



UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS
ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

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Important notice:

Please note that the dates for the 10th UN Conference for the Standardization of Geographical Names and the 27th Session of UNGEGN are:

UNCSGN: 31 July – 9 August 2012
UNGEKN: 30 July and 10 August 2012

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Previous issues of the Bulletin (formerly Newsletter) can be found at

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn_info_bulletins.htm

UNGEEN Information Bulletin

(formerly NEWSLETTER)

The *Information Bulletin of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names* (formerly UNGEEN Newsletter) is issued twice a year by the Secretariat of the Group. The Secretariat is established within the Statistics Division (UNSD), Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Secretariat of the United Nations. It publishes contributions/reports from the Experts of the Group, its Linguistic/ Geographical Divisions and its Working Groups. Contributions for the Information Bulletin can only be considered when they are made available in digital form. They should be sent to the following address:

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Preface

Message from the Chairperson

Now that the 26th Session of UNGEGN is successfully behind us, I thank members of the UNGEGN Secretariat and all of you who were involved in its organization, in preparing papers or workshops, and in participating in the discussions and assorted activities. The Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation will be reviewing your evaluations of the Session and your suggestions will be taken into account in planning the 10th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (New York, 2012).

In following up work from the Session, I would particularly like to mention:

- (1) The proposal for a joint **Toponymy Commission** of the International Geographical Union (IGU) and the International Cartographic Association (ICA) is moving forward. Discussion and planning advanced at the ICA Congress in Paris in July (*see report from Peter Jordan, pages 22-23*). This will be further worked out at the IGU Conference to be held in Santiago, Chile in November. Those of you interested in being involved are still invited to add your names, if you have not already done so.
- (2) The meeting of the **Task Team for Africa** in Vienna has led to an initiative of UNECA to hold a working session of some 15 individuals from Africa this November. The aim will be to develop a strategic work plan for UNECA to create a better framework

for names standardization processes in African countries. We look forward to the advances that should result from this initiative (*see report from Chukwudozie Ezigbalike, pages 18-19*).

- (3) The **UN Spatial Data Infrastructure (UNSDI) Gazetteer Framework**, as introduced to us during the 26th Session, is now presented in more detail (*see report from Suha Ulgen, pages 23-28*). The Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers will collaborate with the CoE4UNSDI Project, but all experts are invited to follow the Project and to provide input.

Early in September, the XXIVth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences (**ICOS**) was held in Barcelona, Spain. The organizers were keen to interweave the research of academics in onomastics with the practicalities of names standardization and the use of names in daily life. A plenary session, discussion groups, and various individual presentations were all linked to UNGEGN activities (*see report from Botolv Helleland, page 28*). Materials will be available as a web publication of ICOS and some parts directly relevant to names authorities will be posted on the UNGEGN website.

In the immediate future, we are turning our attention to the first High Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management (**GGIM**) to be held in Seoul in October (*see report on pages 6-7*). The Working Groups on Evaluation and Implementation and on

Publicity and Funding will hold a joint meeting to coincide with the forum, and so will be offering a small exhibition and short lunch-time presentations on UNGEGN issues to forum participants. A common understanding of UNGEGN's work in geographical names standardization is important for our future cooperation with GGIM.

2012 is the year we shall be holding the 10th UN Conference and I encourage Divisions and Working Groups to make as much progress as possible in the months between now and July/August next year!

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News from the Secretariat

Message from the Secretariat

26th Session of UNGEGN

The secretariat would like to thank delegates of the 26th Session as well as experts working in the preparation of the Session and its various side events for their contributions and great cooperation. The report of the session has been available in all languages on the UNGEGN website since June this year. The website serves as the repository of all material related to the event. The Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation is currently reviewing feedback provided in the evaluation forms at the end of the Session. This feedback will be very valuable in preparation of the 10th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (New York, 2012).

10th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) and 27th Session of UNGEGN

As recommended by the 26th Session of UNGEGN in Vienna, the Economic and Council in July this year decided to hold the 10th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in New York from 7 – 16 August 2012 and, in conjunction with it, to hold the 27th session of UNGEGN in New York, 6 and 17 August 2012 (ECOSOC decision 2011/251). However, the timeframe originally planned has provided issues with conference management. Following the input from the UNGEGN Bureau, after consultation with a wider group of experts and the Secretariat, the decision was taken to move the dates for the 10th UN Conference and the 27th Session of UNGEGN one week earlier:

UNCSGN: 31 July – 9 August 2012
UNEGN: 30 July and 10 August 2012

This difficult decision was reached to avoid the problems inherent in an overlap between UNCSGM/UNEGN and the second session of the Committee of Experts on GGIM, which is now scheduled for 13-15 August 2012.

We are looking forward to your active participation in the 10th Conference and the 27th Session as planned. We expect that the Note Verbale for the two events will be sent out early next year. As usual we will post all material (including the Note Verbale) on our event website as it becomes available. If you have any questions, please contact the secretariat.

World Geographical Names Database (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/geonames/>)

Updates are now done on a quarterly schedule, the next of which is due 1 December 2011. We would like to encourage you to send us your material for the online database by 18 November for inclusion in the next update, namely:

- Names of cities with a population over 100,000 (original writing system and romanized form)
- Coordinates in degrees and decimal degrees
- Audio files (.wav) for each city name

Please check the website and contact us if your country's information needs additions or corrections!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sybille Marxgut for her work on this

database. Sybille has left UNSD and relocated to Australia with her family.

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High-Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management

The ECOSOC made history in its last substantive session in July 2011 by establishing a new intergovernmental mechanism: the [UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management](#). At a time when few new intergovernmental bodies are being created, this decision reflected ECOSOC's concern for promoting greater and wider use of geospatial information globally for sustainable development and humanitarian assistance. The Committee will comprise experts from all Member States, as well as experts from international organizations, as observers. The new body will be serviced by the [Statistics Division](#) of the [Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#) (DESA) and the Cartographic Section of the Department of Field Services.

The Committee will convene its inaugural session on 26 October 2011 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The inaugural meeting will bring together experts from Member States and observers from international organizations to adopt the terms of reference of the Committee, review its rules of procedure, discuss its contribution to The Rio+20 Conference as well as an inventory of critical issues to be addressed by the Committee in future sessions. Immediately preceding the inaugural session of the Committee, the United Nations Statistics Division and the United Nations Cartographic Section are jointly organizing with the National Geographic Information

Institute (NGII) of the Republic of Korea, a High Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management at the COEX Convention Centre in Seoul, 24-26 October 2011. The Forum will provide a first-of-its-type opportunity for in-depth discussion of current critical geospatial information issues and consultations by over 400 representatives including ministers and other high-level Government officials, mostly heads of National Mapping Authorities and National Statistical Offices, international organizations active in GGIM, and prominent civil society and business leaders.

At the opening of the Forum, a Ministerial Segment will be convened in the morning of 24 October 2011. The Under-Secretary-General for DESA, Mr. Sha Zukang, will deliver the opening address. The Segment will provide a platform for Ministers, representing all the regions of the world, to discuss national policies on geospatial information, particularly in reference to management aspects; to provide direction in evolving common frameworks and methodologies across countries; to promote the use of geospatial information to address key global challenges; and to give guidance on capacity development and enhance technology transfer.

The High Level Forum and the inaugural session of the Committee will be accompanied by two thematic side-events, namely:

- an ‘Exchange Forum with the Geospatial Industry’ (on Sunday 23 October 2011) which will initiate a discussion between industry leaders and governmental officials in geospatial information to inform and enrich the subsequent high-level forum on GGIM; and
- a Seminar on “the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information: Issues and Challenges” (on Thursday 27 October 2011). This thematic seminar will look at the best practices in integrating these two types of data and ensure their

efficient use and optimal dissemination. The seminar is co-organized by Statistics Korea, Eurostat and the United Nations Statistics Division. It will be held at the Korea International Exhibition Center on 27 October 2011.

For more information on any of these events, please go to <http://ggim.un.org/>.

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From the Divisions



Arabic Division (ADEGN)

Report about the meetings of ADEGN which were held on 2 and 4 May 2011 in conjunction with Twenty-sixth session of UNGEGN Vienna 2-6 May 2011

Participants

The two meetings had high participation: 22 participants from 11 Arab Countries (Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Kuwait, Morocco, Tunisia, Oman, Qatar, Lebanon), chaired by Eng / Ahmed Mohamed Kamel, Chair of the Arabic Division. One observer Ms. Naela Sarras from ICANN attended the meetings

First Meeting, 2 May 2011

Agenda

1. Database of the names of major cities (more than 100,000 people) in Arab countries.
2. Glossary of terms on geographical names in Arab countries.
3. Establishment of the new web site for ADEGN and enhancing the work of the Funding Committee.
4. Collecting information and contacts about the institutions responsible for geographical names in Arab countries.
5. Geographical names training in Arab countries.
6. Any other items.

