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REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

REPORT OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN DIVISION  
(OTHER THAN ARABIC)

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REPORT OF THE  
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN DIVISION  
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**Terminology – List of Generic Terms in Hebrew**

A new list of Hebrew generic terms in toponymy was prepared in 1995. This includes all generic terms appearing in Israeli geographical names. In this connection it can be mentioned that the descriptive term (not a generic) *Irish bridge* appears at least 162 times in the topographic maps of Israel. A study of the relation of this term to Israeli geography and cartography has been made, based, among others, on material kindly provided by the Chairman of the Celtic Division, Mr. Art Ó Maolfabhail.

**The National Toponymic Database of Israel**

As reported already to the 17th Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, the *Survey of Israel*, national geodesy, mapping and geographic information authority, is proceeding with the production of the digital GIS-derived map series on various scales. In particular, the new 1:40,000 scale topographic map series is based chiefly on the national toponymic database. This includes all names conferred or ratified by the Government names Commission and which, therefore, have legal status<sup>1</sup>. Among these are the names of all populated places, all archaeological sites and ruins, all natural topographic features (orographic, hydrographic etc.) including all nature reserves and national parks, as well as names of interurban road and transport systems such as road interchanges and major junctions.

Thematic maps, and in particular the 1:50,000 scale geological maps of Israel as well as the very popular 1:50,000 Nature Trail series, carry the names appearing in the topographic base maps taken from the national toponymic data base, whereas names pertaining to the thematic component of the map (chiefly geological terminology in the first case and environmental as well as touristic nomenclature in the second) are supplied by the respective professional bodies.

As was the case with the analog non-digital maps in the past, the new digital town maps and plans derived partly from the national GIS carry names received from the respective municipal authorities, not necessarily in digital format. Street and other names within the areas of municipalities and other local authorities such as local and regional councils are not governed by the Government Names Commission and are, in most cases, conferred by local names boards, sometimes lacking the uniformity accorded by decisions of the national names authority.

## Recent Additions to the National Toponymic Database

The trend of the last six years has continued. The bulk of the additions to the national toponymic database approved by the Government Names Commission in the course of the past two years have been in the domain of the very dense transport network. In spite of the national numbering system, all intersections and junctions on the first, second and third order roads receive names. Nature reserves, too, as well as national parks and other nature recreation facilities, have been increasing at a fast rate, and so have their names. A number of features had their names changed by the Government Names Commission as a result of applications by members of the public.

## Review of Transliteration Systems

Forty years have passed since the present romanization system of Hebrew was approved by the Academy of the Hebrew Language (1956) and published in the Official Gazette No. 519 of the State of Israel. An even longer time has elapsed since the introduction of the transliteration system from Arabic into Hebrew (1941). These two transliteration systems have been consistently applied in all official maps of Israel. However, while also used in signposting on the interurban road net, there have been various bodies, public and private, who deviated from these rules in dealing with geographical names in Israel. This fact resulted from the different linguistic background of these bodies, often employing names in phonetic transcription and not in reversible transliteration. In particular this was evident in romanization used in touristic texts (e.g. brochures, guidebooks and maps) published in the different languages spoken by the tourists, which often make use of phonetic transcription into these separate languages. This issue was mentioned already in a Paper presented to the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1992.<sup>2</sup>

The Mapping Council of Israel has, therefore, decided to review the writing systems used in the official maps of Israel in Hebrew and Latin script produced by the *Survey of Israel*, based on the experience gained from many decades of use of the existing systems. Incidentally, this applies not only to names transliterated from or into other scripts but also to the orthography of names in Hebrew, where a trend towards the "ktiv malé" orthography will probably be used, involving a minimum of vowel points. Any changes which will eventually be introduced will affect the production of hundreds of map sheets involving many thousands of names. The point in time chosen for this review and eventual change was dictated by the changeover from analog photogrammetric mapping to digital GIS-based surveying and cartography. Information on new developments in transliteration systems will be supplied to UNGEGN as and when available.

## Inter-Divisional Cooperation

As expressed in Resolution No. 11 of the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, the English Version 2.0 of the *Dictionary of Toponymic Terminology* was to be translated into the five other official languages of the United Nations – French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic. Thanks to the efforts of Prof. Du, China, in cooperation with the editor of the *Dictionary*, Prof. Kadmon, a preliminary Chinese version was produced already in 1994. In principle this translation, when finalised, should form an integral part of the *Dictionary of Toponymic Terminology*. No news concerning translation into the other four official languages have been received.

On the other hand, the Dutch- and German-Speaking Division (DGSD) of UNGEGN decided to produce a German version of the Dictionary adapted to the particular needs of the member-states of this Division. In 1993 a "tentative" translation into German was produced, and the Convenor of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology in Israel was asked to review it and add corrections and comments. An improved final version was later produced, with the collaboration of numerous members of the German Ständiger Ausschuss für Geographische Namen (StAGN) and the Dutch- and German-Speaking Division and the Editor of the *Dictionary*, Chairman of the Eastern Mediterranean Division. This appeared as *Deutsches Glossar zur toponymischen Terminologie*, published by the Institut für Angewandte Geodäsie, Frankfurt am Main, in 1995.

### Education

Courses in Toponymy continued to be held in the Department of Geography of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, reported upon in detail to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 1987<sup>3</sup>.

The Israeli Television Authority presents, within Teletext services, a regular item on new geographical names, accompanied by maps and prepared by the Secretariat of the Government Names Commission.

### Information Paper on UNGEGN for ICOS

At the request of the the Board of Directors of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) at its meeting in Oslo in June 1994, a detailed informative paper on the aims and activities of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and the UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names has been written by Prof. Kadmon, Chairman of the Eastern Mediterranean Division. At the time of writing of this Report the volume of *ONOMA* in which the paper appears was in print.<sup>4</sup>

### References

1. See "The Legal Status of Official Endonyms in Israel". Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 1992, document E/CONF.85/L.4 of 17 June 1992.
2. "The legal status of official endonyms in Israel", op. cit.
3. See "Toponymy Courses at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 1987, Vol. II: Technical Papers. Document E/CONF.79/5/Add.1. See also N. Kadmon, "Toponymy as a University discipline". 19th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, Aberdeen, 1996.
4. N. Kadmon, "Luxor or al-Uqsur – Skagerak, Skagerack or Skagerrak? The United Nations and the Standardization of Geographical Names". *ONOMA*, Vol. 32, 1996, 15 pp. (in print).