



# The role of geographical names in preserving cultural heritage





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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

### Noms géographiques et patrimoine culturel

Chers Collègues,

**D**epuis 1987 au moins, nous avons reconnu « les noms géographiques en tant qu'éléments significatifs du patrimoine culturel des nations » (1987/V/6, 2002/VIII/9, 2012/X/3...). En 2007, nous avons plus précisément évoqué « la fragilité des noms géographiques [...], de même que la nécessité de sensibiliser le public en faisant ressortir l'élément "toponymie" dans la convention de 2003. La participation de l'UNESCO à l'effort de sensibilisation et à la protection des noms géographiques a été considérée comme un élément d'importance primordiale » (compte rendu de la IX<sup>e</sup> Conférence, § 43). Conformément à l'avis exprimé en séance par la représentante de l'UNESCO, nous avons alors « estimé que les toponymes relèvent bien du patrimoine culturel immatériel » (2007/IX/4).



Enfin, par notre règlement intérieur de 2018, l'ECOSOC assigne au GENUNG, parmi ses « buts premiers », « de souligner, conformément à la Charte des Nations Unies et dans le respect de l'égalité des langues, l'importance des noms géographiques en tant qu'éléments du patrimoine historique et culturel et de l'identité des nations. »

Plus encore, cette dernière résolution « encourage les organismes officiels en charge de la toponymie :

- (a) À recenser les toponymes répondant aux critères d'application de la Convention pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel ;
- (b) À en faire proposer la reconnaissance au Haut Comité créé par la Convention ;
- (c) À élaborer un programme de sauvegarde et de promotion de ce patrimoine au sens des articles 2 (3) et 18 de la Convention ;
- (d) À en engager la mise en œuvre. » À ce jour, cela n'a été suivi par aucun des 183 États parties à la Convention. Mais la question a de nouveau été évoquée avec des membres de l'UNESCO, et des pistes ont été envisagées pour mettre cet encouragement en application. Il serait souhaitable que notre groupe de travail sur les noms géographiques en tant que patrimoine culturel s'en saisisse, et cela pourrait constituer un élément de sa relance.

En attendant, la présente livraison de notre *Bulletin* fait un pas de côté en envisageant les noms géographiques, non pas en tant que patrimoine culturel en eux-mêmes, mais en tant que moyens d'en préserver d'autres éléments. Elle montre la profonde solidarité des différents éléments du patrimoine culturel, dont la notion même les unit en un tout cohérent. Dans notre propre domaine, nous pouvons expérimenter combien les noms géographiques sont solidaires des langues dans lesquelles ils sont employés, même s'ils y sont empruntés d'ailleurs, comme nous l'avons déjà reconnu dans le cas des déclinaisons (1967/I/4, 1977/III/19).

On peut prévoir que ces questions seront de nouveau discutées à notre prochaine session, qui se tiendra du 28 avril au 2 mai 2025 à New York sur le thème : « *Faire progresser la normalisation des noms géographiques par des solutions inclusives, culturellement informées et fondées sur des données probantes pour soutenir le développement durable.* » Le présent *Bulletin* contribue donc à la préparer, comme nos groupes de travail, nos divisions et vous, experts, êtes invités à le faire.

**Précisons que les résumés sont attendus pour le 17 janvier et les papiers complets pour le 10 mars 2025.**

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## Geographical names and cultural heritage

Dear Colleagues,

Since 1987 at least, we have recognized "geographical names as significant elements of the cultural heritage of nations" (1987/V/6, 2002/VIII/9, 2012/X/3...). In 2007, we specifically mentioned "the fragility of geographical names and the need to raise public awareness by highlighting toponymy within the 2003 Convention. UNESCO participation in raising awareness, and its support for the protection of geographical names, were seen to be of paramount importance" (report of the IXth Conference, § 43). In line with the opinion expressed during the meeting by the UNESCO representative, we then "recognized that toponyms are indeed part of the intangible cultural heritage" (2007/IX/4).



Finally, under our 2018 rules of procedure, ECOSOC assigns to UNGEGN, as one of its "basic aims", "to emphasize, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, respect for equality among languages and the significance of geographical names as part of the historical and cultural heritage and identity of nations."

Furthermore, this resolution "encourages the official bodies responsible for toponymy to:

- (a) Identify toponyms that meet the criteria for application of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- (b) Submit them to the Committee set up by the Convention, for approval;
- (c) Prepare a programme to safeguard and develop that heritage in accordance with articles 2, paragraph 3, and 18 of the Convention;
- (d) Start implementing it." To date, this has not been done by any of the 183 States parties to the Convention. But the issue has been raised again with members of UNESCO, and ways have been explored to put this encouragement into practice. It would be desirable for our Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage to take this up, and this could be one element in its revival.

In the meantime, this issue of our *Bulletin* takes a step to the side by looking at geographical names, not as cultural heritage in themselves, but as a means of preserving other elements of it. It shows the deep solidarity between the different elements of cultural heritage, whose very notion unites them into a coherent whole. In our own field, we can experience the extent to which geographical names are integral to the languages in which they are used, even if they are borrowed from elsewhere, as we have already recognized in the case of declensions (1967/I/4, 1977/III/19).

We can expect these questions to be discussed again at our next session, to be held from 28 April to 2 May 2025 in New York on the theme: "*Advancing geographical names standardization through inclusive, culturally-informed and evidence-based solutions to support sustainable development*". This *Bulletin* will therefore help to prepare the ground, as our Working Groups, Divisions and you, the experts, are invited to do.

**Please note that summaries are due on 17 January and full documents on 10 March 2025.**

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## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dear UNGEGN Experts,

The 68th issue of the UNGEGN Bulletin features the theme ‘*The role of geographical names in preserving cultural heritage*’. It provides an update on preparations for the 2025 UNGEGN session and covers the usual featured sections – from the countries, divisions, working groups and special projects and news items.

### Featured Theme

Twenty issues ago, Bulletin 48 of May 2015 featured a similar theme to this current issue, which was simply ‘*Geographical names as cultural heritage*.’ The theme remains relevant today as it was nine years ago, as cultural heritage is a living concept that will forever need to be understood, respected and preserved. I will not delve into to the meaning and value of geographical names and cultural heritage or detail the supporting United Nations resolutions from UNCSGN and UNESCO, as these are adequately addressed in many articles. For a comprehensive overview of the works done and issues surrounding the theme, I suggest that you read Peter Jordans article ‘*The role of geographical names in preserving cultural heritage. UNGEGN’s and other activities in closer defining and assessing this role.*’ In support of the theme, 20 articles were received from 18 countries and one international organisation. These contributors were from Armenia, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Iceland, ICOS, Jordan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mozambique, New Zealand, Oman, Russian Federation, Slovenia and South Africa. They provide a rich mixture of cultural heritage practices, examples and challenges, all worthy of reading. However, I ask for your forgiveness as I am sticking my foot out on the limb to share with you that I enjoyed reading contributions from Denmark, Iceland, ICOS, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mozambique, and New Zealand. Should you also enjoy reading the ones I have selected please do let me know.

As you may be aware the work item on geographical names and cultural heritage has been in abeyance and efforts are being made to revitalize this important work. The featured theme in this issue is one of the initiatives taken to revitalize the work item. As you read the 20 themed articles, I suggest that you reflect on what work items are being done or could be done by your national names authority/body in support of advancing the preservation of cultural heritage using geographical names. In doing so please take into consideration Strategy 4: Culture, heritage and language recognition as detailed in the UNEGN Strategic Plan 2021-2029 and in particular strategy 4.iv, that recommends contributing to building technical capabilities, such as developing guidelines, legislation, communication tools and databases to enhance culture, heritage and language recognition.

Included in this issue are seven country contributions from Canada, Croatia, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Malaysia, and Norway. For readers who are interested in innovative approaches and artificial intelligence, I suggest a must-read article from Peder Gammeltoft, Norway, on *Artificial Intelligence in Evidence-Based Standardization of Historical Geographical Names: A*

*Norwegian Case Study*. The paper showcases a practical example on the use of artificial intelligence for historical name processing. There are three articles from the Baltic, East Central and South-East Europe and Romano-Hellenic Divisions, one from the Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy and three contributions to the special projects and news items sections. One is a call to support the Working Group on Romanization Systems, the other is a call for expressions of interest for sponsorship to participate in the 2025 session and an update on the UNGEGN-UN-GGIM collaborative project.

### Preparing for the 2025 UNGEGN Session

The 2025/fourth session of UNGEGN will be convened from the 28 April to the 2 May 2025, in conference room three, at the UN Headquarters in New York, United States, and will be in-person only. The note verbale in ([English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#)) announcing the holding of the 2025 session was issued to all Permanent Missions to the UN in New York on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Announcement letters to Member States and Observers will be issued in December 2024 via the [geoinfo\\_unsd-desa@un.org](mailto:geoinfo_unsd-desa@un.org) email. All information on the 2025 session will be accessible on the [UNEGN 2025 Session website](#).



UNEGN 2023 Session - Opening remarks being delivered by ASG  
Navid Hanif, DESA

### Important Dates to Note

In preparation for the session, we are kindly asking you to note the following dates, for the submission of documents (country reports, divisional reports, and technical papers).

- **The e-deleGATE portal** will be opened on **24 February 2025** to begin accepting registration
- **Summary Reports** are due on **17 January 2025**
- **Full Reports** are due on **10 March 2025**

In support of the preparation of your summaries and reports, we have provided summary and report templates and examples of final paragraphs for technical reports. These are accessible under the [Other Documents tab](#) on the 2025 session pages.





## Theme for the Session

The theme for the session is *Advancing geographical names standardization through inclusive, culturally-informed and evidence-based solutions to support sustainable development*. UNGEGN's biennial theme conforms with General Assembly resolution 70/1, which called for ECOSOC inter-governmental bodies and forums to reflect the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the interlinkages between them. The 2025 theme was therefore created based on ECOSOC's SDG theme for 2025, 'Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind' which focuses on the review of SDG goals 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17. Therefore, governments in preparing their technical papers are encouraged to consider featuring the theme of the session. However, the submission of documents focusing on general issues and challenges of geographical names standardization and UNGEGN's programme of work is also encouraged.

## Special Presentations and National Dialogue

We will also continue the practice of making special presentations which feature current topical technical issues, which will be delivered over the days of the session. Your suggestions for such presentations are welcomed.

The approach to delivering National Reports used at the 2023 session will be continued. Member State representatives who submit national reports under agenda item 4a, *Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names*, will be invited to participate in the national dialogue. The objective is to share national experiences for knowledge enrichment and to assist Member States who may be addressing the same issues, in an interactive and beneficial manner.

General information on session logistics, meeting rooms, hotel accommodation, visas and other matters will be provided in the NEW YORK RESOURCE GUIDE. Please visit the UNGEGN website in January for the Resource Guide and updates regarding preparations for the 2025/fourth session. UNGEGN representatives are encouraged to monitor the 2025 session webpages for updates on preparatory activities, also to begin preparing your technical papers and organizing your travel and hotel. The Secretariat is committed to keeping members informed on modality, organization and preparation of the session over the next months in a transparent manner.

## Ongoing UNGEGN Activities

The objective of the Bulletin is to keep you informed on the work of the Group of Experts. We therefore kindly ask you to help us achieve this by completing the following contact information form. [The UNGEGN contact information for national geographical names authorities](#). The information collected from this form will be used to update the Group of Experts contact database. We thank all our contributors to this issue, and to Andreas Hadjiraftis of Cyprus for designing the front page. Your comments on this issue and contribution to the next Bulletin, number 69, to be circulated in June 2025 under the theme '*The use of artificial intelligence in the standardization of geographical names*' are welcomed.

