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TOPONYMIC GUIDELINES FOR MAP AND OTHER EDITORS

Toponymic guidelines in the USSR

Paper submitted by the Union of Soviet
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TOPONYMIC GUIDELINES IN THE USSR

Toponymic guidelines are necessary aids to map compilation and re-editing. They aim at regulating of place-names rendering, unifying their spelling and application, systematization of generic terms and abbreviations used in maps. All this is of great importance for mapping of any territory, especially of that with alien language communities.

As the Soviet Union is a multinational state, in which there are national languages together with various dialects and language versions historically rooted in toponymy, elaboration of single toponymic guidelines for the whole country would be extremely labour- and time-consuming and seems hardly reasonable. In the USSR the problem was resolved by developing toponymic guidelines for individual languages and areas. Guidelines of this kind, called instructions for Russian rendering of place-names of Union/Autonomous republic or Autonomous oblast, have been many times displayed at the UN-conferences on the standardization of geographical names and in the sessions of the UN Group of Experts.

Until 1967 the instructions were intended for application in mapping only, thus being purely departmental. Since 1967 their status has changed. They have become obligatory for employment by state authorities and are to be used for rendering geographical names not only in maps but in all publications in Russian as well. The instructions can assist in regulating of place-names rendering in publications issued in the Union republics of the country. With that purpose in view their contents and scope of linguistic information have been widened. The instructions are to be authorized by the supreme local legislative body, Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union or Autonomous republics.

The aids provide the following toponymic data:

- standard language of the territory, its main dialects and versions, their chief traits and areal distribution;
- alphabet and main spelling rules of the language;
- pronunciation key by means of corresponding Russian letters (it helps not only to normalize Russian rendering of alien names but also provides rules of reading in the donor language);
- rules for spelling of geographical names in the national language and in Russian (capitalization, use of one or more words or hyphen, use of case forms etc.);
- glossary of principal geographical terms, dialectal words, personal names and other words reflected in the toponymy of a given territory if linguistically required, main grammatical word-forms are also listed;
- list of conventional names in the respective language or for the respective area;
- abbreviations in official maps;
- source materials for rebuilding of original name-forms, publications needed for treatment of geographical names;
- brief information on toponymy of the area, essential toponymic structures, most frequent elements of place-names.

It should be pointed out that since 1967 in Russian rendering of names from national languages using Cyrillic script there is an obvious trend to converge Russian and original spelling of a place-name while preserving its phonetic identity. The principle is implemented for example in the instructions for Russian rendering of geographical names of Kazakh SSR (1971), Kirghiz SSR (1975), Udmurt ASSR (1973), Mari ASSR (1979), Bashkir ASSR (1983).

It has already been mentioned at the previous UN-conferences that the instructions are normative and obligatory and serve as a basic means for the USSR place-names standardization in Russian as the nation-wide language of the peoples of the country. Standardization of geographical names in the national languages within Union/Autonomous republics is carried out on the same grounds.

Revised and enlarged edition of "Guidelines for collection and establishment of geographical names in large-scale maps and plans"(Moscow,1985) was among publications of this kind.

The series of normative aids to Russian rendering of place-names of Union and Autonomous republics and their toponymy has been accomplished some years ago. All in all they number 43. They are revised of necessity.

In addition to the instructions, reference books, namely glossaries of toponymic vocabulary of some territories, are issued. They contain not only the most current generic terms and lexical units but also obsolete, local, and loan words reflected in the toponymy of the territory. The glossaries list meanings of the words, in some cases - their origin, for polysemantic words the whole range of toponymic meanings is couched, for the words arisen in toponymy from other semantic fields their original meaning is stated together with the samples of their toponymic application with all spelling variants, if any.

The glossaries benefit field collection as well as office treatment of place-names. They meet demands of both topographers and map editors. They are also of great linguistic value as they often present words and stems one cannot come across in general linguistic dictionaries. Furthermore, for some well-known words the semantic range is extended by accumulating new toponymic meanings unknown outside certain distribution area. The glossaries carry not only Russian but also national (original) spelling of names, their grammatical, phonetical, and graphical versions fixed in toponymy. In all, 17 glossaries of toponymic vocabulary have been issued in the USSR.

At present, the compilation of glossaries of toponymic vocabulary of the USSR territories is being carried out together with further toponymic research that will provide more information on toponymy and language to incorporate in future revised versions of the guidelines.