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National standardization: Field collection of names

Identification of Islands and Standardization of Their Names

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Introduction

Indonesia is very well known as an archipelagic country. The Indonesian government has mentioned that the number of islands in Indonesia as 17,504 and this number is widely quoted in many literatures. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs data of 2004, among those 17,504 islands, there are only 7,870 have names, while 9,634 have no names and no official legal documents that confirm the number and names of islands published.

The place names as element of geographical features are known as toponyms. Geographical features can be classified as natural such as islands, rivers, hills, mountains, headlands and man-made features.

Therefore, the islands have an important role for an archipelagic country like Indonesia since it contributes to the country's territory and sovereignty. The naming of the island is very important particularly in the context of outer islands in accordance with United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982 which was then ratified by Law no. 17 Year 1985.

The international standard for the definition of what an island can be found in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (1982) in Part 8 Regime of Islands, Article 121. The key features that distinguish between islands and rocks are (1) that an island is "a naturally formed area of land, surrounded by water, which is above water at high tide", and (2) that rocks "which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf" (United Nations 1982)

Based on the above definition, an island should be formed naturally. Its formation must be endogenically formed by a natural process such as movement of the earth's crust or tectonic, not by reclamation/backfilling or avalanches that occurred by man-made processes.

The government of Indonesia has planned for the standardization of names as follows: (1) name the outer islands as this concerns national sovereignty and all other natural name features such as islands, mountains, rivers and lakes, (2) work to define the names of administrative places such as provinces, villages and districts, and (3) manage names in urban areas, for example for streets, businesses and housing estates.

The role and importance of island names

From the government perspective, It is not easy and quite challenging to manage thousand of islands. The large number of islands also increase the potential for problems that can disrupt the territorial integrity of Indonesia, especially the islands located in the border areas with countries that do not have agreements with Indonesia.

The problems can be minimized by the inventory and administration of the islands in detail, valid and standardized in spatial format and official documents as evidence of ownership of the islands as part of the Indonesian sovereignty.

The Marine and Fisheries Research Agency (2003) states that the important dataset of Indonesian islands as an archipelagic state territory has not been supported by official documents reporting the exact number of islands. The number of Indonesian islands are expressed in different numbers from many different data sources.

The disparities on the number of islands in Indonesia may be due to:

1. Island data collection has not been implemented in accordance with standard procedures

2. Inter-institutional coordination has not been optimum yet
3. A standardized geodatabase has not been applied yet
4. Lack of Human resources involved in the toponyms survey and data collection of islands

Along with the enactment of Law no. 22 of 1999 and Law no. 32 of 2004 on Regional Government which in it also regulates the rights and obligations of regions in the management, naming the island becomes increasingly important. Regarding the management of the island as a regional resource, the identification and inventory of island names should be systematically conducted through a mapping method approach integrated with toponyms survey (geographical name survey).

Toponyms survey activities of the island therefore have played an important and strategic roles nationally and internationally. Each UN member country - including Indonesia - must report the number and naming of the island every 5 years in the form of National Report.

Principles for geographical naming in Indonesia

Based on Home Affairs Minister Regulation No. 39/2008: The guidelines of the Standardization of Geographical Names; Chapter 3, Article 6. a number of principles have been established to guide the process of creating or standardizing geographical names. These take into consideration culture, history, religion, philosophy, politics and linguistics. The principles, which are widely agreed on, provide an external set of conditions that make it possible to justify decisions taken in geographical naming. Eight principles are as follows.

1) Use the Roman script; 2) Use one name per geographic feature; 3) Preserve local language names; 4) Comply with government legislation; 5) Respect the existence of ethnicity, religion, race, and class; 6) Do not use proper personal names of people who are still alive; 7) Prefer to use Indonesian language (*Bahasa Indonesia*) rather than foreign languages; and 8) Limit names to a maximum of three words

Gazetteer and geodatabase of Indonesian island names

As a sovereign State, Indonesia shall immediately settle its obligations to inventory the islands within its territory as official documents of the State and to report these activities to the UNCSGN with an attachment of a national gazetteer. The national gazetteer is then stored in a geodatabase.

Gazetteer is a list containing standardized toponymes complete with supporting information. In general, gazetteer can be divided into:

1. Simple gazetteer
Gazetteer containing briefing of topographical elements such as name, feature code, geographical position (coordinates), name information and topo sheet index number.
2. Complete gazetteer
Gazetteer containing complete toponyms information such as name, feature code, geographical position (coordinates), name information and topo sheet index number, pronunciation, language origin, genealogy / history / accessibility, potency and other relevant information in more detail.

At the UNCSGN in 2012, Indonesia reported a total number of islands 13,466. The United Nations hinted that Indonesia immediately reported the gazetteer of island names officially which was released by the National Names Authority of Indonesia, reflecting the claim of the number of islands under its sovereignty. Additionally, about 875 more islands would be reported this year during UNCSGN and UNGEGN meeting that will be held in New York, USA, 7-18 August 2017.

Future challenges

Data on the number of islands in Indonesia are still diverse and not yet integrated among the government agencies. The island geodatabase in Indonesia has not been fully applied. This condition is exacerbated by the fact that there are a significant number of islands which have no name yet.

The islands that number tens of thousands make the government facing difficulties to manage it. Especially the outer islands and border areas which is far from the center of government, the conditions are very apprehensive and neglected. It is ironic, considering that the islands play an important role as the entrance of Indonesia.

The above problems indicate the urgency of naming and inventory of the island in Indonesia by improving a systematic toponyms survey. One of the efforts made by the government is the preparation of web-based toponyms geodatabase of Islands.



The archipelago of Indonesia. The red dots denote the distribution of surveyed islands



Kapacol Sasulut island (left) and "love"-like lagoon in Papua (Eastern of Indonesia)