Please circulate the bulletin among your colleagues and other toponymic enthusiasts. To receive issues of the Bulletin you may register at <https://rb.gy/pgnvog>. Remember to tweet your geographical names activities @UNSD\_GEGN.

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Previous issues of the Bulletin (formerly Newsletter) can be found at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs>



## Theme: The Role of Geographical Names in Preserving Cultural Heritage

### The Role of Geographical Names In The Preservation of Cultural Heritage (Armenia)

Cultural heritage contains both tangible and intangible (spiritual) values and plays an important role in preserving and developing a people's identity, while also contributing to world civilization.

Therefore, cultural heritage is one of the forms of consolidating and transmitting the common material and non-material (spiritual) experiences of mankind. It includes components such as language, traditions, rituals, customs, holidays, memorable dates, folklore, folk art and crafts, works of art, museum, archive and library funds, collections, manuscripts, letters, personal archives, monuments of architecture, science and art, plaques, buildings, landmarks among other evidence of the historical past.

Immovable objects of cultural heritage (historical and cultural monuments) form its material basis, which in turn shapes the unique national environment.

Cultural heritage also includes geographical names, which have a key role in protecting the world's cultural and natural heritage.

The fact that toponyms have an important role in preserving the historical memory and identity of peoples has been observed as early as the Middle Ages, as evidenced by numerous manuscripts and maps.

Many experts regard hydrographic toponyms of great value. Hydronyms, which are ancient toponyms, help to locate ancestral populations with greater accuracy and, in some cases, provide insights into its public order, economic existence, and customs etc.

The multi-layered nature of hydronyms is worth noting, particularly the worship of water spirits and deities from early antiquity. This was reflected both in the name of the river Akhurean (now Akhuryan) and the name of the settlement of the stele Akhurian (Akh-ur-ian<akh "water"+ur "son of "). This is also mirrored in the character of the fairy-tale Okhai / Ukhai (here: \*ox / \*yx: "source").

It is impossible to overestimate the role of hydronyms in human civilization, both in spiritual and material life. The presence of large settlements and religious structures along rivers is vivid evidence of this. The same phenomenon is observed in Armenia.

An interesting aspect of Armenia's spiritual life, is the cult of Tukh Manuk. In addition to their religious role, Tukh Manuk chapels also have a valuable historical significance, because they are all built indiscriminately on the sites of pagan shrines and other sanctuaries and are indicators of the distribution of the pagan Armenian population.

An important part of the cultural heritage of the Armenian people includes astronoms. Since ancient times, various peoples have named the seven days of the week after cosmic objects known at that time, with the following combination:

**Երևակ** Yerevak (Saturn) - the first day, Saturday

**Արեգակ** Aregak (Sun) - the second day, Sunday

**Լուսին** Lusin (Moon) - the third day, Monday

**Հրատ** Hrat (Mars) - the fourth day, Tuesday

**Փայլածու** Paylatsu (Mercury) - the fifth day, Wednesday

**Լուսնթագ** Lusntag (Jupiter) - the sixth day, Thursday

**Լուսաբեր** Lusaber Lusaber (Venus) - the seventh day, Friday

Our ancestors also had their own names for the constellations:

**Հարդագողի ճանապարհ** Hardagoghi chanaparh (Straw Trace) - Milky Way

**Հայկ** Hayk - Orion

**Վահագն** Vahagn - Hercules

**Յոթ սանամոր աստղեր** Yot sanamor astgher - Ursa Major

**Հասկ** Hask - Virgo

**Գամփռ** Gampr - Canis Major

Situated in the cradle of ancient world civilizations, many of Armenia's toponyms were influenced by surrounding cultures. The etymology of some of Armenia's oldest settlements has become a subject of academic research and debate.

One of the prominent examples of Armenian toponym etymology is the name of the capital, Yerevan. Various theories have been proposed regarding its origin. Renowned German philologist and Armenologist Johann Heinrich Hübschmann proposed that the name originates from the Armenian verb erewim/erewec'ay, meaning "to become



certain” or “to appear,” possibly linked to the folk legend of Noah’s Ark coming to rest on Mount Ararat, symbolizing the appearance of dry land. The widely accepted theory today traces the name back to the 8th-century BC Urartian fortress of Erebuni or Irpuni (Salvini, 1969; Arutyunyan and Oganessian, 1970, Schmitt, 1990), founded by Urartu king Argishti I (827 BC- 764 BC). According to the theory, over time the population of Erebuni may have left the castle due to an earthquake or other disaster, moving to another place nearby, taking the name "Erebuni" with them. The name was later phonetically changed, as elements of the Urartian language mixed with Armenian, and the name eventually turned into Yerevan (Erebuni>Erevani>Ere van>Yerevan) (RBN>RVN). In the Urartian cuneiform inscription, V is reported by B, and O by U. In Urartian, the vowel at the end of the word sounded weak, as (Ō): there was a similar picture in Armenian, where the final vowel at the end of the word eventually disappeared.

The case of Gyumri, the second-largest city in the Republic of Armenia, is similar to that of Yerevan.

The cellars mentioned by Sarduri II (8th century BC - 735) were cave repositories and granaries. It is noteworthy that Grigor Ghapantsyan highlights the presence of the word "ayr" (meaning “cave”) in the place name of Kumayri. The words "kum" and "gum" mean “heap” or “group”, suggesting that the form of Kumayri in the name of Gyumri means a group of people associated with the prehistoric natural caves of Shirak. Over time, these caves were modified and used by the ancient Shiraks, both for storing agricultural products (primarily grain) and as reliable shelters. Kumir's equivalent of Kumayr's nomenclature is recorded c.h. from the beginning of the 13th century. Its phonetic form, Kumri, has the pronunciation variants Gyumri, Gumbri, Gyumbri, and Gimri, with Gumri being in the dialectal form.

Another example is the toponym of the city of Vardenis, which is a unique bridge between Old Armenian (Grabar) and modern Armenian.

The transparent etymology of Vardenik /s was given by Hübschmann in his well-known work dedicated to toponyms. He concluded that the name is derived from the plural of the word varden, vardenik, with its Grabar accusative form being Vardenis.

The above-mentioned toponyms are an inseparable part of the cultural heritage of the Armenian people, reflecting the civilizational presence of Armenians in the region since ancient times.

Literature list:

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## The role of geographical names in preserving cultural heritage (Australia)

Australian cultural heritage includes over 60,000 years of human history, starting with First Peoples through to colonization and migration in more recent times. Australia has a wealth of cultural history, and this is often shown through our geographical place names.

Australian members under a government collaboration group called the Intergovernmental Committee on Surveying and Mapping (ICSM), the Place Names Working Group (PNWG) have a focus on geographical place naming and continue to support UNCSGN Resolutions **VIII/9 – Geographical names as cultural heritage** and **X/3 -Criteria for establishing and evaluating the nature of geographical names as cultural heritage**.

Additionally, preserving our cultural heritage is of importance to the following UNGEGN resolutions:

- Resolution V/22 Aboriginal/native geographical names
- Resolution VIII/1 Promotion of minority group and indigenous geographical names
- Resolution IX/5 Promotion of the recording and use of indigenous minority and regional language group geographical names

These are important resolutions which highlight Australia’s shared cultural history. Through geographical place naming (naming) we play a role in educating and reducing community bias towards minority groups, which in turn promotes community cohesion and harmony. Within Australia, the promotion of our cultural heritage through naming is supported by national principles and local jurisdictional policies and regulations.

The PNWG Terms of Reference, state that it aims to “*facilitate preservation of the heritage and cultural significance of place names*”. In addition, the Australian ‘Principles for the consistent use of place names<sup>1</sup>’ (which is being actively reviewed), covers the importance of “*...Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage in areas throughout Australia*”.

On a Jurisdictional (State and Territory) level, various processes and policies (see associated footnotes) are in place to encourage naming which supports cultural heritage, a few statements explaining the importance of cultural history are provided as follows:

- **Australian Capital Territory process<sup>2</sup>**: Place naming is an integral part of the Australian Capital Territory’s (ACT) history. Most suburbs are named after notable Australians who have contributed to the existence of Australia as a nation. Most suburbs have a theme by which streets are

named. The theme may include people, places, flora, fauna, or things relevant and important to the history of Australia. Some people commemorated in street names are well known, while others made their mark as quiet achievers. The historical research undertaken by ACT Place Names unit makes an important contribution to the commemoration of Australian history. The research recognizes diverse and inclusive communities, both locally and nationally.

- **Western Australia policy<sup>3</sup>**: The benefits of recording and preserving geographical names are associated with the past, present, and future of a community. They form an integral part of personal identity by defining where people were born, live, have lived, and where their ancestors came from. They also serve the long-term interests of the community by identifying, protecting, and reflecting its culture, heritage, and landscape. This applies to all nomenclature (within Western Australia).
- **New South Wales policy (NSW)<sup>4</sup>** : The (NSW) Geographical Names Board is committed to recognizing *our* Aboriginal cultural heritage by registering place names given by Aboriginal people, allowing them to be assigned as geographical names alone or used alongside existing non-Aboriginal names. Names associated with the heritage of an area are encouraged, especially the names of early explorers, settlers, naturalists, and significant events.

It is clear from the policies highlighted above that members of the PNWG continue to support, promote, and celebrate our cultural heritage through naming. The case studies below highlight this work.

**New South Wales case study**: Names we give our geographical features should reflect the diversity of our communities. Thirty percent (30%) of the population in NSW were born overseas, however very few officially assigned names reflect the multicultural nature of our communities.



1

[https://www.icsm.gov.au/sites/default/files/consistent\\_place\\_names\\_principles.pdf](https://www.icsm.gov.au/sites/default/files/consistent_place_names_principles.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.planning.act.gov.au/community/place-names/place-name-processes>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/siteassets/documents/location-data-and-services/place-names-and-addressing/1574-geographic-names-policies-v3-november-2020.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.gnb.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/220148/GNB\\_Place\\_Naming\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.gnb.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/220148/GNB_Place_Naming_Policy.pdf)



As part of a local government area in Inner West Sydney efforts to recognize the significant social, cultural, and economic contributions of migrant communities living in the area, a series of ‘Little Village’ precincts were officially named in consultation with local businesses, cultural ambassadors, and communities.

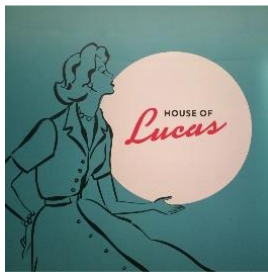
Community feedback strongly supported the move to reflect, through the naming of precincts, the enormous impact that these migrant communities have had on the area.

**Victoria case study:** Here are two examples that celebrate female cultural history.

(1) [Warrior Women Lane](#), named in honour of Lisa Bellear – a Minjungbul, Goernpil, Noonuccal and South Sea Islander woman from Minjerribah who was born in Melbourne (Naarm – the Wurundjeri name for Melbourne) and died in 2006 at the age of 45. Lisa was a prolific activist, photographer, broadcaster, poet, feminist, politician, comedian, academic and performer – a life worthy of commemoration.



(2) Eleanor Lucas – a founder of the textile company Lucas and Co - has a [suburb in Ballarat named after her](#). All the streets within the suburb of Lucas are named after ANZAC veterans in recognition of her company’s involvement in planting 1,000 trees in honour of the men and women who enlisted for service during World War One.



The suburb of Lucas provides a strong link to the place and commemorates Eleanor and the work she and her employees undertook.

