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National standardization

NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

Paper presented by Surinam

National standardization

Geographical backgrounds with respect to the
standardization of toponymy in Surinam

Field collection of names

Multilingualism and toponymy in Surinam

The Republic of Suriname situated on the North-East coast of the South American mainland between 54° and 58° W.L. of Greenwich and 2° and 6° N.L.; between Guyana, French Guyana and the Federal Republic of Brazil, and is divided into 9 districts.

There are about five large rivers which rise at the divide with the sources of the Amazon river, flow virtually North-easterly, and discharge into the Atlantic Ocean.

Besides the many settlements of various tribes of descendants of Negro slaves, Maroons, and many Indian tribes, there are also many extensive rapids (sulas) and river islands (tabikis). Of the total area of 163.800 square kilometers of Suriname only a coastal strip, over a latitude of about 25 km, is intensively populated or cultivated.

The rivers west of the country are uninhabited. The Surinamese population is composed of descendants of many races, apart from the aboriginal inhabitants already mentioned. These various races have also left their mark on the toponymy on the map.

Whereas the influence of former European colonizers (Spanish, English, French and Dutch) is evident in the coastal area the toponyms in the interior, with the exception of the toponyms, are predominantly indigenous, though this is indicated on the map according to Dutch interpretation.

The difference in language between the inhabitants of the coast and the population of the interior is clearly reflected in the geographical names, while spelling-changes in Dutch also reacted on the toponymy. Multilingualism, the etymological and semantic misinterpretations of geographical names, the nomadic way of life of some Indian tribes, the developments in the spelling of Sranan' (the lingua franca of Suriname), necessitated standardization of the geographical names on the map.

Therefore, a Suriname Cartographic Committee was installed by the Government, on 25 May, 1970. In co-operation with the district Authorities an inventory of names was made on maps in the scales of 1 : 40.000 for the Northern part of the country and 1 : 100.000 for the remaining part.

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The Central Bureau for Aerial Surveying, the official body which has the charge of the composition and the publication of topographical maps, at the time had the disposal of aerial photos of the whole country in the scale of 1 : 40.000 (with the exception of the South-Eastern and South-Western parts which, because of constant clouding, could not be photographed. It also had the disposal of mosaics in the scales of 1 : 40.000 and 1 : 100.000. The cartographical material consisted of topographical maps 1 : 10.000 (the so-called agricultural area), 1 : 20.000 (forestry and river maps), 1 : 40.000, 1 : 100.000, 1 : 200.000, 1 : 500.000 (of 4 sheets and 2 sheets) and 1 : 1.000.000. All the maps are available in black-white print, the 1 : 500.000 and 1 : 1.000.000 are also available in colour-print. A separate aeronautical map 1 : 1.000.000 was also published.

In virtue of his office the Head of this Bureau became the Chairman of the Suriname Cartographic Committee. Apart from making an inventory, this committee standardized the references in the 1 : 40.000, and promoted the issuing of a stamp in view of the tri-centennial of Cartography in Suriname, to commemorate the fact that in 1671 the first map of Suriname based on measurements was published by the Dutch landsurveyor W. Mogge. The Chairman of the Cartographic Committee was also added as an observer to the Dutch delegation to the second U.N. Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in London, 1972. He also attended two relevant regional conferences in Costa Rica and Honduras, respectively in March 1974 and May 1976. In Costa Rica he also contacted the officials of the United States Board on Geographical Names.

This Board was composing an official standard names gazetteer for Suriname. However, Suriname received the proofs too late for the corrections desired to take place.

In view of somewhat incorrect spelling of names, as we see it, the changed views in the spelling of Sranan, an unacceptable conception of the borders and an incorrect spelling of the name ' Suriname ', we found it better not to distribute this gazetteer in Suriname, which had in the meantime become a Republic on 25 November, 1975.

