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Reports by Divisions on the Situation in their Regions
and Countries and on the Progress made in the Standardization
of Geographical Names since the Sixteenth Session

Report of the Africa South Division

This is the first report of the Africa South Division, established in pursuance of Resolution 1 of the Sixth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in New York in 1992. Since several countries which now belong to the ASD had not been able to participate in UNGEGN activities previously, their reports are more detailed, including also historical background in some instances.

1. Botswana

No report received to date.

2. Lesotho

No report received to date.

3. Malawi

No report received to date.

4. Mozambique

The changing of the Toponymy, Geographical Names or Place Names in Mozambique started since the portuguese penetration into this country in the XV century. In fact, the cities and the villages names have been changed from this time, even its script in some cases, until 1975, year of the Independence.

From 1975, the National Directorate of Geography and Cadaster, the only institution working on this field, started to update and standardize the Geographical Names until at the moment.

Therefore, with the aim to create the National Committee on Geographical Names, there are on going contacts with some government organizations in order to implement the United Nations Resolutions on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

Presently it is in preparation a Standard Names Gazetteer, updated in relation to the others two similars published in the colonial period. On this gazetteer it will be included the toponymy or Geographical Names in alphabetic

order from A through Z letter.

Other book entitled toponymy Evolution and the Territorial Division in Mozambique from 1974 to 1978, was published. This book deals not only with changing of some colonial names to actual names but also with the new administrative division.

5. Namibia

No report received to date.

6. South Africa

6.1 National Names Authority

The frequency of meetings of the South African names authority, the National Place Names Committee (NPNC), was increased to three per annum. In the period subsequent to the previous session of the Group of Experts, meetings were held on a regular basis. In view of the changing political dispensation in the country, recommendations on the optimal structure and functions of a future geographical names authority were submitted to the Transition Executive Council, taking cognizance of resolutions of the UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

6.2 Toponymic Education and Training

In pursuance of relevant UN resolutions, a UN Toponymic Training Course for the Africa South Division was held in Pretoria from 20 to 30 September 1993. Funded by the Directorate of Culture of the South African Department of National Education, it was attended by some 55 participants from Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland. Full details are given in the Report of the Convenor of the Working Group on Toponymic Education and Training.

The Assembly of the Training Course endorsed the recommendations of the training course held in Pretoria in 1992 that a UNGEGN Geographical Names Centre be established to co-ordinate toponymic activities in the sub-continent, including the establishment of national names authorities in those countries which do not yet have them.

The Proceedings of the first UN Toponymic Training Course held in Pretoria in 1992 have been published by the University of Pretoria.

6.3 Gazetteers of South Africa

In pursuance of resolution of the UN Conferences recommending the preparation and publication of concise gazetteers for countries, a Concise Gazetteer of South Africa has been published. The US Defense Mapping Agency has published a Gazetteer of South Africa in four volumes and has supplied the South African Directorate of Surveys and Land Information with computer tapes of the Gazetteer. That Directorate is currently preparing a comprehensive Gazetteer of South Africa

in accordance with resolution 4(E) of the First UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. It is envisaged that the gazetteer will be completed in three years.

7. Swaziland

1 THE BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT SITUATION

1.1 Swaziland was settled by the Swazi Nation during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The earlier Sotho settlers found in the area were absorbed but have left some reminders of their presence. They were named by the first Swazi migrants as the baSutfu, the people of the dark brown river. The largest river in Swaziland is the Lusutfu, the dark brown river. The Swazi Nation were semi-settled cattle owners. Thus the traditional pattern of settlement is that of scattered, individual homesteads, dependant on surface water, and surrounded by land used for grazing with some cultivation. Other than areas chosen by the royal household there was no reason for population centres to develop. From this it follows that the more important geographic names are those of the populated areas and topographical features such as rivers and hills.

The advent of European settlers with commercial and later political motivation saw the development of commercial and administrative centres, and the use of English, Scots, and Afrikaans names in addition to siSwati names for some of these centres and features such as farms. Inevitably there was a wide variation in the pronunciation and spelling of the siSwati names.

When the Swazi Nation regained its full independence in 1968 some changes to more appropriate siSwati names were made, but the number of changes was relatively small, and was dependant on local feeling. For example in Manzini, formerly Bremersdorp, the streets were given more appropriate siSwati names. In contrast Mbabane has up to the present time retained most of its British colonial street names. Names of course continue to evolve and we as cartographers need to be aware of this fluid situation.

1.2 During 1972 the National Trust Commission was established in Swaziland. I believe that I am correct in saying that among its responsibilities was that of creating a Place Names Committee. Certainly JSM Matsebula, Swaziland's leading historian was a central figure in both the Trust Commission and the Place Names Committee. Unfortunately the systematic recording and analysis of geographical names was not given a high priority and little was achieved. Indeed in 1988 the Surveyor General's Office (SGO) was made aware of a move to decentralise the names committee and to create a committee in each of the four administrative Regions of Swaziland. Inevitably this proposal has foundered and has hopefully sunk without trace.

