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Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms

The Nature of the Endonym *

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THE NATURE OF THE ENDONYM

ABSTRACT

The endonym is the basic toponymic exemplar and as such it needs to be understood properly. To do so we need to appreciate the context of space and place that produces it. Most endonyms arise from the elemental human relationship with space and place, and possess an intrinsic and enduring value which cannot normally be either bestowed or removed by political arbitrariness.

BACKGROUND

The United Nations Working Group on Exonyms was established within the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) in 2002, by resolution 4 of the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The wording of the resolution is:

VIII/4. Working Group on Exonyms of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

The Conference,

Recalling resolutions 28, 29, 31 and 38 of the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, resolutions 18 and 19 of the Third Conference, resolution 20 of the Fourth Conference and resolution 13 of the Fifth Conference, as well as resolutions 4 and 10 of the First Conference, resolution 35 of the Second Conference, resolution 7 of the Third Conference and resolution 4 of the Fourth Conference,

Noting that, notwithstanding the general goal of limiting the use of exonyms, in several countries there has been a tendency to increase their number,

Recognizing that measures such as the categorization of exonym use, the publication of pronunciation guides for endonyms, and the formulation of guidelines ensuring a politically sensitive use of exonyms would help in the reduction of the number of exonyms,

Recommends the establishment of a Working Group on Exonyms of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, with the aim of preparing such measures as those mentioned above.¹

Upon establishment of the Working Group, it was immediately clear to the membership that its first task would be to define exactly what the word ‘exonym’ entailed, and in order to do so it would simultaneously be necessary to define the corresponding term ‘endonym’. After much deliberation the Working Group settled on the following definitions:

Endonym: Name of a geographical feature in an official or well-established language occurring in that area where the feature is situated. *Examples:* Vārānasī (not Benares); Aachen (not Aix-la-Chapelle); Krung Thep (not Bangkok); Al-Uqşur (not Luxor).

Exonym: Name used in a specific language for a geographical feature situated outside the area where that language is widely spoken, and differing in its form from the respective endonym(s) in the area where the

¹ *Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Berlin, 27 August – 5 September 2002*, United Nations, Dept of Economic and Social Affairs, 2003, Document E/CONF.94/3, available online in all six working languages of the UNGEGN – for the English language version see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/eighthuncsgn-english.pdf>

geographical feature is situated. *Examples:* Warsaw is the English exonym for Warszawa (Polish); Mailand is German for Milano; Londres is French for London; Kūlūniyā is Arabic for Köln. The officially romanized endonym Moskva for Москва is not an exonym, nor is the Pinyin form Beijing, while Peking is an exonym. The United Nations recommends minimizing the use of exonyms in international usage.²

Even with these definitions available, however, there remains debate as to the precise nature of the endonym and the exonym, and it is the debate regarding the endonym that this present paper is designed to address.

SPACE AND PLACE

From time immemorial man has gazed at the night sky and wondered how and where he might truly be located in the universe, in the great scheme of things. The same sense of awe can overwhelm us in the daytime as we stand on a mountain top and view the distant horizons, as the pioneering British mountaineer Douglas Freshfield noted:

...the whole was vast and vague, wonderful and strange, creating an impression of immeasurable shining space, of the Earth as it might appear to a visitant from some other planet.³

Where exactly are we, where do we belong, and what is it that we are observing? And aside from likely feelings of human insignificance, is it a sense of space or a sense of place that takes hold of us at such moments; indeed is there in fact a difference between the two?

