

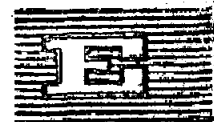
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STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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REPORT BY VENEZUELA ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

By reason of its geographical position as part of the Western Hemisphere, Venezuela has a varied toponymy derived from the indigenous groups which settled in its territory at various times over the centuries before the discovery of America. Many hydrographic and orographic features all over the country bear names of interest to students of pre-columbian language and ethnology.

As in other countries of Spanish America, the influence of the Conquest is also in evidence in the names of towns, rivers and other geographical features. The colonial area and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have also provided their share of geographical terms, which usually apply to local topographical features in the various regions of Venezuela.

The study of Venezuelan names requires the help of a number of scientific disciplines, such as history and sociology, in order that the examination of existing cartographic data and current usage may be combined with the application of rules for the standardization and classification of toponyms.

Under a cartographic programme now in progress in Venezuela, names are collected in the course of geodetic surveys carried out with photogrammetric support. The purpose of the cartographic programme is to prepare basic maps, each covering 5" latitude by 7.5" longitude on a scale of 1:25,000. These maps, scaled down to 1:100,000 are used in preparing maps covering 20" latitude by 30" longitude, which are now being published.

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COLLECTION OF NAMES

The collection of names is the specific function of a Section of the Geodetic Division of the Directorate of National Cartography, which began its work in the middle of 1960 and has so far classified 4,800 aerial views, most of them on the scale of 1:60,000 or 1:50,000 with a few on the scale of 1:25,000.

An area of some 262,850 km² has been covered by this classification in Venezuela. This area comprises three-quarters of the State of Falcón, the eastern shore of Lake Maracaibo and the State of Zulia; 60 per cent of the State of Lara; 70 per cent of the State of Trujillo; 20 per cent of the State of Mérida; 20 per cent of the State of Tachira; 60 per cent of the State of Barinas; 80 per cent of the State of Apure; 50 per cent of the State of Carabobo; 70 per cent of the State of Aragua; one-third of the State of Miranda; 80 per cent of the State of Guárico; 60 per cent of the State of Sucre; 60 per cent of the State of Anzoátegui; 50 per cent of the State of Monagas, and the island of Tortuga.

In addition to this work for medium-scale publications, forty-five urban areas have been classified for large-scale publications on the basis of 1:5,000 enlargements and views.

This work is carried out according to general rules, and the symbols used are those given in the handbooks on classification.

The field work of classification is done in two stages: preparation and execution.

Preparation is the responsibility of the Section. It involves selecting the views to be classified in each project; setting the limits of superimposition for views of transfer zones and indicating the numbers of adjacent views; providing maps, charts or similar documents on the working area; relating the views which are to be classified to the same centres; marking the names of towns, villages, principal rivers, etc., on the views; and selecting and delimiting the enlargements of populated centres which are to be classified in greater detail and to show more information.

Execution entails, first of all, a comprehensive study of the area to be classified, in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the rules and in the Section's supplementary circulars.

Information is usually obtained from local sources. Efforts are made to enlist the co-operation of the persons in each locality who are best informed in the matter or who are most likely to provide accurate data. In open country, the information is obtained from guides and other persons familiar with the terrain, who accompany the classifiers on their travels.

The technique of classification and the use of signs, colours, legends and explanations conform, as already stated, to the instructions given in the handbooks.

Attached to each view is a card giving the names of all features shown on it; evidence of correct spelling, where required; and a description of the named feature (populated centre which may be a capital, district, municipality, village, settlement or hamlet; lake, river, ravine, mountain range, isolated height, etc.). This is followed by the name of the informant, and the report is completed with the date and the signature of the person who did the work.

THE SECTION ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

This new Section has been established in the Directorate of National Cartography, with the following duties:

1. To examine the field data;
2. To prepare toponymic index-cards;
3. To revise the names given in the original source-documents;
4. To prepare geographical dictionaries, State by State, and gazetteers;
5. To select the type faces for printing names on maps in accordance with the rules in force;
6. To compile a Venezuelan bibliography of geographical names.