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Another activity in which the members of the Cartographic Committee participated, was the composition of a book on the cartographical history of Suriname (subtitled: Links with the Past) in three languages: Dutch, English, and Spanish and published by S. Emmerinck in Amsterdam. In September 1974 the first seminar on the standardization of geographical names was held in Suriname. One of the positive results of the seminar was that a number of resolutions was carried, one of which advocated the establishment of a National Names Authority. This authority has as yet no official status. But a working group on Toponymy, under the auspices of the official Suriname Cartographic Committee, works on the standardization of names. A project completed in this respect is the toponymy in West-Suriname.

As already said this region is practically uninhabited and, consequently, its names are scarce. With a view to a large scale development project (the exploitation of bauxite with adjoining railway-construction and water-power works) in that area it had become desirable to give names to its geographical entities.

We proceeded on the following criteria:

1. The name should be efficient and euphonious, and should possess meaningful components.
2. The name should be related to local conditions and should, historically speaking, be justified.
3. Unity of spelling.

As regards the last criterion the following procedure was followed:

1. Dutch, French, and English toponyms are written according to the official spelling of the language concerned.
2. The remaining names are written according to the existing spelling of Sranan.
3. The generic term in the Dutch geographical name is retained in the same language as the descriptive part of that name. In all remaining cases (Indian, Ndyuka, Saramaka, Sranan, Hindi, English) the generic term will always be indicated in Sranan.

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The following procedure was followed in toponymy:

1. For natural entities:

- inventory of existing toponymy
- establishing nameless entities
- determining the importance of the entity. The principal focus of attention here was its value within the group.
- selection from a list of Amer-Indian names traditional to that area but gone out of use, e.g. Anorasula instead of Frederik Wilhelm Waterfall.
- selection from a list of historical names circulating in the area, whether or not these have been recorded in writing (balata period), e.g. Doublestephey.
- selection from a list of existing names of geographical entities that have disappeared (inundation).
- extention and specification of one geographical entity with respect to another.
- indication of new names that answer as much as possible to the special characteristics of the geographical entity involved.

2. Man made entities:

- derivation and/or joining together of names surrounding geographical entities.
- entirely new names that answer as much as possible to special characteristics, if any, of the work of art.

After the toponymy had been brought about there, a gazetteer was composed, on top of the maps in the scale of 1 : 200.000, with the following information:

- a) The geographical name
- b) The entity
- c) Geographic position latitude and longitude, accurate to half a minute.
- d) Extent of entity in hectare
- e) Altitude
- f) Etymological or semantic explanation of the name, or a translation of the name into Dutch.

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Finally, the most recent information on the activities of the working group, Toponymy, is a second seminar with regard to National Standardization of Geographical Names. This seminar was attended by delegates of all Ministries which are directly or indirectly concerned with toponymy.

The most important items on the agenda were:

- a) The spelling of Suriname also in foreign languages using the Roman alphabet.
- b) The standardization of geographical names in Sranan, in the course of which a number of essential changes in spelling were added.
- c) The approval of the toponymy in West-Suriname.

GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUNDS WITH RESPECT

TO THE STANDARDIZATION OF TOPONYMY IN SURINAME.

A. Standardization of Names of Elevations

In the standardization of Oronyms we proceeded from a definition of geographical entities in regard to the sea level. Here it is not of primary importance to first have a picture of the country and divide it in regard to its surroundings.

In subsequent pilot projects we will try to find out to what extent the classification of entities can be applied to the newly selected division in respect of their immediate surroundings without far-reaching consequences.

The following division is used :

- a. low-lands 0 - 200 m
- b. upland 200 - 500 m
- c. mountainous area 500 - 1500 m
- d. high-mountains beyond 1500 m. (not in evidence in Suriname)

Proceeding from this division, we may say that :

- 1. the generic term "bergi" will exclusively be used for elevations beyond 500 m M.S.L.
- 2. the generic term "hey" will be used for elevations between 200 and 500 m M.S.L.
- 3. the generic term "tapu" will be used for elevations of 0 - 200 m beyond M.S.L. which must be named, in view of their significant appearance in the country.