Already in the fourth century BC the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle were writing of space (*χωρα* / *chora*) and place (*τοπος* / *topos*). By the first century AD the Roman mathematician and geographer Ptolemy had returned to the theme, dealing with space and place in a strictly scientific and unemotional manner, simply in terms of mathematically determined locations. By contrast, the Greek geographer Strabo, writing some hundred years earlier than Ptolemy, had dealt with place more artistically, using description to note the differences and similarities of landscapes and cultures⁴. Much later, the seventeenth century philosopher-scientists Descartes and Newton broached the same questions. For Descartes the two phenomena were of a different type; place was about position whilst space was about size and shape, area and volume. Newton considered the relationship between space and place to be hierarchical; place was a part of space. Einstein, as a specialist scientist, followed the Ptolemaic approach in being interested only in what he believed to be measurable and, considering space to be measurable, he spoke mainly of that. Since, as we shall see, it is for the most part place that we need to consider in our dealings with toponymy, the value of Einstein's work to the present study is therefore necessarily limited. Indeed, when caught in Greenland by the type of all-consuming blizzard that renders inoperable many of our navigational senses, including sight, it is most certainly Newton rather than Einstein who needs to be our companion, as Peter Høeg graphically remarks from his experiences among the Inuit:

No one has budged my or Newton's certainty ... No one is going to find his way home to Qaanaaq with his nose stuck in Einstein's writings.⁵

² *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names: Addendum*, United Nations, 16 November 2007, Document ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/85/Add.1, 07-60262, available online in all six working languages of the UNGEGN – for the English language version see

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/glossary_add/glossary_add_e.pdf

³ The view just shy of the summit of Koshtantau in the Caucasus (4303N 4312E), as recounted in *Search and travel in the Caucasus*, Douglas W Freshfield, Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society & Monthly Record of Geography, Issue 12, No.5, 1890, p 258.

⁴ See *Geography & Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World*, Denis Cosgrove, I B Tauris, 2008, ISBN 9781850438472, pp 6-7.

⁵ *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, Peter Høeg, translated from the Danish by F. David, HarperCollins, 1993, ISBN 0006547834, p 39.

The philosopher Wittgenstein frequently employed geographical and topographical language in his discourses, speaking of journeys, of the lie of the land, and of knowing one's way about. In defining metapsychology in his 1915 work *Das Unbewusste (The Unconscious)*, Sigmund Freud wrote of the topographical aspects of a psychic process, these being the aspects relevant to locating and identifying the specific junctures or places within our minds at which consciousness operates. Some four decades later, in *La poétique de l'espace (The Poetics of Space)*, the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard posited that ...the life of the mind is given form in the places and spaces in which human beings dwell and those places themselves shape and influence human memories, feelings and thoughts.⁶

For philosophy and psychology regularly to use such terminology in helping to denote the concepts relevant to those disciplines is a remarkable testament to the importance of space and place in every aspect of our lives. Several writers in more recent years have also turned their attention to these same questions. Three of the most notable contributors to the subject have been Yi-Fu Tuan⁷, Jeff Malpas⁸, and Edward Relph⁹, all of whom agree that there is indeed a distinction to be made between space and place. In contrast to Einstein, Relph argues that space is in fact a somewhat shapeless concept: Space is amorphous and intangible and not an entity that can be directly described and analysed.¹⁰

In a highly important passage, Tuan agrees that space is the more nebulous of the two ideas: "Space" is more abstract than "place." What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. ... The ideas "space" and "place" require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.¹¹

By introducing movement and pause, Tuan here not only endorses the concept of space but further connects it with that of time, and this is a connection also noted by Malpas:

One can thus talk of a 'space of time' ... German simply combines the term for space with that for time – *Raum* with *Zeit* – to arrive at a single term for such a 'time-space' – *Zeitraum*.¹²

The German language is of course adept at making such constructions – *Zeitgeist* is another example from a different sphere – and the word *Zeitraum* manages to encapsulate the time-space continuum more succinctly than is perhaps possible in other languages. Yermak's band of Cossack frontiersmen will doubtless have experienced this connection of space and time as they progressed eastwards across the Siberian taiga and steppes in the late sixteenth century at the behest of the tsar, and the same intertwining was also recorded by the writer Toby Green during his crossing of the Argentine *pampa* on horseback in the 1990s:

Distance seemed to disappear into a concept for maps only: you could always see your target, even if it took three or four hours at a good pace to reach it. Time, which always makes itself known through the passing of changes, vanished into the constancy of the spaces and the grasslands.¹³

⁶ Quoted in *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, J E Malpas, Cambridge University Press, 1999, ISBN 9780521036900, p 5.