Victoria has a campaign in place to support the government initiative of *Our equal state*. Over the next 3 years, there will be more than 6,000 new places to name in Victoria. To ensure these names honor the people who helped make our communities thriving places, nominations are encouraged, particularly for individuals from under-represented groups, including women, First Peoples, and multicultural communities. Nominations will be added to a council name bank, to be considered when naming places, including new streets, parks, community facilities, and buildings. This initiative will further preserve our cultural history. [engage.vic.gov.au/name-a-place](https://engage.vic.gov.au/name-a-place)

**Australian Capital Territory case study:** A great example of co-naming a place to better reflect our culture and diversity is the retrospective co-naming of the suburb of Spence. It was amended in 2023 to honour Catherine Helen Spence (1825–1910), social and political reformer, journalist,



feminist, educationist and writer, alongside William Guthrie Spence (1846–1926), trade unionist and politician, after whom the suburb was first named in 1972.

**Western Australian case study:** A reconciliation, truth telling, and Aboriginal revival project called Place Names Maali was launched in October 2024. This includes an interactive online Aboriginal place names story map for the City of Swan and a video outlining the importance of Aboriginal place naming. To view the map and video, visit the Landgate website: [www.landgate.wa.gov.au/location-data-and-services/place-names-and-addressing/aboriginal-place-naming/](http://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/location-data-and-services/place-names-and-addressing/aboriginal-place-naming/www.landgate.wa.gov.au/location-data-and-services/place-names-and-addressing/aboriginal-place-naming/)



Image: Joe Collard, Biboolmirm Nyoongar man and member of Maali miy

In conclusion, Australia continues to comply with and support UNGEKN’s resolutions and principles on preserving cultural heritage. Geographical place naming is one of the important ways in which Australia, industry, and our communities can work together to preserve our cultural heritage to ensure current and future generations understand the importance of our shared values and cultures.

Using naming to celebrate cultural heritage supports diversity and inclusion which is essential for creating safe, liveable, and equal societies. Australia has a rich history of incredible and diverse people who have shaped many sectors including academia, agriculture, arts, business, industry, medicine, politics, sport, and everything in between.

The challenge is, ensuring that this diversity in cultural heritage is represented in the names we encounter throughout Australia and the world we live in.

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## The Importance of Field Collection of Geographical Names for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage (Brazil)

Geographical names may often be considered “linguistic fossils”, because some have existed for millennia, providing references for us to move around in our daily lives. Although this seems to be their most obvious role, geographical names also have a far more interesting aspect: they bear witness to the life and times of those who created and used them - and of those who continue to do so today.

Geographical names can offer us information about the environment, migrations, economic activities, language, religious beliefs and values of a place and the people who dealt, or deal with, these names.

Geographical names are often the sole guardians of traditions, or of an almost forgotten language, or may be the witness to the existence of an endangered species of plant or animal once abundant in the place they name. This is the case of *Pedra do Banquete* (*Banquet Stone*), a mountain in the State of Rio de Janeiro, whose name tells a sad story of the times of slavery in Brazil. At the top of the mountain, rebellious slaves who had fled and killed their overseer held a banquet, after which they chose to jump off the cliff together rather than be recaptured alive. Another example is the name *Igaracu*, a municipality in the State of Pernambuco, which derives directly from an expression in the old indigenous language *Tupi*: *ygarusu*, formed by the words *ygara* (canoe) and *usu* (big)<sup>5</sup>. This was the indigenous word for ‘ship’ - an object that was new to them -, and depicts the first encounters between the natives and the Europeans.

In Brazil, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE is an important reference for the use of geographical names in the country, in the absence of a National Names Authority. The Geographical Names Department, part of the Coordination of Cartography within the Directorate of Geosciences, contributes to the institutional mission of “portraying Brazil with information which allows understanding the reality of the country and exercising citizenship”<sup>6</sup>. This is achieved by carefully collecting the stories behind the geographical names, the ones that motivate them. These stories provide crucial information for the choice of the most appropriate form of

a name, one that preserves its origins, and the valuable information that a name may contain.

These are the stories of our origins, of our culture, the stories geographical names hold and that a careful survey may reveal. Many of these stories can only be found in what is known as “deep Brazil”, an expression used to refer to areas that are less well-known, representing more authentic and traditional aspects of Brazilian culture, as well as rural or remote areas of the country.

Brazil is a huge country and one of contrasts. There are large, modern, urban centers with abundant resources and services, alongside small villages that often lack even basic services. There are large densely-populated areas and tiny, isolated groups of houses, in the middle of the forest or the scrubland. Access to information and education also varies greatly, and there are sharp economic inequalities not only across different regions of the country but also among individuals, both in terms of wealth and income.

Digital exclusion in Brazil affects 22.4 million people, mostly people over 60 years old, Afro-descendants and people with low incomes and low education levels, according to the *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua 2023* (Continuous National Household Sample Survey 2023)<sup>7</sup>, conducted by the IBGE. According to the same survey, 43.5% of the affected population lacks the digital skills needed to access the Internet.

In this context, the collection of names through methods that do not involve fieldwork, especially by digital crowdsourcing, can pose a threat to gathering comprehensive and accurate sets of national geographical names.

If, on the one hand, digital crowdsourcing projects such as [Flickr Commons](#) succeeded in contributing enormously to cultural heritage and history, the collection of geographical names using this method may not always show such successful results in other countries or areas. This is especially true when the intention is to gather historical information on place names or promote minority names. In

5

<https://www.scielo.br/j/bgoeldi/a/sWBMv5cG3KHqHr8v5jN7TQQ/?format=pdf>, access to the website in October 2024

6

<https://www.abc.gov.br/training/informacoes/InstituicaoIBGE.aspx#:~:>

<text=A%20miss%C3%A3o%20institucional%20do%20IBGE.cidad%C3%A3os%20residentes%20no%20pa%C3%ADs%20vivem>, access to the website in October 2024

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/sociais/populacao/17270-pnad-continua.html?edicao=40866&t=resultados>, access to the website in October 2024





such cases, crowdsourcing projects often fail to reach the most suitable volunteers, such as elderly people who may lack digital skills – or are often uninterested in dealing with digital technology – and/or those people without access to such technology. In these cases, fieldwork is the most efficient way to reach these informants.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the high costs, and the large amount of time involved in fieldwork operations, which can make it difficult, or even impossible, for national institutions responsible for collecting geographical names to execute.

To reduce this impact, the Geographical Names Department of the Coordination of Cartography at the IBGE, in alignment with Strategy 2 of UNGEGN’s Strategic Plan and Program of Work, is developing a project which seeks to establish partnerships with educational institutions, such as schools and universities, as an additional means to obtain information about geographical names where crowdsourcing may not be successfully implemented.

The launch of IBGE’s Manual for the Collection of Geographical Names in July 2023 is expected to make these partnerships possible, by providing common ground for field surveys carried out both by the IBGE and educational institutes. The manual provides “step-by-step” instructions for a methodology that has been validated through several years of field activities by IBGE surveyors. This tool will allow the methodology to be passed on to partner educational institutions, enabling the data collected by these institutions to contribute to the processing of names in the IBGE database.

The project also includes training and guidance, offered by the IBGE to partner institutions, which aims to publish a more precise set of geographical names that truly represent the Brazilian people.

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## Canada's Activities Supporting Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

Canada has a long history of officially recognizing geographical names that are rooted in Indigenous languages. The name of the country is likely derived from the word “kanata” in the Wendat or another Iroquoian language meaning “village” or “settlement.” Indigenous Peoples’ long-standing relationship with the land has shaped their cultures, languages and place names since time immemorial. Indigenous place names have the power to communicate Indigenous worldviews including traditional knowledge of the lands, geography, and natural resources, as well as to preserve language, histories, stories and teachings.

Officially recognizing Indigenous place names respects and transmits knowledge to future generations. Respecting Indigenous Peoples’ right to revitalize, develop and transmit their place names aligns with Article 13 of the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) and is a tangible step towards reconciliation by reconnecting original place names to geographical features. This is vital to nurturing diverse cultural heritage in Canada, now and for the future.

Although many place names in [Canada are rooted in Indigenous languages](#), historically many names were ignored, corrupted or replaced through the practices and policies of colonial settlers, which threatened the erasure of Indigenous Peoples, cultures and languages. This is paralleled by the broader issue of Indigenous languages being threatened around the world. More than 70 distinct Indigenous languages are currently spoken across Canada by First Nations people, Métis and Inuit<sup>8</sup>. According to the UNESCO *Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger*, all Indigenous languages spoken in Canada [are considered at risk](#). Supported by the [Indigenous Languages Act](#) (2019) in Canada and the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, the focus is on drawing attention to and addressing this critical issue, including in the use of Indigenous place names.

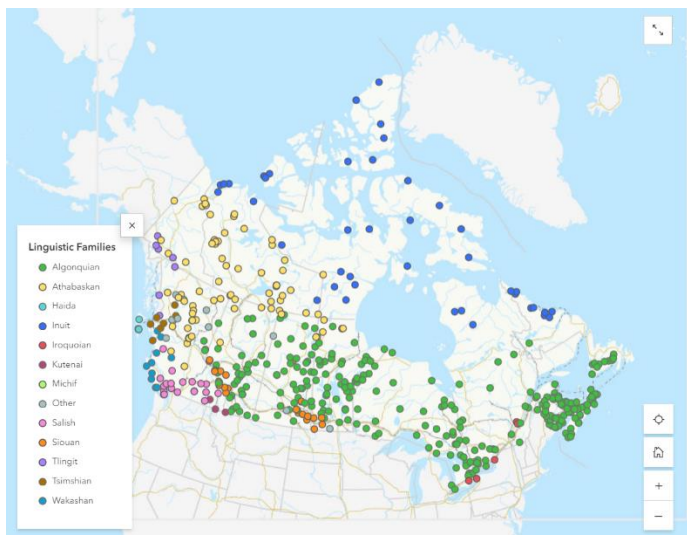
The [Geographical Names Board of Canada \(GNBC\)](#) is Canada’s national coordinating body responsible for standards and policies on place names. The GNBC comprises federal, provincial, and territorial departments and agencies, each with specific authority and responsibility for their respective jurisdictions. Working

together as a multi-jurisdictional national body, GNBC members coordinate efforts to ensure that geographical names are consistently managed. The GNBC is supported by a Secretariat provided by Natural Resources Canada, a department of the Government of Canada. There is a renewed focus in the GNBC on supporting Indigenous geographical names and ensuring that the Indigenous languages that are rooted in these place names are respectfully represented in Canada. Work undertaken by the GNBC is guided by Indigenous Advisors, who provide their expertise and lived experiences as First Nation, Inuit and Métis Peoples.

In Canada, close to [30,000 official place names](#) are of Indigenous origin. These place names reflect the diversity of Indigenous cultures and languages spoken across Canada. For example, well-known place names like Niagara Falls in Ontario and Winnipeg in Manitoba are [derived from Indigenous languages](#) (Wendat or Kanien’kéha (Mohawk), and Cree respectively, though their current spelling and pronunciation may not accurately reflect the original language. These examples and more are captured in an interactive map [Stories from the Land: Indigenous Place Names in Canada](#), released by the GNBC in 2019.

Within the Canadian Geographical Names Database, the standard for use in official base maps, the GNBC Secretariat has been working to amend and update the ISO 639-3 international language standard to ensure accurate and comprehensive representation of Indigenous languages in Canada, and to standardize the collection of languages for Indigenous place names. This work is evolving as Indigenous Peoples are reclaiming and revitalizing their own languages as well as deciding at the community level their endonym, the language name as described by that Indigenous community. This work has resulted in a [public thematic dataset](#) of Indigenous place names containing over 23,000 official place names, with more being added as these are submitted to the naming authorities by Indigenous communities.

