

In Japan, geographical names are collected, arranged, and standardized by relevant governmental agencies to promote their administrative activities. As a consequent, following standardization of geographical names is a well-coordinated effort involving various related organizations which all have clearly defined tasks.

A. The efforts made by these organizations for standardization

1. Standardization of geographical names of administrative districts

Municipalities are composed of small administrative districts called cho or aza in Japanese. The names of small administrative districts are regulated by law, and local governments determine new names and their areas and publish in public notification.

2. Unification of geographical names of natural features

In the natural feature names, the name conventionally called by the local are shown on maps and chart. In 1960 the Joint Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names was established to standardize geographical names by Geospatial Information Authority of Japan (GSI) which compiles maps of land areas, and the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard which compiles maps of mostly marine areas.

3. Standardization of geographical names of undersea features

Names of the undersea features that have been discovered or surveyed by Japan's maritime survey organizations, and those that have been used historically have been standardized by the Japanese Committee on Undersea Feature Names, which consists of academic experts and maritime survey institute staff, and is operated by the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard, to be followed when used in nautical charts and publications.

4. Adoption of Antarctic geographical names

Except for those that have already been named by other countries and have been announced or used internationally, important places discovered and

surveyed by the Japanese Antarctic Research Expeditions in the region of 60 degrees south are tentatively named based on the “Code of Antarctic Geographical Naming”. These tentative names are submitted by the Antarctic Names Committee of Japan to the Japanese Promotive Headquarters of Antarctic Research Expedition, which decides on the official names.

B. National Geographical Names Gazetteer

The Government of Japan made “Gazetteer of Japan” in accordance with the resolutions of the 1st United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1967. After that, it continues to be updated at the right time. This gazetteer contains more than four thousand geographical names, of which administrative districts, natural features, and undersea features, from maps prepared by the GSI, as well as bathymetric charts and international charts prepared by the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard.