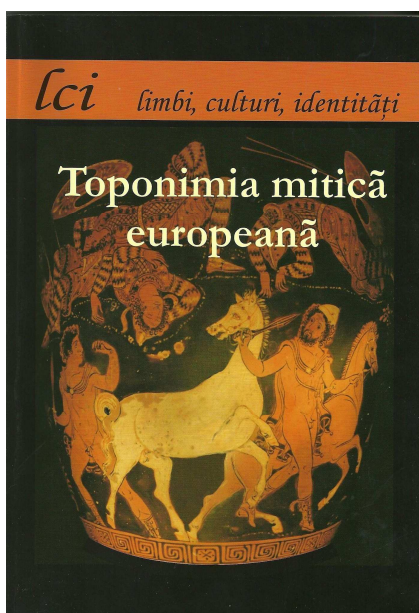


Florica Bechet (coord.), *Toponimia mitică europeană*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2010, 261 p. (Dana Dinu)



*Toponimia mitică europeană* is the result of the research carried out within the project entitled *geomitica* financed by the National Council for Scientific Research in Higher Education, which began in 2007. The research was the initiative of the Institute of Classical Studies, which functions within the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the University of Bucharest.

The project aims at several objectives: “to identify and highlight the literary and historical context of the Greco-Roman place names, especially the European ones, and especially those of the Mediterranean and Black Sea area, which are related to the mythical

landmarks of the Greco-Roman Antiquity and Middle Ages. The non-European elements are included only to the extent to which they are related to Greco-Roman antiquity” (p. 7).

The necessity of the project comes from the lack of a consistent and scientifically based tool providing information about the inventory of place names correlated with Greco-Roman mythology to a large number of readers of various books that refer to ancient place names, or which are interested in the spatial location of ancient myths within the present historical and geographical context. Therefore, it is addressed to “learners and teachers, to researchers, translators, interpreters, journalists and publishers and, last but not least, to the large public” (p. 7).

By design, purpose, amount and diversity of information, by the highly systematic and easy to read content, this book is unique in the Romanian scientific literature, and at the international level there are few works with a similar profile and not very recent. The glossary is given uniqueness by the fact that it is completed by an interactive map which provides a visual dimension and which can be found on the web and as a CD.

This undertaking was neither simple nor easy. It was about selecting and assembling information spread in the Romanian literature and, especially, in the foreign one which is vast, diverse, yet authoritative. The

*Bibliography* (p. 229-231), which mentions only some of the works consulted shows the direct use of the ancient sources of primary importance for the subject of the work and, as secondary sources, dictionaries, atlases and books on Greco-Roman religion and mythology acknowledged by their value.

Since research was carried out in a team, it was necessary to distribute the approximately 3,200 items of the glossary on the alphabetical criterion as follows: Florica Bechet dealt with the letters – *Ph, F, G, H, R, X*, coordinated and harmonized the work of the other authors, elaborated the *Foreword* (p. 7-12) and the *Norms of transliteration* (p. 13-15), Ioana Costa covered the letters *C, I, J, K, P, Y*, Doina Doroftei the letters *A* and *B*, Octavian Gordon the letters *S* and *T*, Simona Nicolae the letters *L, M, N, Z*, and Maria-Luiza Oancea covered the letters *D, E, A* and *V*.

The glossary is the result of a complex interdisciplinary research methodology, which had to be appropriate to the object and which is summarized by the coordinator of the glossary (p. 11-12). Thus, the inventory of place names required the application of relevant and rigorous lexicographic criteria.

On the other hand, lexicology is involved since we are dealing with words that must be explained. Indo-European comparative linguistics and etymology are other linguistic disciplines necessary for the completion of the information about a place name.

At the linguistic level, there is another difficult and important problem – the identification of a consistent and systematic set of rules for the transliteration of Greek and Latin place names, because there is already a very uneven Romanian tradition. This is why the authors set up a system of transliteration presented at pages 13-15. The first rule is that where there is “a Romanian form settled by a long and unanimous tradition (Atena, Ahile, Beoția, Corint, Dardanele, Electra, Fedru, Homer, Hercule, Horațiu, Iocasta, Lemnos, Platon, Socrate, Titus, Vitruviu, etc.) to preserve this form”. For the forms that “are too far from the original language” such as “Phaleron/Faleron, Phthiotis/Phtiotida, Aiolos/Eol, Aiacos/Eac” multiple graphic versions were accepted. A number of other options presented in the same paragraph show that the authors intended to keep the transliteration as close as possible to the original spelling of the terms inventoried.

As for the content of each article, named by Florica Bechet the level of cultural anthropology, this also consists of many layers such as mythology, comparative mythology, history, geography, diachronic geography, etc.

Obviously, the space allocated to each item is commensurate with the importance of the toponym in Greek and Latin mythology or in the literary

tradition (the case of the small river *Digentia* of the Sabin land, whose only ancient source is Horace, is an opportunity for the author of the article, Ioana Costa, to make quite an extensive historical, archaeological, and literary insight) and the amount of information provided by the sources. Place names such as *Athens*, *Arcadia*, *Dacia*, *Delos*, *Delphi*, *Dorion*, *Eleusis*, *Phrygia/Frigia*, *Rome*, *Sicily* and a few others that have higher historical relevance, as well as a rich mythology related to them, and many references in the ancient sources, naturally have larger spaces allocated in the glossary.

The structure of an article is as follows: first, the toponym transliterated according to the rules developed by the authors and explained in the paragraph cited above; then the variants, if any, followed by the brackets containing the Greek form or forms as the case arises, written in Greek letters, and also, the Latinized form or forms, if any.

Next, explanations are given to identify the geographical landmarks according to ancient geography, the significance of that toponym in the ancient world, and, if there is continuity at present, the names and the current geographical landmarks. In some cases the eponym is mentioned, in other cases etymological references are made. The largest part of the article contains the mythological references in versions ranked according to the various traditions or connections with real history. The last part is represented by the diligent indication of the ancient sources that in some cases are quite a few.

The carefully and judiciously chosen iconography inserted between the pages of the glossary provides a suitable and compelling visual support that illustrates and enriches the content by giving it concreteness and relief. By colour, graphics and text, covers I and IV are no less in full unity with the content and invite to reading.

Despite the fact that this project is the work of a team which had to investigate such a large field and the research methods were varied and interdisciplinary, the material was brought under strict control, is presented systematically, coherently, and in a unitary manner. It is obvious that this research is the result of a team of high scholars who are passionate about classical philology in its original meaning and who worked by scientific standards to provide the Romanian public with a pioneering achievement.