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THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
Athens, 17 August-7 September 1977
Item 7 of the provisional agenda.

Reports by divisions and Governments
on the situation in their regions and
countries and on the progress made in
the standardization of geographical
names since the Second United Nations
Conference on the Standardization of
Geographical Names

PRESENT SITUATION OF THE STANDARDIZATION
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN JAPAN

Paper presented by Japan

1. Standardization of geographical names

The Antarctic Place-Names Committee of Japan is the only organization of the Japanese Government that deals with geographical names in the Antarctic, and there is no government agency which makes centralization of collection, registration and administration of geographical names.

The Antarctic Place-Names Committee of Japan was established in the National Polar Research Institute, the purpose of which is to name appropriately places in the Antarctic area with a view to preparing maps of the Antarctic area and for facilitating its observation and survey. Up to now, 188 place names have been selected, and approved by the Committee.

The Joint Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names has decided about 1,000 place names since the previous report of its activities were reported at the Second Conference. As a result, using the adopted place names, the 1:500,000 scale maps have been completed, and further work will be done on place names for the preparation of the larger-scale maps.

The Joint Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names was established to carry out the work of standardizing the place names adopted by the Geographical Survey Institute, Ministry of Construction, and the Hydrographic Department of the Maritime Safety Agency, Ministry of Transport. The place names to be standardized by the Committee will be used in maps issued by the Geographical Survey Institute and in the Nautical and Aeronautical Charts and Publications issued by the Hydrographic Department. Any decision by this Committee is not binding on other ministries. However, representatives of the Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau of the Ministry of Education, and the Broadcast Culture Research Institute of the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) take part in the Committee as observers with a view to making use of the names adopted by the Committee in elementary education and broadcasting.

On the other hand, the Textbook Research Center, an extra-departmental body for the Ministry of Education, is scheduled to establish a committee in the near future for the purpose of assisting in the adoption of place names.

2. Romanization of geographical names

As methods to express the place names in Japan in Roman letters, there are two systems now in use - Kunrei Siki (System Adopted under a Government Ordinance) and Syusei Hebon Siki (Modified Hepburn System). Kunrei Siki is used in topographic maps, nautical charts and Antarctic maps; Syusei Hebon Siki, in aeronautical charts and geological maps.

3. Geographical names of oceans, seas and undersea features

(1) As for geographical names of oceans and seas, the names adopted by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) on the basis of international consensus are now used.

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(2) As regards geographical names of undersea features, the "Assembly on Geographical Names of Oceans" sponsored by the Hydrographic Department of the Maritime Safety Agency is engaged in naming undersea topographical features, or the standardizing of their names, which are required for nautical and bathymetric charting. The Assembly has met five times since the Second Conference and 216 names have so far been adopted.

The procedures and standards for naming are as follows:

A. Procedures.

When a need arises to give a geographical name to any sea bottom feature disclosed by a recent survey within or near the territorial waters, the Hydrographic Department proposes a name on the basis of the information collected on the particular spot surveyed as well as one for referential documents. The name proposed is then discussed by the above-mentioned Assembly and adopted for general use when found appropriate.

B. Assembly on Geographical Names of Oceans.

This organization is sponsored by the Hydrographic Department of the Maritime Safety Agency. Members of the Assembly are specialists/experts from various governmental agencies and scientific organizations related to oceanic researches, i.e. the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Education, the University of Tokyo, the Scientific Council of Japan, the Association of Japanese Geographers, the Oceanographical Society of Japan, and the Japanese Society of Scientific Fisheries.