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STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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EXONYMS

The treatment of geographical names outside Canada
for official Canadian use**

Paper presented by Canada

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** Prepared by Mr. Alan Rayburn, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In 1979 the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names set up the Advisory Committee on Names Outside Canada for Official Canadian Use. The chairman of the CPCGN, Dr. Jean-Paul Drolet, agreed to chair the initial meeting of the advisory committee. Membership on the advisory committee was drawn from federal departments concerned with external affairs, defence, translation and mapping, and from the Commission de toponymie du Québec.

BACKGROUND

The CPCGN has had a long standing principle on the treatment of foreign names:

"Geographical names in foreign countries should be rendered in forms adopted by each country except where there are recognized English or French equivalents established by appropriate international authorities".

Because of its vagueness this principle has been variously interpreted, leading to considerable inconsistency from document to document and from map to map.

Various federal agencies have entered into agreements at the international level for the treatment of names in foreign countries. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) recommended that "the names of places and of geographical features in countries which officially use varieties of the roman alphabet shall be accepted in their official spelling, including the accents and diacritical marks used in the respective alphabets. ^{1/} ICAO also recommends that producing agencies make their own transliterations where romanized names have not been officially adopted.

For the International Map of the World (IMW) Series the following standards have been adopted:

- (a) Countries producing IMW sheets of their own territory shall use geographical names standardized by their own national names authority.
- (b) Countries producing IMW sheets covering or including territory of another country shall use in such territory the names standardized by that other country. If the writing systems of the countries are the same, the map-producing country shall use the names without modification. Names standardized in non-roman writing shall be converted into roman letters by systems agreed upon by the country standardizing the names and the country or countries producing or collaborating in the production of IMW sheets.
- (c) Names of international features shall be in accordance with the usage of the producing country.

^{1/} International Standards and Recommended Practices, Aeronautical Charts, Annex 4, ICAO, 7th ed., April 1978, p. 12.

- (d) Other names, such as conventional, alternative, former or variant names may be added in parentheses at the discretion of the producing country.
- (e) The above general principles may be supplemented in accordance with decisions that may be taken by the Economic and Social Council or by appropriate bodies set up by the Council on the question of standardization of geographical names.
- (f) When the producing country considers it necessary, it may give in the margin:
 - (i) A glossary of the principal generic terms occurring on the sheet, particularly when they are abbreviated, with a translation into one of the official languages of the United Nations;
 - (ii) An indication of the pronunciation of names either in the language of the producing country, or by means of the system of the International Phonetic Association. 2/

The trend, therefore, in recent years has been to acknowledge the geographical names decided upon by each donor country, those names described by Henri Dorion in his paper on exonyms presented in Athens in 1977 as "noms originaux". 3/

The question came to a head in Canada when consideration was being given by the Surveys and Mapping Branch, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources to the production of new editions of a map of the world and a map of the Northern Hemisphere. Traditionally, the cartographers translated names liberally for these maps, and used English and French generic terminology for maps being produced in those respective languages. To adapt to the new trend in the treatment of names in other countries it became imperative to devise a policy applicable to these maps and for all federal maps and documents produced for use in Canada.

In 1979 two contractors reviewed the names used on the Surveys and Mapping Branch's international maps and examined a number of international atlases. They found numerous discrepancies and inconsistencies on both the Canadian maps and in the international atlases. They recommended the adoption of donor country names with conventional exonyms listed parenthetically, if considered necessary. They recognized, however, the difficulty in determining donor country names, if such countries had not standardized their names or approved their names in non-roman scripts.

2/ UN Technical Conference of the International Map of the World on the Millionth Scale, Vol. 2, Specifications, Bonn, 1962, pp. 16, 17.

3/ Le problème didactique de la réduction des exonymes, Third UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Vol. 2, Technical Papers, 1981, pp. 249, 250.

