

Seventeenth Session of the  
United Nations Group of Experts  
on Geographical Names  
New York, 13-24 June, 1994  
Item 10 of the Provisional Agenda

WORKING PAPER  
No. 8

MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON TOPONYMIC TERMINOLOGY

Remarks on UNGEFN Dictionary of Toponymic Terminology

Paper submitted by Hungary\*

\*Prepared by Ervin Földi, Chairman, Hungarian Committee on  
Geographical Names

REMARKS ON UNGEGN  
 DICTIONARY OF TOPONYMIC TERMINOLOGY

Edited by Naftali Kadmon

Version 2.0, 1 Feb. 1993

*The new Dictionary (including its first version) with more systematic definitions and structure has shown a real development in the work of international standardization. A great number of items reflect successfully the tedious work of the editor and the working group, while some other terms and definitions need revision. My remarks are intended not to lessen the results but to help in improving the Dictionary.*

**Notes (page 1):** it should be mentioned that not only phonemic, but phonetic examples are in IPA notation, as well.

**005 allonym:** We had a term *variant name* in the UN Glossary 1987, an extremely useful term indicating the non-official allonyms of a standardized name. We are continuously advised by UN recommendations to give non-official variants in gazetteers and databases. Why should the term *variant name* disappear? Instead, we have now the *standardized allonym*, but of no use. Reading the definition of term 231 *standardized name* and that of 342 *standardized toponym*, an allonym can be found sitting behind both, expressed by the word "preferred". In other word: there is an unnecessary term while the necessary one is missing.

**006 allonym, standardized:** See remarks on 005 *allonym*.

**007 allophone:** Toponyms and nouns given as examples are not written in the IPA alphabet, therefore square brackets have to be changed for ordinary brackets.

**008 alphabet:** According to the definition given here, the IPA alphabet is'nt an alphabet as it has no connection to any specific language. Either this definition should be extended, or the definition for IPA should contain a remark, that it is'nt an alphabet in this sense. Practically it can be considered as a transcription alphabet.

**009 alphabet, conversion:** the term *names conversion* mentioned in the definition is missing from the glossary. The word *names* should be deleted.

**011 alphabet, transcription:** According to the definition for *transcription*, no specific alphabet is used but the alphabet of the language involved. Therefore, it may happen, that the term *transcription alphabet* is a synonym for *target script* (if no diacritics or markers are used), and not an independent term.

**015 alphabetic sequence rules:** The correct reference should be *sequence rules*, without the word *alphabetic*.

**019 article:** No example is given for the mentioned indefinite article. There is no need for it if there is statement, according to which in toponymy only the definite article has importance as the indefinite status is shown in most cases by a zero morpheme with the exception of Albanian: *Tirana* (definite), *Tiranë* (indefinite).

**026 character:** As it is stated several times that graphic signs used as units in *alphabetic* or *syllabic scripts* are also *characters*, examples of these types should also be given.

Another problem: the unit of a *writing system* can be a *script*, but not a *character* in the context of this glossary. A possible improvement in the definition:

a) Graphic symbol used as a unit in a script. Examples.

b) Graphic symbol used as a unit in scripts belonging to non-alphabetical writing systems. Examples.

See also remark on 171 letter.

**030 character, vowel:** In the absence of alphabetic examples it seems that a *vowel character* occurs only in the *syllabic script*, and a *vowel letter* only in an *alphabet*. Words *alphabetic* or should be deleted from this definition. Otherwise 174 *vowel letter* and this term are synonyms, and then there is no need for two definitions.

**032 class, feature:** The word *item* should be changed for *feature*, as there is a term, *topographic feature* in this glossary, while the expression *topographic item* has no meaning in the context of this glossary. The word *item* is again used in the next definition (033) but without the adjective *toponymic*. The origin of all the troubles in connection with *feature class* is that the term *designation* has been degraded to a synonym for *descriptive term*, and the items that make up a *feature class* do not exist in the present glossary. All the cartographers who deal with geographic names need that term. Remembering UN standardization documents, I think that the term *type of feature* or *kind of feature* should be the solution, the first one appearing in the definition of term 118 *toponymic gazetter!* — Another problem: the definition starts with "Grouping" and gives a correct definition for the process. The term itself, on the other hand, seems to refer to the result of that process.

