

UNITED NATIONS

Third Session of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts
on Geographical Names

2 to 12 February 1971

Information Paper No. 6

Annexum 1

Working Group of Undersea Features

Research On Undersea Feature Names

My interest in all kind of names and terms belonging to the sea goes back to my 12th year.

My first work (paper) in question was: Stadnamn frå sjøen i Nordaust-Ryfylke (1938), printed without my knowing 1944. (Place-names from the sea in the North-East of Ryfylke. (On the West-Coast of Norw.)) In this paper (book) I have dealt with some undersea names and some terms for seabed features.

In 1941 I have written about Fishing-ground names and terms for seabed features outside the three miles border in the open sea between Traena in Nordland Fylke (administrative division) to the border of Russia and Finnmark Fylke. It was a paper written for the Norwegian Government as a plea for the International Court of Haag at the process between Gr. Britain and Norway about the fishing border around the Norwegian Coast. It was the first time that place-name studies was used at an international process.* (See note, page 2)

For more than 20 years I collected personally about 20,000 names on fishing-grounds round the Norwegian Coast out to about 30-40 n. miles from the coast, and some places 100 n. miles. In 1961 Norske fiskeméd, Landsoversyn og to gamle médbøker (Norwegian Fishing-grounds, General Survey and Two Old books containing fishing-grounds and their bearing-lines) was printed. This book (380 pages) contains an account of the terms and names used to describe the various fishing-grounds and banks, as well as those used as the last element (generic term) in compound words and names of this kind. The material, which is compared with similar material and information from other parts of Scandinavia and Scandinavian settled

areas, is divided into three main-groups, viz: Words associated with the sea and the ocean: hav "haf", sjø "sea", tare "alga-ground", båe "sunken rock", - Words describing the seabed with its hills and valleys. The fisherman knows this seabed landscape intimately, and in order to describe it he has used words and terms for corresponding topographical features on land, such as bakke "slope", berg "mountain" djup "deep", egg "edge of a bank", hamar "steep rock", klakk "small mountain, mountain slope, ridge", stall "a sort of table plateau", "hill slope", søyle "mud bassin", tå "toe, spur, sort of point, cap e.g. in the continental shelf, or in a bank". - Words and terms to describe fishing-grounds and directly associated with fishing. Hald for instance is used for a place where the boat is held during the fishing. Méd is a place which is situated "in the middle", i.e. in the point of intersection of back-bearings used by fishermen to identify a position out at sea; reid is the place where the boat drifts over a fishing-ground, etc.

Chapter III explains how they identify their fishing-grounds in the open sea, and the terms they use for their bearings. Examples are also given of the way names of mountains used as landmarks eventually come to be associated with fishing-grounds, and how names of fishing-grounds can conversely come to be used as names of mountain. Chapter V is an account of fishing-grounds and bearing lines within a limited area south-west of Karmøy (on the West-coast north of Stavanger) off the coast of the County Rogaland, and serves as an illustration to the first four chapters. This account is based on a old médbok (a small handwritten notebook containing the names of fishing grounds and bearing lines) for the area in question and dating back to about 1800. This is compared with a médbok based on the same

source and used right up to the present and with the terminology used by fishermen of to-day.

At the International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, Amsterdam, I gave a paper: Similarity and identity between names of shoales, reefs and half-tide rocks at sea and names of waterfalls and rivers.

Printed 1966 in the Proceedings of the Eight Congress.

At the Fourth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, Uppsala 1952, I gave a paper: "Sur l'appellation et l'âge des lieux de pêche situés au large de la côte norvégienne.

In several other papers from my hand remarks on sea-bed features and terms is mentioned, too but I feel it needless to recount them all here.

*) Les Noms des lieux de pêche depuis Traena jusqu'au Varangerfjord
Annexe 93.

As chief for Norsk Stadnamnarkiv in 30 years place-names (also under sea feature names) on more than 45 new sea-maps (charts) has been proved by me, and I have collected and written down in phonetic script about 100,000 different names on the coast and out at sea. But anyhow, we in Norway are only at the beginning of working with problems connected with coastal names and names out at sea.

