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REPORTS SUBMITTED BY GOVERNMENTS ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
(Submitted by the Government of Ghana)

The question of the standardization of geographical names in Ghana is not, simply an academic one, it is a very practical and urgent matter. The area of activity where geographical names feature most commonly and conspicuously is in the Survey Division of the country, which is responsible for the preparation and publication of all official maps in Ghana. The maps published by the Division are widely used in Ghana and elsewhere and the Division has come to be accepted as the principal and most authoritative body for information concerning geographical names in Ghana.

With the expansion in governmental administration, several other bodies have emerged which either handle geographical names published by the Survey Division or are in a position themselves to influence the introduction and dissemination of various renderings of such names. The most important of such bodies are:

- (i) The Public Works Department which undertakes road construction and the sign-posting of the names of localities in the country.
- (ii) The Post Office, which publishes a telephone and other directories in which many localities with postal facilities are listed.
- (iii) The Census Bureau. Censuses have been taken in Ghana or parts thereof since 1891 and each Census has resulted in the publication of a report in which are listed localities and their populations. However, until the 1960 Population Census, which was the first really modern and scientifically conducted Census ever to be undertaken in Ghana, there was no permanent Census Office and the identity and existence of this aspect of government was solely represented in the published Census Reports.

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Since 1960, a permanent Census Bureau has been established and this forms an important repository for data on geographical names as well as the demographic characteristics of localities.

The 1960 Census resulted in the publication of several volumes in many of which localities and other geographical entities of demographic significance, such as administrative divisions, are featured. There is no doubt that these publications represent the most comprehensive lists of place names to be found in the country.

In determining the geographical names to be included in the Census publication of 1960, the Bureau relied upon various sources. Firstly, the preparation of enumeration area maps involved the use of geographical names as contained in published Survey maps. Secondly, the geographers and field assistants and, later on, compilation staff working on these names exercised their discretion in the choice of forms and in some cases in the choice of one or other of several names or renderings. Thirdly, various lists of localities such as those employed by the Central Revenue Department for the collection of local rates and those employed by the Ministry of Local Government for electoral purposes were utilized, although it was not always clear what the exact authority for the name forms employed was in all cases. Lastly, in the course of the final editing of the Census reports for publication, use was made of the expert knowledge of vernacular orthography from the Bureau of Ghana Languages.

The result is that today, although we have a very comprehensive list of place names, there is very considerable divergence between the renderings or even the forms of many of these names as they appear in the Census Publications and as they appear on the maps published by the Survey Division.

The problem that faces the country in this matter is more than simply a question of reconciling names from these two sources; it is principally one of establishing definitely whether any of the name forms now in use in the different spheres already enumerated are indeed authentic, correct and acceptable, having regard to the prevailing rules of orthography in different parts of the country and also to the norms which have to be observed by the Survey Division in the rendering of geographical names on maps which are intended for both national and international use. It is the guidelines to be followed in this matter that constitute the real essence of the problem of geographical names now facing Ghana.

Unlike many other countries, including some in Africa, Ghana has never had an official body or authority responsible for geographical names. Consequently, various and divergent efforts in the compilation and publication of place names have resulted in the creation of ever increasing confusion.

The Survey Division, which is most intimately concerned with this problem, has compiled a gazetteer for its own use, but it is clear from the maps which continue to issue from the Division that very much more remains to be done before order can be restored to the present confused situation. During recent months the question of geographical names has been given a new urgency by the decision of the Ghana Academy of Sciences to sponsor the preparation of a National Atlas of Ghana to be produced under the joint direction of the Head of the Department of Geography at the University of Ghana, Legon, and the Director of Surveys. Since it is intended that this Atlas should be an authoritative work of reference, it is most essential that all information provided in it should be as accurate and as reliable as possible.

One of the first problems which the Working Party set up for the Atlas encountered was the problem of geographical names. It became obvious that unless this problem was tackled, the maps contained in the Atlas would fail in a very essential respect to serve the purpose for which they are intended.

The present position in regard to the problems of geographical names in the country is as follows:

1. The prevalence of name duplications from one part of the country to another:

In 1964, a Commission set up by the Government of the delimitation of electoral districts, observed as follows: "The names of certain proposed electoral districts are inconvenient (owing to) their length or the tendency to confuse one name with another". This observation referred specifically to the administrative area names, but it serves to highlight the problem of duplication and to underline the need for some regularization of the geographical name structure of the country.