⁷ [A] *Space and Place: The perspective of experience*, Yi-Fu Tuan, University of Minnesota Press, 1977, ISBN 9780816638772: [B] *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes, and Values*, Yi-Fu Tuan, Columbia University Press, 1990, ISBN 9780231073950.

⁸ Malpas, *op. cit.*

⁹ *Place and Placelessness*, E Relph, Pion, 1976, ISBN 0850860555.

¹⁰ Relph, *op. cit.*, p 8.

¹¹ Tuan, *op. cit.* [A], p 6.

¹² Malpas, *op. cit.*, p 23.

¹³ *Saddled with Darwin: A Journey through South America*, Toby Green, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999, ISBN 0297819011, p 93.

In the 1990s the American journalist and author Anne Applebaum travelled from Kaliningrad to Odessa via Vilnius, Minsk, Brest, L'viv & Chernivtsi – “across the borderlands of Europe”, as she put it. She entitled her book “Between East and West” but by this she certainly did not mean “Central”¹⁴. Whatever central Europe might be, this assuredly is not it. Instead, she was making reference to what she appeared to view as a void, an area perceived by the outsider as indeterminate, being neither quite space nor quite place. Within this void places can take on an indeterminate or multi-faceted nature dependent upon the departure point of an individual's perception. For the Kazakh or Comanche nomad, a sense of space and place forms an integral part of existence, with their seasonal halting locations acting as places among the wider milieu of the space provided by the steppe or pastureland as a whole. On a much smaller scale, the relationship between space and place can be seen in the Iranian city of Eşfahān, in the great *maidan*, the vast rectangle almost a mile in perimeter built at the turn of the seventeenth century during the Safavid dynasty. This awe-inspiring feature has very real attributes of space, yet it is essentially a place, one for which

...there are hardly words enough to describe its exquisite beauty, the cunningness of the arrangement of palaces and mosques and bazaars around it, the delight which comes to the heart when for the first time, you set eyes on it.¹⁵

We have probably seen sufficient now to appreciate that the wider vision we have when studying the night sky or the panorama from a mountain top would seem to be one of space, rather than place, with space determined as something rather vague but extensive, about which we know relatively little and which does not necessarily feature greatly as a direct and pressing influence on our everyday lives. Perhaps we might say that space has three dimensions –four, if we include time – whereas place tends more to hug the two-dimensional contours of the terrain. But does this leave place merely a passive location on the earth's surface, as Descartes and Newton suggest, or is it a concept possessing more active characteristics? At first sight ‘place’ can seem a rather banal word, prone to a myriad of loose everyday applications, but Relph offers us the beginnings of one possible answer: In general it seems that space provides the context for places.¹⁶

This is accurate in as far as it goes, but in reality it does not take us a long way. It is true that at one level one might talk of the world as being ‘space’, and that this ‘space’ is full of individual places, *i.e.* that places are all simply static locations within space. It is also true that at a basic level place is indeed a question of position or location, both absolute within itself and relative in relation to other places. Yet to limit one's understanding of place merely to the belief that it possesses scientifically measurable locational facets alone is to miss the wonder and beauty of the idea, for place as a concept also possesses a soul, namely the ‘sense of place’ that accompanies it. This sense of place works in many different ways and at many different levels. At its most prosaic, a place may mean little without the wider context in which it finds itself, but more intriguingly, and as the earlier important quotation from Tuan suggests¹⁷, a ‘place’ is a location which we choose to make meaningful to us, where we pause and linger, and to which we add value. It can become partly or even wholly synonymous with notions of ‘home’ or ‘dwelling’.

The value we add to, or invest in, a place becomes an attribute of that place, and many such attributes exist: cultural, emotional, geographical, historical, linguistic, literary, political, social, spiritual, and perhaps others too¹⁸. Any number of these may be present in one place, or in the mind of a person or persons relating themselves to that place, and all invoke a sense of attachment or belonging. The

¹⁴ *Between East and West: Across the Borderlands of Europe*, Anne Applebaum, Papermac, 1995, ISBN 0333641698.

¹⁵ *Journey into Persia*, Robert Payne, The Travel Book Club, 1952, p 137.