<sup>8</sup> First Nations refers to Status, non-status and Treaty Indians; the Métis are a post-contact Indigenous community that is connected to the fur trade in the area around Red River; and the Inuit are the Indigenous Peoples originating from the Arctic regions. Source: [\[archives.canada.ca/eng/collection/research-help/indigenous-heritage/Pages/indigenous-terminology.aspx#first-nations\]\(https://archives.canada.ca/eng/collection/research-help/indigenous-heritage/Pages/indigenous-terminology.aspx#first-nations\)](https://library-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)



*Stories from the Land: Indigenous Place Names in Canada, 2019*

To further showcase the role of geographical names in preserving cultural heritage, in 2023, Natural Resources Canada and the GNBC released a public exhibit entitled *In the Languages of These Lands* promoting Indigenous geographical names and languages in Canada. Displayed on large panels, the exhibit consisted of large, colourful and eye-catching photos of landscapes and locations which have official names with origins in 22 Indigenous languages and dialects. These images were accompanied by short narratives for each place name, providing the Indigenous language of origin and the meaning, and a QR code linked to additional information including the phonetic pronunciation, and where available audio recordings of the pronunciations. These panels were displayed in a high-traffic location in downtown Ottawa, allowing passers-by to take a moment to learn about the diversity of geographic place names in Canada with origins in Indigenous languages.

Preserving cultural heritage is a process that is always evolving and utilizes a variety of tools. This includes audio, recognizing that hearing a name can bring a place to life in a manner unlike other methods. [The Innu Nation in Labrador has shared over 400 audio files of their geographical names with the GNBC](#), which has been

incorporated into the Canadian Geographical Names Database. Users of the database can hear the pronunciation of Innu place names, spoken by Innu-aimun language speakers.

Canada is one of the many Member States of UNGEGN who are active in supporting the diversity of cultural heritage by revitalizing and recognizing Indigenous place names. Canada leads a [focus group](#) under UNGEGN on Indigenous and minority language geographical names. This focus group seeks to advance progress under “Strategy 4: Culture, heritage and language recognition” of the [UNEGN Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029](#). The aim of this focus group is to support international promotion and recognition of the significance of Indigenous place names and support Member States in establishing, updating or improving their operational practices and standardization related to Indigenous and minority place names. Leading up to the 2025 UNGEGN session, Canada is working to revitalize the activities of this focus group. If you are interested in learning more, please reach out through the email [nrcan.geonames-toponymes.nrcan@canada.ca](mailto:nrcan.geonames-toponymes.nrcan@canada.ca).

As naming authorities across Canada are working to officially recognize and revitalize Indigenous place names, the GNBC and Natural Resources Canada will continue to support Indigenous Peoples by promoting the significance of Indigenous place names within Canada and internationally. The GNBC is continually engaging with domestic, Indigenous, and international partners to better support communities while they undergo this process. Working to officially recognize Indigenous place names ensures that future generations will be able to continue to benefit from the wealth of cultural and historical knowledge embedded in Indigenous place names.

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## Les activités du Canada à l'appui de la reconnaissance des noms géographiques en tant qu'éléments du patrimoine culturel

Le Canada reconnaît officiellement des noms géographiques issus de langues autochtones depuis fort longtemps. Le nom même du pays vient probablement de « kanata », un mot wendat ou d'une autre langue iroquoienne qui désigne un « village » ou une « bourgade ». Les relations de longue date que les peuples autochtones entretiennent avec les terres influencent leurs cultures, leurs langues et leurs toponymes depuis des temps immémoriaux. Les noms de lieux autochtones ont la capacité de communiquer les visions du monde des Autochtones, y compris leur savoir traditionnel sur les terres, la géographie et les ressources naturelles, et de protéger leurs langues, leurs histoires, leurs récits et leurs enseignements.

La reconnaissance officielle des noms de lieux autochtones est une manière de respecter ce savoir et de le transmettre aux générations de demain. Le respect du droit des peuples autochtones de revitaliser, de développer et de transmettre de leurs toponymes est conforme à l'article 13 de la [Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones](#), et le rétablissement du lien entre les noms de lieux originaux et les entités géographiques constitue une étape concrète vers la réconciliation. Il s'agit là d'une démarche essentielle pour préserver le patrimoine culturel diversifié du Canada, tant aujourd'hui que dans l'avenir.

Même si de nombreux lieux au [Canada portent un nom issu d'une langue autochtone](#), au cours de l'histoire, de nombreux noms ont été ignorés, dénaturés ou remplacés en raison des pratiques et des politiques mises en œuvre par les colons, qui représentaient une menace pour les peuples autochtones ainsi que pour leurs cultures et leurs langues. Cette situation est comparable à la situation générale des langues autochtones, qui sont menacées partout dans le monde. Plus de 70 langues autochtones distinctes sont actuellement parlées à travers le Canada par les Premières Nations, les Métis et les Inuit<sup>9</sup>. Selon l'*Atlas des langues en danger dans le monde* de l'UNESCO, toutes les langues autochtones parlées au Canada sont [considérées comme étant à risque](#). Appuyé par la [Loi sur les langues autochtones](#) (2019) du Canada et la Décennie internationale des langues autochtones, l'objectif est d'attirer l'attention sur cette question cruciale et d'y répondre, y compris en utilisant des noms de lieux autochtones.

La [Commission de toponymie du Canada \(CTC\)](#) est l'organisme de coordination national chargé des normes et des

politiques en matière de toponymes canadiens. La CTC se compose de ministères et d'organismes fédéraux, provinciaux et territoriaux, ayant chacun des pouvoirs et des responsabilités particuliers au sein de leurs territoires de compétence. Collaborant ensemble à titre d'organisme intergouvernemental national, les membres de la CTC coordonnent leurs efforts pour assurer la gestion uniforme des toponymes. La CTC est appuyée par un secrétariat fourni par Ressources naturelles Canada, un ministère du gouvernement du Canada. La CTC porte un intérêt renouvelé aux noms géographiques autochtones et s'assure que les langues autochtones dont ils sont issus sont représentées de manière respectueuse au Canada. Le travail de la CTC est guidé par des conseillers/ conseillères autochtones, qui apportent leur expertise et leur expérience en tant que membres des Premières Nations, Métis ou Inuit.

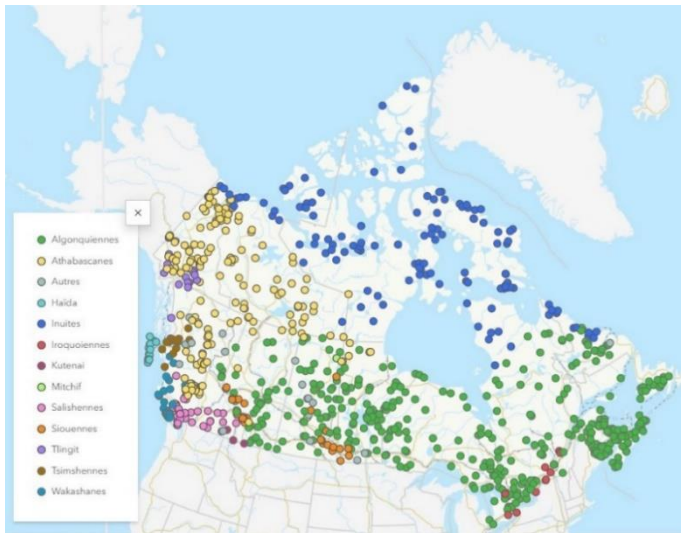
Au Canada, il existe près de [30 000 noms de lieux officiels](#) d'origine autochtone. Ces noms de lieux reflètent la diversité des cultures et des langues autochtones présentes au Canada. À titre d'exemple, des noms de lieux bien connus comme les Chutes Niagara en Ontario et Winnipeg au Manitoba [proviennent directement de langues autochtones](#) (le wendat ou le Kanien'kéha (mohawk) et le cri, respectivement), même s'il est possible que leur orthographe et leur prononciation actuelles ne correspondent pas exactement à leur forme dans leur langue d'origine. Ces exemples et bien d'autres sont présentés dans [Récits du territoire : Noms de lieux autochtones au Canada](#), une carte interactive publiée par la CTC en 2019.

Dans la Base de données toponymiques du Canada, la norme à utiliser dans les cartes de base officielles, le Secrétariat de la CTC a travaillé à la modification et à la mise à jour de la norme linguistique internationale ISO 639-3, afin de garantir une représentation correcte et complète des langues autochtones du Canada et de normaliser la consignation des langues pour les noms de lieux autochtones. Ce travail évolue au fur et à mesure que les peuples autochtones se réapproprient et revitalisent leurs propres langues et décident, au niveau de la communauté, de leur endonyme, c'est-à-dire le nom du lieu tel que désigner par cette communauté autochtone. Ce travail a permis de créer un [ensemble de données thématiques publiques](#) sur les noms de lieux autochtones comprenant plus de 23 000 noms de lieux officiels, nombre qui continue

<sup>9</sup> Les Premières Nations désignent les Indiens inscrits, les Indiens non inscrits et les Indiens visés par un traité; les Métis forment une communauté autochtone qui découle de l'arrivée des Européens et est associée à la traite des fourrures dans le secteur de la rivière Rouge; et

les Inuit sont les peuples autochtones qui habitent les régions arctiques. Source : <https://bibliotheque-archives.canada.ca/fra/collection/aide-recherche/patrimoine-autochtone/Pages/terminologie-autochtone.aspx>

d'augmenter à mesure que les communautés autochtones soumettent de nouveaux noms aux autorités toponymiques.



*Récits du territoire : Noms de lieux autochtones au Canada, 2019*

En 2023, afin de mettre davantage en valeur le rôle que jouent les noms géographiques dans la préservation du patrimoine culturel, Ressources naturelles Canada et la CTC ont créé une exposition publique intitulée [Dans les langues de ces terres](#), faisant la promotion [des noms géographiques et des langues autochtones](#) au Canada. Cette exposition se composait de grands panneaux présentant des photos colorées et accrocheuses de paysages et d'endroits dont les noms officiels tirent leurs origines de 22 langues et dialectes autochtones. Ces images étaient accompagnées d'une courte description indiquant la langue autochtone d'origine et la signification du nom. Elles comprenaient également un code QR lié à un site contenant des renseignements supplémentaires, notamment la prononciation phonétique du mot et un enregistrement audio de celle-ci lorsqu'il était disponible. Les panneaux étaient exposés dans un endroit très achalandé du centre-ville d'Ottawa, permettant ainsi aux passants de prendre un moment pour découvrir la diversité des toponymes du Canada tirant leur origine d'une langue autochtone.

La préservation du patrimoine culturel est un processus en constante évolution qui nécessite le recours à divers outils. Parmi ces outils figurent les documents audio, puisque le fait d'entendre un nom permet de donner vie à un toponyme, ce qui n'est pas nécessairement le cas avec d'autres méthodes. [La nation innue du Labrador a transmis plus de 400 fichiers audio](#)

[contenant la prononciation de ses toponymes à la CTC](#), fichiers qui ont été ajoutés dans la Base de données toponymiques du Canada. Les utilisateurs de la base de données peuvent donc entendre la prononciation des toponymes innus de la bouche de locuteurs de l'innu-aimun.