The 1960 Census Report also noted that "there is as yet no fixed and universally accepted standard for the spelling of locality names in Ghana (and that) names printed on the maps published by the Survey Division often help to popularize certain forms of spelling (which are) sometimes at variance with phonetic renderings and with spelling adopted elsewhere". Observations of a similar kind are also made by Grove and Huzsar in their Towns of Ghana published in 1964.

Obviously such discrepancies are undesirable and the 'ad hoc' and unco-ordinated attempts at improvement by individuals and departments have only served to aggravate the problem and to cause further confusion.

The question of duplication has a quantitative, a spatial and what may be called a feature status aspect. The quantitative aspect involves the number of times a particular name occurs in an area, while the spatial aspect involves the distribution of the occurrences over the area. The feature status aspect refers to the size and overall importance of the actual features or places involved. All three are relevant in Ghana where in the Eastern Region, for example, forty-nine place names have an average duplication of about 2.6 times within an area of 8,693 sq. miles. In this connexion the problem of commemorative naming or dedications may also be mentioned. It is apparent that dedicative naming is excessive in village names, at least in certain parts of the country, considering the frequency with which the words: krom, kura, kope and kofe occur, as generic parts attached to proper names, thus signifying that the localities concerned are named after their founders or elders. This leads to duplication since several different founders have the same names. For reasons not altogether clear, this tendency is not so common in the names of the larger towns which more often have designative names - names bearing a reference to other features, e.g. rivers. These questions also raise the larger question of the historical and social aspects of commemorative naming.

Already various attempts to avoid or modify duplication have been made. In some cases numerals are added to place names to differentiate them, although the practice is not as systematically applied as may be expected. Aboabo No.2, for example, occurs twice in Brong Ahafo and Aboabo No.4 occurs twice in Ashanti.

Compass points are also employed, e.g. Seseama SW and Seseama SE. This is also unsatisfactory since an impression of direction rather than of the name of a locality is created. Similarly the use of the word Central as a differentiating element may not be desirable.

A number of solutions are under consideration for solving the problem of duplication. One of these is the possibility of attaching descriptive or qualifying words to signify the administrative or traditional area where a particular locality occurs. But one of the main problems here has been the many changes which have occurred in the boundaries of these areas as well as the corresponding changes in their names. If the names of the areas themselves are continually undergoing change, this method is ineffective and further confusion is created. There is also a limit to the number and length of qualifying names which can be employed to assist the identification of other names. While one blanket solution for this problem is obviously unlikely to be found, it is hoped that a number of alternative solutions will be found and applied as circumstances dictate.

2. Alternate Name Forms: The evidence from the Census Report of the 1960 Census would seem to indicate that places with two or more different names are quite few, though the full extent of the problem may not be small because there is evidence of numerous alternate spellings which may be considered as an aspect of the same problem. The possible causes of the problem or phenomenon of alternate (or variant) spellings are numerous. The different written forms may reflect different spoken forms or dialectical forms. Thus Effiduase and Affiduse may simply be the Fanti and Asante forms, spoken and written. This often occurs when the initial recording of the name has been by persons from dialect or language areas other than the area where the name in question occurs. Similarly, some names have anglicised written forms. Nkawkaw, Larteh, Mampong, Akim, and Ashanti have written forms which are not usual in the written form of the language in which they occur.

The confused use of the Akan endings si and se, su and so is also a problem. Often the former pair are intended to mean under or beneath and the latter upon or by. Sometimes also su means a stream. Kumasi and Kumase as well as Pepeasi and Pepease both occur, but historical evidence would seem to suggest

that the last syllable in each case should be ge and not si. Similarly Prasu and Praso occur. Here either name makes sense but the correct name of the village can be only one of these.

The rendering of the sounds gy as in gye, ky as in kye dw as in dwa, hw as in hwe and nw as in nwe in Akan and other local languages has sometimes been done with j, ch, j or du, fw and nhw respectively. Whether these are acceptable alternatives, having regard to the relevant orthography, must be determined not only within the context of place names but within the context of the written form of the language concerned.

