IDENTITY OF NAME(S) AS A CRUCIAL PROBLEM IN NAME STUDIES, OR: TOWARDS THE RECOGNITION OF ONYMIC IDENTITY AS A PRINCIPAL ONOMASTIC CONCEPT

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ABSTRACT

In general, identity plays an increasingly important role in name studies. People consider their personal name(s) to be part of their identity, after all. And no less importantly from the onomastic perspective, cultural, social, ethnic or national identity is at least to some extent related to names. So name students utilize names as markers of cultural, social, ethnic or national identity. On the other hand, name studies have in particular neglected to deal explicitly with identity of name(s). As a problem it has, however, been implicitly present from the very beginning of modern name studies. So this paper introduces identity of name(s) as a crucial problem of name studies that is worth, and indeed in need of, being explicitly recognized as a principal onomastic concept. Nomematics, an identity-theoretical framework based upon a dynamic model of language, is applied to achieve this purpose. It is shown that only the various manifestations of one and the same name are identical, with the nomeme serving as an identification schema. Onymic entities (the various manifestations of names) are identical if and only if they match the identification schema (criterion of identity).

[1] INTRODUCTION

Names go with identities and identities go with names. They are closely related and form a pair of concepts. What is meant is this: names are symbols of identities. They tell, or at least may tell, something about the bearer of the name (a woman called Nataliya Vladimirovna Vasil’eva is likely to be Russian). Names may tell something about the relations between the person who addresses someone by name and the person who is addressed by name (someone who addresses the woman as Nataliya Vladimirovna has different relations with her from someone who addresses her as Natasha). Names may also tell something about the in-
intentions of those who bestow names on others or themselves. Spanish parents who have their son baptized Jesús probably want their son to share some of the characteristics of the original eponym. Names may furthermore tell something about the intentions of those who address others by name. It makes a difference whether a woman calls her little son David Featherstonhaugh or simply Dave. Names may change with the objects they designate. The Chinese, for instance, traditionally have special names for each period of their lives, even one for the time after death. The name of a place may change after (the significance of) the place has changed. This phenomenon has been called “the law of relative preservation of the adequacy of a name” (Eichler & Walther 1986, 149). So it will come as no surprise that identity plays an increasingly important role in name studies. Names have been utilized, for instance, as markers of cultural, social, ethnic or national identity (Alford 1988; Clark 1995; Härtel 1997; Virkkula 2001; Postles 2002; Beech et al. 2002; Hagström 2006). On the other hand, identity of names, or rather “identity of name”, has hardly been dealt with explicitly although it has been implicitly present as a methodological problem from the very beginning of modern name studies. It is the explicit purpose of this paper to introduce identity of name, also called “onymic identity” or “isonymy”, as a crucial problem of name studies that is worth, and indeed in need of, being recognized as a principal onomastic concept.

[2] Basic Concepts

Let me first briefly outline the concepts of identity, name and identity of name. To begin with, by identity I mean a kind of relative identity, that is, \( x \) is the same as \( x’ \) if and only if \( x’ \) is a replication or copy of \( x \) (\( x = x’ \), \( x \equiv x’ \)). By name I mean a word, including a complex one like the United States of America, which in contexts that are typical of it, signifies an object as a particular individual. It has grammar/grammatical structures (such as phonology, morphology, semantics, etymology) and functionality, or referential potential (to denote the particular individual object). A name is a name only in its entirety of grammar and functionality. Considering, for instance, one or a few structures of a name at a time is not considering the name but considering part(s) of the name. Grasping the name in its entirety is most important for developing and understanding identity of name as a principal onomastic concept. Consequently, identity of name is understood as a kind of relative identity, which is tentatively defined as \( N \) and \( N’ \) being the same name if and only if \( N’ \) is a replication or copy of \( N \) (\( N = N’ \), \( N \equiv N’ \)). In other words: two “names” are identical if and only if both their grammar and functionality agree.
Identity of name may look like a trivial thing. It is, however, not as trivial as it seems at first sight. In onomastic publications the problem of identity of name(s) is often complicated by colloquial language. Identity of name(s) appears in the guise of so-called “equations of names”, and different kinds of identity of names have traditionally been taken for identity of name, such as

(i) etymological identity of names

(a) German names like Chemnitz (the name of a city north of the Ore Mountains, Saxony), Kemnitz (the name of a village south-east of Löbau, Saxony) and Kemmlitz (the name of a village south-east of Oschatz, Saxony) are considered identical because they are all derived from Old Sorbian *Kamenica ‘the settlement on the Kamenica’.