**033 coded representation:** Also *feature classes* have coded forms, moreover, they usually appear in coded form in *toponymic databases* or *gazetteers* (cf. BGN Gazetteers where they are called *coded designations*). Either the term *coded feature class* should be added, or this one should be extended in that sense. Another problem: anything could have a *coded representation*, therefore, you cannot use this term in the practice. Let's try to imagine a database where the name of a data field giving designations for the *type of feature* (or *kind of feature* as used in Resolution 4, Recommendation E of the first UN Conference) should now be labelled as *coded representation!*

**047 conversion table:** The inverted form of compound terms should be avoided in the text of definitions, They should be used in references only, therefore, *transliteration key*, *transcription key* and not *key, transliteration, key, transcription* is the right form.

**049 conversion, script:** Reference to *conversion, names* is wrong, *names* should be deleted.

**059 data dictionary:** *Digital data base* should be mentioned instead of *data base*.

**061 data element:** *Computer record* should be written instead of *computer file*, as files consist of records, and *records* consist of fields.

**065 data portability:** *Computer program* should be written instead of *program*.

**069 designation:** According to the reference to *descriptive term* it seems that the term *designation* is a synonym for *descriptive term*. However, in the Glossary 1987, *designation* was defined in the same meaning as the present *feature class*. BGN Gazetteers use the term *designation* without differentiating whether it refers to a *feature class* or *teers* use the term *designation* without differentiating whether it is refers to a *feature class* or

to a *single feature*. Let's try to imagine an innocent poor cartographer or linguist studying UN materials, and using the present glossary. The very same refers to term *196 multilingual map*.

**078 digraph:** See remark on *171 letter*. There are two types of digraphs. The English *sh* represents a single phoneme but it is not considered in the alphabet as a unit (cf. alphabetic sequence in the English). The Czech and Slovak *ch* is also a digraph, but it is considered as a unit in the respective alphabets. The same situation appears in the Hungarian alphabet. A possible solution could be a definition which states that a digraph etc. used as a unit in the alphabet of a language should be considered as one letter or character.

**084 element, generic:** The reference *false generic element* should be *generic element, false*. — Another problem: the *generic element* (if it does) does not usually indicate the *feature class*! The *generic element* gives the *type or kind of feature* in these cases! In Hungary we have about ten different *generic elements* indicating small water courses: *árok, csorgó, fok, folyás, patak, viz, vízfolyás*, etc. They all belong to the same *feature class*, but they are different *generic elements*!

**086 endonym:** As explained in the remarks to *091 exonym*, the very same toponym may be both an *endonym* and an *exonym*. If this is true, the definition should contain the statement that "*Where the language of the name used, or the name used itself, has no official status, an endonym may be an exonym at the same time.*" Example of this kind should also be added: *Dunaszerdahely* endonym in Slovakia and Hungarian exonym for *Dunajská Streda*.

**091 exonym:** There was a discussion on this term at the September meeting of the East Central and South-East Europe Division. According to one opinion the introduction of the term *endonym* instead of "*name used in the official language or languages*" (Glossary 1987) in the definition caused a radical change as an *endonym* is not necessarily in the official language(s). This might mean that the Hungarian *Dunaszerdahely* would not be an exonym for the Slovak *Dunajská Streda* as Hungarian is spoken by the majority of the population in that city. According to another interpretation, in consequence of the statement "*outside the area where that language has official status*" in the present glossary the *endonym Dunaszerdahely* is to be regarded as an *exonym* as well. It seems that this second interpretation is the right one. This situation has already been explained in my previous remarks without any visible result. By result I mean: a statement that two types of exonyms exist: 1. *exonym used locally* (the one being an exonym and endonym at the same time), 2. *exonym not used locally*. The very same situation has been described in *Glossar zur kartographischen Namenkunde* by Otto Back and Josef Breu as 1. *exonym in general* ("exonym, allgemein"), 2. *exonym in cartography* ("exonym im Sinne der Kartographie"). See some other remarks on term *086 endonym*.

**092 exonymization:** As I already mentioned, this definition is'n't quite clear. Where does happen this substitution? This question must be answered in the definition. According to the examples one has the impression that the substitution is to be meant in a language. Does substitution mean anything in this case to map lettering? Nothing at all. Everything depends on the choice of the cartographer or *geolinguist* (as Prof. Ormeling would say it). Just take the example of a situation where both the *endonym* (1st place) and the *exonym* (2nd place) are given, while the 2nd one is an *endonym* as well (cf. remarks on *086 endonym*). If there is really a process coined here as *exonymization*, distinction must be made between *exonyms without an endonym*, and *exonyms which are also exonyms*. A sub-group of *exonyms without an endonym*, and *exonyms which are also endonyms*. A sub-group of

exonyms has already been separated in this glossary (*traditional name*), why not another one, the *endoexonyms*?