3. Syntactical Problems: There are syntactical problems with names which have generic Twi endings such as krom/kurom, and with those which have the adverb ending so and those with the traditional group descriptions, e.g. Akim (Akyem), Ashanti (Asante), Agona, etc. The manner of combination of the two parts of the name is not regular. Nkwaakwaakurom and Nkwaakwa Kurom occur. Ashanti Mampong and Mampong Ashanti with or without hyphens occur in various places.

All the above examples have necessarily been drawn from only one language group with which the writers are familiar, but similar examples from other languages would be cited.

4. Multiplicity of languages and consequently of orthographies: There are some nine major languages in Ghana and over fifty others which are grouped more or less geographically. Since geographical names commonly reflect language, it may be expected that each of these sixty one linguistic areas will have different name characteristics and orthographies. The specific problems are:

1. That not all the languages are written.
2. That the alphabets used for the writing of the written ones are different in the number and forms of characters or letters.

So far not all the letters in the alphabets have been employed in the written forms of our geographical names, especially those recorded on maps. This is true of the Ga, Ewe and the northern languages. Although this approach is convenient insofar as it avoids typographical complications, it nevertheless begs the question whether geographical names are to be rendered differently from the rest of the language. The tendency has been for the people in the

various linguistic areas themselves to refer to names within their areas by the authentic oral and/or written form, while other persons including officials tend to employ what they consider to be the most suitable forms. The fact that many of the people who decide on name renderings are unfamiliar with the languages in the areas concerned has resulted in some very strange renderings which bear little relationship with the local forms, e.g. Anamloampa instead of Anamrampa and Pawmpawm instead of Ponpon.

It appears that since the present written forms are based largely on the English alphabet an element of anglicisation has crept into the forms of many names.

Finally, there are a few names, especially those of important and well-known localities or features which through long usage among various European nations from the 15th to the 19th centuries now have forms which are anything but Ghanaian. Such names include Accra, Ashanti, Cape Coast, Winneba, Saltpond, Elmina, Princes Town, Dixcove, Axim, Volta, Ankobra, etc., etc. The problem therefore is posed not only of removing objectionable elements or forms due to the indiscriminate use of the English alphabet but also of rendering names belonging to unwritten languages.

5. Other problems: There are many other problems the principal ones of which are:
- (a) The retention or replacement of names where systematic rendering differs from the existing form with respect to the local vernacular or orthography.
 - (b) Local acceptance of standardized names.
 - (c) The determination of the extent of geographical features, many of which still need to be clearly identified and named.

Thus, it can be seen that Ghanaian geographical name problems may be divided into those which are common to other parts of the world and those which are peculiar to Ghana.

Although efforts being made at present to tackle these problems are specifically in connexion with the preparation of the National Atlas of Ghana, nevertheless this is being done in the light of the recommendations of the group of experts on geographical names set up by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in pursuance of Resolution 715A (XVII) of the Economic and Social Council. It is hoped that procedures followed now will be acceptable to whatever statutory national body may be set up in future for the standardization of geographical names.

The body undertaking the work at the moment is the Committee on Geographical Names set up within the Ghana National Atlas Project. The Committee is a large one of fifteen members drawn from the following bodies: (i) the Public Works Department, (ii) The Post and Telecommunications Services Department, (iii) The Survey Division, (iv) The Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, (v) The Bureau of Ghana Languages, (vi) The Chieftaincy Secretariat, Office of the National Liberation Council, (vii) Department of Geography, University College of Cape Coast, (viii) Department of Geography, University of Ghana, Legon, (ix) National Cultural Centre, Kumasi.

The composition of the Committee to a large extent, reflects the complicated nature of the problems under study. The Committee's first meeting was held in April, 1967. A smaller sub-committee to formalize arrangements for local consultation is due to be convened in July, 1967. The method approved for the compilation of place names consists in the collection of the following details for each name:

1. Census Rendering 1960
2. Rendering on published Survey maps
3. Local Rendering
4. Linguistic area
5. Local Council Area 1960
6. Geographical co-ordinates
7. Population 1960
8. Remarks

This is followed by a decision as to the form recommended for adoption. It is proposed to consult local communities in reaching this decision. A specimen of the form employed for the recording of the above data is attached hereto.

At present work is proceeding on names of places or localities with a population of a thousand or more in order to test methods and to ascertain the range of problems more accurately before we embark on the full scale operations for all localities in the country.