).

The chapters of this collection are divided into two sections: i. Naming Policies, Trends and Practices in the Context of Multiculturalism and ii. Naming as a Form of Identity Construction in Multicultural Societies. The methodology used for the elaboration and organization of the work aimed to gather diversified studies without observing a rigid model for the structuring of the chapters in order to portray, respect and emphasize the different points of view, methodologies and perspectives of analysis; viz, the different ways in which one can investigate multiculturalism in naming and naming processes.

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¹ Review of: FELECAN, O.; BUGHEŞIU, A. (org.). **Names and Namings**: multicultural aspects. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

² In the title of the work and in the introduction, the organizers use the term “naming” which, in onomastic studies, is equivalent to the term “namegiving”. Both are used to describe the process by which a proper name is given to entities considered by the namer to be unique and recommended by the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS), as can be seen in Onomastic terminology – ICOS (<https://icosweb.net/publications/onomastic-terminology/>). Throughout this review, in line with the choice made by the organizers of this review, the term “naming” is used.

This review is organized as follows: first, the collection is presented in its general characteristics; then, selected chapters are described to show the diversity of axes covered and point out the pieces of research that stood out in each axis; next, we point out the chapters in which there was some theoretical discussion about multiculturalism and finally, closing the review, the reading of the reviewed work is recommended.

The chapters in this collection provide comprehensive and in-depth research findings, and some of them present and discuss definitions of multiculturalism. Most chapters portray current situations of multiculturalism and its influence on proper names; a considerable set of chapters describes constitutive and historical multicultural situations in the formation of certain nations; there are also four articles that focus on language policies on the use of proper names in multicultural contexts, and another four that focus on the impact of religious multiculturalism on names. Space limitations in reviews prevent mentioning, describing, and analyzing all the chapters, however, a chapter of each of the main axes identified during the full reading of the book is commented on below.

An example of a chapter that portrays a current multicultural context that impacts proper names is the one written by Mangena and Waiaula (2021) about the current situation in two African countries: Kenya and Zimbabwe. In these countries, two culturally and linguistically distinct ethnic groups coexist: the Bukusu and the Sabaot. Despite the use of hybrid personal names with regard to toponymy, naming practices and interpretation of the motivation for choosing toponyms are quite distinct. The Bukusu experience the place where they live as an extension of themselves and name toponyms honoring a prominent personality in their community. The Sabaot, on the other hand, are nomads and, for them, the naming of places is crucial, as it is what allows them to return to places, especially if someone from the community “stays behind” and cannot keep up with the group that moves forward. It is not surprising that place names are the subject of dispute and different interpretations and narratives because they function as marks of territorialization. As researchers explain: “The Sabaot could claim to be the ‘original inhabitants’ of a place because the place has a name that is evidently a Sabaot name, but the Bukusu could also claim to be the original inhabitants because they have always lived there.” (MANGENA; WALIAULA, 2021, p. 432).

An example of a historical study of multicultural contexts is the chapter written by Czopek-Kopciuch (2021) on multiculturalism in Polish toponymy. With regard to names of Germanic origin, the survey informs that, since the 13th century, certain privileges such as exemption from taxes and duties have been offered to Germans who were expected to colonize a certain Polish region, including Pomerania. The data show most toponyms in the German language suffered spontaneous Polonization and that the world wars resulted in cultural and ethnic homogenization of the country, considering that many were expelled, migrated or were murdered (as was the case with persecuted Jews). Today more than 90% of the population defines themselves as ethnically Polish.

Reading this chapter may interest Brazilian researchers who are dedicated to the history of Germanic migration and the use of the German language as a heritage language

in Brazil, given that Pomerania is recognized as the region from which most German migrants, whose descendants are self-defined as German descendants, came to Brazil.

