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GENERIC TERMS IN TOPONYMIC DATA FILES

Paper presented by Israel

In his report No.1 of 1985, the Convener of the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files (Gazetteers, Computer Assistance), asked for comments on the definitions and relative placement of generic terms in indexes and alphabetic listings (items 2B and 2A respectively). The following notes attempt to supply partial replies to some of the questions raised in the above Report.

Item 2B

A generic term (briefly and only generally defined in U.N. Glossary No. 330, "Technical Terminology employed in the Standardization of Geographical Names", Document ST/CS/SER.F/330 of September 24, 1984) is a noun describing a physical entity on earth. Since usage of such words differs in different cultures and languages, each national names authority must draw up a list of relevant generic terms to be incorporated in its toponymic guidelines. This list can then serve as a decision aid for the purpose of automated separation or non-separation of the generic from the specific element in indexing (see below, item 2A).

As an example, the list of Hebrew generic terms in Israel includes 98 nouns in the singular; 22 of these are used also in the plural. making 120 terms in total. It should be remarked that the plural is sometimes distinguished from the singular not only by a suffix but also in form and alphabetic order of listing: e.g. Mazoq, pl. Mezoqé (cliff(s)); Qeren, pl. Qarné (pointed peak(s)).

Item 2A

A generic term constitutes an integral component of a toponym and, in an alphabetic list or gazetteer, should <u>not</u> be separated from and printed after the specific element, in the following cases:

(1) the trivial case; if the generic term and the specific element are written as one word: e.g. Newport, Aberystwyth, Neustadt;

(2) if a generic term is used in the name of a place of a different generic species: e.g. Mount Vernon, Tunbrige Wells, Tel-Aviv (all towns).

(3) if the name, including the generic term, was conferred by administrative decree or by a names authority: e.g. Bir Maksur (village, Arabic); Qiryat-Gat (town, Hebrew); Karl-Marx-Stadt (city, German).

In other cases alphabetic listing should be by specific element only. If, in the name, the generic term precedes the specific element, word order should be reversed in the listing.

In the automated gazetteer of Israel a hyphen - preventing separation and word-order reversal in alphabetic listing - is used in all Hebrew composite names of this type: e.g. Tel-Aviv. When no hyphen appears, the generic and specific elements may be separated and reversed in alphabetic listing. Examples: Tel-Mond (village), but Tel Megiddo, listed as Megiddo, Tel (archaeological mound); 'En-Ayala (village), but 'En Ayala, listed as Ayala, 'En (spring).

This convention, used also in some other countries, is now being introduced also in romanized maps of Israel.

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