(b) German Nahe, the name of a river left to the Rhine, and Lithuanian Nóva, the name of a river right to the Šešupė (Šakiai), are identical because they are derived from the same Indo-European etymon *Nāu̯ā ‘the (navigable) river’ (alternative etyma have been suggested, which however do not deprive the two names of their etymological identity).

(ii) formal identity of names

(a) German names like Kummer (the name of a farm north-east of Unterneukirchen, Bavaria), Kummer (the name of a village west of Ludwigslust, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania) and Kummer (the name of a village south-east of Schmölln, Thuringia) are declared identical because their present forms agree. The name in Bavaria is of German origin, the names in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania and Thuringia are of Old Polabian and Old Sorbian origin respectively.

(b) German Koblenz (the name of a city in Rhineland-Palatinate) and German Koblenz (the name of a village in Saxony) are formally identical, regardless of their different origins. The former is from Latin Confluentes ‘the settlement at the confluence (of the Moselle and the Rhine)’, the latter from Old Sorbian *Kobyľno/Kobyľna ‘the settlement were mares are bred’.

(iii) semantic identity of names

(a) On the one hand, there is identity of etymological meaning as in the case of several personal names from different languages, the etymological meaning of which can be translated as ‘bear’ (other names of this meaning could be added): Gaelic Art ‘bear’ = Danish Bjørn ‘bear’ = Estonian Karu ‘bear’ = Udmurt Gondir ‘bear’ = Mari Maska ‘bear’).

[3] KINDS OF IDENTITY OF NAMES
(b) On the other hand, there is identity of present connotations in such names as German *Kummer* (the name of a farm north-east of Unterneukirchen, Bavaria) and German *Kummer* (the name of a village south-east of Schmölln, Thuringia). Both have the connotation of German *Kummer* sorrow (the former is from Middle High German *Kumber/Kummer* ‘the settlement at the rubble’, the latter from Old Sorbian *Komoře/Komory* ‘the settlement where there are many midges/mosquitoes’).

(iv) functional/referential identity of names

A classical example is the English names of the second planet from the sun in the solar system, namely *Morning Star*, *Evening Star* and *Venus*. A hill west of Ostritz, Saxony, is known as *Knorrberg* and *Peter-Links-Berg*.

Name students do come across “true” identity of name everyday though without necessarily being aware of it, among other things, when collecting written evidence of names. So the name of a peasant liable to tax in (Klein-) Weikersdorf, Lower Austria, in the second half of the fifteenth century is recorded, for instance, as *Bertl Menhart* and *Partl Menhart*. The name of a brook that runs to the river Hahle, Lower Saxony, is recorded as *Chrebick* and *Crebeck*.

A few quotations from onomastic publications may further illustrate the present approach to identity. In an essay on name theory we read “the proper name (e.g. *John*) never loses its identity when used of different individuals” ([Trnka 1982][1958], 84). The author has formal identity in mind. A typical entry in a dictionary of place-name is as follows: “*Keswick* [...] ‘The cheese (dairy) farm’, O[ld]E[nglish] cēsewīc [...] , the same name as the London *Chiswick*” ([Whaley 2006](#), 195). The author has etymological identity in mind. We are informed by a surname student that it “is obviously dangerous to assert that a [sur]name can have only one origin” ([Redmonds 1973](#), 144). The author has formal identity in mind. Again, different kinds of identity of names have been taken for identity of name, which indicates that we do not express ourselves unambiguously when it comes to identity of name (we have terminological problems) or that we may not know exactly what we are doing in such moments. On the one hand, different ideas of name and interest in different parts of names are indiscriminately referred to as “names”. Different ideas of identity are another problem. We certainly agree with Roger Lass who emphasizes that it is most important “to know at all times exactly what we are doing” ([Lass 1976](#), 220). One way to live up to this demand is to become aware of identity of name.

