Naming the World:  
*Toward A Digital Historical Gazetteer for Asia and the Globe*

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*For Presentation at the Council on East Asian Libraries Annual Meeting*  
Faculty Lecture  
March 15, 2017
I: “Istanbul Not Constantinople”

Place Names Change Over Time
• Naming places is a significant meaning-making activity around the world and through time.

• The power to assign names is the power to control territory.

• Place names often endure in the record when little else remains.

Aztec and Spanish armies at Tenochtitlan in 1519. “What might it mean...to question the habit of thinking of space as a surface? If, instead, we conceive of a meeting up of histories, what happens to our implicit imagination of time and space?”

–Doreen Massey, For Space
Weilu Prefecture 威虏軍 ("awe the caitiffs") became Guangxin 廣信軍 Prefecture ("extensive trust") in 981 in the course of diplomatic efforts between Northern Song and Liao.
A 1584 map of China by Abraham Ortelius based on a manuscript map by Luiz Jorge de Barbuda with Beijing marked as C[vitas] Paquin

The long history of political power is made manifest through a sequence of names.
Hagia Sophia (Ἁγία Σοφία, Sancta Sophia, آيا صوفيا, Ayasofya).

- 537-1453: Greek Orthodox cathedral (except for a short Catholic stretch)
- 1453-1931: Muslim mosque
- 1935-present: Museum
“Sometimes different cities follow one another on the same site and under the same name, born and dying without knowing one another... At times, even the names of the inhabitants remain the same, and their voices’ accent, and also the features of the faces; but the gods who live beneath names and above places have gone off without a word, and outsiders have settled in their place.” -- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (30)
A gazetteer database reveals:
• A few places changed names.
• The density of the state presence varied by region, era, and policy objective.

Spatial information in *difangzhi* 地方志 was relational and textual.

The court abolished dozens of county governments during an eleventh century fiscal reform movement.
An Example of Song Spatial Complexity: Modeling Ningyuan

Ningyuan in Guangnan West circuit had three different names over the course of the Song, three different jurisdiction types, and was transferred multiple times. In 1150 it was known as Jiyan and was a Rank Two zhōu, while in 1080 it was a Rank Four town known as Linchuan, and in 1050 it was a Rank Three county known as Ningyuan. Hope Wright, whose work is organized by place name, describes some of the history of this place as follows:

From 1143: 2 hsien: Ning-yüan (former Lin-ch‘uan ch‘en); Chi-yang (former T‘eng-ch‘iao ch‘en.)
Pops. (1060) 251
(TP 351 (340; 11])
(YF 351 (340; 11) Another ed. 251 (2401 11])
(TP 169; YF 9/469)

Chi-yang (hs) Hsia.
When Yai ch‘ou abol 1073, this hs made a ch‘en, name changed to T‘eng-ch‘iao; tr as ch‘en to CH‘TUNG in 1136. Re-est as Chi-yang hs att to ch‘un in 1143.
II: Toward a Geography of a World Without Maps

From Ptolemy to Postal Codes

Michael Curry (2005)
Three modes of thinking about the world:

- **Choros** (names and regions)
- **Topos** (travels, itineraries, and relationships)
- **Geos** (mathematically oriented maps of continuous space)

A hand reconstruction of postal carrier routes, from a 1993 academic article.

This is the historians’ world of text.

This was widespread only during the short-lived AAA roadmap era.
Yi-fu Tuan: Experience constructs place at different scales. The fireplace and the home are both places. Neighborhood, town, and city are places; a distinctive region is a place, and so is a nation....As centers of meaning the number of places in the world is enormous and cannot be contained in the largest gazetteer.

Tim Ingold: The landscape is constituted as an enduring record of — and testimony to — the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves.
Each of these texts is a series of attestations about a name or status that a place has held at some point.
Catherine Delano-Smith: Early modern European wayfinding generally used texts, not maps.