Interdisciplinarity, noticeable in almost every chapter, is another aspect to be highlighted. In Brazil, there are researchers who argue that, although toponymic studies can be treated through interdisciplinary approaches, they are, in principle, related to Linguistics and must be included in Lexicology (DE SOUSA; DARGEL, 2020). In Mexico, it is argued whether it would be more appropriate to characterize Onomastics as a unidisciplinary or multidisciplinary linguistic science, considering its relationship with other sciences (JIMENEZ SEGURA, 2021). Research presented by the authors of the reviewed work, in turn, are almost all interdisciplinary, however, there is no mention, explanation or justification for this, as if interdisciplinarity in Onomastics were something given beforehand. It is necessary to start from a coherent interdisciplinary theorization to better scientifically substantiate interdisciplinary research in this field, starting with the definition of proper names that can both be expanded and become interdisciplinary, as is the case of the following proposal for redefining proper name as

[...] a singular name, an abstract object stored in a conceptual address in the speaker's mind composed of a logical, a lexical and an encyclopedic component. While the first responds for the necessary processing of information to reach the understanding of utterances in which proper names are used, the last two integrate the linguistic and world knowledge related to proper names and correspond to the onomastic knowledge of the ideal speaker, can range from knowledge of how in a certain language and culture names are used and their grammatical characteristics to scholarly knowledge about the etymology and origin of names. (SEIDE, 2021, p.215).

Another point to be considered concerns the geographic scope of published research. The countries most represented in the works are, respectively, Russia, Romania, and the United States. There is at least one chapter or part of a chapter dedicated to the following countries: Algeria, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

The African continent is also well represented, although no Portuguese-speaking African country is mentioned. There is little or no representation of the languages and cultures that are expressed in French and Spanish and no mention of Portuguese-speaking countries. Regarding the French language, there is a chapter that deals with French-speaking countries in the African continent (HATAB, 2021) and another that includes French anthroponymy data (SCHOCHENMAIER, 2021). With regard to the Spanish language, there is only one chapter that takes up the works by Corominas (TORT-DONADA, 2021). There is no chapter on Lusophone and Hispanic countries in

Latin America. To cover these countries, languages and cultures, a second publication of the book would be necessary.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the chapters dedicated to Romania are especially valuable for Romance Philology lessons, considering that Romanian is part of the Romance languages, and its study was and is fundamental to historical comparative research. The chapters focusing on the influence of religious multiculturalism on naming, in turn, are important for the area of study of religions, as they cover the issue of religious intolerance in different times and countries. The collection can also be included in historical studies, since all the chapters of the second axis of the work present strong interdisciplinary relationships with History by explaining the constitutive multiculturalism of different countries, resulting in useful material for historians.

When it comes to multiculturalism issues, there are chapters discussing the meaning of multiculturalism, namely: Chapter 2, “Multicultural Aspects of Names and Naming in United States” by Frank Nuessel (2021); Chapter 6, “Multicultural Aspects of Name and Naming in Russian Post-Soviet Streetscapes” by Marina Golomidova; Chapter 13, “Multicultural Features in Scandinavian Toponymy” by Staffan Nyström, and Chapter 22, “Multicultural Aspects of Names and Naming Reflected in German Brands” by Angelika Bergien.³

Nuessel (2021) explains multiculturalism as a dynamic concept that is developed in phases given that there are at least three ways to understand such concept:

- 1) as a result of the recognition of the existence of multiple cultures in most contemporary societies;
- 2) as an analysis of people’s attitudes towards multicultural societies, which may be attitudes of opposition, tolerance or approval;
- 3) as proposals for actions that lead to recognition and approval of multiculturalism and implementation of public policies that lead to support and maintenance of multiculturalism in each society.

In fact, the multiculturalist agenda encompasses recognition, tolerance or acceptance and culminates in approval, maintenance, and conservation of multiculturalism in society, as it requires positive and inclusive linguistic and cultural policies.

Nyström comments on the theme by questioning what names of places can be considered as multicultural in a determined context. His questions center on what can be considered a manifestation of multiculturalism in any society. He argues that one can only consider as multicultural⁴ what people perceive as such and not the cultural aspects that refer to foreign languages and cultures, which are already naturalized but are not perceived this way:

³ The other chapters of the collection do not discuss or explain how their authors conceptualize multiculturalism. It is not the purpose of this review to discuss them, although it is known how different the approaches adopted are, McLaren (1997) mentions the conservative, the right-liberal, the left-liberal and the critical and Hall (2003) proposes the existence of two other: the pluralist and the corporate (presented, for example, by Bergien in the reviewed work.