**[4] BECOMING AWARE OF IDENTITY OF NAME**

Awareness of identity of name raises some fundamental methodological problems concerning, for instance,
(i) etymology

In names derived from other names by conversion, suffixation, composition or the like, we may have to take two identities into account such as in Old Sorbian *Kamenica, the etymon of the settlement name Chemnitz, which is derived by conversion from the Old Sorbian stream name *Kamenica 'the stony stream'. Now, is *Kamenica, the etymon of the settlement name, adequately paraphrased as ‘the settlement on the Kamenica’ or rather as ‘the settlement on the stony stream’? Once the identity of the stream name is considered, the answer is obvious (‘the settlement on the Kamenica’).

(ii) statistics

Counting names belonging to a certain type of name, such as settlement names in -ingen, usually does not cause any problems. Counting names as such is something quite different. Here the question is what we count as a name. It is very common to count names with identical forms, phonological structures or graphological structures as one name regardless of the names’ designating different places or people, such as in statements like “In Saxony the most frequent settlement names are Naundorf (43), Hermsdorf (20), Neudorf (18) and Cunnersdorf (17)” (compare Eichler & Walther 2001, 254) and “The surname Smith is found 422,733 times in the 1881 British census”. So this kind of counting of names is about selected parts shared by two or more names rather than about names (in their entirety).

(iii) the so-called “geography of names”

As mapping the distribution of names is based on statistics, the problems are similar. It is true that names (in their entirety) are occasionally mapped but this procedure does not get us anywhere beyond locating the names visually (see map 1 on page 35). So the answer to the question what is usually mapped (see map 2 on page 36) is: selected parts shared by two or more names rather than names (in their entirety).
In exemplifying a selection of methodological problems, it has become evident that identity of name is not generally recognized in name studies. In some areas of name studies we seem to gain more from dealing with identical parts of different names than from dealing with names in their entirety, that is identities of name. Lacking in awareness of identity of name and in explicit identity statements, different kinds of identity are taken for identity of name, which presents a serious problem of identity.

[5] INTRODUCING AN ANALYTIC SYSTEM FOR ESTABLISHING ONYMIC IDENTITY

To get to the heart of this problem, a clear picture of identity of name is needed. Such a picture is available from nomematics Brendler (2008), an analytic system for establishing onymic identities. This system is a completely revised version of approaches to onymic identity by Gulbrand Alhaug and especially by Volker Kohlheim (Alhaug 1992, 2004; Alhaug & Thorvaldsen 2002; Kohlheim 1977, 2002, 2005).

Nomematics is based on a dynamic model of language (DML), the centre of which (see figure 1 on page 37) is formed by the processes of concretization, realization and systematization, connected and driven by abstraction and specification. The cycle of concretization, realization, systematization and again realization delivers torque to the dynamics and development of language. Concretization takes place in communication. It represents both innovative and traditional tokens/occurrences/instantiations of structures of the language system, with the former being integrated into the system by classification, the latter resulting from replication of systemic structures. Concretization corresponds to John Algeo’s “utterance of a type (a token, a speech act)” (Algeo 1973, 51). The process of realization concerns the classification or replication of subtypes/variants/subschemata as expressions of variation. It corresponds to John Algeo’s “use of a type (which is a way the system can be applied)” (Algeo 1973, 51). Last but not least, the process of systematization is about establishing types/patterns/schemata by saving realized structures and about assigning realized structures to established types/patterns/schemata. It corresponds to John Algeo’s “type (which is a matter of the language system)” (Algeo 1973, 51). Concretization, realization and systematization represent a level of language manifestation each. Whereas concretization is a perceptive level, realization and systematization are cognitive levels. The same name can be manifested on any level, thus having a range of manifestations. The correspondence between level of manifestation and manifestation of name is as follows (see figure 2 on page 38): On the level of concretization the name is represented as nomes, which correspond to name occurrences. On the level of realization the name is represented
MAP 1: Field-names of Drenkow (Zühlsdorff 1988, 722)
MAP 2: Distribution of the field-name Wingert (Dittmaier 1963, 346)
as allonomes, which correspond to name variants. On the level of systematization the name is represented as a nomeme, which corresponds to a name.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. So what follows is a concrete example to illustrate how the subtle distinctions between the manifestations of name are made easily visible and how the manifestations are interrelated in the framework of nomematics. In the foundation charter of Quarr Abbey, written between 1141 and 1145 we find a line that contains an occurrence of the name of a manor in the Isle of Wight (see figure 3 on the following page).

