THE INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN TOPONYMY AND IDENTITY

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Abstract: *The interconnections between toponymy and identity.* There are four players involved in the interconnections between toponymy and identity. There are those who give and use toponyms *in situ*, there are those who do so from afar, there are also the toponyms themselves, and finally there are the places and features to which the toponyms relate. These players act out a complex relationship between toponymy and identity that is intimate, intricate, ongoing and sometimes changing. Drawing on examples principally from Europe, Asia, the United Nations and even the imagination, this paper explores the dynamics of this relationship.

Rezumat: *Interconexiuni între toponimie şi identitate*. Se cunosc cel puţin patru actori implicaţi în interconectarea toponimiei cu identitatea. Sunt acei cercetători care dau nume geografice şi le folosesc *in situ*, cei care percep toponimele de la distanţă, apoi ar fi toponimele însăşi, şi în sfârşit locurile şi caracteristicile locurilor, la care toponimele se raporteaza. Aceşti actori scot în evidenţă o relaţie complexă, intimă, complicată şi continuă între toponimie si identitate. Bazându-se pe exemple concrete din Europa, Asia, dar şi cele oferite de Naţiunile Unite şi chiar exemple provenite din imaginarul colectiv, acest articol explorează dinamica acestei relaţii dintre toponimie si identitate.

Key words: *toponymy, identity, Europe, Asia, geographical names.*
Cuvinte cheie: *toponimie, identitate, Europa, Asia, nume geografice.*

1. INTRODUCTION

It is surely axiomatic to state that our instinctive drive to name places and features stems from our need to provide them with an identity. We require that identity in order to organise our lives and our social structures for, as the distinguished Norwegian toponymist Botolv Helleland has written, "without their place names it would indeed be more difficult to recall what happened at Verdun or Beaver Creek or any other named place" (HELLELAND 2012: p110). Thus, having recognised something on this earth's surface to be a place or feature, we project an identity on to it by bestowing it with a name. This is done in many varied ways, even by means of the imagination, as we shall now see.

2. THE IMAGINATION

In May 2004, Poland was among ten candidate countries that acquired membership of the European Union. As with several of these new members, principally those in central Europe and on the Baltic littoral, Poland quickly saw a substantial economic emigration into more prosperous existing member countries. Thousands of Poles moved westwards across the border into Germany, in the pursuit of better employment prospects. The Polish author Andrzej Stasiuk sought to capture in his writings the world of these Polish labourers, and concluded that no toponym existed that would encapsulate the environment in which they lived. Stasiuk was writing in Polish, but he felt the standard Polish word for Germany – *Niemcy* – was not applicable for his purpose, because although the émigrés did indeed live in Germany, they did so in a piecemeal and shapeless fashion. For the most part they were travelling, either within Germany itself or between Poland and Germany, without putting down roots, often fighting loneliness and homesickness, and in many respects keeping the "real" Germany at arm's length.

Stasiuk believed that this amorphous population possessed a specific identity of its own that was not covered by any existing toponym. He hit upon the idea of labelling this entity as *Dojczland*, this being the German name *Deutschland* written in Polish orthography. It proved an inspired invention, which indisputably denoted Germany yet did so from the point of view of these scattered communities of transient Polish migrant workers. *Dojczland* became the title of his book (STASIUK 2007), a book which through its success gave this particular world an established toponymic identity. The book retained the title *Dojczland* when it was subsequently translated into German.

3. COUNTRIES AND STATES

The inhabitants of *Dojczland* constitute, in effect, an example of what Benedict Anderson had some years earlier termed an "imagined community", a community in which each member is aware of being part of some greater communal whole, but in which individual members do not necessarily all meet (ANDERSON 1991). Arguably this notion applies not just to unofficial constructs such as *Dojczland* but also to the more conventional countries of the world. In most instances, the toponymic identity of these polities manifests itself in two distinct forms. These forms are sometimes considered to be a straightforward

pairing – a "short form" and a "long form" – but this is a facile approach to what in truth is a far more basic distinction. The "short form" is in fact a country name (*eg* France), which relates to the geographical territory associated with the country concerned. The "long form" is in reality a state title (*eg* French Republic), which is usually a more formal and elaborate terminological construction and which relates not directly to the geographical territory but to the instruments of authority and governance of that territory. Put in somewhat crude pictorial terms, if I hear or read the word "France" my mind conjures up an image of the map of that country – the *hexagone* – whereas the term "French Republic" produces a mental picture of government buildings in Paris.