In consequence of this choice terms like "Mango", "Kununu" and "Penti" which were also used to denote hills etc., will no longer be used.

The Suriname-landscape has the aspect of a peneplain that has been eroded.

- a) Erosion is especially caused by climatic change from humid to semi-arid climates and the change in vegetation occurring in the process.

- b) Relief is further caused by elevation (Wilhelmina-en Bakhuisgebergte).
- c) The occurrence of weathering resistant rocks like the dolorites in the Van Asch van Wijkgebergte completes the relief.

The summit level of the "Wilhelminagebergte" is at about 1000 to 1100 m above M.S.L. The highest level in Suriname is " Julianatop " (1280 m).

The second summit level is found in South-East Suriname (Kassikassima, Rooseveltpiek etc.), which is at about 700 m. M.S.L.

The third summit level is the Early-Tertiary Level, and is at about 500 - 700 m. M. S. L. ("Bakhuisgebergte", "Nassagebergte", "Lelygebergte", and "Brounsberg").

The fourth summit level is the Late Tertiary Level I, which is only to be traced in a few places with heights of about 250 m M.S.L. (Bongrowiri plateau of "Brounsberg").

The remaining elevations are in the Late-Tertiary Level II between 100 and 250 m. The south of the summit level is slightly higher than the north because of the peneplain.

Thus the generic term "bergi" corresponds to elevations from the summit levels I, II and III.

The generic term "hey" corresponds to the Late-Tertiary Level I.

The generic term "tapu" corresponds to the Late-Tertiary Level II, where the waving pattern was mainly caused by downward erosion.

- B. Nomenclature with regard to the drainage system of surface waters and ruggedness in the normal curve of waterways.
 - 1. Both the generic term "river" and "creek" are used to denote waterways. For the time being it has not proved possible to make these terms operative. But it is possible to trace the concept "creek" back to:

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- a) waterways originating through tide stream with sedimentation in the course of the high tide.
 - b) tributary river
 - c) waterway with little discharge
 - d) waterway running under a closed vegetation cover in tropical climax vegetation.
- In this way the vegetation tops of both banks meet.

Since these definitions are not yet operative, the generic term with waterways will be avoided as much as possible, and only the proper name with article will be used.

2. Waterfalls/Rapids

From a geomorphological point of view the occurrence of waterfalls and rapids in the Suriname rivers lends a fresh air to the old, meandering rivers.

These rapids originated through downward erosion of the weathering-layer of the Late-Tertiary Level II. If there are differences as to the extent of weathering, e.g. as a result of weathering resistant rocks (dolorites) or tectonic factors, rapids are formed.

There is also stream-propulsion and bifurcation which is comparable with a braided stream. This also contributes to the formation of islands in the river "tabikis". It should be borne in mind that these "tabikis" are of a permanent nature, unlike those with the real braided streams.

However, the difference in the level of the water is great between the rainy and the dry seasons and may be as much as 7 m, which causes the rapids formed in this way to have a temporary nature. That is why the generic term "waterfall" is used when the water falls from a height of at least 10 m in the dry season (when the water is low). Thus in the rainy season, when the water is high, these waterfalls have a clearly discernible drop.

For obstacles below 10 m the term "sula" is used; in the area where the Saramaccaners live the word "dan"

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is used.

