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FOREWORD

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Description

An international biannual, *Review of Historical Geography and Toponomastics* publishes articles on all aspects of historical geography and toponomastics. As well as publishing original research papers of interest to a wide international and interdisciplinary readership, the review encourages debates over new challenges facing researchers in the field and discussion of conceptual and methodological issues. Each issue includes a book review section.

It encourages high quality scholarship on a broad range of historical geography and toponomastics topics.

Themes covered in the Review include:

- The geographies of places in the past
- The dynamics of place, space and landscape
- The geographies of place-names
- Methodological problems in historical geography
- Landscape, history and environment

The journal publishes high quality papers that make a new contribution to the understanding of historical geographical systems. The editors invite submissions dealing with theory, methods and models of spatial analysis. The journal has a multi-disciplinary outlook and includes contributions from geography, history, economics, environment and onomastics.

The 2023 RHGT volume (issues 35-36) includes six papers on **place naming and historical geography**.

The first part of the volume is made up of articles focused on *place naming*. Toponymy in current Ukrainian literature is proposed by Paul Woodman, member of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names since 1977 and former secretary of the UK Permanent Committee on Geographical Names. The author considers that literature can play an important role in a time of war. By using the present hostilities in Ukraine as an example, the paper shows that toponymy can act as a weapon in current Russian-Ukrainian war.

Second paper in this volume is written by Stefano Vicari and Francesco Perono Cacciafoco. This paper brings new perspectives on border areas in ancient times, focusing on the current north-eastern Italian border. Authors selected two villages from the mountains of Northeastern Italy, Velo d'Astico and Arsiero, located in an Alpine border area, as elements of a case study connected with the interactions of the local inhabitants with their territory. Besides etymological solutions for the two place names, this study introduces an explanation linked to archaic religion and ancestral cults in the specific border area.

The third paper on place-name geographies is written by Paul Woodman on Annemarie Schwarzenbach: a Swiss travel writer inspired by place names in Afghanistan. Her love for place names makes her to an English-language readership that she deservedly merits a place in the pantheon of female travel writers.

The second part of the volume is dedicated to *historical geographies*. A first contribution is made by Jorge Sobota. This study proposes a new etymology for the toponyms Eumenium (Aeminium, Coimbra) mentioned by Pliny the Elder in his *Historia Naturalis* and suggests why they were denominated eumenium and brings a better suited meaning for the oppidum Eumenium (Aeminium, Coimbra). This is a multidisciplinary article which raises interest in archaeological excavations in the places where these toponyms are situated. As the author concludes, in this article Eumenium equals Aeminium, just their spelling could be found as different.

Another interesting study is that of Priyadarshini Sen. The study is based on urban planning and conservation of the urban heritage in one of the districts of Karnataka, India. Karnataka region is placed in the Deccan plateau where the planners still struggle to maintain the existing historical footprints. This region once served as the fort areas of pre-British era (with famous Summer Palace of Tipu Sultan) and now support tourism-based occupation which suffer now from the ill maintenance of the heritage sites and hazardous urbanization. The paper presents meaningful analysis of demographic components of Srirangapatna with changing land uses coupled with the recent threats of shifting of adjoining Cauvery river with frequent water logging situations.

The last study in this RHGT volume is a second contribution of Jorge Sobota. The author studies the owl-like plaques of the Copper Age and the involvement of children. This study complements the research of Negro, J.J. et al. (2022) in *Science Reports*. Sobota considers that the plaques were primarily dolls and toys that were later used as votive objects in funerals. Owls were selected for the plaques' design because owls are the most anthropomorphic of all animals. Etymologic research in this article strengthens the traditional view of scholars who propose that owls are related to death. The author shows that taking into account the harsh living conditions and early death rates during the Late Neolithic, the owl-like plaques were manufactured as amulets and not votive objects.

To conclude, this volume provides a good ground of debates to studies in place naming and historical geography. The collection of six papers reveals that toponymy and historical geographies are important practice in current research.

Free online access to this journal is available within institutions in the developing world.

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