Worlds Full of Places: Toward an Ecology of Historical Gazetteers

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Imagine…..

1. Creating a portal into a vast and diverse collection of historical information.

2. Using place names (rather than maps) as the common reference.

3. Supporting global-scale historical scholarship by doing so.

4. This requires creating a linked collection of gazetteers.

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*
Gazetteers – indexes of place names – are amazing resources in their own right. And, as core infrastructure for the semantic web, they permit information to be linked and shared, with place names as a common referent. Building gazetteers takes on new urgency with truth and cosmopolitanism under attack.
When you query Google Maps for restaurant recommendations, you are interacting with a gazetteer.
Why Not Make Maps??

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 article by Michael Curry.

This is the historians’ world of text.

This was widespread only during the short-lived AAA roadmap era.
A 1584 map of China by Abraham Ortelius with Beijing marked as Civitas 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

Even building one historical gazetteer is a monumental endeavor. All the more reason to share!
Each of these texts is a series of attestations about a name or status that a place has held at some point.
A major Greek city-state and the principal city of Attika. Modern Athens in Greece.

Canonical URI for this page:
https://pleiades.stoa.org/places/70888

Representative Point (Latitude, Longitude):
37.9752978546, 23.7261584048

Locations:
None

Names:
- Athenai (modern)
- Athenai (759 BC - AD 640)
- Athens (modern)
- Athisa (Athina; modern)
- Athina (650 BC - 330 BC)

Makes a connection with:
- Attica (Attributed dates needed)

Has a connection with:
- Arch of Hadrian at Athens (30 BC - Present)
- Stoa of Attalos (Attributed dates needed)
- Theater of Dionysus Eleuthereus (Attributed dates needed)
- Stoa of Zeus (Eleuthereus) (Attributed dates needed)
- Library of Hadrian at Athens (Attributed dates needed)
- Kolonos Agoraios (Attributed dates needed)

Has a connection with:
- Arch of Hadrian at Athens (30 BC - Present)
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- Library of Hadrian at Athens (Attributed dates needed)
- Kolonos Agoraios (Attributed dates needed)

Search
Search Site

Photos
The Arch of Hadrian (1) by Iwanyus
154 other related photos...

Use this tag in Flickr to mark depictions of this place's site(s):
place дерsciptor:70888
or this one to mark objects found here:
place derivatives:70888

Related Content from Pelagios
Athene
American Numismatic Society (27932)
DAL objects (2793): Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards (279): University of Graz (1989); Pan Delfoiacae (74); Epigraphic Database Heidelberg (74); Ethan Grueter (40); finds.ox.ac.uk (36)

Show place in AViMC's Antiquity At-a-Glance, Google Earth, or Pelagios Pelagios
Show area in eGeoNames, Google Maps, or OpenStreetMap

References:
- Hdt. 8.44
- Hom. Od. 7.80
- TP 701 (Tabeet 1896)

See Further:
- Athenian Agora Excavations
- Blass 59 83 Athenai
- Camp II, John Mok, Kevin F. Daly, and Lee Ann Rickard. 2015. Press: Lanham, Maryland: The Rowman & Littlefield Publisher
- Eur. Med. 129
- New, Frank, Athens
- PECS (Pereus); ATHENS Attika Greece
- SIMM (1854; Pereus); ATHENAE
- Wikipedia, Athens
Pelagios: the ancient Mediterranean linked data web
**Linked open data** is a way to create links that allow data from different sources to be connected and queried together, so long as they are named with URIs and expressed in RDF. Linked data browsers allow users to navigate between different data sources by following RDF links.

1. A list of URIs form the basic entity set for places and periods (Wikidata, Geonames, Library of Congress, Periods, 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 annotated references to specialist or spinal gazetteer (Pelagios Open Annotation; Recogito; European Library; ...)

**Diagram:**
- **Disambiguation gazetteer (‘spine’)**
- **‘Specialist’ Gazetteers**
- **3rd party content**

- **Period list**
- **Place list**
- **Toponym(s)**
- **description**
- **date**
- **x/y**

*Diagram showing relationships between period and place lists with disambiguation gazetteer and specialist gazetteers.*
• Not only polities, administrative districts and significant settlements, but ethnonyms (peoples), language regions, and physical geographic features.

• Tens of thousands of names that lightly cover the whole world in a way that is “broad but shallow.”

• Every specialist should find some point of linkage.
Why start with an authored and edited source instead of just publishing an interconnection format and calling for contributors? (Because it turns out that doesn't really work!)
There are approximately 10,000 names in the index of the Black atlas. We’ve matched about 7,000 of them with Geonames.* We’ll query DBPedia next.

*Certainly with many errors!
Atlas of World History plus D-Place Peoples (RDF formatted HREF). Not just infrastructure but scholarship in its own right. (This is after two months of work!)

![Map of the world with numerous red and blue dots indicating historical events and places.](image-url)
...plus Natural Earth currents and watersheds
Standards: A Draft Place Record in GeoJSON

We’ll need an interconnection format too.
Standards: Towards a Feature Type Thesaurus

See these arrows? Relationships between places in the spine and places in specialist gazetteers will need a thesaurus too! (Is C. Paquin the same place as Beijing?)
The World Historical Gazetteer Team:

- Ruth Mostern, PI
- Karl Grossner, Technical Director
- Ryan Horne, Postdoctoral Fellow
- David Ruvolo, Project Manager
- Patrick Manning, Project Consultant

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