Minutes of the meeting

- First Mr. Ahmed Kamel Chair of ADEGN welcomed the participants and praised the fruitful and constructive cooperation between the Arab members of the Division; then he opened the floor for discussion.
- Dr. Seif Qayedi from United Arab Emirates, Chairman of the Gazetteers Working Group of ADEGN, presented the ongoing work of collecting data of the cities with a population greater than 100000. The countries that have participated are Sudan, Jordan, UAE, Tunisia, Palestine, Qatar and Egypt. He urged the experts to provide the Division with data according to the last official census.
- Mrs. Naima Freiha from Tunisia and President of the Committee on Terminology presented the last work of the Terminology Committee on collection of terms related to geographical names of Sudan, Jordan, Tunisia, Palestine, Egypt, and suggested a standard format for sending further terms. She will provide the Division members with it, and urged the members

of the ADEGN to provide the Division with the terminologies in their countries as soon as possible in a proposed standard form.

- Mrs. Eman Oriby from Egypt presented a collected questionnaire about Romanization systems from some Arab countries: Jordan, Tunisia, Palestine, Sudan, and Egypt. The experts suggested postponing discussion of the unified Arabic Romanization system to the subsequent meeting on 4 May 2011.
- Eng / Ahmed Kamel from Egypt and Chair of ADEGN presented the ongoing work on the new website of ADEGN Egypt and the work of the Publicity and Funding Committee.
- Experts discussed the importance of training for the Arab States on the basis of standardization of geographical names and activating the work of the Training Committee through conducting a training course in Egypt, assisted by a team of experts.
- Experts discussed the importance of establishing bodies responsible for standardization of geographical names in Arab countries.

The recommendations

- The Arab countries recommended to promptly finalize the establishment of institutions who are responsible for standardization of geographical names and to provide a report to the Division about responsible institutions on geographical names and the law regulating its work.
- Urged national institutions concerned with geographical names, to contribute in the creation of glossary of terms of geographical names by sending a list of terms prevailing in the Arab States and its meaning according to a proposed

standard form of the Terminology Committee.

- Postponing discussion of a unified Romanization system to next meeting, on 4 May 2011.
- Experts to contribute in enriching the Division's website and electing Mr. Younis bin Khamis bin Saad Al-Balushi, from Oman as chairman of the Publicity and Funding Committee.

Second Meeting 4 May 2011

Agenda

1. Discuss the current situation for the application of Romanization system 2007 in Arab countries and the regulations actually applied by them.
2. Any other business.

Minutes of the meeting:

- Mr Ahmed Kamel Chair of ADEGN welcomed the participants then opened the floor for discussion.
- Dr. Ibrahim Atoui from Algeria, the Vice-President of the UNGEGN, gave a brief history of the stages of establishing the Arabic Romanization systems and the amendments that have occurred in the system 1956, and Beirut system of 1971, which was adopted by Arab experts and the League of Arab States in the first Expert Forum of the Geographical Names, which was held in Beirut in 1971 and was authorized after the first adjustments in the Second United Nations Conference in 1972 and then the further changes occurred in 1973 which is called amended Beirut-system and the latest amendments in 2007, which is called Unified Arabic Romanization system 2007.
- Members discussed the current situation of applied Romanization systems in their

country and difficulties in applying the Unified Arabic Romanization system 2007, and the significance of the added provision that would allow taking into account the specificity of each country.

Recommendations

The participants decided that:

1- Sending Unified Arabic Romanization system 2007, which was proposed in the Third Arab Conference in Beirut 2007 to the concerned authorities for geographical names in all Arab countries through the Arab League for expressing their opinions before the first of April 2012 for preparation of approval and adoption in the fifth Arab Conference of Geographical Names that will

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be held in Cairo on the first half of 2012.



Photo of ADEGN members with Mrs Helen Kerfoot chair of UNGEGN 5-MAY 2011

Eng.Ahmed Mohamed Kamel

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Asia South-West Division

Planning to establish the Regional Geographical Names Database for Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic)

In order to promote the consistent use and dissemination of accurate place names in the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic), the Islamic Republic of Iran is preparing to establish the Regional Geographical Names Database for divisional member countries.

The necessity of the database creation was raised in the Ninth Regional Meeting on Standardization of Geographical Names in Tehran and was adopted by the delegates.

This regional database can contain many endonyms and exonyms and can cover major cities and important natural and man-made features.

Feature and place coding methods were proposed and necessary data tables were designed by experts of Iranian Committee on Standardization of Geographical Names.

Of course, this regional project requires contribution of national geographical names authority in all divisional countries and each country should take part in collection and

registration of its relevant data.

Finally, the database will be accessible for all of contributor countries via proper media.

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East Central and South-East Europe Division

ECSEE Division meeting during the 26th UNGEGN Session

The East Central and South-East Europe Division (ECSEED) organized a meeting during the 26th UNGEGN Session (2 - 6 May 2011, UN Center Vienna). The ECSEED meeting was held on the 4th May in the UN Center Vienna. The meeting was attended by 14 representatives: Croatia (1), Cyprus (2), Georgia (3), Greece (1), Poland (3), Slovenia (1), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1) and Turkey (2) (see Fig. 1). The last 20th ECSEED Session was held a few months before, in February 2011 in Zagreb. But, during that period there were important Division activities.



Figure 1b: ECSEED meeting



Figure 1a: ECSEED meeting

Georgia joined ECSEED (see Fig. 2). Before that, Montenegro was accepted into the ECSEED in 2008 during the 19th ECSEED session in Zagreb. The ECSEE Division has now 17 countries active (see Table 1).



Figure 2: ECSEE Division countries

The main topics discussed during the ECSEE Division meeting:

- the Division Chairman reported about activities,
- Georgian delegates introduced the country in the field of standardization of geographical names,
- the text about 20th ECSEED session in Zagreb was sent to be published in the UNGEGN Bulletin,
- distribution of a CD with documents of all three joint meetings: 20th ECSEED session, Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers and EuroGeoNames workshop, February 2011 in Zagreb,
- ECSEE Division reporting at the UNGEGN session,
- news and changes on the ECSEED web pages,
- and other.

Tables 1: UNGEGN Divisions and number of countries

Nr.	UNGEgn Divisions	Number of Division countries
1	Latin America Division	22
2	Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division	18
3	East Central and South-East Europe Division	17
4	French-speaking Division	17
5	Africa East Division	16
6	Africa West Division	16
7	Arabic Division	15
8	Romano-Hellenic Division	15
9	Africa Central Division	12
10	Africa South Division	10
11	Portuguese-speaking Division	9
12	Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division	9
13	Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic)	7
14	Dutch- and German-speaking Division	7
15	India Division	6
16	Norden Division	5
17	United Kingdom Division	5
18	Asia East Division (other than China)	3
19	Baltic Division	3
20	Celtic Division	2
21	East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic)	2
22	United States of America-Canada Division	2
23	China Division	1

Organization in UN Center in Vienna was excellent, and the ECSEE Division meeting was held in a working and friendly atmosphere.

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ECSEE Division Chairman
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Norden Division

News from the Norden Division Meeting in Vienna, May 2, 2011.

This year's Norden Division Meeting was held in Vienna on May 2, in conjunction with the 26th UNGEGN Session. Of issues discussed at the meeting was the status of the Norden Division homepage, as well as the implementation of INSPIRE and EuroGeoNames services among the Norden Division area National Mapping Authorities. Also discussed were how to involve the North Atlantic area, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Iceland deeper in the UNGEGN and Norden Division work, and the possibility of legislation for geographical names in Finland.

Next Norden Division Meeting

The next Norden Division Meeting is still being planned. There was a general

acceptance at the Norden Division Meeting that a meeting in connection with the coming *Femtende nordiske navneforskerkongres* (Fifteenth Nordic Name Research Congress) 2012, June 6–9, in Askov, Denmark, would be optimal – as this should give the North Atlantic members a greater possibility of participating in the meeting. The meeting agenda is at present undecided, but the main issues at the next Norden Division Meeting will be how to prepare for the 27th UNGEGN Session and the 10th United Nations' Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names Conference in New York, USA later the same year.