**101 feature, hydrographic:** In Glossary 1987 there were two "hydro" terms: *hydrographic* and *hydrological*. Now there is only one, and it is not clearly stated that it covers both. Several UN documents refer to *undersea and marine features* as they both belong to areas beyond a single sovereignty. Where are these features? At least examples should be given.

**109 firmware:** I wonder if the term *eprom* = *erasable, programmable read only memory* is the right one for this definition. Hungarian characters are sometimes added to printers through *eproms*.

**118 gazetteer, toponymic:** The term *type of feature* should be *feature class*, in the context of this dictionary. At the same time it's a mistake that supports my remarks on term 032, and 033.

**146 index, place names:** In many countries gazetteers appear containing exclusively populated places. They give official standardized names with a number of additional data. They are different to toponymic indexes not only because of the number of additional data, but also because no data is given about location (if location means some types of coordinates or at least map sheet reference; at this point a need arises for a definition of *location*). I always had doubts in translating the title of our gazetteer of this kind into English. Therefore, I think there is a need for a term *place names gazetteer* to be included in this glossary.

**148 indigenous language:** This should be only a reference to 159 language, indigenous, and not a term with definition.

**149 indigenous name:** This should be only a reference to 222 name, indigenous, and not a term with definition.

**150 interactive:** *Program* should be *computer program*, *data base* should be *digital data base*.

**154 key, romanization:** *Letters of a Roman alphabet* should be *letters, digraphs etc. of a Roman alphabet*. See also remarks 155 key, transliteration.

**155 key, transliteration:** See remarks on 026 character and 171 letter. In case of a transliteration key for Hungarian into Hebrew you cannot take *graphic characters* of the Hungarian alphabet, you can take only the *units of that alphabet* consisting of letters described in connection with *letter* (individual letters, digraphs, trigraphs and tetragraphs). In other words: you can take characters, digraphs, trigraphs and tetragraphs. This definition is wrong for all alphabets having digraphs etc. See possible solutions either at 171 letter, or at 078 digraph.

**159 language, indigenous:** See remark on 148 indigenous language.

**171 letter:** The big problem with this definition: the existence of digraphs, trigraphs and tetragraphs. In most of the alphabets (not like the English) digraphs etc. are serving as units, while consisting of two or more characters. In the Czech and Slovak language in the alphabetic sequence the digraph *ch* comes after *h*. From this respect the present definition

is true only if the term *letter* includes digraphs, trigraphs and tetragraphs as well. See also the remarks on 078 digraph and 155 key, transliteration.

In Hungarian linguistic terminology the problem is solved the following way: The term *betű* ('letter') in a broad sense means both one unit in the alphabet (i.e. *a, á, b, c, cs, d, dz, dzs, e, é, f, g, gy* etc.) as well as a constituent part (if there is) of these units (e.g. *y* in the digraphs *gy, ny, ty*). But in the narrow sense, in linguistics, *betű* means only the units in the alphabet, while parts of a digraph etc. are called *írásjegy* or *jegy* ('character'). This also means, that in a strict sense, there is no *y letter* in the Hungarian alphabet, as it occurs only in digraphs or trigraphs (it occurs exceptionally in family names as foreign letter), but there is a *y character*. This narrow meaning is taught in schools from the very beginning.

**173 letter, consonant:** A consonant is a sound in itself, therefore, the expression *consonant sound* is a repetition of words. See definition of 298 segment.

**174 letter, vowel:** Again the problem of the digraphs etc. In the Finnish alphabet two vowel characters represent long vowels: *aa, ää, ee* etc. Are they considered as a letter or a digraph? — Another item: a vowel is a sound in itself, therefore, the expression *vowel sound* is a repetition of words (cf. definition of 298 segment). — See also the remark on 030 character, vowel.

**176 lettering, multilingual:** the reference is wrong, it should be perhaps *map, multilingual*

**177 lettering, multiscriptual:** the reference is wrong, it should be perhaps *map, multiscriptual*

**182 ligature:** An example would be useful from the very frequent devanagari ligatures, showing that ligatures occur also in scripts other than Roman.

