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Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms

Polish lists of geographical names of the World

Submitted by Poland*

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Polish lists of geographical names of the World (Summary)

In 2002, the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland started to work on *Nazewnictwo geograficzne świata (Geographical Names of the World)* developed by a large group of specialists: geographers, historians, linguists and cartographers. Twelve volumes were published and individual volumes range from several to tens of countries and non-self-governing territories and names from about 1100 to about 9200 geographical objects. In all volumes about 53,000 names for geographic features are included. About 10,000 of these objects have Polish exonyms.

The lists include two types of names – Polish exonyms and endonyms. The Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland standardizes exclusively Polish names (without handling the standardization of endonyms), and the exonyms included in the lists are the only Polish names recommended by the Commission.

Lists include the names of geographical features which, solely from the linguistic point of view, were considered by the Commission to be correct and in line with the knowledge gathered so far. In no case do these recommendations have anything in common with the Commission taking any stand on political matters or those relating to administrative status of each territory.

Geographical Names of the World contained glossaries of geographical terms, which appear in the listed names, and the other major terms with their Polish equivalents. In total, the glossaries for 72 languages were included in those volumes. Romanization tables for 28 languages were also included there, as well as rules of pronunciation for 8 languages.

All volumes of *Geographical Names of the World* are available in electronic version (PDF format) at the Commission's website: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/wydawnictwa_ngs.php.

Polish lists of geographical names of the World

In 1951, the Commission on Geographical Names¹ established in 1951 and attached to the Polish Geographical Society began its work aimed at standardization of the usage of geographical names in Poland and at preparing a list of names considered correct and recommended to be used. Until 1956 the Commission had established 19,720 names of features from across the world, a large part of which were exonyms. Lists of established names were published regularly in the years 1952 to 1956 in the form of 15 volumes. 1959 saw the publication of the overall list of corrected and updated names contained in the volumes, with approximately 25,000 names in it². The names included in that list were recognized by the Language Culture Commission of the Linguistics Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences as the norm, and, consequently, they were widely used in many dictionaries, encyclopaedias and geographical studies.

In the later years, the Commission compiled and published only lists of the names of countries³ and established Polish exonyms⁴.

Nearly 50 years after the work on the first list was launched, in 2002, the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland (KSNG) started to work on *Nazewnictwo geograficzne świata* (*Geographical Names of the World*) developed by a large group of specialists: geographers, historians, linguists and cartographers (primary group of authors consisted of 28 people, moreover lists were verified by reviewers, and were discussed during the meetings of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names)

¹ This name was used until 1953, for the years 1953 to 1972 it changed to Commission to Establish Geographical Names, for 1973 to 1984 to Commission on Standardization of World Geographical Names, for 1984 to 2001 to Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside Poland. Since 2001 it has been entitled Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland.

² Ratajski L., Szewczyk J., Zwoliński P. *Polskie nazewnictwo geograficzne świata* (*Geographical Names of the World*). Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1959.

³ *Urzędowy wykaz nazw państw w Europie i ZSRR* (*Official list of country names in Europe and USSR*) in 1975 http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/dzurz_mnszwit_1975_nr_2_poz_6.pdf

Urzędowy wykaz nazw państw pozaeuropejskich (*Official list of country names (other than Europe)*) in 1977 http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/dzurz_mnszwit_1977_nr_4_poz_13.pdf

Urzędowy wykaz nazw państw świata (*Official list of country names*) in 1986 http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/dzurz_mimniszw_1986_nr_8_poz_32.pdf

Nazwy państw świata, ich stolic i mieszkańców – Names of Countries, Their Capitals and Inhabitants in 1997 http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/publikacje/nazwy_panstw_swiate_1997.pdf

Nazwy państw świata, ich stolic i mieszkańców – Names of Countries, Their Capitals and Inhabitants in 2003 http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/wykaz_panstw_2.php

Nazwy państw – Country names in 2006 http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/wykaz_panstw_1.php

Nazwy państw świata, ich stolic i mieszkańców – Names of Countries, Their Capitals and Inhabitants in 2007 <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/wykaz.php>

⁴ *List of the most important Polish exonyms for Europe (without USSR)* in 1982

http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/list_of_the_most_important_polish_exonyms_for_europe.pdf

Polskie nazwy geograficzne świata. Część I. Europa (bez Europy Wschodniej) (*Polish geographical names of the world. Part I. Europe (without Eastern Europe)*) in 1994

http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/polskie_nazwy_geograficzne_swiate_1.pdf

Polskie nazwy geograficzne świata. Część II. Europa Wschodnia i Azja (*Polish geographical names of the world. Part II. Eastern Europe and Asia*) in 1996

http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/polskie_nazwy_geograficzne_swiate_2.pdf