As it happens, of course, those government buildings too may possess a toponymic identity. It is fairly common practice to use the linguistic device of metonymy in order to identify a country, its government, or part of its administration. Metonymy is a figure of speech that involves replacing the whole by the part, and the replacement part is often toponymic. Hence, for example, we might see use of the toponym "Élysée Palace" to denote the French presidency, or "Kremlin" as a toponymic identifier of the government of the Russian Federation or (in former days) the Soviet Union. This figure of speech can be scale-related according to the degree of specificity required; thus the functions of the United States government can be identified variously by the toponyms "Washington", "Capitol Hill" (or more colloquially "the Hill") and "the White House". Metonymy involves substitution, and the British historian Christopher Clark has noted that on occasion we may also use a toponym as a substitute for a personal name, if the person concerned is not broadly popular. Whereas the assassinations of Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy are remembered for what they were – the murders of individuals – the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, though at least as significant, tends instead to be remembered for where it took place, Sarajevo (CLARK 2013: p379).

At its most basic, toponymic identity is usually predicated upon a noun, a substantive form written (where appropriate) in nominative case. This is particularly true of the names we give to cultural features such as countries (*eg* France) and populated places (*eg* Paris). But occasionally a noun form is not available, as the result either of language particularities or of human choice. The Lao language, for example, does not contain a noun equating to the country name "Laos". Only the adjectival form "Lao" exists in the Lao language, and in order to create a noun form out of this adjective a compound term needs to be constructed, such as "Lao space" (*Muang Lao*) or "Lao nation" (*Pathet Lao*). Moreover, the term "Laos" as a noun was in all probability created by the French colonisers of that region in the nineteenth century, and the modern nation there sees its use as pejorative. These factors create a real identity problem for Laos in forums such as the United Nations; "Laos" is inappropriate in today's post-colonial environment, yet the only satisfactory alternative is not a noun but an adjective: "Lao". The solution that Laos has adopted is to establish its toponymic identity by exclusive use of its full state title; the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PCGN 2005: p4).

On occasion, a country may use an adjectival form by choice, even when this is not necessitated by linguistic considerations. Because of post-war sensitivity over the expanding parameters that the term *Deutschland* had developed during the Nazi era, the East German authorities avoided that term as far as possible during their country's existence from 1949 to 1990. They preferred to use the adjectival form *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, thereby creating a toponymic identity that stressed the existence of a democratic republic rather than the prominence of a Deutschland. They were happy to

use the label *Deutschland* only when it was seriously qualified so as to appear unequivocally "modern", as in the title of their country's principal official newspaper, *Neues Deutschland.*

Within the United Nations, matters of convenience may influence a country's decision as to how it wishes its identity to be labelled. The practice in that forum is for countries to be seated in an arrangement that corresponds to the alphabetical order of the English-language form of their name: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, etc. Those countries who adopt their state titles rather than their country names usually reverse the generic element, so that the principal specific country name retains paramountcy; hence Bolivia, whilst wishing to be known by its full state title, nonetheless reverses the generic and sits as "Bolivia, Plurinational State of". Yet a small number of countries do not deploy this reversal, and one of these is the Republic of Moldova. Apart from a brief awkward period between 2006 and 2008, this country has always referred to itself by its full title of "Republic of Moldova", in part to ensure its distinction from the region of Moldova which falls within the territory of its western neighbour, Romania. Choosing to utilise the full state title has assisted in promoting friendly relations between the two countries, and by alphabetising itself under the letter "R" for Republic rather than "M" for Moldova, this country has ensured that in United Nations forums it actually sits side-by-side with that same geographical neighbour, Romania.