¹⁶ Relph, *op. cit.*, p 8.

¹⁷ Tuan's quotation is referenced at footnote 11.

¹⁸ Some of these aspects were considered by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger and can be seen listed in *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, Jeff Malpas, MIT Press, 2007, ISBN 0262134705, p 5.

Australian toponymist Laura Kostanski has written illuminatingly of the sense of attachment to place as part of identity that is felt by Aboriginal peoples in the Australian state of Victoria¹⁹. Malpas too notes how Aboriginal and Maori peoples ...have a conception of human life, and of all life, as inextricably bound up with the land.²⁰

This sense of belonging can be found not just in real life but also in the artistic representation of features both natural and man-made. It is present in a Levitan painting of the Russian landscape, or a Wordsworth poem extolling the beauty of the English Lakeland. Marcel Proust's celebrated novel *A la recherche du temps perdu* (usually translated as *Remembrance of Things Past*) is written almost entirely on the basis of the places dear to each of his characters; for Proust, place is the factor that gives a person their identity. The same affiliation is also evident in the keen sense of urban belonging felt by Orhan Pamuk in invoking the cultural, emotional, historical and spiritual attributes of the Istanbul that he so cherishes:

When I watch the black-and-white crowds rushing through the darkening streets on a winter's evening, I feel a deep sense of fellowship, almost as if the night sky has cloaked our lives, our streets, our every belonging in a blanket of darkness, as if once we're safe in our houses, our bedrooms, our beds, we can return to dreams of our long-gone riches, our legendary past.²¹

The size of a place can vary almost infinitely; as Tuan points out, it can be anything from a favourite armchair to potentially the entire world²². The American writer George Stewart provides a more finely-tuned array of the scales at which place can function:

It may be a continent, a county, an inn, a prison, a forking of streams, a grove of trees, a lake, a grave.²³

There may be several strata of places in co-existence at any given location, e.g. neighbourhood → suburb → town → lower-order administrative unit → higher-order administrative unit → country. A sense of place is a common feeling at any of these scales, for instance when a person relates to their country, as the Slovene geographer Milan Orožen Adamič demonstrates:

Today, it [Slovenia] is not only a place where we live and work, but also a place we carry in our hearts.²⁴

Tuan has called this phenomenon 'topophilia', the love for a place, and in his book of that title he defines this word as

...the affective bond between people and place or setting.²⁵

Tuan further amplifies his explanation of topophilia as being the fondness that one has for a place

...because it is home, the locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood. ... because it is familiar, ... and incarnates the past, because it evokes pride of ownership or of creation.²⁶

There is of course an inevitable corollary to this sense of topophilia, in that as people move away from their familiar surroundings they experience less of a sense of belonging and for the most part become less involved in – and invest less value in – the places they visit. Our perceptions are usually most reliable when we are close to home. The British geographer Denis Cosgrove remarks that as we move away from

¹⁹ *Restoration of Indigenous Toponyms: Recognition of Attachment, Identity and Dependence*, Laura Kostanski, paper E/CONF.98/41/Add.1, presented to the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, New York, 21-30 August 2007, pp 4-7: available online at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/9th-UNCSSGN-Docs/E-CONF-98-41-Add1.pdf>

²⁰ Malpas, *op. cit.*, p 2.

²¹ *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, Orhan Pamuk, Faber & Faber, 2005, ISBN 0571218326, p 31.

²² Yi-Fu Tuan, *op. cit.* [A], p 149.

²³ *Names on the Globe*, George R Stewart, Oxford University Press, 1975, p 4.

²⁴ *About Slovenia*, Milan Orožen Adamič, in *Slovenia: A Geographical Overview*, edited by Milan Orožen Adamič, ZRC Publishing/Slovenian Academy of Sciences & Arts, 2004, ISBN 961650049X, p 7.

²⁵ Yi-Fu Tuan, *op. cit.* [B], p 4.

