TOPONYMIC EXPERT KNOWLEDGE AND THE SCHOOL ATLAS

THE EXAMPLE OF THE **BOSATLAS** (NETHERLANDS)

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The school atlas: traditional role and responsibility

➢ Geography teacher's tool to familiarize kids with their geographic environment – the World

➢ Building an inter-subjective mental map

  ➢ Accountability ensured by applying systematic, controllable and explicable rules

➢ Presenting the world in memorable outlines = in a sufficiently generalized way

➢ Toponyms should:

  ➢ reflect current reality

  ➢ be rendered in a systematic, accountable way

The Bosatlas

- 1877- : Bos' Schoolatlas der Geheele Aarde > De Grote Bosatlas (55 ed.)

- School atlas diversification

  - Different atlases for different school types and levels

  - Going abroad: Netherlands East Indies, Belgium, France, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Canada

  - Atlases for the history class

- Atlases for the consumer market

The position of the Bosatlas in the Netherlands

➢ For more than 140 years, the Bosatlas has been an indispensable aid in Dutch geography education

➢ Apart from its classroom relevance, for most of its existence it has been present in most Dutch households as the geographical work or reference *par excellence*

➢ Most commonly available and commonly used source for the writing of foreign geographical names, and worldwide topography in general

➢ *"As school atlas editors, we are in need of geographical names with the highest possible level of standardization and official recognition worldwide"*

➢ Currently, the authority of the Bosatlas as a source for topography and toponymy – and by consequence our control of the veracity of the mental map acquired by our youth – is in the process of being undermined by the Internet

The Bosatlas attitude towards geographical names

➢ Everything in the atlas, also names, must be real/true, correct and objective; for the high school student it comes down to: "the writing of a name is either right or wrong".

➢ To present names we may consider "correct", we need to follow rules as they apply to the writing of the names both in Dutch (exonyms and partial translations) and in the local official language (endonyms). Everything in the atlas, including names, is shown in a systematic, rule-based way.

➢ Transliteration must also be carried oud in a systematic way, and based on official romanization rules where these exist.

➢ Foreign rules may be simplified or adapted in a systematic way to the use in an atlas meant for Dutch geography education.

➢ We prefer to be systematic across country borders; but our rules are defined per country, source language and feature class.

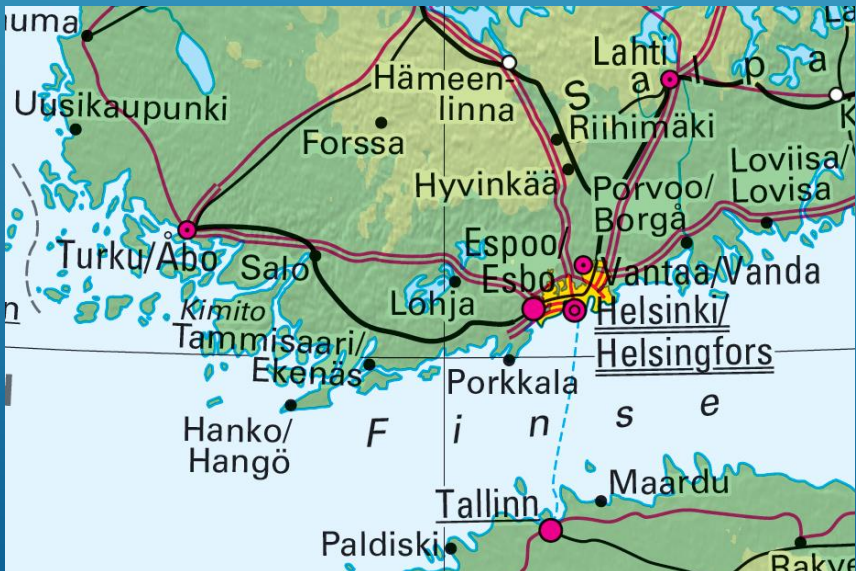# Editorial choices in school atlas toponymy

- **Exonym vs. endonym**

  - Long term development: a steady reduction of the use of exonyms

  - Definition of exonym excludes :
    - systematically transliterated names
    - names differing from the endonym by omission of certain diacritics only
    - names differing from the endonym by translation or omission of generic elements and prepositions/articles
    - names of larger physiographic entities considered to belong to geographic jargon – e.g.: Spaanse Hoogvlakte

  - Exonyms are used for international/(language) border crossing features and countries

  - For other features, exonyms are added to the endonyms in parentheses if they are part of the commonly used Dutch language use – e.g.: Milano (Milaan)

Editorial choices in school atlas toponymy

➢ **Endonym language choice**

  ➢ Official languages – changeable

  ➢ On a sub-national level: which language is official where?

  ➢ Official bilingual localities: both endonyms shown separated by / - but: the sequence is systematic, the main official language nationwide first