The country name Romania itself also provides us with an example of identity change. In 1953, the Romanian language spelling of this name was changed from *România* to *Romînia* as part of a comprehensive (and controversial) drive to assign a preponderantly Slavic background to the country's culture, language and orthography (VERDERY 1991: p104). Whilst this general drive persisted throughout the communist period, an exception was made for the country name, which reverted to *România* in 1965 (VERDERY 1991: p116). These changes of toponymic identity formed only one part of a much broader issue of politics, culture and historiography which forms too wide a subject to address in this present paper.

4. ASTANA

If we are seeking a model to illustrate the forging of a wholly new toponymic identity, there is perhaps no better example than that of Astana, the capital city of Kazakhstan. Since the 1920s, the capital had been located in the southern city known as Alma-Ata in Soviet times and as Almaty since Kazakhstan's independence in 1991. But in December 1997 the capital was transferred 1200 kilometres to the north, to the town known at that time as Aqmola [Ақмола] in the Kazakh language and Akmola [Акмола] in Russian. Just five months later, in May 1998, this new capital was renamed Astana [Астана]. The principal factor behind the relocation was the desire – indeed the determination – of the authorities in Kazakhstan to lay unmistakable claim to the north of their country, an area dominated by ethnic Russians. Uprooting the functions of capital city from the comfortably leafy streets of Almaty in the Kazakh-dominated south, and planting them instead in the climatically harsh environment of the Russian-dominated north vividly made the statement that the entire country, not just the south, was inclusively the Republic of Kazakhstan. But the transfer alone did not fully accomplish this task, for the existing

name of the new capital – translating as "White Grave" – was felt to be inappropriate. The new capital needed to embody "the ideals of postmodern architecture, cultural inclusivity, and global progressivity" (KÖPPEN 2013: p591), and along with this radical and visionary plan for new buildings and infrastructure, a radical and visionary new name was required too. What better name to choose than *Astana*, a word which simply means "capital" in the Kazakh language and has no meaning at all in Russian? The new capital is named "Capital", pure and simple, and is placed in the heart of Kazakhstan's ethnically Russian stronghold; an extraordinarily bold and defiant statement of Kazakh identity and intent.

5. KOLKATA

In 2001, the authorities in India announced that the great city of Calcutta would henceforth be known as Kolkata. Although a name change usually signals a positive intention to change the identity of a place or feature, this particular instance was in many respects not a name change at all for the inhabitants, since Kolkata has always been the (romanized) Bengali name for the city, written as কলকাতা in the original script. The change was intended for the English-language and international communities, who were now being asked to eschew the traditional spelling Calcutta and instead use the romanized Bengali name as the standard toponym in their own languages. Yet matters of identity are rarely as straightforward as a simple name change might indicate. Several Indian writers, some of them inhabitants of that city and others not so, have written that the names Calcutta and Kolkata indicate much more than simply language. The psychologist and writer Ashis Nandy has argued that this extraordinarily complex city cannot be successfully identified by any one name, and that in reality both Kolkata and Calcutta continue to thrive as complementary toponyms. He writes that "[a]ll great cities have plural identities; their multiple names reflect that plurality", and he goes on to claim that (for example) the famous clubs and even the colourful saris of the metropolis are more resonant of a city named Calcutta than of one named Kolkata. So, for Nandy, the city possesses several identities:

> Indeed, a great metropolis almost always has more than one name and it wears this plurality as a badge of its greatness. For a great city always hides a number of cities of the mind, associated with different communities, cultures and languages. These imaginary cities are backed by distinctive experiences and different configurations of public memory. (NANDY 2006)

Similarly, the author Amit Chaudhuri has also explored the complex identity of this vibrant city and the relationship between its toponyms. He suggests that the city with the current name Kolkata is not even the same as its Bengali namesake of yesteryear, but a new creation destined for a soulless and characterless future, a jumble of the highest and the largest in the manner of a Dubai. Like Nandy before him, Chaudhuri makes the bold claim that to encapsulate the identity of the city in its entirety one cannot simply dispense with its supposedly former name of Calcutta:

This city – Kolkata – is neither a shadow of Calcutta, nor a reinvention of it, nor even the same city. Nor does it bear anything more than an outward resemblance to its namesake, Kolkata: the city as it's always been referred to in Bengali. …To take away one or the other name is to deprive the city of a dimension that's coterminous with it, that grew and rose and fell with it, whose meaning, deep in your heart, you know exactly. (CHAUDHURI 2013: p96).