Le Canada est l'un des nombreux membres du GENUNG qui contribuent activement à la diversité du patrimoine culturel par la revitalisation et la reconnaissance des noms de lieux autochtones. Le Canada dirige un [groupe de réflexion](#) sur les noms géographiques dans les langues autochtones et minoritaires au sein du GENUNG. Ce groupe de réflexion vise à favoriser les progrès dans la mise en œuvre du [plan stratégique et programme de travail 2021-2029 du GENUNG](#) (en anglais seulement) en vertu de la stratégie n° 4 sur la reconnaissance de la culture, du patrimoine et des langues. Ce groupe de réflexion a pour objectif d'appuyer la promotion et la reconnaissance à l'échelle internationale de l'importance des noms de lieux autochtones et d'aider les États membres à établir des pratiques opérationnelles et de normalisation en ce qui concerne les noms de lieux en langues autochtones et minoritaires, ou de les mettre à jour. En prévision de la session de 2025 du GENUNG, le Canada cherche à intensifier les activités de ce groupe de réflexion. Si vous souhaitez en savoir plus à ce sujet, veuillez envoyer un courriel à l'adresse [nrcan.geonames-toponymes.nrcan@canada.ca](mailto:nrcan.geonames-toponymes.nrcan@canada.ca).

Pendant que les autorités toponymiques dans l'ensemble du Canada déploient des efforts en vue de reconnaître officiellement et de revitaliser les noms de lieux autochtones, la CTC et Ressources naturelles Canada continueront de soutenir les peuples autochtones en faisant valoir l'importance des noms de lieux autochtones au Canada et à l'échelle internationale. La CTC collabore continuellement avec ses partenaires nationaux, autochtones et internationaux en vue de mieux soutenir les communautés au cours de ce processus. Les travaux visant à reconnaître officiellement les noms de lieux autochtones nous assurent que les générations à venir pourront profiter de la richesse des connaissances culturelles et historiques que portent les noms de lieux autochtones.

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# Geographical names - Inseparable part of the cultural heritage of Cyprus

## Introduction

Cultural Heritage encompasses the legacy of physical objects and intangible characteristics of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, preserved in the present and preserved for the benefit of future generations.

The term Cultural Heritage includes:

- tangible culture (such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art and documents),
- intangible culture (such as folklore, traditions, language and knowledge),
- natural heritage, which includes important cultural landscapes and biodiversity,
- geographical names and toponyms, which are connected to all the above.

## Examples of Cultural Heritage Components in Cyprus

Cyprus' cultural heritage includes the art of Lefkara embroidery (Lefkaritika laces), recognized in UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage along with the ancient art of weaving. The art of pottery dating back to ancient times, developed significantly in Cyprus in order to create vessels for storing or transporting products. Basket-weaving is another art that developed mainly in areas with abundant raw materials such as reeds, rushes and the like, found near rivers. Additionally, silversmithing and woodcarving are two other art forms that were developed in Cyprus since ancient times. The intangible cultural heritage of Cyprus includes all folk songs as well as traditional dances. All of these examples are related to specific areas of the island, thus connecting them directly to geographical names and toponyms.



Examples of Cultural Heritage Components in Cyprus

## Long History of Cyprus

The history and culture of Cyprus is among the oldest in the world. The island's rich cultural landscape has hundreds of archaeological sites scattered throughout, representing various historical periods in the island's evolution. Cyprus's geo-strategic location at the intersection of three continents, namely: Europe, Asia and Africa, has profoundly influenced its history. For certain periods Cypriots lived under foreign domination and became an independent state and a member of the United Nations in 1960. In 1961 it became a member of the Council of Europe, the British Commonwealth and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). In 2004, the Republic of Cyprus became a member of the European Union, joined the Euro Zone in 2008, and adopted the euro as its national currency.

Cyprus is privileged to have most of its geographical names bequeathed in ancient texts, from Homer and Herodotus, to the tragic poets and Strabo, up to ancient cartographers such as Claudius Ptolemaeus. The country's geographical names are also attributed to medieval cartographers, such as Abraham Ortelius, and Lord Horatio H. Kitchener, who mapped Cyprus in the 19th century at the beginning of the British rule of the island. The name of the island "Kypros" was mentioned by Homer 3000 years ago.



Examples of historical maps of Cyprus

## Ancient Culture and Byzantine Influence

Cyprus boasts a unique history with ancient culture dating back to 9,000 BC. The island is home to numerous monuments included in the UNESCO list of World Cultural Heritage, as well as many monasteries and archaeological sites, all of which contribute to its rich and significant cultural heritage.





*Ancient Mosaics in Cyprus*

Due to its geographical location, Cyprus had embraced Christianity by 313 A.D., and therefore has one of the greatest collections of Byzantine art in the world. A significant number of churches, chapels, and monasteries are decorated with priceless early Christian and medieval mosaics, frescoes, and icons.



*Byzantine Art in Cyprus*

The international community shows great sensitivity to the protection and respect of cultural heritage around the world, as is evident from the number of Conventions and Protocols that have been adopted. The Republic of Cyprus is a party to international efforts to protect cultural heritage, such as the [1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict](#).

On the island of Cyprus, there are many medieval castles, adding to the cultural heritage of the country. Intangible cultural heritage - such as oral traditions, dances, traditional songs, events,

festivals, ceremonies, geographical names, toponyms, techniques for making handmade structures, knowledge, and practices related to nature and the universe - are vital elements of Cyprus's identity. They are the elements that make us who we are, inherited from those who came before us. Unlike houses, fields or real estate, they are intangible and cannot be taken away from us.



*Medieval Castles in Cyprus*

## Geographical Names and Toponyms in Cyprus

Cyprus, belonging to the Mediterranean world, has a written history with tangible evidence spanning at least three thousand years. Naturally, historical sources about Cyprus include references to its toponyms. Based on the dominant and enduring Greek presence in Cyprus, dating from 1100 BC to this day, the following groups of toponyms are observed in Cyprus:

- (a) Pre-Hellenic,
- (b) Hellenistic,
- (c) Roman
- (d) Byzantine,
- (e) Frankish, and
- (f) Turkish

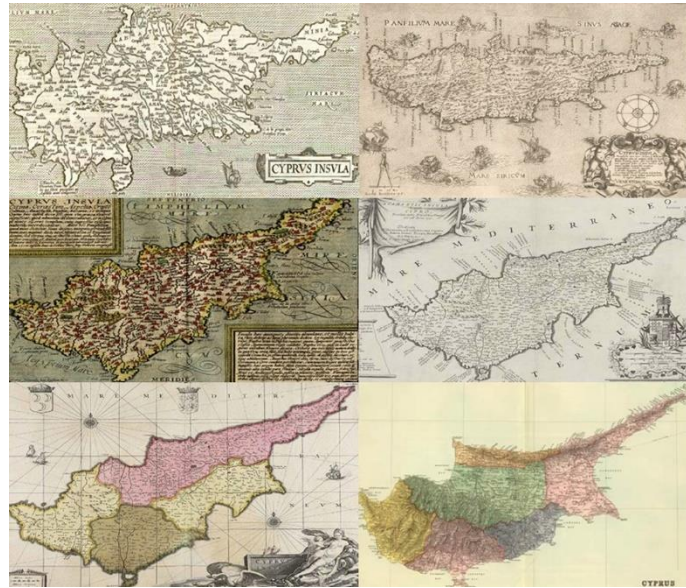
The history of Cyprus is reflected in the kaleidoscope of Cypriot toponyms.

Research has proved that toponyms are mostly stable, often remaining unchanged through the centuries. They typically follow the changes which take place in the historical evolution of the language. However, some toponyms undergo alterations over time, especially when new names are introduced, often referring to natural features, man-made works or changes in ownership.

The last two conquerors of Cyprus were the Ottoman Turks, from the 16th to the 19th century, and subsequently the British until 1960. All geographical names that survived through the centuries - either in writing or oral traditions - up until 1960, (the year of

the independence of the Republic of Cyprus), are fully acknowledged and preserved by the Government. Many of them have been collected from texts and historical documents left by the British, the Ottoman Turks, and other previous conquerors. While each ruling power imposed its own systems, none made massive changes to the island's traditional geographical names.

Following the events of 1974, almost all of the internationally recognized geographical names in the northern part of Cyprus were replaced. This renaming has had a profound impact on the historical continuity of place names, raising concerns about the preservation of geographical names in accordance with international standards and relevant UN resolutions.



*The long history of geographical names of Cyprus*

## Epilogue

Geographical names are an important part of our geographical and cultural environment. They represent irreplaceable cultural, linguistic, and environmental values of vital significance to people's sense of well-being and belonging. Geographical names in Cyprus are therefore of major importance.

Authoritative geographical names are an integral part of the history and cultural heritage of Cyprus, and thus they must be respected and protected accordingly.

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## Re-use of historical field names (Denmark)

### Contemporary naming as preservation of linguistic cultural heritage

The term ‘field name’ in this context refers to place names that denote an individual field or collections of fields on cultivated land, especially arable, but also meadows and pasture. The term is specifically associated with historical agriculture and farming communities that existed from at least the beginning of the Middle Ages until a comprehensive agricultural reform (known as the Enclosure) was implemented in Denmark around 1800 AD.

During this period, the arable land around a rural village was typically divided into areas called *vange* (usually two or three). Each *vang* was further subdivided into an alternating number of smaller fields, and each of the village’s farms had at its disposal a variable quantity of fields within each *vang*. This system of cultivation followed an annual rotation system, e.g. barley and rye were followed by a year of fallow in a three-row system. The distribution of land was managed by the village’s decision-making assembly of farmers called the *ejerlav* (the term also referred to the area managed by the village assembly).

To administrate this rather complicated cultivation system, field names were a necessary tool for identifying and distributing individual fields. Professor of Name Research, Bent Jørgensen has estimated that more than a million field names were in use in Denmark. With agricultural reform, the system was phased out, and each farm was assigned one large, enclosed plot of arable land, and often moved away from the village to the assigned location. Thus, the need for field names was significantly reduced and most of them simply fell out of use and memory.

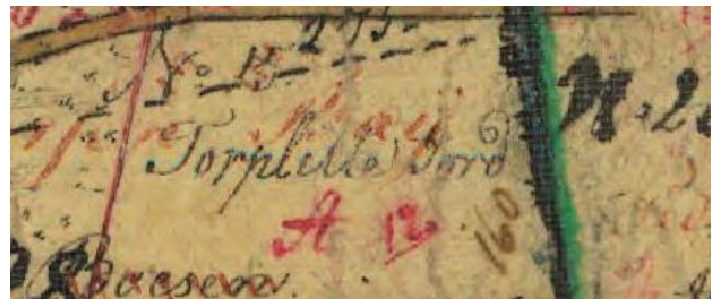
In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century name researchers on the Place Name Committee, established in 1910, were conscious about the status of field names as linguistic cultural heritage worthy of preservation. They were painfully aware of the progressive loss of these names that had occurred throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and therefore initiated the collection of the historical field names.

Field names were sourced from historical documents including *Field books* from 1681-83 (accessible online (Christian 5..s matrikel), [www.arkivalieronline.dk](http://www.arkivalieronline.dk), Danish National Archives). These records were a preparatory work for the 1688 Land Registry, in which the arable land in Denmark (except for Schleswig and Bornholm) was measured, assessed for its agricultural quality, and appraised for the purpose of taxation. Also, numerous field names are recorded from cadastral maps produced between 1780-1810 during a period of Danish agricultural reforms (accessible

online, [www.historiskekort.dk](http://www.historiskekort.dk)), Danish Agency for Climate Data. In addition to these primary written sources, field names were recorded (with their pronunciation) and collected by name researchers as part of on-location fieldwork as well as through a nationwide crowd sourcing initiative.

For this work, in 1922, preprinted report forms with local maps for marking the exact location of the named localities were distributed nationwide to all Danish parishes (approx. 2000), with a request for local schoolteachers to record field names based on interviews with local farmers, preferably the elderly. The collection effort continued to grow from 1960 as part of a university archive, until the 1980s. During this time researchers established phonological recordings of field names for various areas ensuring their collection and preservation. Today, most of this comprehensive collection of historical field names has been digitized and is publicly available

[<https://sprogsamlinger.ku.dk/q.php?p=ds/hjem/mapper/50651>].