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From the Working Groups

Working Group on Country Names

The Working Group on Country Names currently consists of the following members (those marked with an asterisk [*] are new members):

- Marcus Allsup* (United States)
- Bahram Amirahmadian (Islamic Republic of Iran)
- Hubert Bergmann (Austria)
- Caroline Burgess (United Kingdom)
- Catherine Cheetham (United Kingdom)
- Sungjae Choo* (Republic of Korea)
- Leo Dillon (United States)
- Naima Friha* (Tunisia)
- Danielle Henripin* (liaison, UN Terminology Section)
- Peter Jordan (Austria)
- Gholamreza Karimzadeh* (Islamic Republic of Iran)
- André Lapierre (Canada)
- Eman Ahmed Orieby (Egypt)
- Sirkka Paikkala* (Finland)
- Peeter Päll (Estonia)
- Trent Palmer* (United States)
- Ioannis Papaioannou (Greece)
- Ahmet Saraç (Turkey)
- Alexandrous Stavropoulos (Greece)
- Danielle Turcotte (Canada)
- Abdülvahit Torun (Turkey)

The Working Group (WG) held a meeting on May 4, 2011 during the 26th Session of UNGEGN in Vienna. After welcoming new members, the WG discussed the purpose, structure, and content of its principal document, the UNGEGN List of Country Names. This list provides the names of countries in their official language(s) and script(s), and also in the six official

languages of the United Nations, as found on the UN Multilingual Terminology Database (UNTERM - <http://unterm.un.org/>).

The current official version of that document was presented to the Ninth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) in New York in August 2007. It is available from the UNGEGN website, in that Conference's list of documents (E/CONF.98/89). An updated unofficial list was presented at the 26th UNGEGN Session (Working Paper No. 54).

The main job of the WG at present is to update this document for the Tenth UNCSGN in 2012. To aid the WG in this process, an unofficial “working version” of the document will be posted on the WG's section of the UNGEGN webpage (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/wg1.html>). This version contains changes made since May 2011. Most of these changes have been minor, although an entry for the new country of South Sudan has been added. **All UNGEGN experts are invited to make comments and suggestions concerning this draft document to the WG convenor.**

One of the topics discussed at the WG meeting in May 2011 was the development of a document containing references to lists of country names issued by national authorities. It was suggested that by providing access to country names used by national authorities to UNGEGN members, the section called “Names used by a National Authority” could potentially be

removed from the List of Country Names. **Any UNGEGN member state that wishes to contribute to this document is asked to provide a web address or other reference to a country names list to the WG convenor at the address below.**

The Working Group on Country Names invites any interested experts to become a

member of the group. Please contact the convenor at the address below if there are any questions.

Leo Dillon

Convenor

Working Group on Country Names

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Working Group on Exonyms

11th Meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms

The Working Group on Exonyms met informally out-of-session on 4th May 2011 during the 26th Session of UNGEGN in the Theatersaal of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. The venue away from the UNGEGN Session was intended to allow wider participation.

The meeting focused on current themes and questions of the WG, especially on the **endonym/exonym divide** and the status of sea names in this context.

Peter JORDAN outlined his paper “The endonym – name from within a social group” (WP 69) which had been presented to the UNGEGN Session. Paul WOODMAN, who had not taken part in the UNGEGN Session, presented his paper entitled “Endonyms, Exonyms and Language Boundaries: A Clarification”, which recapped the WG’s recent discussions on this subject and aimed at clarifying the author’s view, which he felt had been misconstrued or misunderstood. The paper considered the essence particularly of names for features beyond a single (or any) sovereignty, their nature as endonym or exonym, and how this applied to relevant language communities.

The Working Group enjoyed a robust discussion on the nature of the endonym and name classification in general. A particular discussion focused on the nuanced distinction between ‘all over’, meaning at each individual location within a feature, and ‘entire’ meaning the feature in its entirety as a single whole and how these terms had been intended and interpreted in Paul WOODMAN’s paper.

The essence of the terms ‘endonym’ and ‘exonym’, either as a fundamental characteristic, or as a reflection of an externally-given status, was also discussed. And the significance of the cultural context, noting that a name might differ in its endonym status according to a specific culture, was also acknowledged. An example was noted by Bill WATT of certain Aboriginal people of Australia who had a close relationship with coastal waters, but whose affinity did not extend to the entire body of water. The ‘entire’ sea might therefore not have what could be considered an endonym in certain Aboriginal languages.

The meeting recalled also the WG’s previous consideration of the establishing of **guideline criteria for the appropriate use of exonyms**. A proposal for such guidelines had been considered at the WG’s meeting during the 25th UNGEGN Session in

Nairobi, Kenya, though consensus had not been achieved. Peter JORDAN had drafted a revised document “Criteria for the use of exonyms – a next approach” (WP 64) for the WG’s consideration.

It was noted that the title *Criteria for the Use of Exonyms* was somewhat suggestive of promoting exonym use, and the WG agreed that any subsequent discussions should be considered with the understanding that the goal was to ‘ensure the politically-sensitive use of exonyms’.

The Co-Convenor asked the WG to consider whether, in addition to 'endonym' and 'exonym', a third term might be required where there was contention about the application of either of the existing terms, specifically for **features beyond sovereignty**. The viewpoints of various WG members were again re-stated.

Gholamreza KARIMZADEH presented a paper “Mechanism for standardizing the exonyms of features beyond sovereignty”, suggesting historical evidence should be considered when identifying valid exonyms. The WG noted that there could, however, be practical difficulties in determining the validity of such sources.

The WG also considered **trends in exonym use**. Maciej ZYCH presented his paper “Polish lists of geographical names of the World” (WP 24) describing the list of exonyms approved for use in Poland, noting that only those Polish exonyms included in the list were recommended for use in Poland.

The WG discussed the future direction and appropriate themes to be considered.

Suggestions included the categorisation of exonyms (e.g. such as of their phonological/morphological type, or whether they were a translation of a relevant endonym) and an expansion of the current questions into a more focused look at their relevance and application in languages outside Europe, perhaps especially in East Asia.

A next WG meeting prior to the 10th United Nations Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names (to be held in New York, August 2012) and in preparation for it will be held on three days (one day excursion) in the bilingual region of Kashubia in Poland in May 2012. An exact date is still to be defined. The place for this next WG meeting was chosen due to the kind offer of Katarzyna PRZYSZEWSKA and Maciej ZYCH, who will provide for the local organisation.

This next meeting will have the character of a workshop, where papers are presented and intensively discussed. As regards topics, the endonym/exonym divide, the status of sea names, criteria for a sensitive use of exonyms, trends in exonym use and the categorisation of exonyms will be in the focus of the agenda. A call for papers will be disseminated towards the end of 2011. Registration will start soon afterwards. Participation is not at all confined to WG members.

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Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers

Re-launch of the Working Group website

The WG TDFG website has been re-launched and will be hosted by the German Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy (BKG): <https://network.gdi-de.org/display/wgtdfg/Working+Group+on+Toponymic+Data+Files+and+Gazetteers+of+UNGEGN>

The re-launched WG website as yet comprises the content formerly hosted by Slovenia.

The WG TDFG would like to take the opportunity to thank Ms. Mimi Urbanc and her institute, the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, for hosting and managing the website since 2007. The information on the Working Group website had been regularly updated and new folders like “SDI announcements” were introduced, including links and newsletters in the context of SDIs. For the re-launch of the WG website the software “Confluence” has been used. Confluence is a web-based enterprise wiki software written in Java and mainly used in

corporate environments. It is developed and marketed by Atlassian.

The Confluence software potentially allows implementation of Wiki functionality, e.g. a discussion forum within the website. The WG TDFG will assess and evaluate if there is any interest for commenting or editing drafts/documents or any other WG-related issues in a restricted WG TDFG web space. Those WG members willing to shape this restricted WG web space would have to be registered with a personal user account and password.

The Convenor would like to invite UNGEGN experts to check the content of the re-launched WG TDFG website. Please provide the Convenor with any comments, amendments and corrections by email

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Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers of UNGEGN

Hinverlinkt von [Christian Simon](#), zuletzt bearbeitet von [Christian Simon](#) am Aug 26, 2011 ([Änderung anzeigen](#))

To respond to UN resolutions and UN data needs, this Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers addresses various issues of toponymic data processing, including the creation, maintenance and outputs of toponymic data files (including gazetteer production) and aspects of toponymic data exchange formats and standards.

Issues of providing geographical names information within national and international spatial data infrastructures (SDIs) through web (gazetteer) services and multipurpose toponymic database solutions in the context of SDIs are becoming more and more important.