C. Nomenclature in Occupation System

An occupation system is a coherent system of human geographical entities which distinguishes itself from other systems of cohabitation through the frequency and intensity with which that geographical entity is experienced. In view of visible and concrete addition and changes there are three different occupation systems in Suriname:

1. Nucleus settlements
2. Linear settlements
3. Scattered settlements

Besides this criterion, the functional form of relationship is used in Suriname, which may be divided as follows:

I As Regards the Interior

In the interior we find agricultural, rural nucleus-settlements. Thus from a functional point of view, there are no towns in the interior of Suriname, but villages. On the basis of the dominant socio-cultural determinants in the occupation system of the interior we distinguish the following generic terms:

- a) Kampoe: a non-permanent settlement of bushnegroes whose aim it is to practise agricultural activities in the system of shifting-cultivation. By being non-permanent, the "Kampoe" has no status.
- b) Kondre: a permanent settlement of a matri-linear group of bushnegroes. As artefacts of the social system the kinship group contributes a "faaga-tiki" (totempole of the relatives) and a "kee-oso", a mortuary of the group. In terms of status each "Kondre" should have at least one captain.
- c) Indian villages:
A semi-permanent settlement of a bi-lateral kinship group, which is named after the senior of the village, and which is abandoned at the death of the senior of the village.

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II. The Coastal Plain

From a , primarily, morphological point of view the coastal area may be divided as follows:

a) Nucleus, non-agricultural settlements with Paramaribo as the "primate city", and the little bauxite towns, Moengo, Onverdacht, Paranam, and the little administrative towns Albina, Nw. Amsterdam, Totness, Groningen, Nw. Nickerie.

b) Nucleus agricultural settlements.
The settlements are concurrent with the plantation system.
The nomenclature of these settlements is still dominant in the coastal area. However, it should be borne in mind that there not the proper name, but the generic term is concerned.

The names here may be divided e.g. into the following categories:

1. Names derived from the area of planters, e.g. Berlijn, Livorno, Clyde, Alkmaar.
2. Names derived from names of persons, e.g. Catharina-Sophia, Beekhuizen, Carolina.
3. Names derived from desirabilities, e.g. Zorg en Hoop, Morgenstond, L'Esperance.

c) Linear settlements.
Especially after the post-plantation period the linear settlements took shape, in the process of which first emancipated slaves, and later on immigrants settled along communication axes like roads and rivers, without any clear " object d'assecion". Thus the nucleus settlement was changed into a protracted type of settlement.

1. The emancipated slaves lived especially in old villages, the names of which did not undergo any change, though the settlement itself underwent some visible and concrete additions and changes, e.g.
Nw. Amsterdam 1875, Domburg 1877, Totness 1862.

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2. In order to stimulate the permanent settlement of the indentured labourers from India, places of settlement were proclaimed after 1894. This caused the immigration system to also become a system of colonization: Alkmaar 1895, Pad van Wanica 1896, Laarwijk, Nieuw Waldeck, Hecht en Sterk, Johanna en Margaretha, Kroonenburg, Livorno; the old names of the villages were retained. Still this immigration clearly had onomastic consequences:
 - a) settlements named after depots: Calcutta and Bombay.
 - b) settlements named after agent-generals (the local patron of the immigrants): Van Drimmelen Polder, Boonacker Polder, Weytingweg.

3. Linear village communities of Indonesian immigrants with Indonesian names suggestive of a happy future, e.g. Kampong Baroe, Tamanredjo, Wonoredjo.

Some interesting related problems concurring with the outline of linear settlements are, among others:

- 1) The re-orientation from water-traffic to road traffic, which also caused location changes of the settlements.
- 2) The determination of the centre of these settlements, functionally speaking (since this centre does not always run concurrently with the centre, in an artifactual sense).
- 3) The outline of these settlements.

At present the following provisional criteria are used in Suriname for defining this type of settlements:

- a) The artifactual-morphological assumption.
- b) The sense of experiencing an entity i.e. the area which a person feels he belongs to (intensity).
- c) The frequency of connections among surrounding human geographical entities.

Field Collection of Names.

As stated before, in September 1974 a seminar was held on the standardization of geographical names. At the invitation of the Suriname Cartographic Committee this seminar was attended by professor Francis Gall, U. N. expert for Latin America on geographical names and Dr. D. Blok, Head of the Dutch Bureau for Onomastics, who took the place of professor F. J. Ormeling.

