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**EXONYMS**

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Submitted by the United Kingdom



## EXONYMS

(Prepared by H.A.G. Lewis, United Kingdom)

United Kingdom experts have not regarded exonyms as a subject which inspired them to write papers for discussion by United Nations Experts on Geographical Names. Many papers on the subject have been written by the Dutch-German group, but yet the majority of examples quoted are English exonyms. Some of those examples give a false impression of UK practice in the use of exonyms. Some examples are not English exonyms at all. It is, therefore, hoped that future papers will give exonyms in the language of the authors.

United Kingdom practice in the treatment of geographical names was established more than half a century ago and was last written down in 1954 when it became known as "PCGN Principles" or to give it its full title "Principles of Geographic Nomenclature". Those principles are appended to this paper. Perusal of them will demonstrate that United Kingdom policy and practice conforms to the ideal to which UNGEGN aspires.

Statements made about UN policy are also disturbing. They do not conform to the United Kingdom interpretation of what was intended when the resolutions were adopted. There is also a general misunderstanding of what constitutes an exonym. We are told that Khartoum is an exonym and that El Khartum is the "endonym" or local official form. When I write to friends or government departments in the Sudan I receive a reply headed Khartoum. That is the local official Roman alphabet form of the name of that city. El Khartum is a form obtained by transliteration of the Arabic but it should be noted that the UN-approved system would give Al Khartūm. The Dutch Khartoem is an exonym. Abu Dhabi is the name used by the government of that country for its country name and its capital city when written in the Roman alphabet. It is not, therefore, an exonym. We obtain Abū Zāby, another form of official name, by precise transliteration. Sharjah is a name of the same kind. It is not an exonym. All those names are, however, English conventional names. The Chinese do not regard Peking as an exonym. It is another way of writing Beijing. Peking University is the correct name of that academic institution. Peking is also commonly used in an English context in China. It is not an exonym in the meaning of the term defined by UNGEGN. On the other hand, the French Pékin and Italian Pechino are exonyms.

Then again, we are told that the definite article may be dropped without creating an exonym and an example is given in the name Malmberget from which name the "et" is deleted without creating an exonym. Unless Swedish authorities allow it, the removal is inadmissible. Only Swedish experts can say whether Norrsundet can be written as Norrsund.

We are told that Ar Riad and Riad are both endonyms. They most emphatically are not. Ar Riyāḍ is obtained by transliteration and Riyadh is the name in everyday use in Saudi Arabia. Ar Riyāḍ and Riyadh are endonyms by the UN definition.

It is extremely misleading to say that the definite article can be dropped from names without creating exonyms. We can write Al Kuwayt or Kuwayt, omitting the definite article. We cannot omit the definite article from The Naze, The Wash, Las Negras, L'Aquila, Ar Rimāl, Ash Sham (Esh Shem ), La Rochelle, Le Havre.

Again quoting UN resolutions, it is stated that diacritical marks can be omitted without creating exonyms. Rhone is an English conventional name for Rhône and it is an exonym, as is Liege. Either München must be written in English maps and documents or else Muenchen. An alternative is the English Munich. To write Munchen would be inadmissible.

A further assertion concerns case endings. We are led to believe they can be omitted under all circumstances without creating exonyms. The case ending cannot be omitted from Ostrova de-Longa. To write Ostrova de-Long is not acceptable. 'De-Long' alone would not create an exonym. De-Long Islands would be an exonym. Likewise, altering the case ending of M. Terpeniya would create an odd name and an exonym. The case ending cannot be omitted from the Turkish Van Gölü or Kefken Adası. Van Göl and Kefken Ada would be ridiculous.

It is further claimed that generic terms can be omitted without creating exonyms. Yet a name like Baie des Anges cannot be written as 'des Anges Bay'. Neither is it possible to say 'de Ré Island'. That would be absurd in English. We can only write Baie des Anges and Île de Ré. It is also stated that Aleksandra Arkhipelag means the Archipelago of Alexander. It does not. It means the archipelago named after Alexander. It is not Alexander's Archipelago. The archipelago is in Alaska and its true name is Alexander Archipelago. The Russian in any case should be Arkhipelag Aleksandra.