Polskie nazwy geograficzne świata. Część III. Afryka, Ameryka Północna, Ameryka Południowa, Australia i Oceania, Antarktyka (*Polish geographical names of the world. Part III. Africa, North America, South America, Australia and Oceania, the Antarctic*) in 1994

http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/polskie_nazwy_geograficzne_swiate_3.pdf

Polskie nazwy geograficzne świata. Część IV. Oceany i morza (*Polish geographical names of the world. Part IV. Oceans and seas*) in 1994

http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/polskie_nazwy_geograficzne_swiate_iv_oceany_i_morza.pdf

As work progresses, volumes with the names of separate regions of the world were published. This collection consists of twelve volumes:

1. *Ameryka, Australia i Oceania (The Americas, Australia and Oceania)*;
2. *Bliski Wschód (Middle East)*;
3. *Afryka (Africa)*;
4. *Azja Południowa (South Asia)*;
5. *Azja Środkowa i Zakaukazie (Central Asia and Transcaucasia)*;
6. *Białoruś, Rosja, Ukraina (Belarus, Russia, Ukraine)*;
7. *Azja Południowo-Wschodnia (Southeast Asia)*;
8. *Antarktyka (The Antarctic)*;
9. *Azja Wschodnia (East Asia)*;
10. *Morza i oceany (Seas and oceans)*;
11. *Europa – część I (Europe – part 1)*;
12. *Europa – część II (Europe – part 2)*.

The lists are to include geographical names for a total of some 53,000 geographical features.

Over the last fifty years, the rules governing the establishment of the recommended names have changed. It is mainly about the correctness of the use of exonyms. Initially, their broad usage or even translating the names which were not known in Poland into Polish was recommended. Later, with regard to UNGEGN's recommendations, more caution was exercised in this respect. However, the problem is complicated, it provokes controversy and disputes, and opinions and decisions made in this respect by the Commission have sometimes been very disputable.

Currently, the Commission's view is that one should not remove the names which are well-established in Polish and which, demonstrating the relationships between Poland and sometimes distant countries, are part of Polish cultural heritage, which cannot be impoverished. It also refers to the territories historically associated with Poland and inhabited by a large Polish minority; for these areas it is particularly important to correctly establish names recommended for use in Poland. At the same time, using original names facilitates contacts and enables usage of foreign sources, mainly the Internet. Hence, on one hand, it is necessary to protect those Polish names which deserve to be protected and, on the other hand, to eliminate names which were introduced rashly or those which are no longer used.

The solutions adopted by the Commission were the effect of heated discussions and are not devoid of subjectivity. It is because the criteria for establishing names cannot be unambiguous – even more because language is living. Equally arguable is certainly the choice of names of geographical features included in individual volumes, although special care was always taken to include in them the biggest, the most significant, the most characteristic, the best-known features, or those referred to in literature.

The lists include two types of names – Polish exonyms and endonyms. The Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland standardizes exclusively Polish names (without handling the standardization of endonyms), and the exonyms included in the lists are the only Polish names recommended by the Commission. The absence of an exonym for a feature is tantamount to stating that the Commission recommends no Polish name for it, even if that name can be found in some publications. In such cases the only recommended form is the original name.

Efforts were made to include in the lists the official forms of endonyms originating from national names lists, topographical maps and other official sources. When it proved impossible, the most reliable international publications were used. Therefore sometimes the

official name forms may be disputable because, in spite of the fact that they were established with great care, there were sometimes obstacles which were difficult to overcome. They may have resulted from inaccurate source materials or even from differing, contradictory versions of names provided in official publications of governmental institutions or legislative authorities.

For areas where there are several official languages the Commission's guiding principle was that all nationwide official languages are equal. Therefore, the fact of listing in the first place geographical names in one language does not mean favoring the names in that language. In a case where a given country has regional official languages or individual features have official names also in minority languages, the names in those languages have mainly been provided after the names in the national language.

For names in the languages using a non-Roman script the romanized form has been provided in accordance with the rules recommended by the Commission, to be applied in Poland for geographical names from a specific language. In the case of the majority of such languages, both the Polish transcription form and transliteration form have been provided (with exception for some Asian languages – for the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Lao, Burmese and Khmer only transliteration is recommended). It must be stressed that the Polish transcription form does not mean that we have a Polish name – despite the fact that Polish letters were used, the name remains an endonym. In the case of non-Roman scripts, the first to appear is the Polish transcription of the original name and then its transliteration.

The lists include the names of geographical features which, solely from the linguistic point of view, were considered by the Commission to be correct and in line with the knowledge gathered so far. In no case do these recommendations have anything in common with the Commission taking any stand on political matters or those relating to administrative status of each territory. Any stands on political issues, if they have to be taken, are always in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as for example was the case with recognizing Kosovo as a separate country or using the name Macedonia.

