Town Names and German History

A map of Germany is a picture book of history if you can "read" it. Town names, for example, can provide a great deal of insight into the historical and cultural background of the region.

Many town names in Southern Germany **end in "-heim"**. Historians consider this to be proof of founding by Frankish settlers.

The **ending syllable "-furt"** means that the town originated at a spot on a river shallow enough to be crossed on foot.

If a German town name ends or **begins with "-reuth"**, "-reut", "-reute", "-rode", "-rod" or "rath", it originated in a wooded area that had to be cleared of trees and stumps before houses could be built.

In southern and western Germany, many towns were established by the Romans in the first centuries A.D.

All names **ending in "-weiler"**, "-weier", "-wihl", or "-weil" developed from the Latin word "villa", just as "-kastel" goes back to the Latin "castellum" (castle).

If a name **ends with "-burg"** this shows that the town grew up near or around a "Burg" or castle. Towns that grew up around an abbey or convent usually include the word "Münster", "Kloster" or "Mönch" in their names. A name containing "-zell" locates what was once the home of a hermit.

Town names **ending with "-ingen"** are usually found in the region of Swabia while those ending with "-ing" are almost always located in Bavaria. They are of Celtic origin.

If the name of the town **contains a "bad"** or "baden", it is the location of a mineral water spring that attracted early settlers and travelers seeking the supposed curative powers provided by drinking or bathing with this "special" water. These areas are still popular vacation spots for many Germans who frequent the spas.

Category	Name of City	State	Background
Frankish settlements			
Settlements near a shallow river			
Settlements near a wooded area			
Roman settlements			
Settlements near castles			
Settlements in Bavaria			
Settlement near mineral springs			