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STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR
REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON PROGRESS IN THE STANDARDIZATION
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE FOURTH CONFERENCE

Country report on geographical name activities in Thailand

Paper submitted by Thailand

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COUNTRY REPORT

ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAME ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND

1. INTRODUCTION

The report on Geographical Name Activities in Thailand covers the period since the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 24 August - 14 September 1982.

2. NATIONAL BOARD ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

The Thai National Board on Geographical Names has not been established so far. Although there has been no national body on Geographical Names in Thailand as already mentioned, some effective actions and activities have been taken and responsible by the special Committee of the Royal Institute dealing with the standardization and romanization of Geographical Names called the Committee on Thai Geographical Gazetteer. The Committee consists of one representative each from the Royal Thai Survey Department, the Departments of Highway, Local Administration, Hydrography, Irrigation, Mineral Resources, Meteorology, Land Development; and from the Chulalongkorn and Sri Nakharinwirot Universities and the Royal Institute. Besides preparing the Gazetteer, the Committee also considers, determines and handles all problems and inquiries concerning Geographical Names throughout the country and the world as well.

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3. ROMANIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

3.1 The modified or adapted general system which is proposed adapting from the general system on Romanization of the Royal Institute of Thailand was recognized at the First United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names held in Geneva in 1967. From then on, geographical and place names including street names on Thai maps have been romanized in accordance with this adapted Royal Institute System. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also uses the System for personal names in official documents such as passports. The National Library uses this system for bibliographical work, and so on.

With the reach of computer technology, more people have to write their names, addresses and others in Romanized transliteration form as computer data. With more use of Adapted Royal Institute System, more confusion is revealed. Due to some single Roman alphabet stand for many consonants and vowels in Thai Scripts, i.e. there are fewer Roman Characters than Thai Characters. The mentioned System, therefore is considered inappropriate use and indispensable to be improved and revised for world - wide and practical application.

People with Royal granted names refused to use the System and all of the three major English language newspapers in Thailand, the Bangkok Post, the Bangkok World, and the Nation, seem to ignore this system and have invented their own. People in general choose whatever system they prefer or no system at all.

3.2 The Royal Institute has always been aware of the above-mentioned problems. Therefore on 24 December 1985, the Thai

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Romanization Principles Revision Committee was appointed to undertake the task to set up the standardization of Romanized transcription and transliteration of Thai in which the Royal Thai Survey Department is one of the Committee members. This is planned to be prepared the system which is suitable and oriented to the proper pronunciation. The Royal Institute has also been aware the need for the Romanized transcription and transliteration of Thai are increasing in application, and not only to enable foreigners to read Geographical and proper names but also for the international interchange of data by electrical devices where accuracy is preferred over pronunciation. Moreover, the existing General and Precise Systems on Romanization established and determined by the Royal Institute have been promulgated since 6 March 1939, more than 47 years. Although the adapted System is officially endorsed the public is generally aware of its existence due to a lack of promotion. Thus the Royal Institute decided to have the System improved and revised for practical use.

3.3 At present, the said Committee has been carrying out the task and has not reached the final conclusion yet. The Committee decided that the requirements may be divided into three separate topics : transcription, transliteration, and the combination of transcription and transliteration. The transliteration system will be submitted to the International Standardization Organization (ISO) later this year. The transcription system is going to be distributed to users involved for consideration. This is being done to survey public opinion as was done in 1932.

3.4 After the accomplishment of the Romanization for /...

Geographical Names derived from the aforementioned systems and whenever approved by the Government, it will be submitted to the next United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names for consideration and acceptance for international use.

4. NATIONAL GAZETTEER ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

4.1 The first edition of the Thai Geographical Gazetteer was prepared and published by the Royal Institute dividing into four volumes during 1963 - 1967. The said Gazetteer has been revised and published so far, as the third edition in six volumes during 1982 - 1986. Because of the Geographical and place names have been changed and increased from time to time. Entries in this Gazetteer consist of generic terms, natural features, names of local administrative divisions with designations.

4.2 The first edition of the Map Gazetteer based on series 1501 was prepared and published by the Defense Mapping Agency Hydrographic/Topographic Center in 1985, namely Index to Names on 1:250,000 Maps of Thailand Series 1501. It is the Cooperative Gazetteer Project between the United States Department of Defense and the Royal Thai Survey Department. The Gazetteer contains 22,844 names, entries for Geographical Names both in Thai and romanized names designation, coordinates, and sheet numbers. At present, this Gazetteer has been still making the corrections.

4.3 The Royal Thai Survey Department has been preparing the Gazetteer from the topographic maps at the scale of 1:50,000, series L 7017 at the present time. The work on name compiling is in progress. The list of names obtained from 414 out of 830 map sheets has already been compiled. It is still in the stage of manuscript. /...

5. THE CO-OPERATION WITH THE DIVISION FOR STANDARDIZATION ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

5.1 Thailand sent delegates to attend the Second Meeting of the United Nations Divisional Group of Experts on Geographical Names for Asia, South - East and Pacific, South - West Division, held in Kuching, Sarawak during 2 - 4 October 1984 and the Third Meeting, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 2 - 3 September 1986 as well.

5.2 Thailand implemented the Divisional Projects undertaken by Malaysia in submitting the information concerning the geographical names, physical features, hydrographic details for the preparation and publication of the political and physical maps of Asia, South - East and Pacific, South - West, Concise Gazetteer, and Regional Gazetteer.

5.3 Moreover, Thailand is going to hold the Fourth Meeting of the United Nations Divisional Group of Expert on Geographical Names for Asia, South - East and Pacific, South - West Division in Bangkok, Thailand in 1988 according to the request of member countries of the Division.