The volumes open with a list of recommended names of oceans and large physico-geographical or regional units, the size of which are bigger than the area of several countries. To follow are the names according to countries or territories, for which an abbreviated Polish name and the name in their official languages have been provided. Then the names of individual geographical features have been listed, with a division into categories of objects. The occurrence of individual categories of geographical features depends on the specific character of a country. This is why in certain countries some categories do not occur. It should be also mentioned, that some categories were modified along with publication of the successive volumes. Within each category, the names have been listed alphabetically.

Entries relating to individual geographical features contain a Polish language name (exonym), if it is recommended, and next the original name in the official language (endonym) – or original names if there are more than one official languages or a feature has official names in several languages.

If two or more Polish names are given for one object (e.g. Mała Syrta; Zatoka Kabiska), the first name is the one which the Commission considers as preferable, while the second name is considered as an acceptable. Sometimes only an exonym is provided; it means that a given geographical feature is not named in the country where it is situated or no correct local name of any such feature was found. For some features historical names have also been given, including recently changed names.

The scope of information contained in the individual volumes evolved. In the initial volumes (the Americas, Australia, Africa) less geographical names were included. It is especially visible in the case of small states and territories, for which just a few names were

given. Also, the scope of the additional information was changed. In volumes no. 1 and 3 glossaries of terms were not included. From volume no. 5 romanization tables are included. Along with publishing the successive volumes the typographic layout were also changed – Polish names were clearly marked (bold letters), languages were clearly described (with their name or an abbreviation of their name), the transcription and transliteration forms of names were explicitly described (abbreviations *trb.* and *trl.* respectively).

Individual volumes of *Nazewnictwo geograficzne świata* (*Geographical Names of the World*) range from several to tens of countries and non-self-governing territories and names from about 1100 to about 9200 geographical objects. In all volumes about 53,000 names for geographic features are included. About 10,000 of these objects have Polish exonyms:

- *Zeszyt 1. Ameryka, Australia i Oceania* (*Vol. 1. The Americas, Australia and Oceania*) – the list was published in 2004, it contained names for approximately 5500 geographical features from 89 countries and dependent territories from North America, South America, Australia and Oceania, with Polish exonyms for app. 950 objects.
- *Zeszyt 2. Bliski Wschód* (*Vol. 2. Middle East*) – the list was published in 2004, it included names for approximately 3900 geographical features from 20 countries and dependent territories (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Akrotiri, Dhekelia, Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jerusalem (due to the disputed status, in this list treated as a separate entity), Palestine, Yemen, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Sudan, Syria, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates), with Polish exonyms for app. 550 objects. It also contained glossaries of terms for three languages (Arabic, Hebrew and Turkish).
- *Zeszyt 3. Afryka* (*Vol. 3. Africa*) – the list was published in 2004, it covered names for approximately 7100 geographical features from 58 countries and dependent territories of Africa, with Polish exonyms for app. 650 objects.
- *Zeszyt 4. Azja Południowa* (*Vol. 4. South Asia*) – the list was published in 2005, it contained names for approximately 3800 geographical features from 7 countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), with Polish exonyms for app. 200 objects. It also contained glossaries of terms for 8 languages (Bengali, Dzongkha, Hindi, Maldivian, Nepali, Urdu, Sinhalese and Tamil).
- *Zeszyt 5. Azja Środkowa i Zakaukazie* (*Vol. 5. Central Asia and Transcaucasia*) – the list was published in 2005, it encompassed names for approximately 4300 geographical features from 10 countries (Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), with Polish exonyms for app. 450 objects. Romanization tables for 11 languages were also included here, for 8 of them (Dari, Pashto, Armenian, Georgian, Persian, Kazakh, Kirghiz and Tajik) both transliteration and Polish phonetic transcription were listed, and for 3 languages (Abkhaz, Ossetian and Karakalpak) only transliteration was listed. In addition, for three languages (Azerbaijani, Turkmen and Uzbek), which recently passed into the Latin alphabet, the rules of pronunciation of individual letters were given. Glossaries of terms for 10 languages (Dari, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Persian, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Tajik, Turkmen and Uzbek) were also included here.
- *Zeszyt 6. Białoruś, Rosja, Ukraina* (*Vol. 6. Belarus, Russia, Ukraine*) – the list was published in 2005, it covered names for approximately 2900 geographical features from 3 countries, with Polish exonyms for app. 1550 objects. Romanization tables for 3 languages (Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian) with both transliteration and Polish phonetic transcription were also included here, as well as glossaries of terms for these 3 languages. Due to the availability of new toponymic materials in Belarusian and Ukrainian, and the adoption of many new Polish exonyms for objects from the area of these three countries, Commission decided to publish updated lists of names from this

region – so, the lists of names of objects from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, in the enlarged and updated version, were included in the volume 11 of 2009.