- [work plan](#)
- [actions for 2010 - 2012](#)
- [recommendations & background](#)

If you would like to enable the website's menu bar in English as well, please make sure you have configured your web browser's language to English. Otherwise the language supported by your web browser should be enabled automatically.

Mozilla Firefox: [Firefox Help](#)

Internet Explorer: [How to change the language settings in Internet Explorer 6/7](#)

Opera: [How to change display language in Opera](#)

This homepage was created for the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers (WG TDFG) of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).

[Rules for participants](#)

For further information, please contact [Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu](#) or [Christian Simon](#).

Task Team for Africa

Future Orientation of Geographical Names Programme in Africa

Consultative Experts Group Meeting,
November 23-25, 2011

While African countries recognize the importance of maintaining gazetteers of place or geographical names, very few of them have been able to maintain a continuous geographical names programme. Over the years, UNGEGN has devoted substantial efforts to engage African countries in its work, especially through the Task Team for Africa. The efforts include sending delegations to and making presentations at sessions of ECA's inter-governmental bodies to elevate the status of geographical names activities in their work programmes, and organizing through UNGEGN various training courses to assist countries of UNGEGN Divisions in different geographical regions of Africa.

In 2010 a resolution of the second session of the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom Africa II) urged ECA to liaise with UNGEGN to establish geographical names activities in its work programme. The background of the resolution was that previous efforts have focused mainly on technical aspects, such as creating databases, with little attention being paid to the organizational and policy issues.

It is in response to this resolution, and following up the round table discussion held in conjunction with the 26th Session of UNGEGN in Vienna, that the African Centre for Statistics (ACS) is organizing a consultative workshop to produce a plan of action for geographical names activities in Africa. The outcome of the consultative workshop will be used by ECA (and other partners and stakeholders) to define relevant

activities to be included in their work programme from the 2012-2013 biennium onwards.

Objective

The main objective of the workshop is to develop a roadmap for African countries to implement comprehensive activities on Geographical names at national, regional and sub-regional levels, including identifying areas of intervention by ECA and other partners.

Specific objectives include:

- Reviewing major challenges facing African countries in the area of geographical names management;
- Proposing possible interventions by ECA and other partners to deal with the challenges;
- Defining relevant activities, including technical material and organizing workshops, to be included in the work programme of ACS for the 2012-2013 biennium and beyond.

Methodology

The blueprint for the programme on geographical names will be prepared by drawing on the collective experience of members of the Task Team for Africa of UNGEGN, and contributions from members of the various African divisions and other divisions.

Expected Outcome and Impact

The immediate outcome expected is a short report titled "Future Orientation of Geographical Names Programme in Africa" which will summarize the problems and concrete remedial actions to be taken by

member States, ECA and partners to institute geographical names programmes in Africa at national, sub regional and regional levels.

In the medium term (2012 – 2013), the outcome of the workshop will result in focused work by ECA and partners on geographical names. This will lead in the long run to countries reviving dormant geographical names authorities, or establishing new ones if none existed following appropriate guidelines from

UNGEGN and best practices from UNGEGN members, all in the context of comprehensive geographical names programmes that include policy and procedural issues.

For more information, please contact:

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From the Countries

Brazil

Glossary of the generic terminology – 1: 1.000.000

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) launched the *Glossary of the generic terminology used in the Brazilian official mapping system in the 1:1,000,000 scale*, available at <http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/geociencias/cartografia/BCIM.shtm> in its digital version.

The glossary presents 140 generic terms used in the CIM Chart, organized in alphabetic order and collaborates in conceptualizing the generic terminology used in the official mapping of Brazil drawing from studies carried out by the IBGE researchers in the field of Earth Sciences. Regional variations of terminology for the same elements are dealt with, especially concerning watercourses, which receive different denominations according to the Brazilian region where they occur.

The Glossary was organized by Dr. Cláudio João Barreto dos Santos from the Reference Center on Geographic Names of the Coordination of Cartography of IBGE.

The Gazetteer in the same scale is expected to be launched in October 2011.

International Cartographic Conference (ICC) 2011

The staff of the Reference Center on Geographic Names of IBGE participated with three papers of the ICC 2011, which

took place in Paris from 3 to 8 July. The papers, “A New Approach to the Collecting of Geographic Names in Brazil”, “The Importance of the Phonemes in the Collection of Geographic Names” and “The Riverhead of Uruguai River: Origins of a Controversy” were presented on July 7 and are available, respectively, at

http://icaci.org/documents/ICC_proceedings/IC_C2011/Oral%20Presentations%20PDF/D1-Toponyms%20on%20maps%20and%20on%20GeoDB/CO-313.pdf

http://icaci.org/documents/ICC_proceedings/IC_C2011/Oral%20Presentations%20PDF/D1-Toponyms%20on%20maps%20and%20on%20GeoDB/CO-312.pdf

http://icaci.org/documents/ICC_proceedings/IC_C2011/Poster%20Presentations%20PDF/POSTERS%20SESSION%203/P-150.pdf



Cláudio João Barreto dos Santos in his oral presentation “A New Approach to the Collecting of Geographic Names in Brazil”



Ana Cristina Resende presenting “The Riverhead of Uruguai River: Origins of a Controversy”



Márcia Mathias providing information on the poster “The Importance of the Phonemes in the Collection of Geographic Names”



Ferjan Ormeling receives a printed copy of the *Glossary of the generic terminology used in the Brazilian official mapping system in the 1:1000,000 scale* from Cláudio João Barreto dos Santos.

The Geographic Names Database of Brazil (BNGB)

On September 23, in Rio de Janeiro, IBGE will launch the first version of the **Geographic Names Database of Brazil (BNGB)**. The BNGB is part of the efforts towards the standardization of geographic names in Brazil.

As of this date, the database will be available at www.bngb.ibge.gov.br

Training Courses

As part of IBGE’s annual training program (PAT), the Reference Center on Geographic Names will implement the course of Introduction to Standardization of Geographic Names, from 22-24 November 2011, in Rio de Janeiro. In this period, it is estimated that about 15 people will be trained.

Brazilian Geographic Names and Geographical Indications

The IBGE started a partnership with the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI) which aims at delimitating the areas of the Brazilian geographical indications.

ICA Working Group on Toponymy

Since July 2011 Brazil, represented by Prof. Dr. Paulo Márcio Leal de Menezes, is chair of the ICA Working Group on Toponymy, which is working on the formation of a cooperative working group with the IGU.

Ana Cristina da Rocha Bérenger Resende
 IBGE - DGC - Coordenação de Cartografia
 Centro De Referência Em Nomes Geográficos

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Special Projects and News Items

Progress in the foundation of a joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy

After a first meeting in the framework of the 26th UNGEGN Session in Vienna in May 2011, the next meeting on a joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy took place during the International Cartographic Conference (ICC) in Paris, 5 July 2011. It was chaired by Georg GARTNER, at that time ICA vice-chair and later elected ICA chair, and conducted by Ferjan ORMELING, UNGEGN vice-chair. Several members of ICA, IGU and UNGEGN were present. All of them expressed their firm intention that a joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy should be founded and that it would be instrumental in disseminating knowledge on place names among cartographers and geographers on the one hand and in promoting cartographic and geographical research in this field on the other.

An ICA commission can, however, only be initiated by the ICA General Assembly, and thus within ICA it must start as a working group, that could be elevated to commission status at the next ICA General Assembly (Rio de Janeiro 2015). The IGU-part of the proposed joint commission can start immediately as a commission.

The meeting then developed the following possible terms of reference for the proposed commission:

- to foster geographic/cartographic research in the field of place names, especially as regards:
 - functions of place names on maps
 - rendering of place names on maps

- names placement on maps
 - elaborating principles for creating new place names
 - place names as expression of time – or space-related identity
 - place name/feature relations
 - motives for place naming
 - place names and administration
 - place names and transportation
 - place names in the cyber world
 - social dimensions of place names
 - elaborating principles for solving place-name conflicts
- to disseminate the scientific knowledge on processing and use of place names within geography and cartography;
 - to support the establishment of national and regional boards on geographical names.
 - to support the efforts of international standardization of geographical names, such as undertaken by UNGEGN);
 - to maintain contacts and scientific exchange with UNGEGN and ICOS, such as by organizing joint events;
 - to support and encourage the elaboration and publication of gazetteers, toponymic data files and place-names reference systems (such as EuroGeoNames).

Paulo Márcio Leal de MENEZES (Brazil) was then designated and later (by the ICA General Assembly) elected Working Group chair on behalf of ICA. He was by the same General Assembly also elected ICA vice-chair. It will depend on IGU, whether he is

accepted as the chair of the joint Commission or whether IGU wishes to nominate a co-chair.

