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

Standardization of Geographical Names in Peru

Paper submitted by Peru **

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NATIONAL REPORT OF PERU ON PROGRESS IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

1. BACKGROUND

From the earliest emergence of written language in Peru, with the arrival of the first settlers and later the conquistadors to this land, large-scale cultural and social shock have taken place which naturally effect the use of toponyms to define geographical names. Geographical names changed as they were brought from one culture to another, from the countries of origin of the settlers or conquerors to Peru, often replacing indigenous or aboriginal names.

This cultural transformation was marked first by African ethnic groups who came as slaves and later by the process of independence of the American countries, which obviously also involves Peru, honoring the forefathers and heroes of the epic of independence, famous battles, and new distinguished figures.

It is our understanding that this process obviously occurs in virtually all Latin American countries. In short, all of the foregoing helps to account in general terms for the distinguished delegates present at this Seventh Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names how our toponyms were formed and how they changed.

In Peru, geographical names are conferred within the territory defined by international treaties in force with neighboring countries.

2. GATHERING OF DATA AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

In Peru the designation of geographical names is conducted by the National Geographical Institute, which acts as the lead agency for the country's cartography. Since 10 May 1921, when it was entrusted with this task by the President of the Republic, Augusto B. Leguía, it has prepared and updated that Basic National Map (Topographic Cartography), which is the document used by all other public and private institutions to prepare their thematic maps.

In Peru there are three sources or means for gathering toponyms for the definition of geographical names:

- (a) The Basic National Map (Topographic), issued by the National Geographical Institute;
- (b) Descriptions provided by informants, gathered by classification personnel in the field, during the process of preparing the Basic National Map;

- (c) Through verification of information arising in the form of concerns by institutions of the locality or from the population.

3. PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS

Peru has two official languages, Spanish and Quechua. There is also the Aymara language, which, although not enjoying the status of an official language, is spoken by a significant part of the indigenous population. It is interesting to note, with regard to Quechua, that there also exist throughout the territory six principal regional varieties or dialects, namely: San Martín, Cajamarca-Cañaris, Cusco-Collao, Ancash-Huaylas, Ayacucho-Huanca, and Junín-Huanca. Each of these has its own local usage and writing, when a written form exists.

In addition, there are several native communities which possess their own way of expressing themselves and communicating with one another, through very particular idiomatic forms.

We may conclude that, in Peru, there are three major languages and approximately 64 ethnic groups (dialects), all of which generate aboriginal terms.

With regard to urban toponymy, the subject may be approached by taking the example of the provinces of Lima and Callao. This metropolitan area has some 7.2 million inhabitants (1993 census) spread over 49 districts, with some 25,000 thoroughfares (avenues, streets, ways, etc.). About 25% of those thoroughfares are not yet fully identified and are not accounted for in registers of thoroughfares. They are codified in terms of letters and/or numbers, blocks and lots, or sectors and groups. Finally, some have no identification. The nomenclature is quite varied. Names of saints, presidents, scientists, military heroes, statesmen, and national and foreign figures predominate. There are also names from the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms, from geographical places, capitals, cities, planets and stars, etc. Some names are repeated. For example, the name "Santa Rosa" occurs in 92 places around the city. The principal problem posed by all this is confusion for the citizenship, companies and authorities. It gives rise to many cases of tax evasion and non-payment of assessments, rates or fees. But another consequence is that there exist no public records of approval of construction, certificates of numeration, and other municipal documents. In an effort to solve this specific problem, the communities most affected are employing private companies for the task. Another practical solution that has emerged through custom is to accompany and address with a well-known cartographic reference or with a sketch map.

It is said that there exist some 100 different CLIMATES in the world, a climate being understood as a complete geographical setting with its anthropo-geographical features, giving rise to varying meteorological conditions, different ways of building and living, different forms of food and drink or dress, different ethnic groups –in short, everything the word CLIMATE implies. The eminent Peruvian geographer Dr. Javier Pulgar Vidal, professor emeritus and author of several works of geography, tells us that

Peru has almost all the climates that are to be found on the face of the earth. The toponyms used to designate a geographical entity are no exception to that diversity. Yet another problem!

4. POLICIES ADOPTED BY THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL INSTITUTE TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEMS PRESENTED

The National Geographical Institute, the lead agency for cartography in Peru, is accepted in fact, although not in law, by all public and private entities in developing nomenclature for geographical entities in the country. It issues its Basic National Map, which is accepted as the basis for preparing thematic maps. The work of the institute can be summed up as follows:

- Formulation of official documents containing the names of the various geographical entities, seeking to assign a single official name to each entity, and continuing evaluation and monitoring of this process.
- Use in the Basic National Map of Peru of the geographical names that have the greatest historical significance, i.e. the toponymy most used by the population, relying on the existence of a population in a geographical entity.
- Avoiding double naming, whether by giving the same entity two different names, or by giving the same name to two different entities. Let me report that we are working as a matter of priority on this task with a view to achieving better results.
- Planning and implementation of toponymic updating projects in geographical-cartographic information, providing for dissemination.
- In cases of doubt or discrepancy, setting up meetings of technical groups to provide solutions to the problems encountered.
- Application of toponymic orthography, based primarily on preferring national names over foreign ones, and modifying toponyms to take on a national identity in terms such as Cusco, Vilcashuamán, Nasca, Carás, Huarás, and others.
- Striving constantly for standardization and uniformity in geographical names, in terms of the Basic National Map.
- Relations with national entities in order to encourage uniformity and generalized use of the names used in official documents.

- Use of appropriate personnel for field classification of geographical names, helping to obtain toponyms that correctly represent the geographical entities under consideration.
- Review and updating of the official nomenclature of political-administrative units in Peru.
- Verification of reliability of the sources that provide geographical names, specifying the validity of the information.

As may be gleaned from this very brief overview, the National Geographic Institute, Peru's lead agency in cartography, is striving within the limits of its resources and without false modesty to fill the gap created in my country by the lack of a national authority for geographical names. It will continue these efforts, with help from the international community, which we are already receiving. (At this point I must make reference to the International Course on Standardization of Geographical Names held by the IPGH in my country in 1995, in which I participated together with colleagues from Peru and neighboring countries.) Continuing along these lines, and with increased co-operation, we will be able to do a better job. Thank you very much!

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