NORSK STADNAMNARKIV, University of Oslo, Blindern, Oslo 3.

(signed)

Per Hovda.

NOTES

on papers given by G.F. Delaney (chairman of the Working Group On Undersea Feature Nomenclature) 11 December 1970 and dealing with the four areas in the report of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Geographical Names (ESA/RT/C/GN/1 April 29, 1970).

Paper I Suggested Principles For The Selection of Undersea Feature Names

- 1. Priority. Agreed.
- 2. Identification. Agreed.
- 3. Acceptable Derivation. Agreed.
- 4. Personal Names. Agreed.
- 5. Languages. Agreed.
- 6. Conventional Names (Exonyms). Agreed.
- 7. Non-Translation of Descriptive Names. Agreed.
- 8. Recognition of New Names. Agreed.

Paper II Definition Of Descriptive Terminology

As not even GEBCO Advisory Committee has reached to a full conclusion in this field, it seems to that The Ad Hoc Group's first step must be to find "a firm base of acceptably defined seabed descriptive terminology" to a useful initial recommendation. It may perhaps be discussed in The Group before we finally recommend the GEBCO List (your Reference 12). I fully agree with your last sentence

Paper 2: Definition of additional generic terminology

I am glad to mention what you say on page 2 in the same paper!

Paper III

- 3. Methods Of Recording And Stabilizing Underseas Nomenclature.
- 4. Determination Of Methods Of Centralizing And Dissemination.

Your wish is that these two items must be treated as one. Reading your reasons it appears to me that your proposal better can solve the whole problem than settle the two items separately.

Your statement on the pages 5-8 is of great value and I agree with your Summary page 8.

Paper IV General Conclusions

It appears to me that you have brought up a proposal not only appropriate for a discussion in The Group but also a very good basis for a definite report to the Ad Hoc Group's February meeting.

NORSK STADNAMNARKIV, University of Oslo, Blindern, Oslo 3

January 15, 1971.

(signed)

Per Hovda

Translation

Hamburg, 19 January 1971

Subject: UN-Committee on Standardization of Geographic Names;
here: Undersea features.

Reference: Your letter 5104-1 of 11 December 1970.

Dear Mr. Delaney,

Thank you very much for your kind letter of 11 December 1970 which was forwarded to me by Professor Meynen. Before answering your questions, I should like to make a fundamental clarifying comment:

In your letter, you ask for my "reactions from the standpoint of the Federal Republic of Germany...." My comment to this is as follows:

My reactions cannot be the official standpoint of the Federal Republic of Germany. I can only give my opinion as a German representative in the Working Group. Before giving my comments I do, of course, always discuss them with the competent authorities- in any case with the Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (Permanent Committee on Geographic Names) and with the Deutsches Hydrographisches Institut- as well as with other scientists. I suppose that this was meant by your question.

And now for the single items of your letter:

Item 1

My research in the field of undersea features has so far been limited to comparisons of the name applications used by the different authors, mainly German ones. Therefore, there is nothing I could add to the papers prepared by you so very carefully, which you kindly attached to your letter.

Item 2

Paper 1:

I appreciate it very much that you make such a clear distinction between "specific" and "generic" terms. This differentiation must be maintained, and should be established firmly in a possible international agreement on the names of undersea features. As English is not my native tongue, I cannot say whether "specific" and "generic" are the English terms describing best what is meant. This should be decided by the English speaking nations; it does, however, not change the facts.

I agree, on the whole, to your draft "Suggested Principles for the Selection of Undersea Feature Names". Should such rules become binding some day, I should think it indispensable to explain them by examples. I do, for, not quite know how you differentiate between "(1) Geographically significant names", "(2) Descriptive Names", and "(3) Names of associated physical features". This, however, will be necessary with regard to paragraph 7 of your "Suggested Principles".