The presence of these scholars was meant as a contribution to institutionalising the standardization of the toponymy in Suriname. The activities which were performed within the framework of this seminar had a dual nature:

- a) Establishing the functions of a Names Authority to be instituted, and establishing the mode of working of this Authority through guidelines. This resulted in three Bills with regard to the institution of the Names Authority, and a number of guidelines and rules which will further regulate the internal structure and the proceedings of the Authority.
- b) A field trip to Tapanahony in South-East Suriname. This area was selected because:
 1. it was within easy reach by plane;
 2. it was rather densely inhabited, accounting for the fact that it is in the interior of Suriname.
 3. people speak a vernacular there, viz. Ndyuka, which has hardly a written form and differs a great deal from Sranan, the lingua franca of Suriname.

The purpose of the field trip with the two foreign experts was to arrive at the formulation of operational procedures of work and a research model in the field collection of names, according to initial experiences and insights. This has resulted in a provisional inquiry and some practical guidelines, which will be used in the field, e.g. the use of aerial photographs of the area concerned.

What is stated in 3 above makes it obvious that the quality of field research necessitated special requirements, in order to obtain optimal information from the local population of the

interior. Fortunately, the Suriname Cartographic Committee had the disposal of someone who had studied the historical and cultural backgrounds of the local tribe, the Aucaners, and who enjoyed their confidence.

The research model designed by the foreign experts and the Suriname Cartographic Committee was tested in the field research, which lasted more than six weeks.

After receiving the instructions necessary, the field workers were provided with forms for inquiry and tape-recorders; a topographer was added to localize the geographical entities. Evaluating the results of the research, we found among other things that:

- a) The data obtained largely concerned the settlements and rapids (sulas) en route, which, properly speaking, have yielded too few toponyms as yet.
- b) During the research the emphasis was laid on the meaning and on the explanation of names that were largely known already but that had not yet been standardized. Naturally, the explanation of the names yielded a treasury of cultural-historical data, which must needs be recorded since there is as a rule a lack of documentation in this respect. The informants who were still able to give some traditional information appeared to be rather old; and the increased urbanisation renders traditional, historical information to younger generations doubtful.
- c) The existing differences between the local language, Ndyuka, and the lingua franca of Suriname, Sranan, cause problems of spelling which can only be solved after a thorough study of the languages concerned; and following a possible unity in spelling this might lead to the standardization desired of the geographical names existing in that area.
- d) In preparation to their research the researchers will orientate themselves towards several disciplines, and will deepen their insights into the various aspects of the research, in order to achieve maximum results. The relevant aspects are of an anthropological, a linguistic, historical, geographical, and cartographical nature.

At the second local seminar that was organised by the Suriname Cartographic Committee on the standardization of geographical names, the abovementioned findings resulted in the acceptance of a resolution with regard to the desirability of a unity of spelling for the creole languages in Suriname in support of the standardization of geographical names in the country. This resolution was presented to the Government of the Republic of Suriname together with a list of new names in West-Suriname spelled in accordance with the recommendations of spelling made by the Suriname Cartographic Committee.

Anticipating a final decision of the Government, we will continue our research activities in a next pilot project in the residential area of the Saramaccaners. In this area many villages disappeared as a result of a reservoir which was built for generating electricity, and in other places new settlements with fresh names came into being, which makes it desirable for a thorough inventory to be made.

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MULTILINGUALISM AND TOPONYMY IN SURINAME.

Even in its geographical names Suriname bears the mark of its fluctuating colonial past. The aborigines were the Amerindians. Their languages have mainly been preserved in names of rivers and in a number of place names. Since there is as yet little conclusive evidence about the earliest habitation of the country, its migration-history, the languages and the principles of name-giving, little can be said with certainty in explanation of the geographical names. The least that can tentatively be done is the classification of toponymic and hydronymic elements that are in evidence. As for the names of rivers, reference can be made to the frequently occurring elements like -ini, -name and -ica, e.g. Gonini, Sipaliwini, Cottica, Saramacca, Peninica, Suriname, Coppename. As regards the place names, reference can be made to the spread of the element ibo, which is to be found along the entire north-coast of south America. Some examples from Suriname: Paramaribo, Onoribo, Potribo, Acaribo.