For the cartographer, the choice is Kolkata. But for the representation of the city's identity in all its multi-textured entirety, the choice of toponym is less clear-cut.

6. KALININGRAD

The Calcutta/Kolkata issue notwithstanding, there are instances where the disconnection of identity between old name and new name does seem to be absolute. A classic instance of such a situation is found in the 1945 mutation from East Prussian Königsberg to Soviet Russian Kaliningrad. This change, which was consequent upon the dénouement of the Second World War, involved a transfer of sovereign power and the ejection of most of the existing inhabitants, to be replaced by newcomers speaking a language new to the locality. Ernest Gellner, a leading proponent of the modernism theory in the formation of nations, was unequivocal about this development, calling it a "total discontinuity":

In more than one sense, the city no longer exists. The place where the Prussian city of Königsberg had stood is now occupied by the Russian city of Kaliningrad. (GELLNER 1987: p76).

Surely we are indeed looking here at the absolute replacement of one identity by another. Certainly the degree of change is on a scale far, far greater than that witnessed by Calcutta, yet even here the reality is perhaps not quite as unequivocal as Gellner suggests. To be fair to this distinguished writer, his words certainly appeared to be an accurate reflection of reality when they were penned a quarter of a century ago, but even in this city of "total discontinuity" the human mind has more recently developed a capacity to recover the past. Kaliningrad is a city steeped in history, most notably perhaps as the home of one of the greatest philosophers of all time, Immanuel Kant. However, Kant's lifetime and indeed most of what we might call the "memorable history" of the city occurred at a time when it was known as Königsberg. Seven decades have now passed since the traumatic disjuncture of 1945, and the Cold War is no longer an everyday presence on the landscape. Today's inhabitants, as they stroll through the streets, cross the many bridges and study the evocative monuments, are no longer obliged to deny this history but instead have begun to reflect on it, and although they possess no inherited ethnic association with those times, they nevertheless wish their city to share today the identity formed by that magnificent history. So we find that the old name of the city has gradually begun to re-surface; not so much in its controversial entirety as Königsberg, but in gentler and more subtle ways. The younger generations, despite their being Russian-speakers sharing no inherited association with Kant and his times, now speak colloquially of the city as "Кёниг" (seen in Roman

script as *Kënig* or *König*). A sense of place and history is trumping the absence of ethnic connections. The young have decided that there is a certain paramount identity to their city that is the product of historical times and which must again be expressed to the world today; an identity that cannot adequately be conveyed solely by the current standard toponym Kaliningrad (DIENER & HAGEN 2013: pp505-06). There is now at least one locally created website forum dedicated to this particular issue (PK 2014).

7. TIME AND PLACE

The Kaliningrad example above demonstrates that there is an inherent time factor involved in the connections between toponymy and identity, even if on occasion that factor is in fact represented by a certain timelessness. Time is very significant when one considers the question of place of birth as a factor of identity. A person born in the capital of Mozambique in, say, 1960 was born in the Portuguese colonial city of Lourenço Marques. They were not born in Maputo, for the name change from Lourenço Marques to Maputo did not take place until 1976, after Mozambique had achieved independence. In fact, it might even be said that this person was born *into* – rather than *in* – the city of Lourenço Marques, for we are all born *into* an identity, including a toponymic identity, that is at any given juncture a particular complex of time and locational environment. That toponymic identity can and does change if the political and cultural identities should also change, as happened in Mozambique at the time of independence.

