

## **PLANETARY NOMENCLATURE: A REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN CULTURE AND ALIEN LANDSCAPES**

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Planetary nomenclature has two major functions: one is a cultural function: to commemorate people associated with space science; and other people, places or names representing human culture in general. These serve as the specific parts of extraterrestrial placenames. This function links extraterrestrial territories to our home planet, the Earth. The other function is to represent the true nature of the geographic (landscape) feature named. This second part of its name, the so called descriptor term is based the physical properties of the feature: its morphology (shape), and in some cases, its geological origin. The descriptor term is always in Latin, thus providing a link to medieval cartographic traditions and being neutral in a contemporary, international context. The system is standardized, having only one official form for each name.

It is a problem, however, that no nation speaks Latin today; and the currently used names are mostly unknown for most of their readers. The traditions of the nomenclature (names of mythological characters, famous scientists, the use of Latin), linked terrestrial and the celestial geography together, and linked extraterrestrial geography to human culture in the last centuries. The same nomenclature now alienates extraterrestrial landforms – the opposite effect from its original one. This is partly because of the international nature of nomenclature: one can not know the various “intercultural links” appearing in the Gazetteer. The other factor is that while IAU still uses Latin in the nomenclature, terrestrial (domestic and international) geography now is national and thus multilingual, even in its standardized forms.

In this paper we investigate the evolution of the current Planetary Nomenclature Gazetteer and illuminate some disturbing problems related to the current practice of the use and development of the nomenclature. In the future additional nations are expected to have a more active role in Space Research; from cultures other than the Western (Old World) one; therefore it may be needed to reconsider some aspects of planetary nomenclature, especially its international nature which, as we show it, not as intercultural as it should be. We give some suggestions on how to improve the Gazetteer, with new datasets from showing the original language of the name, the original written form in the original writing system, the original pronunciation of the particular name. We also suggest that national (local) variants of the Gazetteer should be handled as equal to the international IAU Gazetteer.