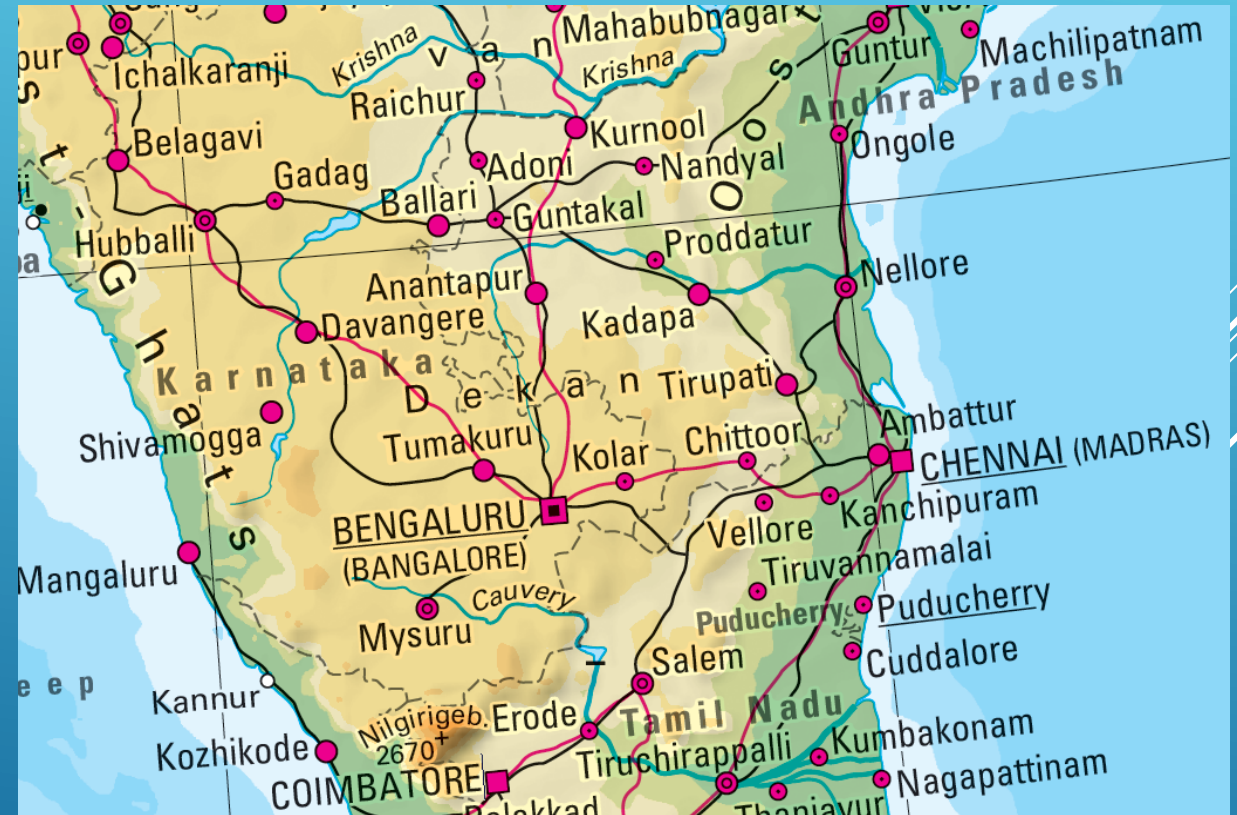# Editorial choices in school atlas toponymy

➢ **Border-crossing rivers**

➢ Endonyms in different languages are shown where they are valid.

➢ One of the endonyms must be selected as the "preferred name" to the Dutch public, when the scale of the map allows for one name only.

Editorial choices in school atlas toponymy

➤ **Obsolete names**

> ➤ Well-known names that were recently changed will temporarily be added to the new names in parentheses – in a similar way as exonyms.
>
> ➤ Less well-known names that were recently changed – or well-known names less recently changed – are included as cross-reference in the index
>
> ➤ Obsolete names tend to be confused with exonyms; we treat them as "temporary exonyms".

Editorial choices in school atlas toponymy

- **Generic elements**

  - Included in the original language if they are connected to the specific element – e.g. Oulujoki, Oulujärvi

  - If written separate from the specific element in the original language:
    - Included in the original language in an increasing number of countries, if it is considered (more or less) familiar to the Dutch public
    - Systematically translated if it is considered unfamiliar to the Dutch public
    - Systematically omitted in the case of rivers and islands, when in the context of map names it is considered redundant (e.g. Mississippi, Lombok, Elba – but: Red River, Long Island)

  - If the specific element is an adjective, the generic element cannot be omitted – and either both elements are translated, or none at all.

  - If generic elements are omitted or translated, the specific element must be rendered in nominative/non-declined form (e.g. Uusimaa, Aleksander)

Editorial choices in school atlas toponymy

➢ **Transliteration**

   ➢ Names from non-roman languages are preferably rendered following a transliteration key recommended by UNGEGN.

   ➢ In a (decreasing) number of languages, UN-recommended transliterations must be simplified for the sake of memorability for the Dutch high school student.

   ➢ Where simplification is required, in most cases this will be limited to the omission of diacritical marks.

   ➢ Where no recommended transliteration system is available, non-roman names are transliterated systematically from the original versions following a self-devised key.

Editorial choices in school atlas toponymy

- **Other decisions**

  - In accordance with Dutch practice, articles are generally omitted in map names, except…

  - Endonyms in roman-writing languages are rendered complete with the correct diacritical marks, with the single exception of the tonal accents in Vietnamese.

  - In some languages, a choice must be made between grammatical variants, for instance indefinite and definite name forms; in that case, Toponymic Guidelines are followed where available (e.g. Romanian: Pietrosu vs. Petrosul; Turkish: -dağ vs. – Dağı; Albanian: Shkodër vs. Shrodra. In all cases, there should be consistency.

  - Capitalization of initial letters should follow locally official rules.

  - In any of these decisions, toponymic guidelines published through UNGEGN can be extremely helpful.

UNGEGN documents useful to the school atlas editor

➢ Current toponymic guidelines – especially when published on the Internet

➢ Gazetteers or certified source maps

➢ Transliteration keys

➢ Updates from member states about official name changes

➢ Updates from member states about changes in official orthography, as far as these apply to toponyms

Note that the school atlas, in its turn, provides an ideal medium to disseminate recommendations issued by UNGEGN and promote international standardization of geographical names.