The next ICA/IGU Working Group on Toponymy Meeting will take place during the IGU Regional Conference in Santiago, Chile, November, 17th, and will have the following agenda:

- Discuss the possible terms of reference for the proposed joint ICA/IGU commission on toponymy (see above);
- Define the IGU chair and propose on acting of the joint commission chair;
- Discuss the final proposal to consolidate the ICA/IGU Working Group;

- Define next meetings' date and venues.

Everybody interested is invited to take part in this meeting. For further information on this meeting and as well as if you wish to support the efforts of founding the joint ICA/IGU Working Group (later: Commission), please contact peter.jordan@oeaw.ac.at

Peter JORDAN

September 2011

Email: peter.jordan@oeaw.ac.at

The Gazetteer Framework of the Centre of Excellence for UN Spatial Data Infrastructure Project – an UNGEGN-supported initiative

Introduction

At the 26th Session of UNGEGN on 26 May 2011 in Vienna, the Centre of Excellence for UN Spatial Data Infrastructure (CoE4UNSDI) Project of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG) was introduced by current UNGIWG Co-chair, Mr. Suha Ulgen, of the Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) of the UN Secretariat in New York. The presentation focused on one of the deliverables of the Project, namely the UN Spatial Data Infrastructure (UNSDI) Gazetteer Framework, as it is of particular interest to UNGEGN. Mr. Ulgen expressed the desire of the CoE4UNSDI Project Team to collaborate with UNGEGN as well as Member States in the development and

piloting of the Gazetteer Framework infrastructure.

The basis for UNGEGN's support for the CoE4UNSDI Project was laid down almost 10 years ago when in 2002, the 8th Resolution of the 8th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) recommended that the Group of Experts collaborate with UNGIWG in the design and construction of the toponymic solutions. The UNCSGN further recommended that the Group of Experts, through its structure of Working Groups and Divisions, actively facilitate the provision of standardized geographical names information from appropriate national authorities to UNGIWG.

This summary covers both the background to CoE4UNSDI Project and related developments since May 2011. It foresees active collaboration with UNGEGN, its Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers, and UNGEGN members in reference to the CoE4UNSDI Project deliverables.

Background

From peacekeeping to humanitarian relief, from climate change to disaster reduction, response and recovery; from environmental protection to poverty reduction, food security and economic development, the agencies of the UN System deliver more services in more places than ever before. In doing so they produce data and information that needs to be shared among these agencies and programs, with Member States, and with non-governmental organizations and scientific and research institutions. This shared data and information is essential to reducing costs, raising operational efficiency and improving the quality of services for everyone.

The UN Geographic Information Working Group (www.ungiwg.org), a voluntary assembly of geo-spatial professionals representing more than 30 UN Secretariat departments, funds, programs and specialized agencies was established in 2000. In 2005 UNGIWG decided to establish the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure (UNSDI) to begin to institutionalize common standards, adoption of best practices, and the governance required to develop and sustain mechanisms for successful geo-spatial information-sharing. Subsequently, UNGIWG developed the UNSDI Strategy (http://www.ungiwg.org/docs/unsdi/UNSDI_Compendium_13_02_2007.pdf), a multi-phased roadmap that situates individual

agency geospatial initiatives and inter-agency activities within a coherent information and communications technology (ICT) action plan. This is intended to achieve substantial strides towards interoperability and contribute to the United Nations Reform objective of “Delivering as One”.

In 2010 UNGIWG voted to create the Centre of Excellence for UNSDI Project to implement the first phase of the Strategy. In 2011, as part of its mandate to harmonize ICT practices across the UN System and responding to the request of UNGIWG, the Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) of the UN Secretariat is standing up the CoE4UNSDI Project for an initial period of two years. OICT assumed this responsibility in conformity with its mandate (endorsed by the General Assembly in 2010) to harmonize ICT practices across the UN System. In parallel, leading members of UNGIWG have constituted the UNSDI Steering Committee¹ as the governance body to provide strategic direction to the UNSDI process. A trust fund has been established at the UN Secretariat to receive voluntary contributions from donor nations for project implementation.

In a related development in 2011, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) endorsed the establishment of the inter-governmental Expert Committee on Global Geospatial Information Management

¹ 2011-13 UNSDI Steering Committee members are: Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Global Pulse Project (GP), Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT), United Nations Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) and World Food Program (WFP).

(GGIM). Taken together, these developments create needs and opportunities for collaboration and synergies between the work of UNGIWG, GGIM and UNGEGN.

The Centre of Excellence for UNSDI Project

The CoE4UNSDI Project has three sub-projects. These are: i) the Gazetteer Framework which seeks to establish standards and best practices for provisioning core geodatasets; ii) the Spatial Data Warehouse, and iii) the Visualization Facility.

Together, these three elements are designed to accomplish the following:

- To strengthen and enable improved interoperability between the existing network of geospatial information management portals (found within a number of UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes) and extend this network further throughout the UN System promulgating open standards.
- To realize additional value from agency-produced or procured geospatial content (maps, Geographic Information System data, remote sensing imagery, Global Navigation Satellite System data logs, and other georeferenced information) by formally describing these resources using the UNGIWG Metadata Profile, thus making them discoverable, accessible and re-usable across the UN System.
- To provide a framework that supplements and supports UN agencies' and national efforts to build, maintain and provide access to gazetteers. Common gazetteers will be used to leverage social network and volunteered geographic information and to reconcile

crowd-sourced information with more formal data sources.

- To interlink UN System agency-procured content (e.g. thematic reports and statistics) as well as crowd-sourced information at regional, country, sub-country and local geographic levels, on common presentation platforms. Analytical and navigation options will permit highly visual, drill-down and cross-sectional views of related information. This will facilitate the identification of new relationships between disparate data sources. This has been impossible up until now, in the absence of any collective publishing and presentation platforms.
- To realize operational efficiencies by allowing the producers of the content to use a single data upload facility that will walk them through a process that georeferences any content not already location-tagged. It will also make content-producers aware of the data sharing policies supported, and help them to decide which visualization platforms they want to publish their content on.
- To eliminate the necessity for each content provider to negotiate a separate agreement anew with publishing platform owners such as Google, Microsoft, ESRI, Yahoo, geoCommons, etc. through the development of favorable blanket agreements with these organizations in advance.

The UNSDI Gazetteer Framework

Of immediate significance to UNGEGN is the UNSDI Gazetteer Framework, which will provide an important means for getting UN organizations to "open" the data they collect on the ground by offering them significant benefits in exchange for sharing.

The UNSDI gazetteer framework is being funded by AusAID and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Australia's national science agency, and being implemented by CSIRO in partnership with OICT.

The UNSDI Gazetteer Framework will provide mechanisms that allow:

- i) Registration of authoritative gazetteers and the ability for users of gazetteers to subscribe to them. This registration and subscription patterns will enable a social network view of gazetteer usage, by which system designer and users will be able to determine ‘who is using what’ gazetteer;
- ii) Creation, management and integration of indexes for registered gazetteers enabling users to explore the actual terms used within each gazetteer;
- iii) Cross-referencing of gazetteer terms between systems, based on the registration and publication of individual place name terms, and the unambiguous stable identifiers for each;
- iv) Users to follow links between gazetteer terms in integrated index and features in source systems to which they relate;
- v). The development of common access mechanisms and tools that work across a range of diverse gazetteers, thus enabling a globally scalable solution;
- vi) Users to add their own place names to supplement registered gazetteers and to tag existing place names in common gazetteers to report deficiencies to relevant authorities and thus improve the data quality.

The Gazetteer Framework will develop an ICT infrastructure to support these mechanisms and then field-test them. Indonesia is the first country where this facility will be piloted with a focus on social

protection applications. Lessons learned will be compiled in a Gazetteer Framework Cookbook to be developed for subsequent scaling of this capability globally.

Technology companies will be encouraged to develop interfaces between the UNSDI Gazetteer architecture and their offerings in order to provide a means to “plug-in” services such as topological analysis, fuzzy matching, crowd-sourcing – anything that may validate or augment registered gazetteer content. Identifier metadata for each feature will be published by the UNSDI Gazetteer Framework. The source features themselves will remain hosted by partners, as well as through the anticipated Spatial Data Warehouse deliverable.