²⁶ Yi-Fu Tuan, *op. cit.* [B], p 93 & p 247.

familiar ground so our powers of description may become less capable of recording the novelties that we encounter. He cites as an example the manner in which the written records of the early nineteenth century Lewis and Clark expedition, as it moved further and further westwards across increasingly unfamiliar American territory, became more and more “fractured and failed”²⁷. One can see the same phenomenon in the almost apocalyptically grim portrayals of the Alps as found in some of the paintings of the British artist J M W Turner, recording as wholly inhospitable a foreign landscape that those looking from the outside today see as little more than mildly daunting.

We have begun here to consider the role of perception in place. As humans we use perception to bring order to our world, at least in part because we feel more comfortable by doing so. Seeking order and symmetry out of chaos is a natural human endeavour, since it allows us to imbue nature with a degree of the rationality that the human brain craves. In earlier centuries in particular, this endeavour was underpinned by the desire to discover, understand and interpret the divine logic that was thought to be present in the natural world. And as we consider our own landscapes²⁸, so we perceive; we evaluate and rationalise; we identify; we compare and contrast. If for instance there are hills, then we also look in the expectation that there will be corresponding valleys. We may attribute characteristics to the features we see; thus a mountain may be regarded by one social group as a celestial stepping-stone but by another as an abode of evil spirits. Sometimes the features we see might be thought self-evident; mountains, perhaps, or a desert. Yet Tuan cautions us to be wary of making assumptions of self-evidence, since No two social groups make precisely the same evaluation of the environment.²⁹

Tuan here is reminding us that the identification process is not necessarily the same in different cultures. This touches on the question of feature perception, something which is subject to dramatic variation across societies and cultures. It is, though, all too easy to be oblivious to such variations. Whereas it would in normal circumstances be absurd to identify singly each tree in a European forest, on the other hand the Kalahari Bushmen of southern Africa know every stone and bush of their domain because in that environment these features become significant, even though they are small and remain unnoticed by outsiders³⁰. Similarly, where an outsider perceives a single undifferentiated desert, the local inhabitant may see separate features where, respectively, there is easy going for camels, there is quicksand, and there is a spectacular display of flora after the occasional rains.

The author Jonathan Raban illustrates the way in which eighteenth and nineteenth century European settlers in western Canada struggled to understand the manner in which the local Tlingit inhabitants regarded the places in which they lived. Whereas the Europeans automatically identified the land features and considered the sea to be an essentially uniform whole, for the Tlingit the opposite was true; the water was their way of life and they gave primacy of perception to it rather than to the land:

The whites, who conceived of the sea as an empty space, expected their canoe to go in a straight line, a compass course, from departure point to destination, and could not fathom why Indian pilots should insist on frittering away precious time in a succession of stops, starts, and unnecessary diversions. ... [the whites] couldn't grasp the fact that for Indians the water was a place, and the great bulk of surrounding land mere undifferentiated space.³¹

²⁷ Cosgrove, *op. cit.*, pp 93-4.

²⁸ The term *landscape* is here used in its English language sense, of a rural or urban portrait as observable from a particular location and viewed either internally from within that portrait or externally from outside. This is as opposed to the apparently analogous German language term *Landschaft*, which is in fact a different concept, one of an area with shared physical and cultural characteristics.

²⁹ Tuan, *op. cit.* [B], p 5.

³⁰ Tuan, *op. cit.* [B], p 78.

³¹ *Passage to Juneau: A Sea and Its Meanings*, Jonathan Raban, Vintage Books, 1999, ISBN 0679776141, p 99 & p 103.

Perception also raises its head in other ways. The mountain that we climb or the stream in which we fish may be obvious features to most observers of a single culture, though – as we have seen – not necessarily to those of a different culture, but this clearly cannot be so for an administrative unit or a country. These latter are intangible features, created by humans to enhance their feelings of social order and structure, and in that sense they are therefore ‘imagined’ rather than naturally real. This arguably brings such features into the category of ‘social constructs’, phenomena invented or constructed by participants in a particular culture or society and existing because people agree to behave as if they exist³². Very possibly, as Benedict Anderson might argue, the post-nineteenth century nation state is the ultimate social construct in this regard; the ultimate artificially constructed but meaningful ‘space’³³. Yet even these constructs only make sense as an extension to the place from which one views them, and thus however one approaches the issue a sense of place remains a *sine qua non* for an understanding of the way we have ordered our societies and cultures.