The name change from Lourenço Marques to Maputo was accepted by the local post-colonial community without any particular dissension. However, this is by no means true of all name changes. The Soviet Union remained a controversial polity throughout its existence, even to many of its own inhabitants, and some of the politically inspired settlement name changes that were introduced there did not fully alter the identity of the city or town concerned. The huge city of Perm' [Пермь], in the Urals, was between 1940 and 1957 named Molotov [Молотов] in recognition of the leading Soviet politician Vyacheslav Molotov. In contrast with the situation regarding Lourenço Marques *vis-à-vis* Maputo, the political and cultural situation in this thoroughly Soviet environment had not changed at all, and it is tempting to speculate that, as a whole, the inhabitants would not have regarded the name Molotov as betokening a new identity for their city. They would more likely have regarded it as a parallel name, a terminological irritation that needed to be deployed when filling in official forms or otherwise dealing with the authorities. In conversations in the streets and on the trams, it seems doubtful whether people in general would have used the name Molotov, except when they felt the presence of authority within earshot. The toponym Perm' would surely have continued to provide the city's real identity. Of course, a considerable amount of Soviet and Soviet-inspired toponymy portrayed an identity that was actually in opposition to reality. Villages named "Svobodnoye" [Свободное: from свобода = *free*] were not free, and those labelled "Pravdino" [Правдино: from правда = *truth*] did not represent the truth. There was in the Soviet Union a sharp dichotomy between the intention and the reality of the toponymic identity.

A different set of toponymic identity dichotomies is encountered in Algeria. Since independence, Algeria has insisted on Arabic as the language that should represent the

country's identity, and French has consistently been downplayed or even treated with hostility as the language of the former colonial power (Algeria, almost alone amongst French-speaking countries throughout the world, has not joined the French-speaking Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names). Algerian law, in particular the Arabic Language Generalisation Law of 1991, dictates that all names (including toponyms) should be written in Arabic script (ALGERIA 91-05). Yet the reality in Algeria is that there is a register of some 40,000 toponyms, all of them written in Roman script and displaying a French-style romanization. So while on the one hand the law calls for an Arabic toponymic identity, practice has determined that the real identity is otherwise. An uneasy truce resolves this impasse:

> Refuge was taken behind a tacit understanding on the part of the authorities that, while in theory the law was unyielding in its demand that toponyms be in Arabic, in practice it was permissible to write toponyms in a "descriptive" manner. Thus, toponyms could be "described" in Roman script, and these "described" forms could be shown on maps. In this neat way, a convenient *modus operandi* designed to delay or even obviate any irreversible shift to Arabic, and instead to continue showing toponyms in Roman script, has been devised. (PCGN 2003).

Toponyms applied to certain places and features may subsequently be deemed to convey a misrepresentative or even demeaning identity. In the 1960s, Romania saw many changes of name that removed toponymic elements such as *porc* (pig; swine) and *secătură* (layabout; idler), because such names were thought to suggest a primitive or backward condition. Thus the hamlets of Porceşti in Sibiu county and Secături in Prahova county became Turnu Roşu and Plaiu respectively, as part of a general attempt to improve and modernise toponymic identity (INDICATORUL 1974).

8. MODIFICATION OF NAMES

It is not always necessary to change a name completely in order to alter identity. The existing name can be modified or nuanced to bring a new "feel" to it. Perhaps the most frequent examples of this involve what might be termed toponymic branding, whereby a place or feature name has a new element added in an attempt to enhance the identity and overall prestige of the location denoted by the toponym. In 1938, the town of Wittenberg officially recognised its association with the sixteenth century religious reformer Martin Luther by rebranding itself as Lutherstadt Wittenberg (WIKI-DE 2014). After the Second World War, the Italian village of Breuil decided to trade upon its proximity to one of the most iconic peaks of the Alps, the Matterhorn, by becoming Breuil-Cervinia ("Cervinia" based on Monte Cervino, the Italian name for the Matterhorn). For several years in the early twenty-first century the Swiss village of Zermatt, lying on the other side of the Matterhorn from Breuil-Cervinia, added the element "Paradise" to several of its skiing domains; hence Rothorn-Paradise and Schwarzsee-Paradise. This somewhat egregious addition, complete with English spelling of the word "Paradise" (presumably for global

recognition), seems now to have been largely abandoned, perhaps belatedly recognised to have been an exercise in hubristic self-promotion.