Longer-term Implications of the UNSDI Gazetteer Framework

The “game changing” potential of the UNSDI Gazetteer Framework is that the model created will go beyond the multitude of stand-alone systems being built with the inherent weakness of separate access and little interoperability. The Gazetteer Framework model, instead, will offer an infrastructure that supports *all* participants in exchanging data, collaborating in rights management, and observing mutually agreed-upon protocols. It will also be expandable to incorporate future interoperability requirements. This ‘cloud-based facility’ will be owned and operated by all of the participants, with development and running costs covered by sponsors.

More specifically, UNSDI Gazetteer Framework will provide the foundation for an interoperability support and validation framework for domain-specific data networks by creating:

- The ability to share common definitions of terms and their semantics;
- The ability to specify data exchange structures;
- The ability to specify service operations;
- Data provenance and discovery framework (e.g. for indicators);
- The ability to share and specify data production methodologies;
- A spatial referencing framework to support delegation/aggregation and validation services;
- Open source and other tools and configuration templates;
- Case studies and best practices.

The thematic domains to be served in pilot implementations of the UNSDI Gazetteer Framework are social protection, climate change adaptation and humanitarian response.

Major Project Stakeholders

As a UN System-wide initiative, the Centre of Excellence for UNSDI Project is designed from the ground up to deliver the desired outputs, once it is sufficiently funded. Key UN organizations have actively contributed to the formulation of the project goals and the development of the implementation approach. To ensure wide adoption of its guidelines and tools, the CoE4UNSDI Project is seeking to align with the activities of global and regional entities such as the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure (GSDI) Association, the Group on Earth Observation/Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEO/GEOSS) and the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE) as well as the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC).

The UN Secretary-General's Global Pulse Project (<http://www.unglobalpulse.org/>) with its objective of supporting social

protection policy formulations at Pulse Labs around the world (such as the one being established in Indonesia) is providing initial use cases for the UNSDI Gazetteer Framework. UN Environment Program (UNEP) is another organization aligning its infrastructure development efforts with the CoE4UNSDI Project. The Common and Fundamental Operational Datasets initiative of the humanitarian community lead by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is also one of the early beneficiaries of the UNSDI Gazetteer Framework.

In addition to AusAID and CSIRO's financial and technical commitment, other UN Member States are also considering supporting the CoE4UNSDI Project - especially as they consider the necessity to align with work programs of related initiatives, such as the recently endorsed GGIM. The CoE4UNSDI Project plans include active participation in the October 2011 GGIM meeting in Seoul, Korea.

Aligning with UNGEGN's Program of Work

As a primary focus of the CoE4UNSDI Project, the Gazetteer Framework will seek to contribute to the work of UNGEGN through a close collaboration with the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers and with member states directly. *Name Specialists* of UNGEGN member countries are invited and encouraged to provide direct input into the Gazetteer Framework. Please contact the UNGEGN Secretariat or the Convenor of the Working Group of Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers to express your interest in contributing to the effort or taking advantage of its offerings, and to receive earliest information about next steps in the developing CoE4UNSDI Project.

T. Suha Ulgen (Mr.)

Co-chair of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group and Senior Advisor on Spatial Data Infrastructure
Office of Information and Communications Technology

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The XXIVth ICOS Congress, Barcelona, Spain 5 – 9 September 2011

The XXIVth Congress of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) was held at the University of Barcelona 5 – 9 September this year. The number of registered participants was close to 600, which is the highest number until now. Altogether 537 papers were accepted, but some people were not able to participate so the final number of contributions was about 480. The number of participating countries was 57. At the opening of the congress UNGEGN Chair Helen Kerfoot held a key note lecture entitled Toponymy and Administration: from plazas to planets with particular reference to United Nations work. Several parallel sessions were held on various onomastic topics, reaching from street names to brand names. In addition, three round tables were organized, one on Analysis and management of databases and toponymic/onomastic information, and one on Onomastics and media and a third one on Names Authorities. The powerpoint presentations of the last one are available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/nna.html>.

The number of official Congress languages was extended at this congress as Catalan, Occitan, Spanish, English, French and German were accepted. Catalan is the main language in the Barcelona area.

One day was allocated for excursions to various sites of historic and touristic area, i.a. the Monastery of Montserrat.

See program and timetable on <http://barcelona.onomastica.cat/en/programa/>

At the ICOS general assembly a new Board was elected:

Executive Committee:

President: Carole Hough (Scotland)
Vice-President: Richard Coates (England)
Vice-President: Milan Harvalik (Czech Republic)
Secretary: Guy Puzey (Scotland)
Treasurer: Staffan Nyström (Sweden)
Assistant Secretary and Web Officer:
Antti Leino (Finland)

Non-executive Members:

Terhi Ainiala (Finland)
Lidia Becker (Germany)
Ian Clark (Australia)
Barbara Czopek-Kopciuch (Poland)
Laura Kostanski (Australia)
Kaisa Rautio Helander (Norway)

The XXVth ICOS Congress is to be held in Glasgow in 2014.

Botolv Helleland

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A place, a toponym, a cultural heritage : The legendary story of the foundation of CARTHAGE-BYRSA

(Winner's paper of the UNGEGN essay and poem contest, 2011)



Introduction

This paper deals with the origin of the toponym Byrsa rather known as the Byrsa hill, the centre of the Punic Carthage, a hilltop overlooking what is today known as the Gulf of Tunis and whose name is often associated with Carthage (Carthage-Byrsa). This area, a current elegant residential city, offers wonderful vestiges and relics of ancient civilizations.

Indeed, the toponym of Byrsa is closely linked to the story of the founding of the city of Carthage. According to various sources, this story is legendary as it recounts the shrewdness of the Princess Elissa from Tyre (in Lebanon) who came to these shores to set up a new city (Carthage).

Given the various cultures having succeeded (Phoenico-Punic, Roman, Paleochristian, Arabic) and besides the historical depth of Tunisia that they recall, these toponyms

represent a part of the national cultural patrimony and serve as a witness to the enduring heritage that needs to be preserved by all means, especially through the standardization of geographical names. In present day Tunisia, they are still an important asset in the tourism development in the country and specifically in the Carthage area.

The History of Carthage

Carthage, in Arabic : قرطاج ; in Latin : Carthage, Carthago or Karthago ; in Punic : Kart- Hadasht, is located in the northern suburb of the capital, situated 17km from Tunis with a population of about 21.000. Carthage has been classified a UNESCO world heritage site since 26 October 1979.

Founded in 814 BC by the phoeniciens (Elissa, princess of Tyre), Carthage - or in Punic, Kart- Hadasht, meaning new city or shiny city-, is an extensive archaeological site, located on a hill (Byrsa hill) dominating the

Gulf of Tunis and the surrounding plain. Exceptional place of mixing, diffusion and blossoming of several cultures that succeeded one another (PhoenicoPunic, Roman, Paleochristian and Arab), this metropolis and its ports became a major maritime power in the Mediterranean basin, and accordingly a cause of rivalry to Rome which ended with its destruction in 146 BC. The same Romans rebuilt it a century later, and made it one of the largest cities of the Empire -The city of St. Augustin-, which disappeared in the VII century, with the arrival of the Arabs.

The metropolis comprises the vestiges of Punic, Roman, Vandal, Paleochristian and Arab presence. The major known components of the site of Carthage are the acropolis of Byrsa, the Punic ports, the Punic tophet, the Punic necropolises, the Carthage museum, the Roman Amphitheatre, the Antonin baths, the Malaga cisterns, the archaeological reserve and the St.Louis Cathedral built by the French in the 1890s on the spot where the French King Louis IX died in 1270.

Other important sites in Carthage that need to be mentioned, are the presidential palace, the Al Abidine mosque built on 2003 in the center of the archeological site of Carthage and the American cemetery called « North Africa American Cemetery and Memorial », where rest 2,841 American military dead, who lost their lives in World War II in military activities ranging from North Africa to the Persian Gulf.

The Legend of Byrsa

Byrsa was the walled citadel above the harbour in ancient Carthage. It was also the name of the hill it rested on.

According to some sources, the name is derived from the Phoenician word for citadel ; according to others it is a corruption of "Barsat", which means stronghold in Phoenician (referring to the 55 meters hill' altitude), whereas in other sources it means oxhide.

The last interpretation (oxhide) for Byrsa could be related to the legend of Queen Elissa (Queen Dido in Roman; Deido in Greek and Didon in Latin) whose life details are sketchy and confusing: the beautiful Elissa and her brother Pygmalion were the children heirs of king Matten of Tyre. Fearing her brother who had murdered her husband in hopes of gaining his wealth, Elissa left Tyre with a group of followers including some senators.

The exiles, while passing through Cyprus, seized some other persons mainly women to increase their number.

