
New York, 5-16 March 1973

REPORT OF THE
WORKING GROUP ON DEFINITIONS OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

(C. Page)

1. Item number six of the Agenda of the Fifth Meeting of the GEGN should be altered by replacement of the words Mr. Corderas (Spain), by the words Mr. Gall (Guatemala).

2. Three meetings of the Working Group on Definitions took place during the Fifth Meeting of the GEGN. The convenor was Mr. C. Page (U.S.A.), the rapporteur was Mr. Velásquez (Cuba), and the following members of the Working Group were present: Mr. Breu (Austria), Mr. Nédélec (France), Mr. Lewis (U.K.), Mr. Gall (Guatemala), Mr. Hovda (Norway), Mr. Meynen (Federal Republic of Germany); absent were Mr. Dahlstedt (Sweden), Mr. Radó (Hungary), Mr. Lapasa (Spain), Mr. Hakulinen (Finland), Mr. Sharma (India), and Mr. Földi (Hungary).

3. The Working Group decided to complete its work prior to the convening of the Sixth Meeting of the GEGN, so that a final report of its work might be presented to that Meeting.

4. The following resulted from discussion of the work assigned to the Working Group by the second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in London, May 1972, and of definitions of terms distributed throughout the Working Group since that time by Messrs. Page, Nédélec, and Gall:

A. Definitions for the following terms were decided:

1. alphabet, transcription

An alphabet which may be employed in the process of transcription, q.v.

2. alphabet, transliteration

An alphabet which may be employed in the process of transliteration, q.v.

3. grapheme

A graphic symbol or combination of graphic symbols, cited within the context of a particular language, which represents a particular phonological and/or morphological item or items with consistency.

4. key, romanization

A table which sets forth the graphic symbols of a non-Roman writing system together with corresponding graphic symbols of one or more Roman writing system(s).

5. reversibility

A characteristic of a conversion system which results in the convertibility of any written item from one writing system to another, and re-conversion into the first system, the result being identical in every particular with the original item.

6. vocabulary

a. A list of the words of a language (synonym: lexicon);

b. A succinct dictionary giving the principle words of a language or citing a list of specialized terms (see glossary or lexicon);

c. The repertory of words of a particular individual for all his communication.

7. Standardization, geographical name

The prescription or the recommendation of a particular graphic form or forms for application to a given feature, as well as the conditions of employment of that form or forms.

8. Standardization, international geographical name

(See Resolution E/CONF.61/C.4/R.4 - London, 25 May 1972).

B. Definitions for the following terms were discussed, and it was decided that these would be considered by correspondence so that definitions might be presented to the Sixth Meeting of the GEON:

- a. diglossia
- b. feature, hydrographic
- c. form, graphic
- d. term, descriptive

C. It was decided to omit the following terms:

- a. syllable
- b. nucleus, vocalic
- c. vowel
- d. consonant
- e. cluster, consonant
- f. diphthong
- g. (a number of technical linguistic terms)
- h. language, national
- i. language, state
- j. language, vernacular
- k. toponymy, cartographic

D. The terms exonym, conventional name, and traditional name were discussed in full session of the UN/GEON, and recommended definitions will appear in another working paper of the Fifth Meeting of the U.N. GEON.

5. For the continuity of the work, the convener (Mr. Page) will draw together all definitions of terms presently pending, will make comment or suggestion with regard to each, and will distribute the resulting document to all members of the Working Group. Comment and suggestion will be solicited from all members of the Working Group, using this document as a base.

6. A paper on definitions by Mr. Lapesa (Spain), received by members of the Working Group during the course of the Fifth Meeting, as well as Working Papers 17 and 29 of the Fifth Meeting, presented by Mr. Gall (Guatemala), will be included.