The coming of the Europeans in the seventeenth century, and their activities of all sorts in subsequent centuries caused a thorough change and an increase of the geographical names. On the whole, the changes are due to a misinterpretation by the Europeans of the autochthonous names.

On the old maps there are numerous examples of inconsistencies in the rendering of the same geographical name. This may have been caused by the linguistic differences among the Europeans: english, Dutch, and others.

However, there are also many cases of adaptation. An example of this is the diphthongization by the Dutch of the /i:/ sound of the names of rivers. Thus Marowijne is the result of the diphthongization of Marowini, Commewijne of Commewini, Corantijn of Corantini.

This diphthongization is not found with geographical names of the interior, since these names were mostly recorded much later. The diphthongization that took place in the seventeenth century was no longer operative, e.g. Sipaliwini, Gonini.

The increase of the number of geographical names runs concurrently with the history of settlement in Suriname. These names are a reflection of the fluctuating European power and interest in the country. Thus on our maps we find French, English, Dutch and other names. Some of these names have merely

been copied from the previous "mother-countries". There are migration-names like Gravenstraat, Wageningen, Groningen; the element "nieuw" has been prefixed to some names, e.g. Nieuw Amsterdam.

A third kind, though on the basis of European languages, was formed in Suriname: hence they are not migration-names. Reference can here be made to the numerous plantation names both in Dutch and in French: Rust en Werk, Zorg en Hoop, Ma Retraite, Mon Plaisir.

The slave trade and slavery took the Africans to Suriname, who, through the Creole languages which they spoke, viz., Sranan, Saramaka, and Ndyuka, thoroughly effected the existent names to such an extent that now Sranan may be taken as the basic language for the standardization of the geographical names. The geographical names are written as much as possible according to the spelling of Sranan.

Later immigrations exerted no great influence on the form of the names or on the principles of name-giving.

The standardization of the geographical names meets with a problem which may be indicated as exonyms within the country itself. The question is this. From of old the coastal area has been the most densely populated and the most cultivated. There the Government is situated, and it is from there that standardization, among other things, takes place. The inhabitants of the coast have, partly in imitation of the Europeans, partly of their own accord, called the interior by different names from what the so-called bushnegroes and Amerindians call it. The point is how to correct this. Essentially the Cartographic Committee lends priority to the form and to the pronunciation of the local population; and wants to standardize the names as they are used in their own surroundings, even if this would entail profound changes of the names on the map.

The corrections concerned are, generally speaking, names

- a) that have been wrongly heard and written, or have been adapted, e.g. "Tapanahony" for "Tapama(r)oni", "tabbetje" for "tabiki", etc.
- b) that do not occur at all in the interior. The bushnegroes call the entities concerned by different names, e.g. Andobusiman for "Lelygebergte".

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Sranan has been selected as the basis for the spelling of geographical names that are non-European. It is, therefore, necessary for Sranan itself to have a correct spelling. That is, as regards spelling at least, one of the Creole languages of the Caribbean is being standardized. The first spelling that was more or less official dates from 1960. At present a new spelling has been proposed for Sranan, also in view of the standardization of the geographical names.

The above mentioned corrections and this change of spelling will not create too many difficulties for names of sparsely populated or uninhabited areas, and for new names, e.g. in West-Suriname. However, the adaptation of old familiar names, especially of the coastal area, will have to be considered with care. If the well-known map is changed too radically as regards spelling and names, it is very well possible that this will cause confusion and uncertainty, which might partly nullify the benefit of standardization. The Cartographic committee has also taken these matters under consideration.
