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TOPONYMIC EDUCATION AND PRACTICE AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION:
TRAINING COURSES IN TOPONYMY

Toponymy courses at the University of Jerusalem**

Paper submitted by Israel

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Introduction

At the twelfth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (Geneva, 1986) it was proposed "that, in view of the increasing mobility of students and the inter-institutional accreditation of studies, the Working Group [on Courses in Toponymy] prepare a list of courses in toponymy at both basic and advanced level. It was also recommended that concerted efforts should be made to have the subject promoted at University level" (see [1], para. 68).

Several agencies in Israel, apart from the Government Names Commission in the Prime Minister's Office - the legal authority on place names - systematically, regularly or sporadically engage in toponymic activities. Among these are governmental as well as other public institutions such as the Ministry of the Interior, the Central Bureau of Statistics in connection with census activities, and the Public Works Department which is responsible for road signs. Local authorities - chiefly municipalities - have their own urban names boards concerned mainly with street and neighbourhood names. However, map publishers such as the Government Department of Surveys (the "Survey of Israel") - which is the major producer of both cartographic and toponymic output in the country - and private map and atlas publishing houses deal extensively with geographical names. These institutions all require and employ staff dealing with toponymy; most conduct in-house or on-the-job training.

One particular field of toponymic operations has been increasingly moving into the forefront. This is the subject of computer-assisted treatment of toponymic files. The output of such digital files of names can take several forms, from ephemeral computer screen display to permanent cartographic or bibliographic hard-copy form configuration. Maps and gazetteers are among the most important forms of output. A private publisher in Israel (Carta of Jerusalem) is producing a world atlas in which transcription, transliteration and translation are performed by computer. This continues pioneering work done in this field at the Survey of Israel, where the world's first computerised bi-scriptual (Hebrew-Roman) gazetteer was produced (Kadmon, 1980, [2]).

In contrast to these practical applications and activities, research into various aspects and problems in toponymy is being conducted at various institutions of higher studies, such as some of the country's five universities.

Course description and contents

A course in toponymy at academic level is offered at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem within the Geography Department, which is part of the Faculty of Social Sciences. This course is facultative for third-year students of Bachelor of Arts, Science or Social Science (i.e. undergraduate) studies, as well as for Master of Arts or Social Science (i.e. postgraduate) study programs. It is a one-semester (4 month) course of 2 hours of frontal lectures per week, plus practical work assignments, and is usually held by the writer in alternating years. The course is extensively map-bound and cartography-oriented, and is recommended, among others, to leading staff of cartographic institutions and geographical names authorities. The average intake is 25-30 students, and among these are usually a number of students from outside the Geography Department and the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The course provides a general introduction to toponymy (Part A) with, inter alia, the following subjects:

Identification and definition of location; verbal vs. numerical methods

Toponyms as identifiers

Change of toponyms in time and space

"Natural" and "institutionalised" generation of place names

Collecting and documenting names

Legal status of toponyms; names authorities

.Standardization of geographical names - national and international

Exonyms

The five methods of names storage - mental, cartographic, bibliographic, audio-mechanical or magnetic, digital

Writing systems - logographic, syllabic and alphabetic

Basics of Hieroglyphic, Chinese and Japanese logographics, Amharic and Kana syllabics, and Roman, Hebrew, Arabic and Greek alphabetics

Unwritten names

Transformation methods - transcription, transliteration and translation

Romanization, particularly of Hebrew, Greek and Arabic

Toponyms in multi-lingual countries - theoretical and practical aspects

The four phases of names treatment: geographical, administrative, linguistic and technological

Office treatment of toponyms

Names placement on maps

Graphical-technological handling of names

Computer-assisted treatment of names

The interaction of maps and gazetteers.

Part B of the course deals specifically with toponymy in Israel.

Further details can be obtained from the Secretary of the Geography Department, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 91905 Mount Scopus, Jerusalem, Israel.

References

[1] Report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on the Work of its Twelfth Session. ESA/RT/C/GN/10, 17 Dec. 1986.

[2] Kadmon, N., "A Bi-Scriptual Gazetteer of Place Names in Israel produced by Computer". ONOMA, Bulletin of the International Committee of Onomastic Science, Louvain, Vol. 24, No. 1-3, 1980, pp. 98-102.

[3] Idid., "A Computerised Map-Linked Bi-Scriptual Names File/Gazetteer for International Cooperation". 11th International Conference on Cartography, Warsaw, 1982.