The field name *Torplille Jord* mistakenly read as *Torplette Bord* (Cadastral map 1795, [www.historiskekort.dk](http://www.historiskekort.dk))

A small number of field names were re-used where new names were needed after the enclosure reform was implemented around 1800, for instance, as names applied to outlying farms or as road names. Some names were re-used in their original form (e.g. *Langager* ‘the long field’), but it was more common to see them adapted into compounds containing the field name as a first element combined with suffixes designating the type of locality, for instance *-gård*, (‘-farm’), *-vej* (‘-road’). Continuity is also typical for administrative naming of and within residential areas and recreational areas established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



The Danish Place Name Committee has consistently encouraged municipalities (which are also represented in the committee) to secure historical place names and preserve them as part of Denmark's linguistic and intangible cultural heritage. This is often achieved by reintroducing field names when new residential or urban development areas are established, instead of opting for names inspired by birds, politicians, or similar types of technical-administrative themes. This has been and is done, explicitly with reference to the contents of the UN resolutions VIII/2 Commemorative naming practices for geographical features, VIII/9 Geographical names as cultural heritage, IX/4 Geographical names as intangible cultural heritage and has had a generally positive impact.

However, good intentions can sometimes lead to problematic results. For instance, when names from old maps are directly copied and therefore used in orthographic forms that are unsuitable from a standardization perspective. Sometimes an old form is misread, for example, the field name *Torplille Jord* ('the land belonging to Little Torp') found on a cadastral map from 1795, has now become a road name *Torplette Bord* (*lette* means 'to rise, take off' and *bord* means 'table'), which is so strange that people regularly contact the Name Research Archive for an explanation.



*The strange road name Torplette Bord (Photo: Google Street View, [www.googlemaps.com](http://www.googlemaps.com))*

Recently, residents of an area near Roskilde have raised concerns about the names of three new lakes (former gravel pits that have since filled up with water). The residents claim that two of the names "have been swapped". These lake names are in fact new constructions but inspired by former field names, similar to the case of road names in nearby development areas north and east of the new lakes (Svogerslev and Hyrdehøj, Roskilde Municipality). The lake names align perfectly with historical place names and their orientation on cadastral maps from the area. The likely explanation is that an employee within the municipal administration with all the best intentions, relied on historical maps without accounting for contemporary local usage. This is somewhat unfortunate as consideration of cultural heritage should not be at the expense of clarity in contemporary language usage.

Despite these minor challenges, the re-use and reintroduction of historical names, such as these Danish field names remain exemplary. Static preservation of cultural heritage is necessary for research and leaves a corpus to be inspired from, but the active use of place names secures continuity, prevents loss, and even provides the residents of new urban settlements with a sense of historical anchoring.

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## The Role of Geographical Names in Preserving Egypt's Cultural Heritage

Geographical names are an essential component of Egypt's cultural heritage. Place names represent the oldest aspect of living human heritage, orally passed down through generations. They form part of the community's memory, express identity, and carry a cultural legacy passed down from generation to generation across the ages.

### Historical Development of the Egyptian Language, Writings:

Egypt is the cradle of civilizations. God has given it many blessings, from an excellent location in the center of the world, connecting the three continents of the Old World, to its moderate climate, natural resources, and the Nile River. These features made it a center for trade and cultural exchange between the peoples of the Old-World continents and a target for colonists and invaders throughout the ages.

As a result, the Egyptian language evolved through stages: Old Egyptian, Middle Egyptian, New Egyptian, Demotic, Coptic, and finally Arabic. Egyptian writings developed accordingly including hieroglyphics, hieratic, demotic, Greek, Coptic, and finally classical Arabic.

### The Impact of the Development of the Egyptian Language and Writings on Geographical Names

The Egyptian language, through its interactions with languages such as Greek, Roman, Persian, Turkish, English, and French, has influenced the majority of Egyptian geographical names, many of which are now foreign-derived and have undergone various changes, making them inconsistent in form and pronunciation with their ancient origins. Among the foreign words that are repeated in Egyptian geographical names is the word Meet (ميت) which is ancient Egyptian and means "road"; Kafir (كفر) is a Syriac word meaning "village"; Por (بور) is from the English word "port", as in Port Said and Port Fouad; and Kom (كوم) which is of Greek origin meaning "village". Other names reflect older meanings such as Bulaq (بولاق), derived from the ancient Egyptian Bilaq meaning "harbor", and Shubra (شبرا) originating from the ancient Egyptian kharu an ancient term meaning "street" or "limited residential area".

Geographical names in Egypt have evolved with linguistic developments. Some names disappeared due to their integration into a larger entity, the occurrence of a natural disaster, or changes driven by religious, political or social

considerations. Others were distorted due to the difference in the pronunciation of letters from one language to another, especially with the absence of letters such as "ع", "ض", "ح", "خ", "غ" which have no equivalent sounds in some Latin languages.

We can summarize changes that occurred in Egyptian geographical names as follows:

1. **Phonetic Exchanges:** letter substitutions when translating from one language to another, e.g. T to D and vice versa, J to Q, "ح" to A or H and K to J or Q, T to Kh, B to M.
2. **Reversed letters:** Reordering letters, as seen in Alaskandariyya (الاسكندرية) from Alexandria and Sakha (سخا) from Khasu.
3. **Syllable Modifications:** Adding or deleting a syllable or letter, such as adding the syllable "us" or "is" when translating from ancient Egyptian to Greek and deleting them again when translating to Arabic.
4. **Name Extinction:** full names disappearing as the result of merging into a larger entity, such as Meniaty Badr and Habib instead of Mit Badr Halawa and Mit Habib Al Sharqiya respectively, or removing the geographic location, such as Saft Al Yaman and Jazirat Al Balah. Or even because the name was disapproved of, such as Bani Majnoon (بنى مجنون) which means "crazy" in Arabic was transformed to Bani Saleh (بنى صالح) which means good person, and Al Kharaba (الخرابة) which means "ruined place" in Arabic and was transformed into Al Maamoura (المعمورة) which means "inhabited place" in Arabic.
5. **Merging words:** Simplifying pronunciations to become one word, such as tal Beqa to talbaqa.
6. **Dialects:** The pronunciation of letters in the Egyptian dialect differs from that in classical Arabic, such as the letter Qāf (ق), which is pronounced as A in the Egyptian dialect, and J, which is pronounced as G, in the Cairo dialect (e.g. Giza). G changes to D in the Upper Egyptian dialect (e.g. Dirda for Girga), and Th, which is sometimes pronounced T or S, (e.g. Kom al-Tha'alib (كوم الثعالب), which is pronounced Kom al-Ta'alib (كوم الثعالب), and the letter Zāh (ز), which is pronounced Dāh (ض), (e.g. Al-Zahiriya (الظاهرية), which is pronounced Al-Dhahiriya (الضاهرية), sometimes also written Al-Dhahiriya).
7. **Softening Hamza (ء):** Changing to a "yaa" sound, such as Munsha'a (منشأة) which is written and pronounced Manshiyya (منشئية).



## Origins of Egyptian Geographical Names

The origins of geographical names in Egypt vary and often reflect the country's cultural identity. Most Egyptian place names are derived from religious meanings or describe the geographical features of the area, including terrain, climate, direction, color, geology, or mineral resources. Some names commemorate individuals, families, or tribes, while others are linked to historical events, or the names of plants or animals.

## Collecting and Documenting Place Names in the Arab Republic of Egypt

- Many researchers have collected and documented Egyptian place names including, but not limited to, Yaqut al-Hamawi in his book *Gazetteer of Countries*, Al-Mamati in *Laws of the Diwans*, and Al-Jabarti in *The Wonders of Antiquities in Biographies and News*. The most recent of these references is *The Geographical Dictionary of Egypt from the Era of the Ancient Egyptians to the Year 1945* by Muhammad Ramzi.
- The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) periodically publishes a guide to administrative units with place names for Egypt's administrative units (governorates, sections and centers, villages, cities).
- CAPMAS updates the Geographic Information System of Egypt, with comprehensive coverage of urban and rural areas of Egypt and includes names and locations for governorates, suburbs and centers, villages and cities, hamlets, roads, streets, landmarks, seas and rivers.
- The Center for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage has launched the Archaeological Map of Egypt, a website documenting and managing Egypt's ancient heritage sites. Multimedia technologies have been used alongside the GIS to document the archeological and geographical details of each monument. The project covers 1180 sites in 27 governorates <https://archmap.culnat.org/Map.aspx>.

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2. *Gazetteer of Countries* by Sheikh Imam Shihab al-Din Abu Abdullah Yaqut al-Hamawi, edited by Farid Badr al-Aziz al-Jundi, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon.
3. *The Book of the Laws of the Diwans* by Al-As'ad bin Mamati, collected and verified by Aziz Suryal Attia, Madbouly Library, Cairo.
4. *The Personality of Egypt: A Study in the Genius of Place*, Dr. Gamal Hamdan, printed in 1994-1995, Cairo, Dar Al-Hilal Press





# Geographical names and cultural heritage in Iceland: Current work and future challenges

## The legislative framework in Iceland

In Iceland, geographical names have been protected in law from 2015 on the grounds that they are a key part of the nation's cultural heritage (<https://www.althingi.is/LAGAS/NUNA/2015022.HTML>).

The interpretation of geographical names as cultural heritage was an innovation in the 2015 bill. In the explanatory material that accompanied the draft legislation, reference was made to UNESCO's definition of cultural heritage including geographical names, and concern was expressed about the "danger that globalization and various societal changes in contemporary times may contribute to the loss of cultural heritage" (<https://www.althingi.is/altext/143/s/0832.html>).<sup>10</sup>

The implementation of the place name laws is the responsibility of a number of publicly-funded institutes and government-appointed bodies, namely the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies (*Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum*, SÁM), the Land Survey of Iceland (*Landmælingar Íslands*, LMÍ), the Housing and Construction Authority (*Húsnæðis- og mannvirkjastofnun*, HMS; previously *Þjóðskrá/Registers Iceland*), and the Place Name Committee (*Örnefnanefnd*, appointed on a 4-year basis by the Minister of Culture and Business Affairs). There are, of course, challenges that those involved in the work of upholding the legislation encounter. Chief amongst these is the realization of an efficient workflow and data-sharing framework to optimize cooperation between the different parties. Nonetheless, on the basis of historical precedent and ongoing initiatives, Iceland is well-equipped to formally recognize geographical names as cultural heritage, and to promote greater understanding among the public, of the significance of inherited geographical names for local, regional and national heritage and identity.

## SÁM's role in safeguarding and promoting geographical names as cultural heritage

SÁM (the Árni Magnússon Institute) plays a leading role in efforts to protect and promote Icelandic geographical names as cultural heritage. The Institute houses the national place name archive (previously in the care of *Örnefnastofnun Íslands*, the Place Name Institute of Iceland, until 2006) as well as other archival materials important for geographical names (e.g. manuscripts in the Árni Magnússon collection, and an ethnographic archive preserving a variety of oral traditions). The place name registers (*Icel. örnefnaskrár* or *örnefnalýsingar*) were mostly produced over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for farms and other landscape areas (such as commons, or fishing grounds).

They are often very detailed documents with much contextual information about names, including what was known or believed about the origins of individual place names at the time of recording, associations with folk traditions, and information about landscape change.

