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Activities relating to the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

**International Meetings on Toponymy with A Specific Focus
on Cultural Heritage and the Public**

Submitted by Republic of Korea*

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International Meetings on Toponymy with A Specific Focus on Cultural Heritage and the Public[†]

SUMMARY

This working paper reports on the two international meetings on toponymy organized by the National Geographic Information Institute (NGII) of the Republic of Korea after the 28th Session. One is a symposium on *Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage* held in Seoul, 5-7 November 2014 and the other is a workshop on *Place Names to the Public* held in Jeju, 8-10 October 2015. Both meetings were designed to contribute to the growing academic and policy attention to the topic of cultural heritage and to the closer relevance of geographical names with the public life.

International Symposium on Toponymy: *Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage*, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 5-7 November 2014

A symposium on *Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage* was held in Seoul on 5-7 November 2014, organized and sponsored by the National Geographic Information Institute (NGII) of the Republic of Korea. The symposium consisted of two keynote speeches, two paper sessions and one panel discussion session (eleven papers in total):

Keynote Speeches

- Helen KERFOOT (Natural Resources Canada): Tracing UNGEGN's evolving interest in geographical names as cultural heritage
- William WATT (UNGEGN Chair): Getting the names right: Geographical names as intangible cultural heritage and activities of UNGEGN Working Group

Session I: *Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage: Conceptual Discussion and Practices* (Chair: CHI Sang-Hyun, Kyung Hee University)

- Staffan NYSTRÖM (University of Uppsala): Onomastic research in Scandinavia: Place-names as messages, memories and heritage
- Annette TORENSJÖ (Lantmäteriet): Good place-name practice in Sweden: Legislation and how to act as a place-name authority
- HUA Linfu (Renmin University of China): China's toponymical influence upon Korean Peninsula during history period
- SON Heuiha (Chonnam National University): The loss and transformation of meaning in Korean place names, and suggestions for its prevention
- CHOO Sungjae (Kyung Hee University): Geographical perception on place and place names as cultural heritage: The case of the Korean place names

[†] This working paper pertains to the UNCISG resolutions I/7 (Regional meetings) and IX/4 (Geographical names as intangible cultural heritage).

Session II: Cultural Politics of Toponymy (Chair: RYU Yeon-Taek, Chungbuk National University)

- Peter KANG (National Dong Hwa University): Whose cultural heritage and in what sense? The naming of MRT station in Taiwan and the representation of urban space
- Derek ALDERMAN (University of Tennessee): Naming streets, doing justice? Politics of remembering, forgetting, and finding surrogates for African American slave heritage
- Multamia LAUDER and Allan LAUDER (University of Indonesia): A historical perspective on the study of geographical names in Indonesia
- Michel SIMEU-KAMDEM (National Institute of Cartography, Cameroon): One mountain, two geographical names: The endless dispute between the Batcha and Batchingou, West Cameroon

The symposium was followed by a half-day workshop, chaired by Annette Torensjö, convenor of the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage, to discuss future research and implications for the standardization of geographical names. At the conclusion of the symposium and the workshop, the participants agreed by consensus on the following summary points:

- It is valuable to be exposed to a large spectrum of toponymic issues with relevance to cultural heritage in a wide range of national and cultural contexts.
- Future research on geographical names as cultural heritage may well include such topics as collection of toponyms with cultural heritage, ways of life mirrored in geographical naming, materialization of cultural elements, and so on.
- UNGEGN may need to develop and adopt its own definition of ‘cultural heritage’ with reference to the UNESCO’s definition.
- An examination of the UNCDSGN resolutions containing elements of cultural heritage may provide guidance on future directions.
- Preserving geographical names as cultural heritage should be supported by appropriate management of toponymic data files.

The three-day meeting was concluded with a half-day excursion to a number of cultural heritage sites of old Seoul, including Changdeokgung (palace), Bukchon (traditional village) and Insa-dong (commercial area for traditional goods), which was followed by a farewell dinner.

The papers presented at the symposium were later published in a book:

Sungjae Choo, ed., 2015, *Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Toponymy*, Seoul, 7-9 November 2014, Seoul: Kyung Hee University Press (ISBN 978-89-8222-540-6)

International Workshop on Toponymy: Place Names to the Public, Jeju, Republic of Korea, 8-10 October 2015

A workshop on *Place Names to the Public* was held at the International Convention Center Jeju, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province on 8-10 October 2015, organized and sponsored by the NGII. It was part of the 20th United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific organized by the NGII.

The workshop featured one special lecture, two paper sessions and one panel discussion session:

Special Lecture

- SONG Seongdae (Jeju National University): Cultural geographical specificities and place names in the Jeju Region

Session I: The Nature of Place Names: Functions and Uses (Chair: RYU Yeon-Taek, Chungbuk National University))

- Paul WOODMAN (Former Secretary, PCGN): The use of geographical names as brands
- Asep KARSIDI (Geospatial Information, Indonesia): Geographical names as spatial identifier to support one map policy in Indonesia
- CHI Sang-Hyun (Kyung Hee University): Place name as a key to understanding others: The publication of *Place Names of Korea*

Session II: Place Names by the People, for the People (Chair: KIM Young-Hoon, Korea National University of Education)

- Peder GAMMELTOFT (University of Copenhagen): Public participation in naming decisions: Advantages and problems identified in Denmark and Norway
- Shazlin binti OMAR (Survey and Mapping Malaysia): Standardization of public geographical names in Malaysia
- Thanh Lam PHUNG THI (Vietnam National University): Hanoi's street names: Interpreting now from the past

Session III: Panel Discussion: Place Names to the People (Chair: CHOO Sungjae, Kyung Hee University)

A few premises were shared: (1) place names are spatial identifiers; (2) principled standardization is a prerequisite to naming places (Karsidi); (3) place names are very near to the public. Place names are coming to the public through branding procedures by producers in the primary sector, companies, and public organizations (Woodman). Place names are reaching out to differentiated groups of the public, within or outside of a country or a language group (Chi). For place names to be easily accessible to the public, the role of conveyors of place names, such as media, broadcasting, social network services, and YouTube, has to be noted. User-friendly technical frameworks, such as toponymic database (Omar), should also be provided.

The public also reaches out to place names. The public participated in naming places through the stages of initiating, using, changing (or 'complaining') and even killing (Gammeltoft). Names authorities of many countries guarantee public participation in their naming principles. Sometimes the public initiates the search for the identity of a place, based on their feelings, or perceptions and memories of the particular place (Phung Thi). An interesting question then is: How do place names become more familiar to the public? Answers to this question have to be sought in the future.

The workshop was followed by a one-day excursion to the natural and cultural attractions of Jeju Island, including Seongsan-ilchulbong (volcanic mountain), Haenyeo (female diver) Museum and Jeju Stone Park.