From what has been written above, it is clear that a gulf exists between the members of UNGEGN. UK practice is to use the so-called endonyms, e.g. Köln, Roma, Vlissingen. If space permits, the English exonym is added in brackets, Praha (Prague). On the contrary, the place which we call Częstochowa is named Tschenstochau in Germany and Zabrze is named Hindenburg. Novaya Zemlya is called Nouvelle Zemble by the French.

The UN resolutions, when drafted, were intended to mean that actions described above, e.g. omitting the article and accents, etc. could be performed if an exonym was not created in the process.

In the opinion of UK experts, country names should not be treated under the heading of exonyms. Names of countries cannot be divorced from nouns and adjectives of nationality. They are, therefore, deeply rooted in everyday speech and writing and, on that account, must be easily pronounced and memorized. To standardize country names in a single form would have profound consequences for all the Roman alphabet languages in the world and even more profoundly affect the non-Roman alphabet languages. It is hoped, therefore, that experts will agree to treat country names as a separate issue.

PERMANENT COMMITTEE ON GEOGRAPHICAL  
NAMES FOR BRITISH OFFICIAL USE

PRINCIPLES OF GEOGRAPHICAL NOMENCLATURE

Short title "P.C.G.N. Principles"

- (1) The spelling of the names of (a) regions and geographical features of continental or inter-national extension, (b) water-areas extending beyond the territorial limits of recognized government, and (c) countries, shall be in accordance with English conventional usage; e.g., (a) Sahara, Alps, Danube, (b) Bay of Biscay, (c) Italy.
- (2) In the case of oceanographical features lying outside territorial waters, the descriptive terms entering into their names shall be in English; e.g., Challenger Bank, Dogger Bank, Walfisch Ridge (*not* Walfisch Rücken).
- (3) The approved name of any administrative division of a state,\* or federation of states, or of any natural or artificial geographical feature or of any place lying wholly within one state, or federation of states, shall be that adopted by the supreme administering authority concerned with that state or federation of states; e.g., Uttar Pradesh (*not* United Provinces), Kaliningrad (*not* Königsberg);  
*but*, should a different name be current in English conventional usage, the latter may be given subordinate recognition; e.g., Cabo de Hornos (Cape Horn), Dhiórix Korinthou (Corinth Canal), Moskva (Moscow).
- (4) Where any name of the kinds referred to in Section (3) above contains a descriptive term in a foreign language that term shall not be translated into English; e.g., Cabo de Hornos (*not* Cape de Hornos), Schloss Bellinghoven (*not* Bellinghoven Castle), Isola d'Ischia (*not* Island of Ischia);  
*but*, where a geographical term on a foreign map or chart stands in isolation and is neither a geographical proper name nor is attached to such a name, it may be translated; e.g., "bridge" (*not* German "Brücke"), "ford" (*not* Russian "brod").
- (5) The names of places and of geographical features in countries which officially use varieties of the Roman alphabet shall be accepted in their official spelling, including the accents and diacritical marks used in the respective alphabets.

(6) The non-Roman letters in the official names of places and geographical features in countries which use partly-Roman alphabets may be transliterated into Roman letters in accordance with the conventions of the respective partly-Roman alphabets.

(7) In countries where the official alphabet of the administering authority is not Roman:

- (a) where an official Romanization acceptable to the Committee is in current use the spelling of names shall be in accordance with it.
- (b) where no official national Romanization exists but a system of Roman transliteration has been accepted by the Committee for the country under consideration, the official forms of names shall be transliterated in accordance with it.
- (c) where there is no system of Romanization, or none acceptable to the Committee, the official forms of names shall be transliterated into the conventional alphabet given below.