

REPORT OF UNITED STATES/CANADA DIVISION

Submitted by Helen Kerfoot, CPCGN Secretariat, Canada

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Helen Kerfoot, Canada

Representatives of the US/Canada Division met at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (USA) in September 1990 to discuss various toponymic issues. This meeting coincided with the centennial celebrations of the United States Board on Geographic Names (USBGN). Attending the meeting were the CPCGN Chairman (who is also UNGEGN Chairman), the Executive Secretaries of the CPCGN and USBGN, the BGN Executive Secretary for Domestic Names and the Chief, Branch of Geographic Names, of the U.S. Geological Survey. A similar meeting was held in Washington on November 13, 1989.

The US/Canada Division is undertaking work on several project to further UNGEGN activities:

- (a) The resolutions from the Fifth Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names are being incorporated into the groupings already established for the first four conferences. The English-language texts are being entered into an Apple Macintosh computer - to facilitate future updating. When this is completed, the French-language texts will be assembled in the same way.
- (b) Work is still to be completed, in cooperation with the ad hoc - UN Working Group on Evaluation, to review the significance and utility of the existing UN resolutions from the first five conferences.
- (c) A compilation of names and contact addresses of national names authorities is being prepared.
- (d) A small study is being undertaken to ascertain whether UN recommendations are being followed in various atlases. Sample names will be compared in some 20 atlases published over the past 20-year period.
- (e) Under the leadership of the UNGEGN Chair, a small collection of documents is being assembled to create a "training kit" for forthcoming English-language UN toponymic training courses.

The United States and Canada continue to cooperate on an ongoing basis on a variety of toponymic subjects of common interest - for example, automated toponymic records, treatment of toponyms outside North America, recognition of Amerindian names, and consistency of application of names for features crossing the US/Canada border.

United Nations Group of
Experts on Geographical Names

Fifteenth Session
Geneva, 11 to 19 November 1991

Item No. 14 of the Provisional Agenda: Working Group
on Romanization Systems

REPORT BY THE CO-CONVENOR

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The focus here is on developments regarding romanization systems as reported at the Fourteenth Session of UNGEGN, Geneva, 17-26 May 1989.

GREEK

It is important to determine the extent to which the ELOT 743 system has been applied to the Greek 1:50,000-scale HMGS map series or other official maps and publications. Furthermore, information needs to be obtained regarding the extent of the conversion from katharevousa name forms to dimotiki forms in other applications such as tourist publications, road signs, etc. Such conversion was to be accelerated, it had been reported, by a parliamentary act to be passed in 1989.

KOREAN

At the Fourteenth Session of UNGEGN, experts from both the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea agreed to cooperate in arriving at a single unified romanization system for Korean inasmuch as both countries had each submitted quite disparate systems. According to the UNGEGN Newsletter No. 7, May 1991, both Koreas have held meetings on this matter under the auspices of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). It would be appropriate to have information as to the results of the meetings.

RUSSIAN

It is necessary to know more about work in progress for the new edition of the world atlas, the Atlas Mira, which would reflect names rendered in the GOST 1983 system in both the map plates and the index. It would also be helpful to know its anticipated publication date. Furthermore, it would be desirable to obtain evidence of cartographic source materials, issued during the past two years, which show implementation of the new system.

THAI

It has been reported that Thailand is in the process of revising its previously UN-approved romanization system. It is necessary to inquire whether the revised system, in both its transliteration and transcription versions as submitted to the Fifth Conference in 1987, has now been finalized.

Comments regarding the revised Thai system:

1. The introduction of the colon in the new romanized transliteration table, placed either after a Roman-script vowel letter (a:), or consonant letter (r:), or between two consonant letters (k:h), is potentially confusing because the colon could be taken as an indication of vowel length (quantity) or a syllable boundary. In addition, the introduction of diacritics (macron, sub-dot) will make the system difficult to use in an ADP environment.
2. The substitutions made of a few Roman-letter equivalents of Thai characters in the new romanized transcription table (almost entirely in the vowel inventory) only partially constitute an improvement. In addition, the problem of linguistic underdifferentiation remains, i.e., using the same Roman letter for two or more different Thai characters. An example of this underdifferentiation is the Roman letter t, used to represent a total of twenty different Thai characters in syllable-final position.