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TERMINOLOGY IN THE STANDARDIZATION
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Exonyms and Endonyms **

Paper submitted by the United Kingdom

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When we use a·foreign name, or any new name, we are adding a new word to our vocabulary and, therefore, augmenting the language itself. The name may be used only once by one person and its tenure of life will be no longer than the time taken to utter it. It may, on the other hand, be used frequently by many people, perhaps, with variations in pronunciation and in writing. Writing a name will impart a degree of permanency not possible in speech. It will also allow the name to be transmitted far from its place of origin. If the name is written often enough it will tend to achieve a widely accepted form. In the jargon of today it will tend to achieve a "standard" form.
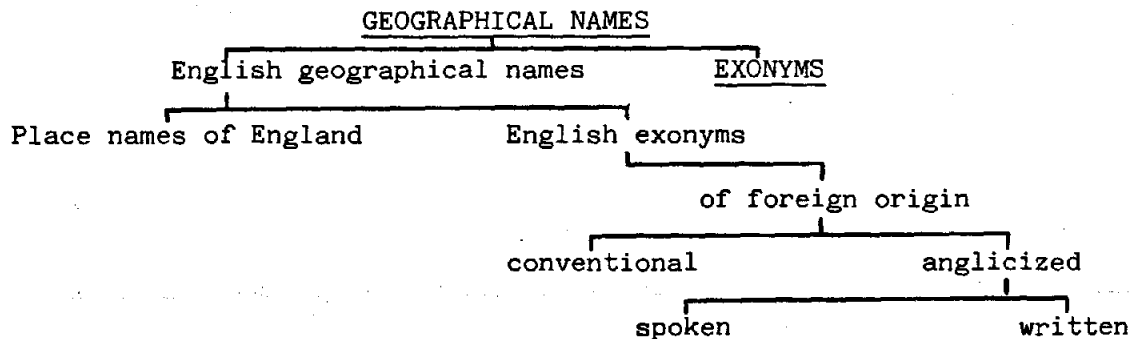
A foreign name which is consistently written in a particular way is said to be established by "convention" and if its written form differs from the way it is written in the place to which it belongs it is said to be a "conventional" name.

Marcel Aurousseau, a former secretary of the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British official Use – to give the Committee its full name – wrote a book entitled " The Rendering of Geographical Names". In that book he discussed English geographical names and divided them into two broad classes:-

Place names of England – English exonyms.

Thus, the word "exonym" came into being. He could equally well have written: Place names of England – Foreign place names occurring in English, except for the fact that he was discussing those names which had come into the English language (in England) and so he excluded all those foreign names which were not English in character. Had the word English been omitted from "English exonyms" the word 'exonym' would have covered all foreign names, and quite rightly so in the ordinary meaning of the word "exonym".

Because Aurousseau was only addressing the subject of English geographical names his diagram depicting the hierarchy of names stemmed from English geographical names. Had he extended the scope of his overview to include all geographical names, he would have been obliged to make them originate from a general category "geographical names". That would have meant a further category "exonyms"as shown below in a modified version of his table of hierarchy in geographical names. The additions are shown in upper-case letters and are underlined.

GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
English geographical names   EXONYMS
Place names of England   English exonyms
                                      of foreign origin
                 conventional   anglicized
                        spoken   written

In this table the words "endonyms of England" could have been substituted for

"place-names of England".

In its work on geographical names the UN Group of Experts experienced some difficulty in reconciling views expressed on the meaning of "conventional names". They finally adopted the word "exonym" but took its meaning to be that covered by "English exonyms" in the table above. The following definition was the result:

exonym   A geographical name used in a certain language
        for a geographical entity situated outside the
        area where that language has official status
        and differing in its form from the name used
        in the official language or languages of the
        area where the geographical entity is situated.

The definition of conventional name adopted by the Group of Experts was:

name, conventional: A written form of a name in widespread,
          current use in a language community which
          differs from any form of the name in current
          use in the language community to which the
          name belongs.

The only significant difference between the two definitions is the statement that a conventional name is one that is in widespread use. In other words, a conventional name is an exonym in widespread current use.

If an endonym (which the Group of Experts has not yet defined) is a name within a community, it follows that all other names are exonyms, whether they are in widespread use in that community or not. So there is a great difference between an exonym and a conventional name. Exonyms are foreign names. Conventional names are those foreign names which have been adopted as part of the speech and writing of some other community, suitably modified in pronunciation and in their written form.

It must be emphasized that Aurousseau's table (before the additions made above) was drawn up to illustrate the pattern of English geographical names. English exonyms (a term used correctly by Aurousseau) referred to names which have come into the English language, in England, from outside. As the table shows, some will be English in origin (Marseilles; Suez; Genoa, Leghorn) others will be foreign in origin (Cologne-from French; Copenhagen-from German; Florence-from French).

Those which are foreign in origin will be either conventional (Salonica, Istanbul, Athens) or anglicized (The Hague, Liege, Delhi).

All are divisions of English exonyms. Liege with a grave accent is an exonym, as is Vlissingen for the English conventional Flushing. They are not English exonyms when written in their correct Roman alphabet form (Vlissingen etc) but they are exonyms because they are foreign names, non-English names.

Definitions adopted in a special discipline like toponymy, or the standardization of geographical names which deals with toponymy, ought not to depart greatly from those employed in other disciplines nor, too widely, from ordinary language. Inevitably trouble will ensue should there be such a departure.

A Welsh name (Caerlyr) for an English place (Leicester) is an exonym in a wholly English context just as Milford Haven is an exonym for Aberdaugleddau in a wholly Welsh context. Yet Welsh is a national language like English. The question then

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arises as to when an exonym becomes an endonym.