- *Zeszyt 7. Azja Południowo-Wschodnia (Vol. 7. Southeast Asia)* – the list was published in 2006, it contained names for approximately 5100 geographical features from 14 countries and dependent territories (Burma, Brunei, the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, East Timor, Vietnam, Christmas Island, Cocos Islands and Spratly Islands), with Polish exonyms for app. 250 objects. Romanization tables for 4 languages (Burmese, Khmer, Lao and Thai) were also included here, for which only transliteration were listed (Polish phonetic transcription isn't recommended for these languages). In addition, for Burmese and Vietnamese the rules of pronunciation were given. It also contained glossaries of terms for 10 languages (Burmese, Tagalog, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Malaysian, Thai, Tetum, Vietnamese and Cocos Islands Malay).
- *Zeszyt 8. Antarktyka (Vol. 8. The Antarctic)* – the list was published in 2006, it consisted of names for approximately 1100 geographical features from the Antarctic and adjacent territories and islands (the French Southern and Antarctic Lands, the South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Gough Island, Macquarie Island, Bouvet Island, the Heard Island and McDonald Islands, the Prince Edward Islands). In the Annex all geographic names established since 1978 during Polish Antarctic expeditions were listed. In the volume Polish exonyms for app. 550 objects were given, and also glossary of terms used in geographic names from this area was included here.
- *Zeszyt 9. Azja Wschodnia (Vol. 9. East Asia)* – the list was published in 2006, it included names for approximately 4500 geographical features from 6 countries and territories (China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, North Korea and Mongolia), with Polish exonyms for app. 300 objects. Romanization tables for 5 languages (Tibetan, Uyghur, Japanese, Korean and Mongolian) were also given here, for 4 of them only transliteration were listed and for one (Mongolian) both transliteration and Polish phonetic transcription were provided. In addition, for three languages (Chinese, Japanese and Korean) the rules of pronunciation were displayed. Glossaries of terms for 4 languages (Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Mongolian) were also included here.
- *Zeszyt 10. Morza i oceany (Vol. 10. Seas and oceans)* – the list was published in 2008, it encompassed names for approximately 1700 seas and its parts (gulfs, bays, straits and other sea water bodies), currents and objects of seabed. In the volume Polish exonyms for app. 900 objects were given as well as glossary of English terms used in geographic names of undersea features.
- *Zeszyt 11. Europa, Część I (Vol. 11. Europe, part 1)* – the list was published in 2009, it contained names for approximately 9200 geographical features from 21 countries of Central, Southern and Eastern Europe (Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Kosovo, Lithuania, Latvia, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia (including the Asian part), Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine and Hungary), with Polish exonyms for app. 4700 objects. Romanization tables for 8 languages (Belarusian, Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Russian, Ukrainian, Rusyn from Vojvodina and Rusyn from Slovakia) were also included here, with both transliteration and Polish phonetic transcription. In addition, glossaries of terms for 18 languages (Albanian, Belarusian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Estonian, Greek, Lithuanian, Latvian, Macedonian, Russian, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Ukrainian and Hungarian) were given here.
- *Zeszyt 12. Europa, Część II (Vol. 12. Europe, part 2)* – the list was published in 2010, it consisted of names for approximately 8200 geographical features from 30 countries and territories of Western, Southern and Northern Europe (the volume includes the names of geographical features situated in Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Faroe Islands,

Finland, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Iceland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Italy, Jan Mayen, Jersey, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Svalbard, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Vatican City), with Polish exonyms for app. 1400 objects. In addition, glossaries of terms for 19 languages (Catalan, Danish, Dutch, English, Faroese, Finnish, French, German, Icelandic, Irish, Italian, Luxembourgish, Maltese, Manx, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romansh, Spanish and Swedish) were also included here.

The glossaries comprise geographical terms, which appear in the listed names, and the other major terms with their Polish equivalents. In total, the glossaries for 72 languages were included in volumes. The most extensive glossaries, with more than 200 terms, are those for terms used in Ukrainian, English, Russian, German, Arabic and French. Romanization tables for 28 languages were included in volumes (for 10 languages only rules of transliteration were given, and for 18 languages both rules of transliteration and Polish phonetic transcription were given), as well as rules of pronunciation for 8 languages.

All volumes of *Nazewnictwo geograficzne świata* (*Geographical Names of the World*) are available in electronic version (PDF format) at the website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland, but in Polish only: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/wydawnictwa_ngs.php.