Under paragraph 5 you suggest that names in other than the Roman alphabet be transliterated into the Roman alphabet. Here, it would be absolutely necessary to prescribe one specific system for each non-Roman alphabet, because otherwise, different systems for one specific original object would have different results. In my opinion, the respective system of transliteration cannot be selected by hydrographers, geographers, military men etc. This task should be left to the linguists.

From paragraph 6(b) I see that within territorial waters of a nation no exonyms from other nations shall be accepted. Is that really meant? If so, I think this requirement to be somewhat strict. This would mean, in the end, that no exonyms would exist any longer, for the examples given under 6(a) do not concern real exonyms.

Here - with paragraph 6(a) - one should try to obtain that the respective names in the different languages express the same. So, e.g., the English term "Mid-Atlantic Ridge" corresponds to the German "Mittelatlantischer Rücken", whereas in French it is called "Seuil de l'Atlantique". "Seuil", however, does not correspond to "ridge" or "Rücken"; besides, as to the "specific term", the word "Mid" or "Mittel" is missing.

As I mentioned already, it is rather difficult for me to see without any examples how you differentiate in single cases. In paragraph 7 "Newfoundland Basin" or "Algerian Basin" f.i. would fall under "Descriptive or common names". But you want the "specific part" not to be translated. In a publication in German language, however, one would speak of "Neufundlandbecken" and "Algerisches Becken", that means to translate not only the "generic" but also the "specific" part. By the way, it should then read "Algiers Basin" or Becken, anyway.

As to paragraph 8, I agree with you on principle, that there must be a central authority for the recording, checking and dissemination of new names of undersea features. This authority should, in addition, revise the names already recorded and try to reach a uniformity. I shall refer to this item below and explain why I think the IHB to be more suited for this task than the UI.

I am backing fully your recommendation that newly applied or proposed undersea feature names submitted for recognition should be properly identified and described and that information should be given as to the origin or derivation of the name.

Paper 2

With regard to the definition of the "Descriptive terminology" - what you called "generic term" in Paper 1 - in my opinion, there would have to be distinguished between two different steps:

- 1) Each nation will have to establish a list of the generic terms used in its language, and to define these terms.
- 2) By means of these definitions, the generic terms used by the single nations should be intercompared.

Here, it will of course become necessary to set up the framework for the selection of these terms. Besides, it must be taken care that nations speaking the same language - as f.i. the U.S.A. and England - will not use two different generic terms for one undersea feature.

For the practical procedure, it would be recommendable to use a list already available with generic terms as a firm basis. This list should be forwarded to the other nations which are then to compare their national generic terms with the definitions given in the list. There, it might happen that for one or for several terms on the one side, there would only exist one equivalent term on the other side. So, in German, we have but one version for the terms "Ridge" or "Rise", viz. "Rücken". On the other hand, it could very well happen that, in German, distinction is made between two terms, while in an other language there is only one. It would, however, not seem reasonable to me to participate as a German in discussions on the terminology used in the U.S.A. and in its definition. I mean the abstract terminology only and not how, in a practical case, an undersea feature would have to be classified.

I think the list set up by Edvalson a very appropriate basis for the work described above. It is especially valuable on account of the examples given, because they describe the specific bottom features better than the text does.

I agree to the recommendation suggested by you that the United Nations Committee on the Standardization of Geographic Names and the GEBCO Advisory Committee of the IHB should cooperate closely.

Paper 3

I have nothing to add to the very detailed descriptions.

Paper 4

I agree with the suggested recommendation to be presented to the February Meeting of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts. Only, as to paragraph 4, I should think it preferable to propose either the GEBCO Advisory Committee or an authority to be newly established with the IHB, which shall carry out the tasks mentioned under (a) - (e). My suggestion is founded on your detailed appreciation of the work of the GEBCO Committee in your Papers 3 and 4.

It would then still have to be decided about the kind of relation between the UN and the GEBCO Committee or another authority of the IHB.

Dear Mr. Delaney, I want to thank you for the trouble you have taken with the preparation of the material you kindly forwarded me. I wish you every success for the meeting of the Ad Hoc Group.

Best regards,

Yours sincerely,
sgd. Dr. Bettac