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REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

Report of the Brazilian Institute of Geography
and Statistics (IBGE)

submitted by Sonia Luiza Terron, Brazilian Institute of Geography
and Statistics, Rio de Janeiro.

**Report of the Brazilian Institute of Geography
and Statistics (IBGE) ***

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), for supporting its statistical and geoscientific programmes, has been engaged with toponymy since 1938, although not permanently or systematically.

However, in spite of the efforts made over decades, toponymical information remained scattered in various publications, files, databases, maps and charts produced by the Institute.

In 1990 the Geosciences Direction, considering the damage caused by the absence of a specific unit responsible for toponymical matters, established a toponymic section charged with the organization and maintenance of geographic names.

Also recently, IBGE has revised the general plan of statistical and geographical information (PGIEG), which embraces a wide range of programmes and projects, including the basic guidelines for IBGE's toponymic activities in the project "Inventory and Organization of Geographical Names".

This project, presented at the Sixth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (E/Conf.85/L.78), has as its purpose the systematic collection, organization and consolidation of the physical and cultural named features on Brazilian territory in order to shape the onomastic memory of the Brazilian geographic and physiographic features.

The present report covers IBGE's activities on geographic names during 1992-1993, and is organized into three subjects: courses, inventory and organization, and studies, researches and publications.

Courses

The Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH) sponsored, in Brasil, its V Course on Geographic Names, which was organized together with IBGE and held at IBGE headquarters, in Rio de Janeiro, from October 26 to November 6, 1992.

* Prepared by Sonia Luiza Terron, Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, Rio de Janeiro.

The two-week programme consisted of lectures, alternated by practical exercises, field work and PC's database management. The programme was realized by Dr. Richard R. Randall (DMA/USA) and Dr. Roger L. Payne (USGS/USA), and the participants came from IBGE (18), other brasilian official agencies of mapping, communication and research (7), Naval Hydrography Service - Argentina (1), and Geographic Military Institute - Bolivia (1). In addition, brasilian experts were also invited to join this team, providing information about the nature and origins of geographic names in Brasil and its importance for communication.

The technical knowledge and guidelines presented were of great assistance for IBGE's toponymic section personnel, engaged with the implementation of the project "Inventory and Organization of Geographical Names", also stimulating the participant institutes on future actions in this field.

Moreover, the participants from IBGE, Historical and Geographical Brazilian Institute, Geographic Service Direction (Army) and Brazilian Mail and Telegraph Agency, sent to the Geosciences Direction a written proposal of legal establishment of a brasilian geographic names authority regarding standardization.

Inventory and Organization

According to the guidelines and schedule of the project "Inventory and Organization of Geographical Names", two major steps were planned to start in 1993, as follows:

- . the collection of geographical names, including field work, at the 27 IBGE's regional offices, and
- . the development and implementation of the Geographic Names Database and correlated systems.

However, owing to financial difficulties that have been limiting IBGE's programmes development, during 1993 the project's expected results were not obtained, and the original plan was revised and adapted to the circumstances. This revision led up to the following major guidelines:

1) The project's first phase might start with the collection of geographic names on the 550 sheets of the 1:250.000 topographic map series, which cover the whole country.

2) Data to be collected will be reduced to generic terms and proper names of features, kind and classification of features, geographical coordinates for purposes of location and extent, location by state and map identification. Field work is not planned.

3) The collection method will be simplified in order to reduce the need of training courses and previous knowledge requirements from the regional offices' staff. This method includes simplifications such as getting geographic coordinates through the use of film overlays with codified cells of 7'30" x 7'30" each. Once each name collected is attached to its correlated cell code, the system automatically stores geographic coordinates of the central point of the cell. That means a maximum or minimum positioning error of 3'45".

4) Data storage and checking system will be developed to operate on the regional offices' microcomputers (PC), while the Geographic Names Database and correlated systems will be developed for the mainframe computer (IBM), as the final depository of geographical names.

This revised plan was submitted to the Geosciences Direction at the end of 1993 and might be started as soon as approved.

Studies, Researches and Publications

During 1993 two valuable researches, embracing geographic names of the State of Rondonia (North Region) and the State of Ceara (Northeast Region), were published.

Dr. Marlio Fabio Pelucio Falcao published the "Small Toponymical Dictionary of Ceara", enclosing toponymical information about the 187 municipalities, 672 administrative districts and 200 small populated places of Ceara. He is also preparing the publication of two other volumes entitled "Gentilicos", presenting designation given in accordance to birthplaces in Ceara, and "Municipal Genealogy", with informations about the origin and evolution of Ceara's municipalities.

Dr. Gerino Alves da Silva Filho concluded the research entitled "Hydrography and Orography of Rondonia", which presents relevant and clarifying data about location and denomination of those features. There were catalogued 1231 geographic features moreover to subsidize future researches and studies in Rondonia, a state of many toponymical changes and indigenous' geographic names.

In 1993 the retrieval system of the Territorial Structures Database was concluded, allowing the edition of reports embracing the toponymy of brasilian populated places, political and administrative units, and other territorial structures.

Conclusions

Albeit far from meeting national needs on systematic collection and standardization of geographical names, in the past four years IBGE reached to great advances.

The creation of a specific toponymic section, the establishment of the project "Inventory and Organization of Geographical Names" and its continuous accomplishment, attests the intention of toponymical development despite all constraints.

In addition, IBGE spared no effort for the success of the V PAIGH Course on Geographic Names, which was one of abiding contribution to the dissemination of the national needs in the field of geographic names.

Finally, we believe that all these efforts done profile the beginning of a national action towards the organization and standardization of geographic names in Brasil.