**196 map, multilingual:** I am completely aware of the fact that the use of words and terms depends on agreement, and the original meaning of the constituent elements is in many cases of minor importance. However, in this term the word *multilingual* is strongly misleading. Most of the maps are *multilingual* because of the different countries and different languages represented. The situation described in this definition does not cover the complete field of maps using different languages. Besides, the previous UN definition for *multilingual lettering* had just the opposite meaning: it referred to rendering geographical names on a map according to UN recommendations, i.e. without exonyms, and using UN recommended conversion systems. Is it right that we recommend to use the very same English word (*multilingual*) in a 10 year period to represent two completely opposite terms? I think: no! Not to speak about the fact that the present glossary lacks any term on the type of map or atlas described previously as *multilingual lettering*. This glossary has no term for describing the solutions on the International Map 1 : 1 million, in the international atlases of Bertelsmann or Touring Club, etc. (I draw the attention again to reference 176 *multilingual lettering* to the missing *multilingual script*, already missing from the previous edition. )

**201 marker, vowel:** According to the definition of term 288 *defective alphabetic script* Thai is a defective alphabetic script. Consequently, this term and 372 *vowel point* are synonyms, and only one definition is needed.

**217 name, composite:** Definition is'nt quite clear, and the examples are'nt illustrative enough. A possible improvement:

Toponym consisting of a generic and of a specific element where usually the specific but also the generic element may consist of several words. In the absence of one of these elements, two or more words of the other element make also a composite name. Examples: *Mount Cook, Newport, La Coruna; Newfoundland, Sierra Nevada Oriental; Gobi Desert; Rostov-na-Donu, Stoke-on-Trent*. Complementary term: name, simplex.

I did'nt mentioned free morphemes as they could be regarded as words.

**222 name, indigenous:** See remark on 149 indigenous name.

**227 name, place:** It's not clear what was the the intention with part b) in this definition. The fact is that we need the term *populated place name* or *place name*. Can we say that *place name* is a defined term in this glossary? In translating this glossary I considered *place name* as a term in the meaning of *populated place name* of the Glossary 1987. Or *populated place name* is the preferred one? But it is only mentioned in the text of the definition, and not given as a term. Why?

**231 name, standardized:** If the definition b) of 214 *name* is correct, this term and term 342 *toponym, standardized*, are synonyms, and only one definition is needed, even if there is a reference to this fact. It is a question of principle: does this glossary consider terms differing from the one given in the glossary, and occurring in other contexts (e.g. UN resolutions) as synonyms, or not. From other examples I have concluded the result that they are sometimes even not mentioned, or given only as "invisible synonyms" by hiding them in the text of some definitions, like *type of feature* in 118 gazetter, toponymic.

**236 names conversion:** Reference is wrong, *names* should be deleted

**238 names survey:** Reference is wrong, *survey, toponymic* is the right one.

**263 pictogram:** In the definition *anobjecy* should be *an object*.

**281 romanization:** *UNGEEN-approved* should be *approved by a UN Conference*.

**287 script, conversion:** Reference is wrong, *names* should be deleted.

**288 script, defective alphabetic:** A consonant is a sound in itself, therefore the expression consonant sound is a repetition of words. See definition of term 298 segment.

**298 segment:** Phonetics has been defined in term 186 *linguistics* as part of it, therefore it is misleading to mention it in this form.

**301 sequence rules:** The example *toponyms in a gazetter* should be *toponyms in a toponymic gazetteer*, as there is no term *gazetteer* in this glossary.

**305 software:** The term *programs* should be *computer programs*.

**330 term, descriptive:** The most frequent word used as a *descriptive term* is an individual *generic term*. It should be mentioned in the definition.

**331 term, generic:** Reference should be. See also *generic element, to be*.

**342 toponym, standardized:** See remarks to 231 name, standardized.

**345 transcription:** The remark (*i.e. the sounds*) should be (*i.e. the phonemes*). A more simple solution: ... *in which the phonemes of a source language...* – Another problem: Am I right in saying that in case of the pinyin or other systems, a romanization of the Chinese is a transcription? In other words: conversion of logograms is effected by transcription?

The definition of term 048 conversion gives no other possibility. This should be somehow reflected in this definition. The trouble is, that the source language and the target language, are the same! I think there is a possibility to put it in a way that it fulfills the requirements of pinyin as well as the IPA, which is also a non-language bound transcription.

**347 transcription key:** Reference is wrong, and I wonder why this term is missing from the glossary (while *transliteration key* is given)?

**351 transliteration:** This is the only definition where digraphs etc. are considered. But why only on the target side? Source alphabets also have digraphs etc.

**372 vowel point:** See remark on term 201 marker, vowel.