Work undertaken at SÁM includes maintaining the place name archive and making it accessible in different ways, most importantly via the digital interface <https://nafnið.is>. Opportunities for place name collection on a large scale have been limited in recent years, but research is undertaken on the existing materials, and in some cases, previously unrecorded geographical names are collected and analyzed, as in the case of Birna Lárusdóttir's research on the place names of the young volcanic island Surtsey (see further [https://surtsey.is/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Surtsey-2020\\_14\\_79-83\\_HISTORICAL\\_A-short-note-on-place-names-in-Surtsey.pdf](https://surtsey.is/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Surtsey-2020_14_79-83_HISTORICAL_A-short-note-on-place-names-in-Surtsey.pdf)). From time to time, documents or maps with unrecorded geographical names are deposited by individuals, sometimes in the wake of collaboration with LMÍ as part of their initiative to geo-reference geographical names recorded in the place name archive.

In November 2024, a new permanent exhibition showcasing Icelandic manuscripts will be opened by SÁM. It aims to explore ideas that Icelanders in past times had about life and the societies they lived in (see further <https://arnastofnun.is/en/exhibition>). Icelandic place-naming traditions are presented as a key part of the country's cultural heritage. Engaging the public's attention and interest with regard to Icelandic cultural heritage, broadly speaking, is one of the formal duties of SÁM and foregrounding the role that place names play in people's lives and perceptions of rural and urban landscapes is an effective way to achieve this goal.

## Some other initiatives – and some challenges

Other ongoing initiatives also work to raise public awareness of geographical names nationally and locally. Membership of *Nafnfræðifélagið* (The Society for Name Studies) is open to anyone: the society was founded in 2020 with the aim of promoting knowledge about Icelandic and international name research as widely as possible. In 2023, a book aimed at the general public was published by the Society in collaboration with SÁM: essays discussing Icelandic geographical names featured prominently (<https://arnastofnun.is/is/utgefing-efni/nofn-nyrri-old-20-greinar-i-tilefni-20-ara-afmaelis-nafnfræðifelagsins>). An example of a local project that aims to raise awareness of folklore traditions associated with geographical names is the *Strandasögur* project (see <https://www.strandasogur.gwi.uni->

<sup>10</sup> In the original Icelandic: *Jafnframt er hætta á að alþjóðavæðing og ýmis félagsleg umbrot í nútímanum verði til þess að menningararfðir glattist.*



[muenchen.de/en/](https://muenchen.de/en/)) based at the University of Iceland Research Centre in Strandir, Hólmavík, West Fjords.

Rapid and extensive economic, technological, social, and cultural change occurred in Iceland over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, aspects of which are reflected in the place name records made during that period. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, landscape change is widespread – not least as a result of the changing climate, and of exponentially growing tourist numbers. Iceland’s geographical names are affected directly, and new challenges are emerging regarding the work of safeguarding and promoting them as part of Icelandic cultural heritage. One example is the increasing number of English-language names for sites popular with tourists. The tension between what Přemysl Mácha calls the “artefact perspective” and the “community perspective” on the heritage value of place names is evident with respect to these English names (<https://doi.org/10.34158/ONOMA.58/2023/2>). In some cases, they are created without reference to already existing Icelandic names for the place or topographical feature in question; in other cases, the features to which they refer are new or otherwise nameless.



*Keighley Hill”,*

[https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/ams/china\\_proper\\_s/w/txu-pclmaps-oclc-6492126-spindholt-122-a.jpg](https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/ams/china_proper_s/w/txu-pclmaps-oclc-6492126-spindholt-122-a.jpg)

An example of the former is *Yoda Cave*, the name used by tourists and tour-operators for a cave at Hjörleifshöfði known in Icelandic as *Gýgjagjá* (“troll- or axe-cave”, <https://nafnið.is/ornefnaskra/22761>). Names given to ice-caves, increasingly popular tourist destinations, are examples of the latter: *Crystal Cave*, *Blue Diamond Cave*, *Dark Rubin*, *Northern Lights Cave* and *Waterfall Cave* have appeared recently in tourism contexts (e.g. <https://guidetoiceland.is/nature-info/ice-caves-in-iceland#blue-diamond-cave-in-vatnajokull-glacier> and on Google Maps). In 2019, the chair of the Place Name Committee sent a letter to all Icelandic local authorities

recommending that they pay attention to the tourism-sector-driven trend of giving English names to local places and propose Icelandic names promptly so that English names do not become fixed in the name lexicon.



*“Yoda Cave”, <https://guidetoiceland.is/travel-iceland/drive/yoda-cave> (copyright Guide To Iceland)*

It is useful to note that there are many examples of Icelandic topographical features that have more than one name, and also that English-language influence on geographical names in Iceland is not new. When British and American troops occupied Iceland during World War two (WWII), they gave a multitude of English names to places, e.g. *ley Hill* for *Valhúsaheð* on the Seltjarnarnes peninsula (<https://doi.org/10.33112/ordogtungu.19.8>). These names appeared on maps from the time published by the American Map Service but since these maps were not in general circulation, and since great efforts were made on the part of Icelandic authorities to prevent the occupying forces having an impact on Icelandic society, these names did not replace their Icelandic counterparts. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000082464>

The bigger question is how/when do new names (whether Icelandic or English) become accepted as part of Icelandic cultural heritage? This is as much an intellectual as a policy-driven matter that needs closer attention by those working to protect and promote geographical names as cultural heritage in Iceland.

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## *The role of geographical names in preserving cultural heritage. UNGEGN's and other activities in closer defining and assessing this role (ICOS)*

### *The basic statement*

Geographical names are part of cultural heritage, not only because they are elements of language, but also because they exert very specific functions as proper names designating geographical concepts and features. They can be regarded as ‘condensed narratives’, reflecting both the feature they designate and the communities that use or gave those names.

The principal fact that geographical names are part of cultural heritage has been confirmed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in its 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Based on this Convention, the theme became a central topic at the 9<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) in 2007. In her [keynote address, Madame Hélène-Marie Gosselin](#), UNESCO Representative to the UN and Director of the UNESCO New York Office, highlighted the significance of geographical names.

### *Its scientific elaboration*

In the years that followed, several symposia on this topic were held and their proceedings were published. The first was in Vienna [Wien] in 2008, organized by UNGEGN’s Dutch and German Speaking Division with proceedings published (see Jordan et al. 2009). The second took place in Seoul in 2014, organized by the National Geographic Information Institute (NGII) of the Republic of Korea, again followed by proceedings (see Choo 2015); the third was in Florence [Firenze] in 2015, organized by UNGEGN’s Romano-Hellenic Division again with proceedings (see Cantile & Kerfoot 2016).

At the International Geographical Union’s (IGU) Thematic Conference on Heritage Geographies in Lecce (Italy) in 2021, the Joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy organized sessions under the title “Place names as (part of) cultural heritage” compiled into a themed issue of “Onoma”, the journal of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) (see Jordan 2023).

The same year saw the 6<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Place Names, co-hosted by the Joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy and the Department of South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies at the University of the Free State, South Africa. The symposium, devoted to “Standardization and the wealth of places names - aspects

of a delicate relationship”, covered a topic very close to ours, with proceedings published (see Loth 2022).

In 2023, the UNGEGN Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy, chaired by Peder Gammeltoft, held an international training course on this topic in Bali, Indonesia.

In parallel and supported by this scientific work, UNGEGN developed a series of resolutions, adopted at subsequent UNCSGNs: VIII/9 (2002): “Geographical names as cultural heritage”; IX/4 (2007): “Geographical names as intangible cultural heritage”; X/3 (2012): “Criteria for establishing and evaluating the nature of geographical names as cultural heritage”.

### *Major aspects*

These symposia and resolutions have defined and assessed the role of geographical names as cultural heritage more closely, thus guiding the way for their practical use and standardization. The following aspects have been emphasized:

- Traditional geographical names are often very old, attributed to features within specific linguistic, political, social, and economic contexts. They have sometimes been preserved across succeeding languages. They therefore offer a key to understanding settlement and cultural history. They reveal a lot about the character and essence of a place, as well as its former economic and linguistic situations. They form part of an interrelated system of names in a certain region, a ‘place-names landscape’, describing historical, but often still relevant situations. They also inform us about the name-giving community, sometimes referring to now extinct societies and their cultural and economic disposition and attitudes.
- Geographical names support the building of space-related identity. Mentioning or remembering the name of a familiar place evokes a whole set of thoughts of that place and expresses or confirms the emotional relation of a person to a place. Geographical names are therefore an important element of feeling at home, especially for linguistic minorities and indigenous groups.





Traditional house name on a recently exposed plate in Valbruna, Val Canale, Italy. Many traditional houses in this village feature similar plates. Below the house name, the village name appears in all local languages (Italian, Friulian, Slovene, German). (Photo: Jordan 2024)

- Special protection may be needed for names in minority and indigenous languages, as well as for names in declining languages and dialects, the latter being subject to a significant erosion process due to the expansion of social communication networks, the power of nationwide media, and trends towards cultural globalization. Whether dialect names should be standardized is another question depending on the social prestige of the dialect and their 'suitability' for wider exposure. Traditional exonyms need protection, while often not standardized or systematically documented, they may remain in popular use. From a pragmatic point of view, they may become the optimal means of communication, and their continued use should be encouraged, at least in domestic communication.
- Dangers to which traditional, inherited geographical names are at risk are partly due to their strong symbolic power. Endonyms (not exonyms) can therefore be seen as expressions of appropriation or at least responsibility. The dominant force in a society wants to define them. Changes in dominance (at all spatial scales, from the political to the economic sphere) may result in renaming – with commercialization as a specific problem of our times. Other dangers to traditional names include inadequate legislation for their protection, the loss of knowledge about specific examples of field names, or changes in lifestyle from rural to urban living.

## Conclusion

The role of geographical names as part of cultural heritage is a fundamental toponymic concept that merits in-depth discussions, including in the context of the standardization of geographical names. This topic deserves ongoing consideration within the framework of UNGEGN to ensure that all the various aspects mentioned are fully explored.

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# Geographical Names and Their Role in Preserving Cultural Heritage and Civilizational Heritage (Jordan)

## Names of Geographic Places

Names of geographic places are one of the ways to preserve the cultural and civilizational heritage in any society. Geographical names show the long history of peoples, and their customs and traditions, allowing local communities to connect with these names in ways that promote a sense of belonging. Additionally, geographical names document traditional knowledge (such as traditional weather forecasting), support cultural-based tourism as well as being a part of sustainable development strategies.

To promote this concept, Jordan has undertaken several initiatives and activities prepared in coordination with the National Committee for Geographical Names, which consists of:

### 1. *Jordanian Geographical Names Index.*

- This is the first and most important step to preserve Jordan's cultural, social, and historical heritage. A special index of the nation's geographical names was prepared and issued containing the name, coordinates, feature type (e.g. country, valley, mountain), the map and its scale, and the name in Roman letters (romanization). This index serves as the foundation for any work related to geographical names, and significant progress has already been made.
- The work on the dictionary began in the mid-eighties, with the collection of names and related information completed in 1990. The index now contains more than 10,600 entries. To facilitate its use across various categories, copies of the dictionary were produced in both paper and digital formats (Excel, PDF, and Access). A special Access version was created to streamline searching and presentation of results. Additionally, approximately 5,000 names, including street names and those from tourist maps and atlases of Jordan and the world, have been added, making this a valuable reference for names and proper romanization methods.



