

fact immaterial; but on the other hand it often proves the means of suggesting a more or less valuable contribution to a correct conception of the historical development of the dialect or language in question.

Hence it is, I hope, perfectly clear, that the record of the place-names of any locality can only lay claim to be definitive and final when it is made by a trained philologist who possesses an accurate knowledge of the dialect spoken in that locality. Without that it is not possible to secure a perfectly reliable basis for further investigations into the history of human settlement in the same locality, because the place-names constitute an important element in such investigations; any more than you can in non-philological literature obtain any trustworthy foundation for the correct spelling of the local place-names. For, as a rule, the system of transcription which is employed in that literature is essentially different from the system which is best suited to the purposes of pure philology. The phonetic system of most languages is such that it can be reproduced only very imperfectly by means of the traditional Latin alphabet. Consequently for philological purposes we have to employ a more developed phonetic alphabet. Many alphabets of this kind have indeed been proposed, as well as actually used. Of these the now antiquated Standard Alphabet of Lepsius is perhaps that which is best known by name outside of the science of philology. Alphabets of this character, with their array of subtle distinctions and strange-looking letters, cannot however be employed in ordinary books. In these a far simpler system must be used, which nevertheless, if it is to be consistent, and so far as it goes accurate, must of necessity be based upon, and be controlled by, a scientific and exact knowledge of the pronunciation of the language under consideration.

My object in beginning with this lengthy introduction is to emphasise the fact, that a very long time is likely to elapse before we can hope to obtain fixed, and at the same time correct, forms for the millions of geographical names which figure on the surface of the earth. In many of the older seats of civilisation the place-names have not yet been examined — how much more therefore in the distant lands of Asia, of Africa, and of America! And before these millions of names can be investigated and analysed, thousands upon thousands of them will get established in incorrect forms, and so will come into frequent and general use, whereby the faulty forms acquire such a degree of authority that, when their correct form is at length demonstrated, it is far too late to attempt to introduce any change in the established usage. Accordingly we have by no means heard the last of such complaints as that to which Dr. B. Hassenstein has given utterance in *Petermanns Mitteilungen*, Ergänzungsband 28, pp. 382 ff. »Dass aber trotz aller Ortsverzeichnisse die Durchführung einer von allen möglichen Inkonsequenzen und Fehlern freie Nomenklatur ein Ding der Unmöglichkeit ist, solange wir Kartographen auf das bunte Gemisch von Materialien aller Nationen angewiesen und nicht in der Lage sind, selbst alle Sprachen *ex fundamento* zu studieren, wissen wir nur zu wohl.« And even on the appearance of Dr. Sven Hedin's great book the same complaint would be raised with regard to the Central Asian names, notwithstanding the well-known fact of Dr. Sven Hedin's great linguistic attainments being a sufficient guarantee for the belief, that his reproduction of the native names is far better than that of any of his predecessors in the same part of the world.