ADOPTION OF A POLICY

In 1980 the Advisory Committee on Names Outside Canada provisionally adopted the following policy:

1. Names of sovereign States
 - a) to be rendered in English and French forms as provided by Canada's External Affairs Department to the Secretariat of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.
2. Populated places in countries outside Canada
 - a) to be rendered according to decisions of the names authority in each state, following recognized romanization systems;
 - b) to have their traditional English and/or French exonyms indicated in brackets in text after the national form, or in smaller type in brackets on maps, as an option, if the names are deemed to be necessary to identify the places (e.g., Canton to accompany Guangzhou).
3. Names of other features within sovereign states
 - a) to be rendered according to decisions in published gazetteers of the names authority in each state as published in romanized form;
 - b) if no national gazetteer exists to be determined through consultation of recent atlases and maps produced by each state;
 - c) if no recent national gazetteers, atlases or maps are available to be determined by the CPCGN Secretariat through consultation of other sources deemed to reflect forms acceptable to each national authority concerned.
4. Names of features adjacent or common to two or more sovereign states
 - a) to be rendered in both English and French if the map or document is designed for both English and French audiences (e.g., English Channel and La Manche);
 - b) to be rendered in English only if the map or document is designed for English readers only (e.g., Red Sea only);
 - c) to be rendered in French only if the map or document is designed for French readers only (e.g., Mer Rouge only).

A number of procedures have been devised to implement the policy. In regard to the names of sovereign states Canada's Department of External Affairs is asked periodically to verify that the list is correct and up-to-date. As for the names of populated places and physical and cultural features recommendations have been made for the coding of the 4,400 names shown on three Surveys and Mapping Branch

maps depicting areas outside Canada so that the names could be entered into the national toponymic data base.

The adoption of the policy has been considered at the 1980 and 1981 annual meetings of the CPCGN, with some members requesting further time to evaluate the full implications of the policy before giving it full approval.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

In 1980 the Canadian Hydrographic Service issued a cartographic standing order on international geographic nomenclature. The brief instruction on foreign names is as follows:

1. On Canadian Hydrographic Service charts and other publications of foreign coasts, there shall be no translation of geographic names, including the generic part of names, into either English or French language equivalents. All geographic names on foreign coasts, including the names of countries and their overseas territories, shall be shown in the following manner:
 - (i) where the Roman alphabet is officially used by the country having sovereignty, geographic names shall be in exact agreement with the usage of that country.

EXAMPLES

United States of America*
Grønland
Danmark
Rio Amazonas
Kap Farvel
Lisboa

* With the international boundary symbol this shall be abbreviated to United States. This form may also be used in other applications where space is at a premium.

- (ii) Where the country having sovereignty employs a script other than the Roman alphabet, geographic names shall be shown in their equivalent romanization. This romanization shall be either that shown on the most authoritative sources of the country having sovereignty (e.g. the latest edition of maps and charts published by that country) or, where no Roman equivalent is shown on these sources, by applying the international systems for romanization approved by the United Nations.

EXAMPLES

Soyuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik
Athinaí

- (iii) Where it is considered that the name of a country or its overseas territories shown in the national form may create ambiguity as to its

/...

identity, the name may also be shown in a subordinate manner in the conventional English or French forms.

EXAMPLES

Shqipëria
(Albania/Albanie)

Miḡr
(Egypt/Egypte)

- (iv) All accents and/or diacritical marks required shall be retained, both on upper and lower case letters.

EXAMPLES

Île Saint-Pierre

São Paulo

Köln

Harøfjorder

Tōkyō Wan

Island

2. For continental land masses and for international waters, geographic names shall be shown in the conventional English and French forms.

EXAMPLES

North America and/et Amérique du Nord

English Channel and/et La Manche

Bay of Biscay and/et Golfe de Gascogne

Caribbean Sea and/et Mer des Antilles

Mediterranean Sea and/et Mer Méditerranée

3. International geographic nomenclature shall be supplied in the same manner as that for national nomenclature. All queries and cases of doubt are to be referred to the Nomenclature Section for verification through the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.

Essentially the standing order of the Canadian Hydrographic Service is in concurrence with the provisional policy of the CPCGN, with the one basic exception that national forms of names of countries are to be given precedence over conventional English and French forms. The CHS believes such treatment will be more in keeping with international hydrographic and oceanographic practice.

In the Surveys and Mapping Branch the computerization of the international names will be undertaken upon completion of the automation of the national (i.e. domestic) toponymic data base in late 1982. Once this data base of 4,400 foreign names is constructed, the CPCGN will have a consistent source of information for other federal departments and agencies to use in referring to the correct spelling and form of the names of countries, populated places and physical and cultural features outside Canada.