⁴ In this review, the terms multiculturalism (which corresponds to the English term “multiculturalism”) and the term “multicultural” (which corresponds to the English term “multicultural”) are used.

Of course, words, place names and personal names of foreigner origin sometimes form part of our street and road names, but as a rule these are words and names long established in Swedish in general, so we get no sense of a foreign or multicultural influence (NYSTRÖM, 2021, p. 199).

Examples of this type of place names are the Swedish names *Baltiska vägen* (Baltic way), *Kinagatan* (China street) and *Ryska gränd* (Russian alley). He also notes that, in Scandinavia, more and more buildings are being named after names entirely or partially in English, as is the case with the name *Mall of Scandinavia*. Names like this are not considered by the researcher as multicultural as they do not result in cultural diversity (NYSTRÖM, 2021).

Also in the same chapter, place names are mentioned in autochthonous languages which have received, since the end of the 70s of the last century, affirmative linguistic policies, but which, until recently, if no longer forgotten, are still silenced: Nyström reports that traffic signs in the Sami language are often spray-painted. An example of a place name partially formed by an indigenous language is the name *Gällivare*, formed by the name *vare* which means mountain in the Sami language (NYSTRÖM, 2021).

Golomidova argues that the main characteristic of multiculturalism is defending the right to equality of different cultural lives in multi-ethnic societies and points out that

At the second half of the twenty-first century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, the reasons for the growth of scientific attention to the phenomenon of multiculturalism were, obviously, the renewal of the political landscape on the map of different continents, the liberalization of legislation in several countries, the processes of globalization and opposing trends in the preservation of ethnic identity, as well as a significant interest in territorial, national and ethical identity. (GOLOMIDOVA, 2021, p.73).

Should multiculturalism lead to the recognition and defense of ethnic identities, the Russian researcher verifies to what extent this happens in the official toponymic policies of Russian multi-ethnic municipalities and shows that there are municipalities that apply these policies in a more systematic way. A positive example is the city of Kasan, where 48.6% of the population is ethnically Russian, 47.6% Tartar, and 4% are of other ethnicities. In Kasan, a policy has been enforced establishing that street signs are primarily written in the Tartar language. “First of all, this is manifested in the consistent fixation of street names in the state languages of the Republic, in Tatar and in Russian: *Үзәк урамы—улица Центральная* ‘Central street’ ” (GOLOMIDOVA, 2021, p.77).

Also based on this multiculturalist ideal, the German researcher Bergien verifies to what extent the existing multiculturalism in German society influences the choice of German brand and product names. Few examples were found, but these are cases showing that the nominator aimed to represent, as a target audience, a certain part of

society. One of the appointments that reflects the cultural diversity of Germany used the strategy of extending an existing brand by adding a secondary name created to establish communication with the intended target audience

In 2006, for example, Deutsche Bank (German Bank) decided to create a new division targeting Turkish clients in Germany. The demarcation name chosen was Bankamiz, which literally means “our bank” or “the bank of ours” in Turkish. One of the first images to be developed to promote this new brand, which has since become the icon of the brand, was a cup of tea. Deutsche Bank chose tea because it is part of Turkish culture. Tea is appreciated by the Turks and is also a symbol of friendship and hospitality. (BERGIEN, 2021, p. 356).

In addition to using one or more concepts of multiculturalism discussed in the aforementioned chapters, the studies presented in the collection are comprehensive in several ways:

- 1) by analyzing different types of proper names: place names, brand names, first names, surnames, and nicknames and/or;
- 2) by encompassing both the historical constitutive multiculturalism of society and culturalism in the present time, and/or;
- 3) by gathering and analyzing data from various societies in certain regions.

Due to the richness of the data, to its scope and analytical depth, we highly recommend the reading of *Names and Namings* collection and its use in different university school contexts seems to be fundamental, considering that it goes beyond Onomastic classes (area of study specifically focused on proper names). Moreover, selected chapters of the book can be useful for multicultural and interdisciplinary studies about specific regions as in some African places, for example, whose official language is English, in Islamic places and in Eastern Europe.

The book is available in the following formats: PDF, eBook, and printed. Customers can buy the entire book or by chapters at the publisher’s website.

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Received on October 4, 2021

Approved on January 24, 2022