PLACE AND THE ENDONYM

Looking back on the question of space and place, we can see that there is something intrinsically elemental about it all. The subject goes right to the core of our psychological comprehension of who we are and where we are. We have seen that we need to identify those features around us that matter to us, in order to try to bring some sense of order out of nature’s chaos. It is pertinent now to consider the means by which we do identify those significant features, in other words how we achieve the vital interface between place and person. In practice, of course, this interface is achieved by means of applying the label which we call the place name, or toponym³⁴.

It is not surprising to discover that the Bible has scarcely begun before the first toponyms appear; the first eight biblical toponyms occur as early as the second chapter of the Old Testament Book of Genesis: And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in **Eden**; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is **Pison**: that is it which compasseth the whole land of **Havilah**, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is **Gihon**: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of **Ethiopia**. And the name of the third river is **Hiddekel**: that is it which goeth toward the east of **Assyria**. And the fourth river is **Euphrates**.³⁵ [*my emphases*].

In his important mid-twentieth century study *The Making of the English Landscape*, the historian W G Hoskins provides us with an idea of the connections that bind space, place, and the toponym: For what a many-sided pleasure there is in looking at a wide view anywhere in England, not simply as a sun-drenched whole, fading into unknown blue distances, like the view of the West Midland plain from the top of the Malvern Hills, or at a pleasant rural miniature like the crumpled Woburn ridge in homely Bedfordshire, but in **recognizing every one of its details name by name**.³⁶ [*my emphasis*].

³² This definition of ‘social construct’ is adapted from that found online in Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_construct

³³ *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, Benedict Anderson, Verso Books, 1991, ISBN 0860915468.

³⁴ Note that ‘place name’ and ‘geographical name’ are not synonymous terms; the latter has a wider application and can for instance cover the names of moving features such as ocean currents or winds.

³⁵ *Holy Bible*, Authorised King James Version (Church of England), 1611, Book of Genesis, chapter 2: verses 8-14. The locations of Eden, Pison, Havilah & Gihon are open to interpretation; Hiddekel = Tigris.

³⁶ *The Making of the English Landscape*, W G Hoskins, Hodder & Stoughton, 1955, p 19.

The wide and fading view provides the space and the Malvern Hills and Woburn ridge give us our places but, as Hoskins notes, we then need the names. The theme of space and time in relation to toponymy has also been explored by the Algerian toponymist Brahim Atoui, who writes that One names in order to delimit, to isolate, identify, distinguish, demarcate, and also and especially to give value³⁷

On such aspects of toponymy Stewart is perhaps our most valuable guide, for his classic work tells us most of what we need to know. He classifies toponyms as descriptive, associative, incident-related, possessive, commemorative, commendatory, folk-etymological, manufactured, or originating in error. Stewart defines the relationship between place and name in the following way:

A place, therefore, is any area which an observing consciousness, whether human or animal, distinguishes and separates, by whatever means, from other areas. The boundaries may be precise or vague; they may be physical and concrete or mental and imaginary. A place may be a natural feature or a human construction. ... To be named, a place must first be conceived as an entity, that is, as being separable and identifiable from other places.³⁸

Stewart also notes how a sense of place can emanate outwards from the centre of the location involved, in that people can legitimately say they are at Big Pool as soon as they see the water of that pool glinting through the trees. They do not have to ...wait until they stand at the bank, much less step into the water, but the influence of the place, along with its name, oozes outward.³⁹

The full extent of sizeable features, such as an ocean, the Alps or the River Danube, may not initially be recognised by those living nearby, who until some later age of exploration may be aware only of those portions close to them. They will name the portions which are meaningful to them, and expand the attribution of such names as their knowledge of the features themselves expands. In his account of the feature perception held by the peoples of western Canada, the nineteenth century German explorer Aurel Krause noted the following about the places important to the Tlingit: [He] knows every bay that lends itself to fishing or the beaching of a canoe, every valley that offers a way to the interior and **for these he had names**; but the mountain peaks themselves, even though they are outstanding on account of their shape or size, are scarcely noticed by him.⁴⁰ [*my emphasis*].

