SUMMARY

Nowy Tomyśl County in Names

Series

ONOMASTIC MONUMENTS OF WIELKOPOLSKA, VOL. 2

The book is devoted to the geographical names of the Nowy Tomyśl County, treated as cultural heritage which—much like material heritage—preserves knowledge about the region's past and its inhabitants. The author shows that although today's language users tend to perceive a name mainly as a label identifying a given object, each name originally carried a specific meaning and reflected the worldview, value system, and everyday life of past communities. The aim of the publication is therefore to explain the origins and mechanisms of name formation, as these provide evidence of the history, beliefs, customs, work, and spiritual culture of previous generations.

This is the second volume in the series *Onomastic Monuments of Wielkopolska*, initiated by the volume devoted to the names of Poznań. This series grew out of onomastic exhibitions organized between 2012 and 2015 by the Onomastic Commission of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The publication is popular-scientific in character—it is written in an accessible style, avoiding excessive specialist terminology, which makes linguistic issues approachable even for readers unfamiliar with onomastics. The author analyses the origins of the names of towns, villages, streets, squares, parks, pharmacies, rivers, and forests of the Nowy Tomyśl County, selecting examples subjectively, guided by their historical and cultural value. The work takes the form of a dictionary preceded by an introduction and includes both official and informal names—those used by residents, though often absent from official registers. The entries are arranged alphabetically but grouped into clusters bringing together names that are thematically, linguistically, or his-

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torically related. Each entry is accompanied by illustrations—both contemporary and archival photographs of the objects—and, whenever possible, short notes on their history.

The author's main goal is to popularise knowledge about the region's naming past and to show how names have evolved through linguistic processes, spontaneous transformations, or administrative decisions. The book does not aspire to provide an exhaustive discussion of all names; rather, it presents the most important naming phenomena and models that illustrate how designations become fixed in the landscape. In doing so, it contributes to discussions on how names shape local collective identity and preserve memory of past ways of life.

In the introduction, the author discusses types of proper names according to the kinds of knowledge they convey about people and their surroundings—about appearance, environment, activity, or beliefs of former inhabitants. Topographical names reflect the features of the terrain—its shape, colours, vegetation, or animals characteristic of a given area (e.g., *Bukowiec*, *Mokrzyzny*, or *Zielona Góra*). Such names often include elements referring to plants (*Pokrzywno*, *Jemiołowo*), animals (*Kozi Rynek*, *Lisia Góra*), or trees once considered sacred (*Dąb*, *Lipa*, *Brzoza*), which point to ancient beliefs and the cult of nature.

Possessive, patronymic, and family-derived names, on the other hand, document the existence of former owners, founders of settlements, or their descendants (*Kuślin*, *Pakosław*, *Wąsowo*), while commemorative names honour distinguished individuals (e.g., *Lafajetowo*).

An important category consists of cultural names, which preserve information about the economic, craft, and religious activities of past communities. Examples include *Łazy*, *Kuźnica*, *Torfowisko*, or *Święta Helena*. This group also encompasses numerous names of Olender villages (*Holendry*, *Olędry*), founded as part of colonization efforts undertaken by settlers from the Netherlands, Germany, and Poland who specialized in land drainage. The author discusses their distribution, the typical structure of such names (e.g., *Bolewickie Olędry*, *Lewickie Olędry*), and the process of re-Polonization after 1918, when Germanized forms were simplified or modified.

The author also analyses toponyms formed from ethnic names, indicating the origin of inhabitants (*Cygany*, *Prusy*, *Rybojady*), occupational and service toponyms reflecting social roles and professions of inhabitants (*Rataje*, *Winiary*, *Sokolniki*), as well as secondary names formed from preexisting ones (*Nowy Tomyśl – Stary Tomyśl, Lwówek Śląski – Lwówek Wielkopolski*). Some secondary names also arose through the transfer of names from other places or cultures (*Malta*, *Korea*, *Abisynia*).

The introduction also reflects on the dynamic and multi-layered nature of proper names. The author emphasises that each name accumulates various meanings—both original, uncovered by linguists, and secondary, created by contem-

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porary users. Folk etymologies often transform old forms, assigning them new meanings, as in the case of *Bolewice* (according to folk etymology derived from *Bolek* and *Wicek*) or the district *Świerczewo* in Poznań (wrongly associated by its inhabitants with Gen. Świerczewski). Such reinterpretations sometimes give rise to entirely new names, e.g., *Groffowe Łąki* ('Groff's meadows'—from their erstwhile owner named Groff) > *Grochowe Łąki* ('Pea Meadows'—from *groch* 'peas'), revealing the modern understanding of an old expression.

The book demonstrates that geographical names are not merely empty labels but living testimonies of history and language, documenting cultural transformations and the ways successive generations have perceived the world. They represent a kind of "summary of the past," in which historical facts coexist with the emotions and imaginations of the region's inhabitants. Studying them enables a deeper understanding of how local identity develops and how enduring the bond is between people and the places they name and inhabit.

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