Moskva, is strictly speaking, a Russian exonym in the USSR, since the true name
is written in Russian Cyrillic. The point is better illustrated by Chelyabinsk
which can be written Čeljabinsk and in other ways. There are thus many Roman-
alphabet renderings of a name like Chelybinsk and the varified character of
those renderings makes the transliteration an exonym in relation to Russian
geographical names. Moskva may seem to be in a different category to that of
Chelyabinsk but that is an illusion based on the fact that Moskva is an unambiguous
letter-to-letter transliteration. If the transliteration were made into other
forms of the Roman alphabet another version would result. The Welsh alphabet for
example lacks the letters 'k' and 'v' and so would produce an odd-looking letter-to-
letter transliteration.

In the absolute sense transliteration and transcription produce a type of exonym
unless, like Yugoslavia, there is a Roman-alphabet equivalent giving a standard
written alternative.

Beijing is not an exonym in China because Pinyin readings of the Han characters
of Chinese are part of modern standard Chinese. Peking is an exonym in China
but widely used in the past when it had the character of an endonym as did Shanghai,
which fortunatly retained its spelling in Pinyin. Peking is still used a lot
coloquially in China and elsewhere in the world but there is no disputing the
supremacy of Beijing.

Cairo is conventional English. El Qāhira is the transliterated form normally used
in Egypt. Al Qāhirah is the way it would be written if the UN system for Arabic
were employed. But that form is not in current use in Egypt. Cairo, on the other
hand, is used in Egypt. The true "endonym" is the Arabic القاهرة . Which then is
the Roman alphabet equivalent? Al Qāhirah, El Qāhira or Cairo? Are there two
Roman-alphabet "endonyms"? Are there more than two?

Doha is the only Roman alphabet endonym used in Qatar for the Arabic equivalent of
Ad Dawḥah just as Sharjah is for Ash Shāriqah and Abu Dhabi for Abū Ẓabī. Again
one can pose the questions - which are the Roman alphabet endonyms? Which are
exonyms in the sense of the UNGEGN definitions? Which are the spellings to be
used in the standardisation of geographical names? Must dual Roman-alphabet forms
be used? If so, which has precedence?

Let us take a multilingual area like the USSR.

Russian is the language of administration for the whole Soviet Union. In any of
the numerous nationalities either Russian or the nationality language may be used,
or both, depending on the context. Suppose in the Georgian SSR a place has names
in Russian, Georgian, Ocetian, Armenian and other languages of the Republic.
Russian or Georgian, or both, may be preferred in a given situation. If they are
the "endonyms", taking endonym to mean the preferred name, as seems to be the case
in the Group of Experts, how should the rest be described? Are they "variants" or
"variant names? They are certainly "allonyms" but that term gives no indication
of the status of the names.

The definition in UN Glossary 330 (rev 1) states:-

> name, variant   A name other than that or those accepted as the
>   approved official name.

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If Russian (and in an appropriate context) Georgian give the approved official
names, can the other names be considered to be"variant names"? In the same
context can Russian and Georgian be defined as "alternative" names where the
choice lies between one and the other.

In a bilingual country where two names have equal standing they can be said to be
"alternative". The names themselves are 'alternative' names. In searching for a
term to describe multiple language versions of a place-name, the term "domestic
exonym" has been suggested among several others. Since a "demestic name", in the
sense in which "domestic" is used here, is an endonym, a domestic exonym is therefore,
an endonymic exonym. If that seems odd, it is nonetheless exactly descriptive, if
exonym is to be taken to mean what the UN definition implies. "Exonymic endonym"
would be equally applicable.

In Canada, the situation is much like that of the USSR. A place may have a French
name and an English name and yet have a name in another language of Canada. If
French and English can be considered as alternatives in a particular case, how
should the other name or names be described? The term 'alternate' may suffice if
"variant name" is unacceptable.

Alternate growth in botany describes leaves which grow consecutively along a twig
as opposed to growing one opposite the other in pairs. Alternating current in
electricity has a similar meaning ofsuccession but not both together. Names which
are not true alternatives but which are allonyms can therefore, be described as
"alternate" names.

The definition of "alternate name" would be:

> name, alternate   A name which can only be substituted for another
>   in certain contexts, its status being inferior.

It has been suggested that "autre appellation" would be a suitable descriptive term.
Ordinary language is, or ought to be, preferable to terms of scientific appearance
derived from Greek or Latin. However, the term "allonym" already exists in the
Group of Experts terminology. It's meaning is precisely "autre appellation". The
word 'appellation' in English as in French means a name, a title or the concept of
bestowing names. In appearance appellation is very like appellative (appellatif)
with which it must on no account be confused since appellative denotes a common
noun as opposed to a proper noun (an appellation) and also describes a class or
group of objects which gives it the sense of"a generic term". Whilst, therefore,
"autre appellation" is the kind of expression used in ordinary speech and will
continue to be so used, it would appear to be less satisfactory than "allonym" in
a glossary of technical terminology. Nevertheless, experience with the use of
"exonym" demonstrates the wisdom of using the vocabulary of ordinary language whenever
possible.

As has been amply demonstrated, the adoption of the term "exonym" as an equivalent to
"conventional name" is a corruption of the use of the term by its inventor,
Aurousseau.

Until recently the word "endonym" has not found much favour. Now, however, the
term is used more and more. "Endonym" and "exonym" cannot exist side-by-side in
a single terminology as long as "exonym" retains a meaning wholly at variance with
that inferrred from "endonym".

However painful it may be, the word "exonym" should be re-defined to mean what it actually means - a foreign name. It is inconceivable that anybody other than the "experts on geographical names" would use the term in any other way. Experts on geographical names cannot surely, tolerate the conflict between endonym and exonym or remain forever the only soldier in the army marching "in step".