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Item 15 of the Provisional Agenda

MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON EXONYMS

On Exonyms of the Hungarian Language\*

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\* Prepared by Béla Pokoly, Hungary

## On Exonyms of the Hungarian Language

As was put forward on the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of UNGEGN in January 2000 (WP 65), the Hungarian language uses a rather large number of exonyms compared to the size of Hungary. The statement is true in general, although for the levels of use the definition given in the findings of a paper at an earlier meeting of the subject well defines the situation in Hungary, too: „exonyms are most frequently used for state names, are also preferred by the mass media, in everyday communication, in the case of historical and natural features, whereas scientific, technical (e.g. cartographic), multinational as well as means of communication employed in the endonym country tend to make the least use of exonyms”<sup>1</sup>

A smaller part of this set comprises such “classical” cases, as country names, names of (especially European) cities, and of major physical features of the world. While most of the latter names are translations (e.g. *Nagy-Medve-tó* for Great Bear Lake, or *Nagy-Vízválasztó-hegység* for Great Dividing Range), there are cases, especially country names, when a special etymological background explains the exonym. Examples for these include *Lengyelország* for Poland (Polska), *Olaszország* for Italy (Italia) or *Bécs* for Vienna (Wien).

Most of the Hungarian exonyms however, can be tied to historical circumstances, and to the related fact, that several million ethnic Hungarians live in countries neighbouring Hungary. As the Hungarian language is only official within Hungary, geographical features named in Hungarian in these neighbouring countries and used in Hungary qualify for the classification exonym. But these names are also used in these countries in the indigenous Hungarian language as unofficial name variants<sup>2</sup>. If we take into account the current definition of endonym, we realize that these name variants are endonyms, albeit not standardized endonyms. Some specialists are arguing that these names are in fact neither, they are of a type of name between the two<sup>3</sup>. Some examples of this type are: *Marosvásárhely* (for the Romanian city of Târgu Mures), *Gyilkos-tó* (for Lacul Rosu also in Romania), *Dunaszerdahely* (for the Slovakian town Dunajská Streda) and *Csallóköz* (for Žitný ostrov, a large river island of the Danube also in Slovakia).

In last year’s meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms a suggestion was presented by a member of the Working Group for a new definition of the term exonym<sup>4</sup>. He

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ifag.de/kartographie/Stagn/GeoNames2001.htm>, GeoNames 2001. International Workshop on Exonyms, Berchtesgaden, 1-2 October 2001, Results of the workshop and proposals of UN resolutions, Jörn SIEVERS, Frankfurt am Main, Peter JORDAN, Vienna

<sup>2</sup> compare the situation written in the Preface to the Selected German Language Exonyms, *Jörn Sievers* E/CONF.94/CRP.33

<sup>3</sup> On the boundaries of Endonyms and Exonyms, by Zs. *Bartos-Elekes*, in: *Geodézia és Kartográfia*, Budapest, 2002/4

<sup>4</sup> The UNGEGN Definitions of „Endonym” and „Exonym” by Paul Woodman, Paper for the Meeting of the UNGEGN WG on Exonyms, Prague, September 24-26

suggested that the Glossary term “indigenous language” should be introduced within the definitions of both endonym and exonym. He further suggests that, in the definition of an exonym, the concept of “official” should be replaced by “spoken”. Although the proposal was received favourably by Hungarian experts, the effect it would have on all former relevant resolutions should also be taken into account.

When discussing these questions our experts (Ervin Földi and others) have also raised the point, what the effect of recent legislation in some neighbouring countries on the use of minority place names may have on the status of these names as exonyms (Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 191/1994 Coll. on the Indication of Settlements in the Language of National Minorities, permitting the use of certain minority language of place names on roadside name plates, Law on Local Public Administration No. 215/2001 of Romania allowing certain place names to be used in the mother tongue of minority language in the local administration). The names of certain localities, for example those above like *Dunaszerdahely* or *Marosvásárhely* may no longer have to be regarded as exonyms, but we are not sure. The legal measures mentioned stipulates a limit of 20 % within the resident population for the given minority for the right to use the minority place name on road signs or in the local administration.