Krause also notes that the names given by the Kwakiutl in the Queen Charlotte Strait area of western Canada are of the type ‘Having Great Ebb Tide’, ‘Shallow in Middle of Water’ and ‘Round Thing on Water’ (*i.e.* ‘island’); they reflect the primacy of water in the perception of the local inhabitants⁴¹. Raban meanwhile returns to the theme of Tlingit toponyms:

For the coastal Indians, the surface of the sea was their primary workplace – it was where they fished, fought their wars, traded goods, met their wives and husbands ... **They had names for every feature of the water – many more names for the sea than they had for the surrounding land.** To understand the true history of the Northwest, the essential character of this landscape, you have to get into the mindset of a canoe-Indian, and learn to see the water as a place, with the forests and mountains as mostly undifferentiated space.⁴² [*my emphasis*].

³⁷ “On nomme pour délimiter, pour isoler, identifier, distinguer, démarquer et aussi et surtout pour faire valoir”, in *Introduction à la notion d’espace et de limite contenue dans un nom de lieu*, Brahim Atoui, paper E/CONF.91/CRP.29, presented to the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, New York, 13-22 January 1998.

³⁸ Stewart, *op.cit.*, pp 3-4 & p 8. His classification of toponyms can be found in Section II of this work.

³⁹ Stewart, *op.cit.*, p 10.

⁴⁰ *The Tlingit Indians: Results of a Trip to the Northwest Coast of America and the Bering Straits*, Aurel Krause (translated by Erna Gunther), University of Washington Press, 1956, ISBN 0295950757, p 104.

⁴¹ Raban, *op. cit.*, p 231.

⁴² This quotation is taken from *A conversation with Jonathan Raban, author of Passage to Juneau: A Sea and Its Meanings*, this being a conversation between publisher and author, the text of which is available at <http://www.amazon.com/Passage-Juneau-Sea-Its-Meanings/dp/product-description/0679776141>

Such names are endonyms, because they are indisputably names created in and arising from within the locality, rather than names attributed from the outside (this latter characteristic being the classic mark of the exonym). A farmer will give names to his individual fields, because he needs to distinguish each field uniquely, even if only in speech, in order to provide a means of identifying where he has sown his crop of wheat or settled his flock of sheep to graze. A neighbouring farmer may give very similar names to his own fields, but there will be little scope for confusion from farm to farm, and where there is confusion one duplicate name will find itself subject to natural change. These names are endonyms irrespective of the manner in which they manifest themselves: they may be written or spoken; in an official language or in a well-established language; in a standard form of one of these languages or even in a dialect form of one of these languages. The process is social, emotional, even spiritual, and the resulting names are truly endonyms.

This inevitably leads us to the realisation that the official authority with overall governing competence over these localities – usually the State – does not usually play an initial role in the creation of an endonym. An endonym is most frequently the product of a “bottom→up” approach to toponyms, with the people on the spot being its originators and determiners. An endonym can originate as an item of personal or locally collective property, a reflection of the individual’s right to choose the name and the language (or dialect thereof) by which he denotes his local geographical features. However, in certain socio-political environments, it can be the State that determines the endonym, as happened for example with the ideologically-driven monikers applied to features in the Soviet Union during the communist era.

Even outside such totalitarian environments, the State can have some function. For example, only the State can determine which endonyms are official; this will be a natural by-product of whatever laws determine the official language or languages of that State. Also, the State will have a role in determining which endonyms are standardized, perhaps by legislation concerning orthographic rules – without proper accordance to the appropriate orthographic rules an endonym will not be standardized. But even those endonyms which fall outside the “official” and “standardized” categories remain, quite simply, endonyms; albeit unofficial and non-standardized, and albeit very possibly of severely limited value outside their own immediate locale⁴³.