In Virgil and Justin's accounts of Dido's founding of Carthage, when Dido and her followers arrived on the coast of North Africa, they encamped at Byrsa. The local Berber chieftain offered them as much land as could be covered with a single oxhide. Therefore, Dido cut an oxhide into tiny strips and set them on the ground end to end until she had completely encircled Byrsa. This story is considered apocryphal, and was most likely invented because "Byrsa" sounds similar to the Greek word 'βυρσα', meaning oxhide. (This event is commemorated in modern mathematics: The "isoperimetric problem" of enclosing the maximum area within a fixed boundary is often called the "Dido Problem" in modern Calculus of variations. -It has to be noted that an international conference on the isoperimetric problem of Queen Dido and its

mathematical ramifications was held in Tunis from 21 to 29 may 2010-).

Many of the locals joined the settlement and both, locals and envoys from the nearby Phoenician settlement of Utica, urged the building of the city of Carthage-Byrsa. While digging the foundations, an ox's head was found, indicating a promising fertile soil but doomed to perpetual slavery. So they carried the city to another location. There they found a horse's head, which meant that the people would be powerful. Then the city was put on this spot of favorable omen.

The creation of this legend ended sadly because Elyssa threw herself into the fire. In some accounts it was to protect her city and remain faithful to her husband, after the king Hiarbas asked her for marriage. In others, it was because she was unable to endure her abandonment by Aeneas, the famous Trojan hero, with whom she fell in love when he stopped on the shores of North Africa after a storm but who had to resume his journey to found a new city in Italy, Rome.

Many sites (residences, hotels, restaurants, streets...) are today named after Elissa, Didon and others, to pay homage to these heroes and their civilizations, which have made out of Carthage, a place that will always continue to nourish the universal imagination with its literary and historical renown.

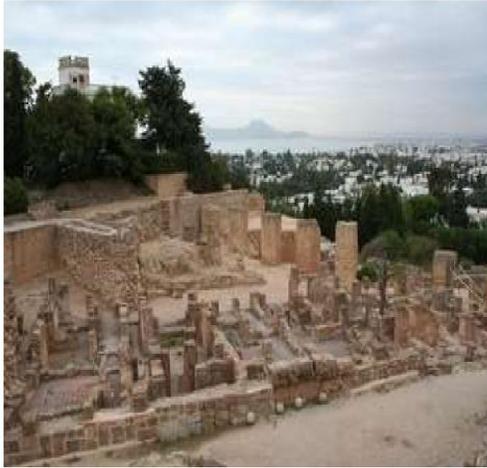
The Rebirth of Byrsa: The Boy of Byrsa

An important historical event, that has brought the toponym of Byrsa to the fore, is the fortuitous discovery in 1994 of a sepulchre of a young man on the southern flank of the Byrsa hill, which is one of the most famous sites of antique Carthage. A joint Franco-Tunisian team moved in to excavate. An anthropological study of the skeleton showed that the man's bones were more than 2,500 years old, that he died sometime in the 6th century between the age of 19 and 24, had a pretty robust physique and was 1.7 meter tall, according to a description by Jean Paul Morel, director of the French archaeological team at Carthage Byrsa.

The man from Byrsa has been rebaptised Ariche -- meaning the desired man -- at the initiative of the Tunisian Culture Minister. Ariche has regained an almost living human appearance very close in physiognomy to a Carthaginian of the 6th century B.C after a dermoplastic reconstruction undertaken in Paris by Elisabeth Daynes, a sculptor specialising in hyper-realistic reconstructions.

Repatriated on September 24, Ariche will be on show in the Carthage museum at Byrsa until the end of March 2011 when he will travel to Lebanon, the land of the Phoenicians who founded Carthage, for an exhibition at the American University of Beirut.

Photos of Carthage-Byrsa



The very best preserved part of Punic Quarter of ancient Carthage



The Punic harbour seen from Byrsa hill



The Roman necropolis at ancient Carthage

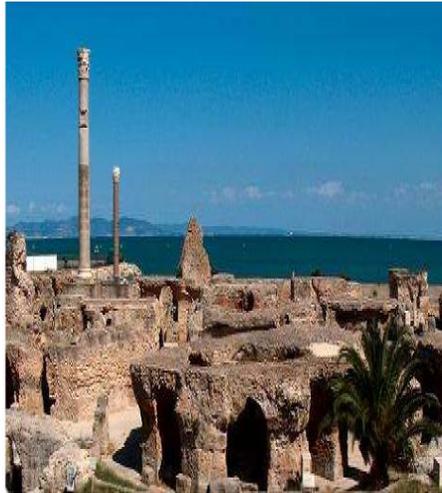


Tophet with child sacrifice



The Cathedral St Louis





The Thermal Antonine Baths



The Al Abidine Mosque



The North Africa American cemetery and memori



The Boy of Byrsa
(Before dermoplastic reconstruction)



The Boy of Byrsa
(After dermoplastic reconstruction)

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Un lieu, un toponyme, un héritage culturel :

L'histoire légendaire de la Fondation de CARTHAGE-BYRSA

Introduction

Cet article traite de l'origine du toponyme Byrsa plutôt connu comme la colline de Byrsa, le centre de la ville Punique Carthage, une colline surplombant ce qui est aujourd'hui connu comme le Golfe de Tunis et dont le nom est souvent associé à Carthage (Carthage -Byrsa). Cette région, actuellement une élégante zone résidentielle, offre de merveilleux vestiges et traces des civilisations anciennes.

En effet, le toponyme de Byrsa est étroitement lié à l'histoire de la fondation de la ville de Carthage. Selon de nombreuses sources, cette histoire est légendaire car elle raconte la perspicacité et la ruse de la princesse Elissa de Tyr (en Liban) qui est venue sur ces rivages pour fonder une nouvelle ville (Carthage).

Vu les différentes cultures qui se sont succédées (Phénico-Punique, Romaine, Paléochrétienne, Arabe) et en plus de la profondeur historique de la Tunisie qu'ils rappellent, ces toponymes représentent une partie du patrimoine culturel national et servent de témoin pour l'héritage durable qui doit être préservé par tous les moyens, principalement par le biais de la normalisation des noms géographiques. Aujourd'hui, ces toponymes jouent un atout important dans le développement du tourisme dans le pays et particulièrement dans la région de Carthage.

L'histoire De Carthage

Carthage, en Arabe: قرطاج; en Latin: Carthage, Carthago ou Karthago; en Punique: Kart-Hadasht est située dans la banlieue nord de Tunis, à 17 km de la capitale, avec une population d'environ 21.000. Carthage a été classée site du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO depuis le 26 Octobre 1979.

Fondée en 814 avant JC par les phéniciens (Elissa, princesse de Tyr), Carthage - ou en Punique, Kart-Hadasht - nouvelle ville ou ville brillante- est un vaste site archéologique, situé sur une colline (la colline de Byrsa) dominant le golfe de Tunis et la plaine environnante. Emplacement exceptionnel de mélange, de la diffusion et de l'épanouissement de plusieurs cultures qui s'y sont succédées (Phénico-Punique, Romaine, Paléochrétienne et Arabe), cette métropole est devenue, grâce à ses ports, une grande puissance maritime dans le bassin méditerranéen, et par conséquent un rival aux Romains qui ont fini par la détruire en 146 avant J.C. Elle fût reconstruite un siècle plus tard par les mêmes Romains qui ont fait d'elle l'une des plus grandes villes de l'Empire -la ville de Saint-Augustin- qui a disparu au VIIème siècle, avec l'arrivée des Arabes.

La métropole comprend les vestiges de la présence des époques : Punique, Romaine, Vandale, Paléochrétienne et Arabe. Les principaux éléments connus du site de Carthage sont l'acropole de Byrsa, les ports Punique, le tophet Punique, les

nécropoles Punique, le musée de Carthage, l'amphithéâtre Romain, les thermes d'Antonin, les citernes de Malaga, la réserve archéologique et la cathédrale Saint-Louis construite par les Français dans les années 1890 à l'endroit où le roi français Louis IX est mort en 1270.

D'autres sites importants à Carthage qui nécessitent d'être mentionnés, sont le palais présidentiel, la mosquée Al Abidine, construite en 2003 au cœur du site archéologique de Carthage et le cimetière américain où reposent 2.841 militaires américains qui ont perdu leur vie dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale lors d'activités militaires allant de l'Afrique du Nord au Golfe Persique.

La Légende De Byrsa

Dans la Carthage antique, Byrsa était la citadelle fortifiée au-dessus du port. Byrsa était aussi le nom de la colline sur lequel elle reposait.