But there can also be a much more sober and serious aspect to the nuancing of names for identity purposes, as exemplified by the Japanese city of Hiroshima. It is normal practice in Japan to use standard Sino-Japanese characters – known in Japan as *kanji* – in the writing of Japanese toponyms. By this method, Hiroshima is written as 広島, the two characters together providing the meaning of the name: "broad island". However, there is another way of writing in Japanese, using a phonetic script called *kana*, which simply reflects the pronunciation of the given name at the expense of its meaning. To complicate matters, *kana* script itself has two separate forms: the more angular *katakana*, which Japanese cartography normally utilises in the writing of toponyms occurring at some remove from Japan (for example in Europe), and *hiragana*, a more rounded form which is used to provide (where necessary) pronunciation information for toponyms within Japan, running alongside the standard *kanji*.

Hiroshima of course belongs to a small and particular group of toponyms that can claim, for better or worse, an exceptional history based on one single incident. In August 1945 the city became the site of the first explosion, outside of experimental situations, of an atomic nuclear device. And whereas normal Japanese practice, as for any Japanese city, is to write the city's name in *kanji*, some Japanese authors have instead used the *katakana* form ヒマ in an attempt to convey the city's global significance and indeed its exceptionalism; its extraordinary otherworldliness in the annals of history. The result is to remake Hiroshima as if it were a foreign city (BURUMA 1995: p93). Nor is *katakana* the only variant form used. The leading Japanese photographer Miyako Ishiuchi has taken a different path, maintaining *kana* to denote the exceptionalism of Hiroshima's history but at the same time attempting to soften its harshness by using the more feminine *hiragana* form ひろしま in her work, thereby cleverly incorporating an element of Japanese domesticity too (UBC 2011). By such methods as these, the identity of the name Hiroshima can be and has been nuanced to considerable effect (YONEYAMA 1999: pp48-9).

We also saw changing toponymic identities in the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian revolution. There was at that time a change in focus away from Persian nationalism and towards a pan-Islamic Arabic toponymic inventory. Shortly after the revolution, the senior hard-line cleric Ayatollah Khalkhali remarked that the entire Middle East and South-West Asia area was Islamic territory, and Iranian citizens, being Muslims, should not insist on national components in their feature names. Indeed, he went on to say, the Persian Gulf could just as well be called the Islamic Gulf (MESKOOB 1992: p16).

But the emphasis in Iran has changed dramatically since those early post-revolutionary days, and it is impossible to imagine an opinion in favour of a pan-Islamic identity being expressed today. Since the turn of the twenty-first century there has instead been a concerted and officially encouraged nationalist fervour in support of Persian toponymic identity, with the term "Persian Gulf" encouraged at the expense of both the existing alternative "Arabian Gulf" and the notional alternative "Islamic Gulf", as for instance the Google corporation discovered in the spring of 2012 (LEVS 2012).

9. ROMANIZATION AND SCRIPTS

Those of us whose languages use Roman script are accustomed to the idea that if we encounter a toponym from a country that uses non-Roman script – perhaps a toponym in Laos or Greece – there should be available a romanization system (preferably a system approved by the United Nations) that will assist us in scientifically turning the original form of the toponym into a corresponding Roman-script version. By and large, we think no further than that. Yet for certain countries romanization achieves much more than this limited function; it projects identity. The *pinyin* system for the romanization of toponyms in the People's Republic of China has been with us for almost half a century, and has been approved by the United Nations since 1977. This lengthy stability of the system, coupled with the incrementally growing significance of China in today's globalised world, has made the romanized *pinyin* forms of major Chinese city names as much part of the identity of those cities as the original Han character names themselves. Thus, to my mind, China's second city and major seaport possesses two valid parallel manifestations of its toponymic identity; an identity manifest in Han characters as 上海 and in Roman script as *Shanghai*.