A traveler’s itinerary from England to Rome around 1400, set out according to political divisions. One note marks the halfway point of the journey, another indicates the spot where horses must be paid for. The last heading describes an alternative route to be used if there is war in Lombardy.
《渡海方程》, 《海道經書》, 《海道針經》 and other rutters were navigation itineraries. Navigation maps were made from texts, not made from scratch.
Ben Schmidt: tracks from nineteenth century ships logs, all voyages from the ICOADS US Maury collection
III: Placing Names
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12 The Yeosi Project: Finding a Place in Northeast Asia through History Youcheol Kim, Byungnam Yoon, Jonghyuk Kim, and Hyunjong Kim 174
Core-periphery modeling in China and Japan using gazetteer data
(Henderson and Ryavec, Mizoguchi)
Place name etymology and language change (Pai and Fan)
IV: Toward a World-Historical Gazetteer

Modeling Places and Creating Infrastructure
Modeling and Linking Places
Karl Grossner et al. in *Placing Names*

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**Temporal Scope**
- hasTemporalScope

**Setting**
- hasSpatialScope
- scopedBy

**Spatial Scope**
- subClassOf

**Temporal Extent**
- definedBy
- hasBeginning
- hasEnd

**Place**
- hasName
- hasType

**Spatial Extent**
- definedBy
- geo:hasGeometry

**Period**
- hasName
- hasType
- composedOf

**Period Type**

**Place Name**

**Period Name**

**Setting Name**

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```
chinadz:place_123 { z:Western_Han_Dynasty ;
    z:hasStart '206 BCE' ;
    rdfs:type z:Place ;
    skos:preferredName 'Western Han Dynasty' . }


chinadz:place_124 { z:Western_Han ;
    z:hasStart '208 BCE' ;
    rdfs:type z:Period ;
    skos:preferredName 'Western Han' . }

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```
set:Setting set:hasTemporalScope set:hasSpatialScope ;
set:TemporalScope .


set:Place set:scopedBy set:Setting .

set:SpatialExtent rdfs:subClassOf set:TemporalExtent ;
owl-t:TemporalEntity .

set:SpatialExtent rdfs:subClassOf owl-Feature .

set:hasTemporalScope a owl:FunctionalProperty .

set:hasSpatialScope a owl:FunctionalProperty .
```
An increasing number of digital humanities projects focusing on historical texts, maps, and data are backed by gazetteers, but most are local or regional in scope, and/or focused on a very particular topic.
Dataset repositories like the Collaborative for Historical Information and Analysis at the Pitt World History Center need gazetteers as thesauri and to support visualization.
Place modeling supports analysis and interoperable infrastructure and is also an exercise for thinking about discourse and semantics.

But specialist gazetteers need to be linked together.

1. A list of URIs form the basic entity set for places and periods (Wikidata; Geonames; Library of Congress; PeriodO; ChronOntology;...)
2. A Disambiguation Gazetteer, provides basic visualization and alignment infrastructure (Pelagios Interchange; CIDOC CRM;...)
3. Specialist Gazetteers increase scientific content and granularity (Pleiades; PastPlace; DARE; SKOS;...)
4. 3rd Party content is annotates references to specialist or spinal gazetteer (Pelagios Open Annotation; Recogito; European Library;...
"Linking together the places of our past through the documents that refer to them"
## Appendix 2: Sample Gazetteer Entries

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NAME*</th>
<th>TYPE*</th>
<th>CONTAINED BY*</th>
<th>NAMED PERIOD*</th>
<th>ATLAS MAP ATTESTATIONS BY TIME PERIOD</th>
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Guinea coast of Africa from Sierra Leon to Elmina (Ghana). Cantino Map of 1502, Biblioteca estense, Modena

Collaborators with specialist gazetteers can link them to the “spine.”

Detail of Southeast Asia from the Selden Map of c. 1619, Bodleian Library
Kraków
Poland, Lesser Poland Voivodeship
Carcovia, Cracau, Cracał, Cracovia, Cracovia, Cracoviae, Cracow, Cracovia, Cracowia, Gorad Krakau
Krakau, KRK, Krak, Krakau
Kraków am see
Germany
Krakow
US > Michigan

Details
Kraków
1038CE - Present

Linked resources
- related resource
- related resource
- related resource
- related resource
- related resource

Connections
- Kraków -- place 2, 1734
- A Pope's Itinerary, 1342
- Mongol invasion, 1241
Gazetteer development is a crucial endeavor because linked gazetteers are critical infrastructure for interoperability in the digital realm, and because place names are the residue of the “meeting up of histories in space.”