

MATS WAHLBERG (ed.):

Svenskt ortnamnslexikon.

Andra reviderade upplagan.

Institutet för språk och folkminnen, Uppsala 2016. Pp. 434.

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This second, revised edition of *Svenskt ortnamnslexikon* (Swedish Place-Name Dictionary) comes thirteen years and around 14,000 copies in sales after the first. Like its predecessor, the 2016 version of the dictionary offers an accessible guide to the etymologies of around 6,300 Swedish place-names. The names covered include those of all provinces, counties, parishes and towns along with a selection of smaller settlements and important topographical features. While the majority are of Germanic origin, the material presented also includes a relatively large number of Sámi, Meänkieli and Finnish names from northern Sweden. In addition to the discussion of discrete names, there are also 51 entries on the more common and/or interesting naming elements associated with settlements in Sweden, such as *by*, *hem*, *holm*, *-inge*, *lösa*, *måla*, *rud*, *sal*, *stad*, *tuna* and *åker*. Relevant visual examples, and tasteful breaks in the text, are provided by a series of 80 photographs, illustrations, line-drawings and distribution maps, all of which have been selected by the editor, and most of which are reproduced in colour.

The etymologies presented may be brief, with few amounting to more than five or six lines on one of the two columns into which each page is divided, but they come with the highest academic credentials. Their content has been distilled from the archives and expertise of Institutet för språk och folkminnen and Institutionen för nordiska språk at the University of Uppsala. As previously, the endeavour was led by a joint committee of specialists and edited, once again, by Mats Wahlberg, Reader in Scandinavian languages and former Head of Research at the Name Archive in Uppsala. Great care has nevertheless been taken to extend the appeal of this work to the lay reader. The entries are written in a concise and functional style, uncluttered with source-referencing, excessive illustrative examples or tangential minutiae. Readers interested in these things can access them easily elsewhere, including

the digitalised records of the Svenskt ortnamnsregister (Swedish Place-Name Register) hosted on ISOF's webpages.¹

The volume begins with a concise introduction to the study of place-names generally, setting out and explaining the concepts, categories and terms used, and the method by which the etymologies have been derived – i.e. consideration of the earliest available written forms in conjunction with the local, dialectal pronunciation, cross-referenced against the context(s) within which the place in question can be found, whether that be topographical, cultural or a combination of the two. There are also useful introductions to the Finnish and Sámi material, as well as the fascinating subject of place-name conservation – a topic with which few are likely to be particularly familiar. The bulk of the volume, however, comprising around 420 pages, is devoted to the place-names entries themselves. These are listed alphabetically from Abbekås to Öxnevalla, along with a supporting glossary of abbreviations, words and symbols, a register of additional names found within individual entries, and an extensive and well-structured bibliography. This last part is further sub-divided into three sections covering: overview and general reading; material relevant to each of the three Swedish *landsdelar* (lands), and works pertaining to individual *landskap* (provinces) along with the three largest cities: Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. Given the ubiquity of the internet these days, it would have been worth highlighting a selection of useful online information here too, such as Lantmäteriet's (The Swedish Ordnance Survey's) *Toponymic Guidelines*.² However, this is easy enough to find using standard online search engines.

This edition sees the addition of around 60 new entries, with hundreds of others being subject to revision, ranging from minor typological corrections to major rewrites, and a few being left out altogether. It is worth noting that the previous edition of the dictionary was the first of its type to present new interpretations of the Finnish and Sámi material. The orthography of these has now been updated.

Svenskt ortnamnslexikon is intended to serve as a practical guide to Swedish place-names. And for tourists, travellers and casual discussion it certainly succeeds. The format, which is not only compact but reassuringly hefty, is equally well-suited to the glove box of a

car or a backpack as it would be to a coffee table. That being the case, it is surprising that the committee has decided for a second time to leave out any indication of local pronunciation, unless it is of particular importance to the etymological discussion. This seems strange given the approach outlined in the introduction. In other countries, such as Scotland, where the namescape of many localities represents a complex layer-cake of linguistic transformations, both within and between different languages, the pronunciation of a name can be essential for unpicking its language background, never mind its etymology. In Sweden, on the other hand, where the majority of place-names come from various stages in the development of the Swedish language, and have remained relatively transparent throughout, this is not such a major issue. Somewhat less convincing, however, is the editorial committee's view that the existence of alternative local pronunciations would make the inclusion of a single, normalised form not only undesirable but difficult.³ Why this should preclude giving the general reader a modest selection of alternatives – where necessary – is not entirely clear, especially when the equally erudite team behind *Norsk stadnamnleksikon* (Norwegian Place-Name Dictionary) has managed to provide a phonetic rendering for every head-name in their 6,000 entry place-name dictionary for Norway. Even those with a casual interest in place-names would appreciate a guide to pronunciation, if for no other reason than to avoid misunderstanding when asking for directions!

Of course, as the lists of further reading suggest, a wealth of additional and more detailed information on Swedish place-names is available elsewhere, which includes guides to pronunciation. One popular example is the 1968 second edition of Sahlgren and Bergman's *Svenska ortnamn med uttalsuppgifter*, the 1979 reprint of which was digitalised and made available online by Project Runeberg in 2011.⁴ Having mentioned this, it would be disingenuous not to point out that a PDF of the first edition of *Svenskt ortnamnslexikon* is also available online, free-of-charge, via ISOF's website.⁵ But this, in turn, begs the question of why the editors have not gone down the fully digital route for this new edition, as is now underway with the *Norsk stadnamnleksikon*,⁶ and has already been done, albeit at a more academic level, by the

Name Research Section of Nordisk Forskningsinstitut at the University of Copenhagen, with their interactive *Danmarks Stednavne* (The Place-names of Denmark),⁷ the collaborative *DigDag*,⁸ and others.⁹

For those undertaking serious research on Swedish place-names, the concise format of this paper dictionary has its shortcomings. With no map co-ordinates, local pronunciation, source references and few comparative examples, its usefulness is limited to a handy selection of first impressions. For readers with only a passing interest in place-names, however, and especially those who appreciate the tangible qualities of a printed book, this volume is both portable and easy to use, and will undoubtedly answer questions, stimulate interest and bring a great deal of satisfaction. For these reasons alone, it is worthy of commendation.

Endnotes

¹ <http://www.sprakochfolkminnen.se/sprak/namn/ortnamn/ortnamnsregistret/sok-i-registret.html> (Accessed 20 Sep 2018).

² https://www.lantmateriet.se/contentassets/41a7acabed464c519755771a3b760b84/toponymic_guidelines_2007_61.pdf (Accessed 20 Sep 2018).

³ <https://www.ltz.se/artikel/slakt-o-vanner/fira-o-uppmarksamma/ortnamn-svenskt-ortnamnslexikon-i-ny-upplaga> (Accessed 20 Sep 2018).

⁴ <http://runeberg.org/ortnamn/> (Accessed 20 Sep 2018).

⁵ <http://www.sprakochfolkminnen.se/download/18.5850f85e15732ead0b325e/1529494467246/Svenskt%20ortnamnslexikon.pdf> (Accessed 20 Sep 2018).

⁶ <http://www.norskstadnamleksikon.no/> (Accessed 20 Sep 2018).

⁷ <http://danmarksstednavne.navneforskning.ku.dk/> (Accessed 20 Sep 2018).

⁸ <http://digdag.dk/> (Accessed 20 Sep 2018).

⁹ <https://navn.ku.dk/databaser/> (Accessed 20 Sep 2018).

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