Bulgaria provides another case in point. Although the standard romanization system for Bulgarian toponyms has a much shorter history than *pinyin*, having only been adopted by the United Nations as recently as 2012, it already shares some of the same characteristics. Spurred on by Bulgaria's accession to the European Union in 2007, the major cities, towns and administrative divisions of the country now have standardized Roman-script forms, which exist in parallel with the original Cyrillic script versions. Bulgaria uses these standardized Roman-script forms in its official documents such as the publications of its National Statistical Institute, including its *National Register of Populated Places* (BG-REG 2014) and handbook of *Regions, Districts and Municipalities* (BG-RDM 2011), and it is by means of those Roman-script toponymic forms that most of the European Union recognises the places and features for which those names act as labels.

Thus toponyms in China and Bulgaria now have developed or are developing Roman-script versions of their identity, in addition to the long-standing versions in original script. These Roman-script versions do not constitute an additional identity imposed by outsiders; they are becoming an integral part of the innate identity. If we perhaps harbour doubts as to the validity of this assertion, we can consider recent developments concerning the romanization of Persian toponyms. The original United Nations romanization system for Persian, adopted in 1972, produces romanized toponyms which are visually rather similar to those in Arab countries romanized via the United Nations system for Arabic. However, Iran is manifestly not part of the Arab world and the Persian and Arabic languages are entirely different. For this reason, the Iranian authorities have in recent years pressed for the adoption of a new United Nations romanization system for Persian, which would produce uniquely distinctive results. They achieved this goal by means of a resolution at the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 2012 (UN 2012). The reason Iran has been so very concerned about this issue is precisely because the authorities in Tehran wish even the romanized toponyms of their country to reflect a specifically Persian identity.

There is of course a more dramatic method by which a country can change its toponymic identity, and that is by changing the script in which its language is written. In 1972 Somalia achieved a unified national toponymic identity when for the first time it

adopted a single national orthography for the Somali language, to replace the colonial Italian-language and English-language orthographies that had existed hitherto. The Republic of Moldova adopted Roman-script orthography as soon as the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed replacement of the Moscow-imposed Cyrillic script. It is conceivable that other countries may also take this path; Kazakhstan, for example, is mooting a change from Cyrillic script to Roman script for the Kazakh language, to take effect by the year 2025 (PAVLOVSKAYA 2013).

10. A TWO-WAY PROCESS

The consistent thread running through this paper up to now has been one of human influence on toponymy. In various contexts and for various reasons, we have seen human beings initiate and adapt place and feature names to suit their circumstances and preferences, and to provide those places and features with an identity. But this is not the only way in which toponymy and identity interact. It may on occasion be the case that the toponyms, having been set down by humankind as labels, then themselves act in reverse as furnishers of human identity. Having projected an identity on to a place by bestowing it with a name, that name can in its own right become a source of personal identity. The relationship between toponymy and identity is therefore a two-way process. We are all surely familiar with examples of this mechanism. It is found frequently in the food and drink industry, where the concept of protected designation of origin (*appellation d'origine contrôlée*) ties a product to its location by means of that location's name: hence Roquefort cheese (*fromage de Roquefort*) and Parma ham (*prosciutto di Parma*). And it applies to personal names too. In the panoply of Christian saints, for example, is it really possible to think of St. Francis without adding – even if only in our minds – the associated toponym Assisi? In secular history, would the name Eleanor make sense to us without the addition of her home region Aquitaine? I think not; and the same applies to Catherine of Aragon (*Catalina de Aragón*) and many others. The toponyms have become an integral part of the individual's personal identity.

