



STATEMENT/INTERVENTION

Item Number: 13

Item Name: Exonyms

Statement/intervention provided by:

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Statement/intervention: Addressing “Quatre types d’exonymes”

It has many merits to raise the consciousness that exonyms are valuable parts of our cultural heritage and that UN resolutions on exonyms passed so far do recognize this fact insufficiently. What specifically underlines their value in this paper is that many exonyms can only be explained by the cultural history of the user community (here called “cultural exonyms”) and that exonyms express diachronic relations between languages or historical relations between cultures and places. In fact, the spatial pattern of exonyms represents to a high extent diachronic and synchronic external relations of a user community. I would, however, not so much base the justification of exonyms and exonym use on their categorization by feature type, feature-name relationship or exogenous versus endogenous origin. It is in my opinion rather the scope and purpose of communication that counts. Exonyms exert all their benefits in communication with a domestic audience. An exception are exonyms used as international names by international authorities like IHO or ICAO for international communication in a certain field, e.g., maritime navigation or aviation. Another exception are exonyms of prestigious global trade languages used in texts written in these languages, in atlases and other map works with titles and legends in these same languages for an international audience as well as in international conferences and other international events, where a global trade language is applied. It would therefore be appropriate if a UN resolution recognizing the value of exonyms hints also at their functionality in – first of all – domestic communication, but also in these fields of international communication mentioned before.

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