1.3 The earliest topographic map of Swaziland was published in 1896 by AM Miller. This map shows names for all the important rivers, and some of the major hill features. It names the chiefs kraals, and gives a scatter of concessionaires homesteads, stores, and mines. It names Bremersdorp, but not Mbabane, which at that date consisted of only a hotel and a store.

During the first half of the twentieth century the mapping needs of Swaziland were met by the then Union of South Africa. The 1936 1:500,000 topographical sheet of the southern part of Swaziland again gives the names of the major rivers. It also indicates the administrative centres, the mission stations, and a few farm names. Some hill features are named, and it names an amazing number of "kops".

In the 1950's Swaziland was mapped at the 1:50,000 scale with the thirty one sheets produced by the British Directorate of Colonial Surveys, later to become the Directorate of Overseas Surveys. The place names on these sheets appear to be a mixture of office compilation from previous mapping, and of names presumably collected in the field by government officers. A large number of the "kops" from the 1936 1:500,000 maps are shown, and a few names of the European concessionaires shown on Millers map still appear on these sheets. This mapping did however begin to show the important area or locality names widely used today by all sections of the community. Since the mid 1950's many of the place names shown on the first editions of these maps have persisted through the subsequent editions up to the mid 1980's, even though in many cases the names are no longer in use. From the early 1980's, as some sheets were revised an effort was made by the SGO to revise the placenames. In particular attention was paid to the recording of the area names which with the development of the rural areas began to be of major importance.

In 1991-92 with the assistance of the South African Directorate of Surveys and Land Information the 1:50,000 map series was re-plotted, revised, and published in 1993. As part of this task a names collection was made. The fieldwork was undertaken by technician grade land surveyors and cartographic draughtsmen, supervised by professional staff. The names were recorded on the 1989 1:50,000 orthophoto maps. The field staff were required to collect the names of topographic features appropriate to the 1:50,000 scale. Emphasis was placed on achieving a comprehensive and accurate collection of the area names. In addition the SGO endeavoured to record the location and name of all schools. Swaziland has an extensive distribution of schools. Their locations were required for internal government use, but they form a valuable network of landmarks for the map user. An attempt was made to record the source of each name, and the field staff were encouraged to seek more than a single informant. Unfortunately many of the the field staff failed to appreciate the importance of this aspect and generally names were simply recorded on a copy of the orthophoto map.

1.4 Swaziland is fortunate to have national mapping at the 1:5,000 scale. However this is an orthophoto series produced in the 1970's and shows only a few place names which were taken from the 1:50,000 series. The urban areas are covered by 1:2,500 mapping which shows street names. These names are normally obtained from the local government office.

2 GEOGRAPHIC NAMES. THE PRESENT SITUATION IN SWAZILAND.

2.1 There is in practice no effective national place names committee. An effort by the SGO in 1988 to revive the committee was met with a proposal to decentralise the national committee to the four administrative Regions. The SGO was never consulted on this proposal and feels strongly that it is a retrograde step. This feeling was reinforced when an attempt was made by the SGO to work on the collection of names during 1988 with the office of one of the Regional Administrators. The SGO met with a wall of indifference and a lack of cooperation.

2.2 As a result of the experience described above when work began in 1991 on the revision of the 1:50,000 series the SGO had no option but to take responsibility for the revision of the geographical names. Nevertheless the SGO was aware that it had no official authority to collect and publish geographical names.

2.3 As the SGO had to use its own resources, and given the urgency of the task, it was necessary to use technician level staff for the fieldwork. This had the advantage that the staff involved were native siSwati speakers and were often very familiar with the area of work, but the disadvantage that some did not fully understand or appreciate the importance of the task. In general however the fieldwork was done in a responsible manner with a reasonably reliable and comprehensive collection being achieved appropriate to the mapping scale of 1:50,000.

2.4 Upon completion of the fieldwork the next obvious step was to achieve consistency for the siSwati spelling and grammatical construction. Here the urgency of the mapping programme prevented the establishment of links with any official or academic bodies concerned with the use of and publication in the siSwati language. It will be necessary to establish such a link as we move into the phase of recording revision data for the 1:50,000 series. We are also planning to fill other mapping requirements such as the demand for street guides and maps for tourist use. These will all have a large placenames component and will hopefully reach a wider range of map users.

2.5 Given the creation of a suitable committee to examine the geographical names collected, it would then be possible, with adequate funds, to publish the committees work as a gazetteer of the geographical names of Swaziland, giving both the location and meaning of the recorded names. Regrettably we are still some distance from that objective.

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