In the instances above, this process is undertaken not by the individual concerned, but by others who feel the need for that individual to be properly recognised and identified. On other occasions, however, individuals themselves use toponyms to supply their own identity, which others then acknowledge and reflect. This process can be seen in religious circles in Iran where, as the political commentator Sandra Mackey notes, "[a]ccording to tradition, a cleric adopts the name of his place of birth when he reaches the highest station in Shia Islam." (MACKEY p223n). In this way a child named Ruhollah Mustavi, born in the village of Khomeyn, rose in religious significance during the course of his life and, on achieving the status of Ayatollah, became known as Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni.

Similarly, when for the first time citizens of the youthful Turkish republic were obliged to take surnames, following the passage of the 1934 Surnames Law, many looked to toponyms in order to fulfil this new function. The second president of the Republic, Mustafa İsmet, took the surname İnönü to commemorate his role in the battles that had taken place near the town of İnönü during the war of independence (POPE & POPE 1997: p57). One of Turkey's early prime ministers, Adnan Menderes, similarly took his surname from a toponym, choosing the river name Menderes (the *Meander* of classical times) in

recognition of the role he had played in battles along its course. There may well have been an element of self-aggrandisement in the choices made by these politicians, as there no doubt also was in the case of the Romanian communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu, who added the toponym Dej to his name to commemorate – perhaps even to flaunt – the hardship years that he had spent in prison in the town of Dej in Cluj county (WIKI-RO 2014: Note 1). But, whether justifiably so or not, all these toponyms – Khomeyn, İnönü, Menderes and Dej – became vital components of the personal identity of these particular individuals. And the connections do not necessarily stop at that juncture; there is now an İnönü University (*İnönü Üniversitesi*) in the city of Malatya in eastern Turkey. Thus the original toponym İnönü became a personal name, which in turn became a toponym elsewhere, denoting an educational campus far removed geographically from the river of the same name and with no direct association to the original toponym.

In the Arab world in particular there is a close connection between toponyms and personal names, with the former strongly influencing the identity of the latter. It is common for a toponym – usually the name of the birthplace – to provide the final component of a person's name. The full name of the former dictator of Iraq was *Saddam Husayn 'Abd al Majid al-Tikriti*, the final element "al-Tikriti" relating to the dictator's birthplace, the small town of Tikrit in north-central Iraq (WOODMAN 2014: p135). Of course this particular individual carried with him a global notoriety, and there was little doubt among the world's media and commentators that the crucial elements of his name were "Saddam" and "Husayn". But for less well known individuals, the crucial element is not always so clear, and often the temptation is to treat the final component as a surname, in line with common practice in many western languages. In early 2014, for example, *The Times* newspaper of London carried the following news report:

> Abu Khalid al-Suri was among several people killed when two suicide bombers blew themselves up inside his compound in the northern city of Aleppo….Al-Suri was the founder of Ahrar al-Sham, a prominent hardline Islamist rebel group. (PHILP 2014).

The reporter here makes (or perhaps simply continues) the understandable but erroneous assumption that the final component of the name – "al-Suri" – is a surname which can be extracted and used as unmistakable shorthand for the person's identity. But in fact, as with "al-Tikriti", the final component "al-Suri" is toponymic in nature, meaning "from Syria" or "the Syrian". As such, it is an inadequate shorthand reference to the individual's identity, since much of the population of Syria could also legitimately be tagged as "al-Suri". Cultural misunderstandings such as this abound whenever one society makes identity assumptions about another, and they demonstrate, as Robert Louis Stevenson knew, that "[t]here is no foreign land; it is the traveller only that is foreign." (STEVENSON 1883).

11. SUMMARY

In the introduction to this paper, we noted that identity is projected on to a place or feature by the bestowal of a name or names. I hope that the examples we have considered, in our journey from Kolkata to Kaliningrad and from Germany to Japan, have demonstrated

this to be true in a variety of ways. We have looked at the roles played by factors such as time, place, the imagination, and changes of orthography and script. And, additionally, we have seen towards the end of the paper that the projection of identity is not just a one-way process; it can also flow in the reverse direction, from toponym to person. The relationship between toponymy and identity is indeed both complex and fascinating.

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