Selon certaines sources, le nom est dérivé du mot phénicien pour citadelle; selon d'autres il est une corruption de "Barsat", ce qui signifie forteresse en phénicien (se référant à la hauteur de la colline : 55 mètres), alors que dans d'autres sources, cela signifie peau de bœuf.

La dernière interprétation pour Byrsa (peau de bœuf) pourrait être liée à la légende de la reine Elissa (Dido en Romain ; Deido en Grec et Didon en Latin) dont les détails de la vie sont peu précis et déroutant: la belle Elissa et son frère Pygmalion sont les enfants héritiers du roi Matten de Tyr. Craignant son frère qui avait assassiné son mari dans l'espoir de mettre la main

sur son trésor, Elissa a quitté Tyr avec un groupe de fidèles y compris certains sénateurs.

De passage par Chypre, les exilés se sont emparés de certaines personnes, principalement des femmes pour accroître leur nombre.

D'après les récits de Virgile et de Justin sur la fondation de Carthage par Didon, lorsque Didon et ses partisans sont arrivés sur la côte de l'Afrique du Nord, ils ont campé à Byrsa. Un chef berbère nommé Hiarbas leur a offert autant de terrain qu'en pourrait couvrir une peau de bœuf. Elissa a fait couper la peau en lanières très minces et les a posées bout à bout sur terre jusqu'à ce qu'elle ait complètement encerclé Byrsa.

Cette histoire est considérée comme apocryphe, et a probablement été inventée parce que Byrsa ressemble au "βυρσα" mot grec signifiant peau de bœuf. (Cet événement est commémoré dans les mathématiques modernes: Le "problème isopérimétrique" pour encercler une surface maximale dans une limite fixe, est souvent appelé le "Problème de Didon" dans le calcul moderne des variations. - *Il est à noter qu'une conférence internationale sur le problème isopérimétrique de la reine Didon et de ses ramifications mathématiques a eu lieu à Tunis du 21 au 29 mai 2010-*).

Beaucoup d'habitants voisins ont rejoint le campement et ensemble, avec certains habitants de la ville phénicienne voisine, Utique, ont exhorté la construction d'une ville qui fût par la suite Carthage-Byrsa. En creusant les fondations, on trouva dans les premières une tête de bœuf, indiquant un sol fertile mais voué à un perpétuel esclavage. On transporta donc

l'emplacement de la ville en un autre endroit. Là on trouva une tête de cheval, ce qui signifiait que le peuple serait belliqueux et puissant et l'on décida de bâtir la ville sur cet emplacement de favorable augure.

La fin de cette légende est triste puisque Elyssa se jeta dans le feu. Dans certains récits, on raconte qu'elle a fait cela pour protéger sa ville et rester fidèle à son mari, après que le roi Hiarbas l'a demandée au mariage. Dans d'autres, on raconte que parce qu'elle a été incapable de supporter son abandon par Enée, le fameux héros de Troie, de qui elle est tombée amoureuse lors de son escale sur les rivages de l'Afrique du Nord après une tempête, mais qui a du reprendre son voyage pour fonder une nouvelle ville en Italie, qui est Rome.

De nombreux sites en Tunisie (résidences, hôtels, restaurants, rues ...) portent aujourd'hui les noms de Didon, Elissa, Hannibal etc., en hommage à ces héros et leurs civilisations qui on

fait de Carthage un lieu qui continuera toujours à nourrir l'imagination universelle grâce à sa renommée historique et littéraire.

La Renaissance De Byrsa: L'enfant De Byrsa

Un événement historique important qui a amené le toponyme de Byrsa à l'avant,

est la découverte fortuite en 1994 d'une sépulture d'un jeune homme sur le flanc sud de la colline de Byrsa, qui est l'un des sites les plus célèbres de la Carthage antique. Une équipe mixte franco-tunisienne s'est déplacée pour l'excavation. Une étude anthropologique du squelette a montré que les os ont plus de 2.500 ans, que l'homme est décédé au 6ème siècle avant JC entre l'âge de 19 et 24, qu'il avait un physique très robuste et a été de 1,7 mètre de hauteur, selon la description faite par Jean Paul Morel, directeur de l'équipe archéologique française à Carthage-Byrsa.

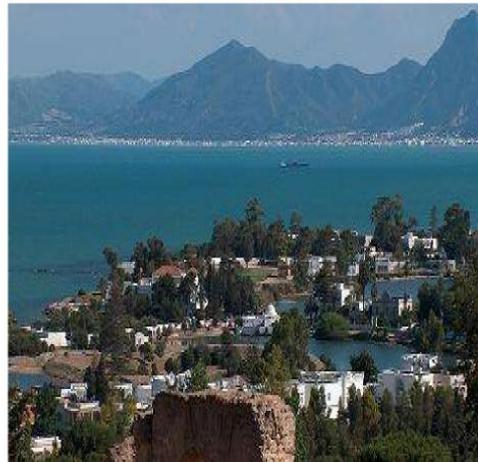
L'homme de Byrsa a été rebaptisé Ariche - ce qui signifie l'homme désiré - à l'initiative du ministre Tunisien de la Culture. Ariche a retrouvé un aspect vivant presque humain très proche de la physionomie d'un Carthaginois du 6ème siècle avant JC, après une reconstruction dermoplastique entreprise à Paris par Elisabeth Daynes, sculpteur spécialisée dans les reconstitutions hyper-réalistes.

Rapatrié le 24 Septembre 2010, Ariche sera en exposition au musée de Carthage à Byrsa jusqu'à fin Mars 2011; après il voyagera au Liban, le pays des Phéniciens qui fondèrent Carthage, pour une exposition à l'Université Américaine de Beyrouth.

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The Punic harbour seen from Byrsa hill



The Roman necropolis at ancient Carthage

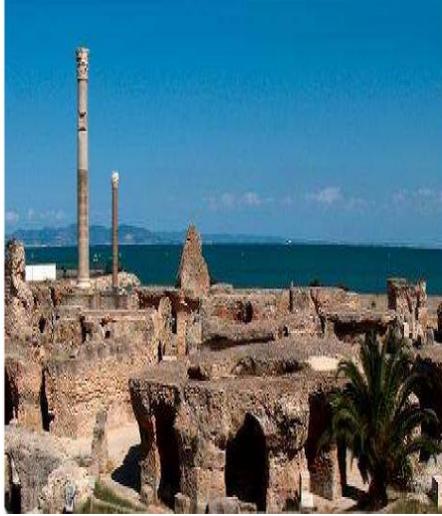


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Upcoming Meetings of Groups Associated with Geographical Names

Some forthcoming meetings of organizations relevant to geographical names

**High Level Forum on Global Geospatial
Information Management**

(<http://ggim.un.org/forum1.html>)

24-26 October 2011, Seoul, Republic of
Korea

Africa GIS 2011

(<http://www.eis-africa.org/EIS-Africa/>)

7-11 November 2011, Abuja, Nigeria

International Geographical Union

IGU Regional Conference 2011

(<http://www.ugi2011.cl/>)

14-18 November 2011, Santiago, Chile

**American Association of Geographers
(AAG)**

Annual meeting 2012

(<http://www.aag.org/cs/annualmeeting>)

24-28 February 2012, New York, U.S.A.

Challenges in synchronic toponymy:

**structure, context and use / Défis de la
toponymie synchronique : structures,
contextes et usages**

(<http://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/lidile/>)

22-23 March 2012, Rennes, France

International Congress Geotunis 2012

(<http://www.geotunis.org>)

26-30 March 2012, Tunis

GSDI World Conference

*Spatially enabling government, industry
and citizens: research and development
perspectives*

(<http://www.gsdi.org/gsdiconf/gsdi13/>)

14-17 May 2012, Québec, Canada

Names in the Economy

(<http://www.tse.fi/EN/unis/otherunits/names-in-the-economy/Pages/NITE4.aspx>)

14-16 June 2012, Turku, Finland

Trends in Toponymy 5

(<http://www.topotrends2012.org>)

9-13 July 2012, Bern, Switzerland

International Geographical Union

*IGU International Geographical
Congress 2012*

(<http://www.igc2012.org/frontend/index.php>)

26-30 August 2012, Köln, Germany

**ICC 2013 – 26th International
Cartographic Conference**

(<http://www.icc2013.org/>)

25-30 August 2013, Dresden, Germany

**International Congress of Onomastic
Sciences (ICOS)**

(<http://www.icosweb.net/>)

25-29 August 2014, Glasgow, Scotland