Thus we can say that endonyms are a factor of terrain and language, not of politics. The processes that create endonyms work independently of State authority and do not depend on the existence of any particular State. We can illustrate this very well by considering the endonyms of Poland. Shortly after releasing his 2007 film *Katyn*, the Polish cinematic director Andrzej Wajda commented on the many tribulations suffered by the Polish nation over the centuries, noting in particular that
In the 18th century, we were erased from the map for 100 years. We survived thanks to our two fatherlands: the earth we lived on and our language and literature.⁴⁴

Wajda is here remarking both on the continuity of time and place, and also on the continuity of language, all of which maintained their functions throughout this period, irrespective of the politics of the day. Certainly Poland as a country did disappear from the map for more than a century, split among Austria-Hungary, Prussia and Russia. However, the continuity of its terrain and its language remained and therefore so too did its endonyms. Note also that Polish was not always an official language during this

⁴³ This paragraph and the two that precede it are based in part on sections of the text of my paper *Man, his Terrain and his Toponyms*, in *Exonyms and the International Standardisation of Geographical Names*, edited by Peter Jordan, Milan Orožen Adamič & Paul Woodman, Lit Verlag, 2007, ISBN 9783700005872, pp 89-93.

⁴⁴ *Andrzej Wajda comes face to face with a terrible truth for Katyn*, Brigid Grauman, in *The Times* (London), April 17, 2008, available online at http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/film/article3758372.ece The period Wajda refers to lasted for considerably more than 100 years, from towards the end of the eighteenth century until shortly after the end of the First World War.

period, but this had no effect on its endonyms. Polish endonyms remained Polish endonyms throughout this troubled period of history; *Łódź* was and remains an endonym because it is Polish, not because it is official.

Hungarian language names in parts of Romania, such as *Segeșvár* for the town known in Romanian as *Sighișoara*, have consistently remained endonyms because of the long-standing and well-established Hungarian community present there, notwithstanding the fact that official status for the Hungarian language in those parts of Romania has been absent for several decades. Such examples can be found worldwide; the toponym *eGoli* has always been the Zulu endonym for *Johannesburg*; when South Africa's 1994 constitution was enacted this endonym simply acquired official status. English endonyms in the United Kingdom are no less endonymic simply because the English language lacks official status in that country, and likewise are no less endonymic simply because there happens to be no authoritative organisation in the United Kingdom responsible for endonym standardisation. The names in all the above examples have arisen from within. Conversely, the German language form *Genf* for the city we know in English as *Geneva* cannot be an endonym, even though German is an official language of Switzerland, for there is no meaningful well-established German-speaking community resident in that city who could have given rise to such a name.

It is of course important that, if a language is not actually official, it should at least be well-established before its toponyms can be considered as endonyms. Migrant or seasonal populations, such as the Portuguese community working in the hotel and catering trades in Geneva, are not sufficiently well-established for their language names (*e.g. Genebra*, the Portuguese name for *Geneva*) to be endonyms⁴⁵. However, such communities may well take root over time, and it is perfectly possible for example to argue that the Punjabi form of the name for Southall in the United Kingdom is well on the way to becoming endonymic, a substantial Punjabi community having been settled in that town for over half a century⁴⁶.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we name what we need to name; no more, no less. And when the naming processes are as elemental as those we have examined, when toponyms arise *in situ* from the relationship between humans and their occupancy of their terrain or 'place', then such names have arisen from within and are incontrovertibly endonyms (*évdov* / *endon* = within). Any United Nations definition of endonym must reflect this basic truth, and the current United Nations definition reflects it very well⁴⁷.

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⁴⁵ This point was originally made in my paper *The UNGEGN definitions of endonym and exonym*, in Jordan, Orožen Adamič & Woodman, *op. cit.*, pp 81-7.

⁴⁶ The Punjabi form in its original Gurmukhi script ਸਾਊਥਹਾਲ can be seen in parallel with the usual form *Southall* on the signage at the town's railway station. The Punjabi form is romanized as *Sāūthhāl* under the current UN-approved romanization system for that language.

⁴⁷ See the section entitled **BACKGROUND** at the beginning of this present paper for the current United Nations definition of endonym.