When this occurrence is classified as a variant of the name Heasley, we have gone through the process of abstraction from the concrete occurrence via the less concrete variant to the more abstract name (see figure 4 on the next page).

Identity of name extends over all the manifestations of one name, that is the same name. The nomeme serves as an identification schema. Onymic entities are identical if and only if they match the identification schema (criterion of identity). Only in its entirety of grammar and functionality can the nomeme fulfil its
function as identification schema. As nomematics is based on a dynamic model of language that considers language a process characterized by passage of time, the historical dimension of the entirety of grammar and functionality is allowed for.

Replication of one and the same name as well as classification of the resulting name occurrences and name variants produce onymic manifestations that are relatively identical — manifestations of (one and the same) name (see figure 5 on the facing page).

There is another process that forms a level of manifestation, namely archisystematization. It is central to human reflection on language, including on names. Differences between nomemes are neutralised by abstracting from the differences. What is left are the parts that names share, mostly name forms/lemmas, and that are often taken for names themselves in statistics, lexicography or geography of names. Archinomemes are not representations of names but are parts or structures of names that are often shared by at least two names. — For a full treatment of the concept archinomeme and the related concepts archisystematization and archiallomonome, see Brendler (Brendler 2008, 40–41, 112–125).

concretization = nome △ name occurrence
realization = allonome △ name variant
systematization = nomeme △ name

FIGURE 4: Manifestations of Heasley
Recognition of identity of name challenges some traditional views of name variation. In not a few cases ostensible name variants (cases of allonomy) prove to be different names of the same object (cases of allonymy, heteronymy, polyonymy) or different names of different objects. If, for instance, one and the same person in Regensburg in the fourteenth century is called Friedrich, Fridel and Fritz, we recognize Friedrich, Fridel and Fritz as three grammatically different but functionally identical names of one and the same person rather than variants of one name. The same holds for Ranteshofen and Rantesdorf (1025 Rantesdorfsive Ranteshova), once two grammatically different but functionally identical names of one and the same settlement in Upper Austria, now called Ranteshofen.

Concerning name variation, a few more inevitable conclusions can be drawn from nomematics. I know three people called John and three villages called Kemnitz. As John is (apart from semantics) grammatically identical but functionally different in the three cases, there are three different identities of name, that is three different personal names John. The same holds for Kemnitz. The three cases are (apart from semantics) grammatically identical but functionally different. Again, there are three different identities of name, that is three different settlement names Kemnitz. There is, however, but one archinomeme/name form/name lemma John and but one archinomeme/name form/name lemma Kemnitz. So if we speak about the distribution of the personal name John in England and Wales in 1881 (see map 3), we actually speak about the distribution of
MAP 3: Actual distribution of the personal name John in England and Wales in 1881 (Archer 2003)
the archinomeme/name form/name lemma *John*. In compliance with identity of name we could say “the distribution of the personal names *John*” instead of traditional “the distribution of the personal name *John*”. So the recognition of identity of name throws light on the problem of homonymy and polysemy with regard to names (see figure 6). There is homonymy between names of the same form and polysemy between, say, archinomeme/name form/name lemma 1 and names with name form 1.

[7] **Summary**

(i) Different kinds of identity of names have traditionally been taken for identity of name.

(ii) We usually do not express ourselves unambiguously when it comes to identity of name.

(iii) A clear picture of identity of name is needed for us “to know at all times exactly what we are doing”.

(iv) Such a picture is available from nomematics.

(v) Identity of name extends over all the manifestations of one name.

(vi) The nomeme serves as an identification schema.

(vii) Onymic entities are identical if and only if they match the identification schema (criterion of identity).
(viii) Only in its entirety of grammar and functionality can the nomeme fulfil its function as identification schema.

(ix) Awareness of identity of name raises some fundamental methodological problems.

(x) Recognition of identity of name challenges some traditional views of name variation.

(xi) It is worth recognizing identity of name as a principal onomastic concept.

REFERENCES


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