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COUNTRY REPORT ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAME ACTIVITIES
IN THAILAND

COUNTRY REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The report on Geographical Name Activities in Thailand covers the period since the Thirteenth Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names held in Montreal, Canada , on 17 and 31 August 1987

2. NATIONAL BOARD ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

The Thai National Board or Authority on Geographical Names has not been established yet. Even though there has been no national body or authority handled on Geographical Names in Thailand , some effective actions and activities have been undertaken and responsible by the two Special Committees of the Royal Institute and the Ministry of Interior respectively. The former deals with the standardization and romanization of Geographical and Place Names called the Committee on Thai Geographical Gazetteer. The said Committee consists of 12 representatives from Government agencies , i.e., the Royal Thai Survey Department , the Departments of Highway , Local Administration , Hydrography , Irrigation , Mineral Resources , Forestry, Meteorology , Land Development and from the Chulalongkorn and Sri Nakharinwirot Universities and the Royal Institute. Besides preparing the Gazetteer , the Committee also considers , determines and handles all problems and inquiries concerning Geographical and Place

Names throughout the country and the world as well. The latter is the Committee on Changing of Names of the Province , District ,Village and other Official Place Names. This Committee also comprises several Government agencies including the Royal Thai Survey Department . The mentioned Committee handles only the changing of names . Both Committees would be developed to be the national board in the near future.

3. ROMANIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

3.1 The Romanization of Thai Geographical Names was recognized as the international system at the First United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names held in 1967. From then on, geographical and place names including street, road, village, district, province and other names on Thai maps have been romanized or transcribed in accordance with this system. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses the mentioned system for personal names in official documents such as passports. The National Library and other libraries as well also use this system for the bibliographical work and others concerned .

Owing to the fact that the using of computer technology assisted in many fields of work has expanded and increased at the present time. With more use of the said system , more confusion and problems are revealed. And due to some single Roman alphabets stand for many consonants and vowels in Thai Scripts, i.e, there are fewer Roman Characters than Thai Letters

in writing. The Romanization of Thai Geographical Names therefore is considered inappropriate use and indispensable to be improved and revised for more practical application.

Moreover, the private sector, educational institutions and schools as well as all English language newspapers seem to ignore this system and have invented their own. People in general choose whatever system they prefer or no system at all.

3.2 The Royal Institute has always been aware of the abovementioned problems. Therefore on 24 December 1985, the Thai Romanization Principle Revision Committee has been established to undertake the improvement and revision of the romanized transcription and transliteration of Thai characters in which the representative of the Royal Thai Survey Department is one of the Committee members. At the Present, the said Committee has already determined and carried out the task but has not reached the final conclusion yet. The new Transliteration system has already been submitted to the International Standardization Organization (ISO) for acceptance. The new Transcription system has already been distributed to users for consideration and comments. It would be hopefully concluded as the new system to be submitted to the next United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names.

4. NATIONAL GAZETTEER ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

4.1 The first edition of the Thai Geographical Gazetteer was prepared and published by the Royal Institute dividing into four volumes during 1963-1967, and then was revised AND MADE

into six volumes and published during 1982-1986. Because of the geographical and place names have been changed and increased from time to time, therefore the Committee mentioned in item 2 has prepared and arranged for the improvement and revision since January 1989.

4.2 The first edition of the Map Gazetteer based on map series 1501 at the scale of 1:250,000 which contains 22,844 names has already been corrected the incorrections and errors found in the Gazetteer. The list of errata would be printed in the near future.

4.3 The Royal Thai Survey Department has been prepared and arranged the Gazetteer based on the topographic maps of Thailand at the scale of 1:50,000 , series L 7017 at the present time. The compilation of names has already been completed 628 out of 830 map sheets so far. It is still in the stage of manuscript. The checking of names on the mentioned topographic maps for the purpose of revision and correction of the names is concurrent and in progress. The work based on the Directory of Village Names of the Local Administration Department. At the present time, the list of changing names has been obtained from 648 out of 830 map sheets, and also in the stage of manuscript.

5. CO-OPERATION WITH THE DIVISION FOR STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Thailand as the host country held the Fourth Meeting of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names for Asia, South-East and Pacific, South-West Division

in Bangkok during 12-14 September 1988. There were five
countries sending their representatives and observers
to attend the Meeting.
