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REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

Geographical Place Names in the Sultanate of Oman

submitted by the Sultanate of Oman, National Survey Authority

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SULTANATE OF OMAN

GEOGRAPHICAL PLACE NAMES IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

ABSTRACT

This report updates the situation with regard to Geographical Place Names in the Sultanate of Oman, and gives an over view of the progress made, and the matters still outstanding at this time.

1. INTRODUCTION

In our previous report of two years ago to the 6th UN Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names, we drew attention to the general situation pertaining in the Sultanate of Oman. Since then a number of tangibles have developed and I particularly like to draw attention to the following facts.

2. PLACE NAME COLLECTION

At the present time, geographic place names are still collected and verified on an "ad hoc" basis; according to the requirements of new mapping programmes.

However it is planned to direct new impetus, to a comprehensive programme to deal with this aspect on a Sultanate-wide basis in the very near future.

3. DUAL TEXT REQUIREMENT

We see the need within the Sultanate to enhance the use of map products by the population at large. To this end all maps are being scripted in Arabic text. The national map series at 1:100,00 scale comprising of 138 separate titles in total, is currently under conversion to Arabic text. Under this programme 40 map sheets previously in English text only have been Arabised and thus a total of 69 map sheets, more than half of the series maps issued have a version with Arabic text. It is hoped to complete this programme over the next year and a half.

4. NATIONAL BODY FOR GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

In order to establish a satisfactory depiction of the Sultanate particularly cartographically and with correctness of names, a controlling body, The Committee for the Control over Maps of Oman Before Publication (CCMOBP) has been established to ensure that certain minimum standards are met prior to the publication of any map product.

As an adjunct to this committee, a sub-committee, the Oman Permanent Technical Committee for Geographic Names (OPTCGN) has been established, with the purpose of controlling the use and form of geographic place names, ensuring uniformity and historical continuity. It is hoped that one day, this committee will develop into a full national body responsible for Geographic Place Names; when we would be able to hand over responsibility to such a body; however that is some time into the future.

5. TRANSLATION OF TEXT

Within the Sultanate, there is often a disparity between the Arabic form of a geographic place name, and the English transliteration, basically because of the non centralisation for such an activity. There is a lot of room for improvement.

To expedite the map making process, we have in the National Survey Authority (NSA) standardised the transliteration process in the following manner, namely:-

- 5.1 Diacritical signs are not used.
- 5.2 Differentiation of sun and moon letter is followed.
- 5.3 The definite article in a three part name, is given in the lower case, e.g.

Ghuwayfat al Habb

6. ACHIEVEMENTS

We have embarked on establishing a computer data base, to set down the origins and basis of use, of Geographic Place Names within the Sultanate. We anticipate that this information would require entry in up to 22 entry fields and would encompass between 4,000 and 8,000 place names. We anticipate this programme would be largely completed by the end of 1997. a specimen of the spread sheet is attached.

7. FUTURE UPGRADE OF INFORMATION

Our programme on Geographic Place Names including the computer data base takes due cognisance of the fact that in the future a more precise correlation between the Arabic and English texts may be achieved.

However at this time, our greatest priority is to produce new maps or digital map data, and the majority of our resources are directed towards that aim.

8. PUBLICATIONS

A number of publications and maps related to Geographical Place Names in the Sultanate have been published to date, and we would like to draw attention in particular to the following namely:-

8.1 Series K668 maps at 1:100,000 scale.
77 map sheets in total.

8.2 Series K6611 maps at 1:100,000 scale.
137 sheets in total.

Adopted as the basis of the new national series, and increased to 138 map titles.

8.3 Gazetteer of Oman.
Published by the Defense Mapping Agency in March 1976 revised in January 1983: approximately 1510 settlement place names taken from Series K668 maps.

8.4 Gazetteer of Wilayats and Tribes.
Published by the Ministry of the Interior. Publication entirely in Arabic text with over 1880 settlement places listed.

8.5 Gazetteer of Wilayats and Tribes.
In English vernacular; not transliterated; internal Ministry of Defence Publication.

Attachment:

Annex A : Spread Sheet of Computer Data Base Information.

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