الاسم الجغرافي	الاسم باللاتينية	الخطوط العرضية	الخطوط الطولية	نوع الميزة	ملاحظات
البحر الميت	Al-Bayt Al-Mawt	31° 55' N	35° 45' E	بحر	بحر ملحي عذب
البحر الأحمر	Al-Bayt Al-Ahmar	12° 50' N	41° 50' E	بحر	بحر ملحي عذب
البحر المتوسط	Al-Bayt Al-Awlaq	36° 00' N	34° 00' E	بحر	بحر ملحي عذب
البحر الأسود	Al-Bayt Al-Swar	41° 00' N	37° 00' E	بحر	بحر ملحي عذب
البحر الأبيض المتوسط	Al-Bayt Al-Abyad	36° 00' N	34° 00' E	بحر	بحر ملحي عذب

### 2. *Interactive maps of geographical names:*

- Geographical names should be digitally documented using technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS) and interactive maps, making them easier to access and study. Digital documentation is one of the criteria for identifying and evaluating geographical names as cultural heritage.
- These interactive maps were created to deal with information about the geographical names of cities, villages, historical sites, and other regions. It contains all the information such as the meaning of the name, its coordinates, origin, historical context, alternate names, even, where applicable, the title deed papers (lands), and more.
- Information is collected from multiple sources, including books on geographical names.
- These maps are considered a reference for researchers and stakeholders specializing in the search of geographical names, facilitating access to all information related to each name. The addition of geospatial information is used to make a comparison between names and locations, helping to verify geographical and historical information and associated events.



### 3. *Geographical Database of Archaeology in Jordan:*

- Geographical names play a vital role in the field of antiquities, as they reflect the cultural and historical identity of the place. Geographical names help identify the sites of ancient monuments, making it easier for archaeological researchers to locate sites of historical importance. Additionally, geographical names are used in educational curricula to introduce new generations to the history of places and their cultural importance.
- MEGA JORDAN is a national system established to document and manage Jordan's cultural heritage using GPS and geographic information system (GIS) technologies. The program is available online in both Arabic and English.
- The project aims to build a geographical database of archaeological sites in Jordan based on the old JADIS database, creating an updated record of Jordanian archaeological sites. The database now contains approximately 15,000 archaeological site names and 53,685 archaeological elements, and the information can be linked to the Jordanian geographical names index and interactive maps.  
<http://www.megajordan.org>



### 4. *Education, training, and awareness of the importance of geographical names.*

The sound methodology for managing and preserving geographical names involves enhancing the understanding of the public about the importance of inherited geographical names in relation to local heritage, as well as regional and national identity. Educating people and spreading the culture that geographical names are a topic of high importance fosters a culture that recognizes their relevance to all aspects of daily life in any society.

Therefore, the role of the authorities concerned with geographical names play an essential role in training specialists and the general public and must focus on the younger generations. Instilling this principle early ensures future generations will develop and improve on this science. Integrating geographical names into the educational curricula will ensure its sustainability and the preservation of cultural heritage.

#### **The bottom line:**

Fully understanding the importance of geographical names as they reflect our history and culture, helps local communities connect more deeply with their heritage. They document traditional knowledge, helping stimulate tourism and prevent the loss of different cultures. Although it is an ancient science, the field can embrace modern technologies for its development and improvement, such as GIS, drones, virtual reality (VR), remote sensing, and the involvement of local communities in the process of documentation. Listening to personal stories and experiences related to heritage sites adds a human and cultural dimension to the documentation of geographical names, reinforcing its significance without losing time convincing others of its value.

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## Documentation and Use of Indigenous Livonian Geographical Names (Latvia)

Latvia is unique in that it is one of the few European countries to officially recognize an indigenous people and language: the Livonians and their language—Livonian. Despite the critically endangered status of the Livonian language and its speech community (Moseley 2010), estimated currently to consist of only 40-50 speakers, Livonians have played a crucial role in shaping the language and culture of contemporary Latvia throughout history.



*Unveiling of the first bilingual sign by the president of Latvia  
Egils Levits*

During the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Livonian-speaking communities inhabited nearly one-third of present-day Latvia. However, following the establishment of the medieval German-ruled Livonia—named after the Livonians—the Livonian people were gradually assimilated by the surrounding Baltic tribes, contributing to the formation of the modern Latvian language and culture. As a result, Livonian influence remains evident in Latvian culture, particularly in the geographical names rooted in Livonian found across areas once inhabited by the Livonians.

Livonian heritage has survived in a small, isolated community along the Livonian Coast—a stretch of fishing villages in northwestern Latvia (Ernštreits 2023). However, the destruction caused by the World Wars and subsequent Soviet occupation displaced the remaining Livonian speakers and scattered the community across Latvia (Ernštreits 2019). Despite this, the Livonian community maintains a strong connection to the Livonian Coast, and both the community and new settlers recognize the importance of preserving and revitalizing Livonian heritage, particularly through the use of geographical names.

Supporting efforts to document, standardize, and promote the use of Livonian place names across Latvia has defined the work of the University of Latvia Livonian Institute (established in 2018), which has spearheaded this endeavor.

### The Legal Framework for Livonian Place Names

The status of the Livonians as an indigenous people of Latvia was first established by the law “On Free Development of Latvia's National and Ethnic Groups and Their Right to Cultural Autonomy” (1991). This status is further enshrined in the “Official Language Law” (1999), which regulates language use in Latvia. According to this law, languages in Latvia are classified into three categories: (1) the state language, Latvian, along with a historic variant—the Latgalian written language; (2) the indigenous Livonian language; and (3) all other (foreign) languages. Livonian, as an indigenous language, holds a special status, distinct from that of an official state or minority language.

This law also addresses the use of Livonian in geographical names. Article 18 explicitly states that place names in Latvia should be in the state language, with one exception: “In the area of the Livonian Coast, place names, as well as the names of agencies, community organizations, businesses, and events, may also be created and used in Livonian.”

Regulations Regarding Geographical Names Information (2012) expanded on this provision, stipulating that “place names in territories historically inhabited by Livonians must also be in Livonian and adhere to Livonian linguistic norms.” The most recent legislative development concerning Livonian place names is the Historical Latvian Lands Law (2021). This law obliges state and municipal institutions to preserve the identity and cultural-historical environment of the Livonian people. Specifically, Paragraph 4 states, “(..) State and respective municipalities ensure preservation of the identity and cultural-historical environment of Latvia’s indigenous people—the Livonians (..) including (..) introduction and usage in the environment of place names in Livonian.”



*Livonian children from the summer school “Mierlinkizt”  
 (“Sea birds”) taking photos with newly introduced sign in  
summer 2023*



## Documenting Place Names and Ensuring Accessibility

The foundation for the use of Livonian place names is the existence of a standardized collection of these names. Historically, Livonian geographical names were documented sporadically as part of vocabulary collections and lexicographic efforts (e.g., Sjø 1861; Kettunen 1938; Winkler & Pajusalu 2009; Viitso & Ernštreits 2012). The most comprehensive collection prior to recent efforts was the Livonian place name index, which contained 181 entries and was published in the Livonian-Estonian-Latvian dictionary (Viitso & Ernštreits 2012: 380–381).

From 2020 to 2023, the University of Latvia Livonian Institute undertook a project to document and map Livonian place names and create an official place name register. Due to the limited number of Livonian speakers and their disconnection from historical Livonian territories, this project relied on various sources, such as scattered previous collections, folklore, manuscripts, and cultural collections. One of the key resources was a list of place names compiled in the 1960s by Livonian language activist Pētõr Damberg, which was located during archival research.

This work culminated in the creation of a geospatial database of 1,558 Livonian geographical names, which includes both exonyms and endonyms (Ernštreits 2024). The Livonian place name catalogue was published in October 2024 (EDŠ). The database, along with a map, is accessible to the public on the Livonian Institute's resource platform [Livonian.tech](http://Livonian.tech). Additionally, Livonian place names are now included as a layer at the map service [BalticMaps.eu](http://BalticMaps.eu), provided by the publisher "Jāņa sēta."

## Introduction of Bilingual Signage

Efforts to introduce bilingual signage in Latvian and Livonian on the Livonian Coast began in 2018, following the establishment of the Livonian Institute. Initial resistance from state authorities, who were responsible for road signage, led to extended discussions and even an art installation designed to raise public awareness about the importance of Livonian place names. In August 2021, an agreement was reached to create bilingual signage standards for Livonian and Latvian place names, which was expanded to include Latgalian as well.

A list was created of 171 road signs on the Livonian Coast, which were to be changed to Latvian-Livonian bilingual signs, based on standardized Livonian names from the aforementioned database. The first Livonian-language sign was installed on February 20, 2023, at the Talsi municipality border, followed by several more signs featuring Livonian village names later in the year. The installation of bilingual signage is ongoing.

## Conclusion

The journey to introducing Livonian place names into official signage has been lengthy and complex, hindered by both the absence of data and a lack of institutional understanding. Nonetheless, the eventual appearance of Livonian signage has

been warmly received by both the Livonian community and the wider public. One Livonian community member expressed this sentiment in a social media post shortly after the installation of the first sign: "It feels as though a voice silenced for many years has been returned to my people."

The introduction of Livonian geographical names in official signage has also had broader implications. In addition to facilitating the use of Latgalian place names, it also influenced Latvia's contribution to the Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022-2032), which now includes a provision for extending the use of Indigenous names in official signage, with a focus on areas historically inhabited by Indigenous peoples.

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## Geographical names as preservers and propagators of intangible cultural heritage (Luxembourg)

### An insight into the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual context of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg

Situated between France, Belgium and Germany, Luxembourg is often referred to as the heart of Europe. Despite its small size of 2586 km<sup>2</sup> and its 67,2050 inhabitants (as of 2024), Luxembourg is home to a multitude of different nationalities and languages, where native and foreign-born inhabitants live side-by-side and are in everyday contact with cross-border commuters. The latter constitute a large percentage of Luxembourg's workforce and also have a considerable impact on all spheres of life in Luxembourg, be it cultural or linguistic.

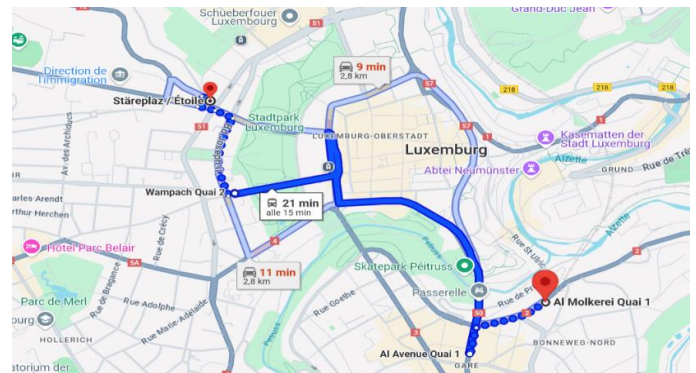
The language situation in Luxembourg is quite unique due to its trilingualism, Luxembourgish being the national language and French and German the administrative languages. The linguistic landscape is further shaped by the addition of the many other languages that are spoken in Luxembourg by foreign nationals and by the fact that, the workforce, which traditionally originated from neighbouring countries, has over the years come from further afield. The Portuguese language, as an example, constitutes the biggest non-French-speaking ethnic group, while English predominates in the banking and technology sectors.



Cutout from [geoportail.lu](http://geoportail.lu) showing the districts Verluerekascht, Polfermillen (as Pollfermillen) and Pafendall in Luxembourg City

In 2019, Luxembourg's house and place names were integrated for the first time into the Luxembourgish inventory of intangible cultural heritage. These names predominantly refer to older linguistic and cultural structures that are no longer present in their previous form or are no longer used for their initial purpose. For instance, the bus stop *Wandmillen* in Luxembourg City hints at the former presence of a windmill in the area. Another place

name that many people would be familiar with is *Charly's Gare*. While it refers to a train that operated around a century ago in Luxembourg, it is also a perfect illustration of the multilingual interference that features so heavily in Luxembourg's society, as the name features both Luxembourgish and French linguistic traits. Although there are no physical traces left of these landmarks, both names form part of Luxembourg's everyday life and have become points of reference to many people.



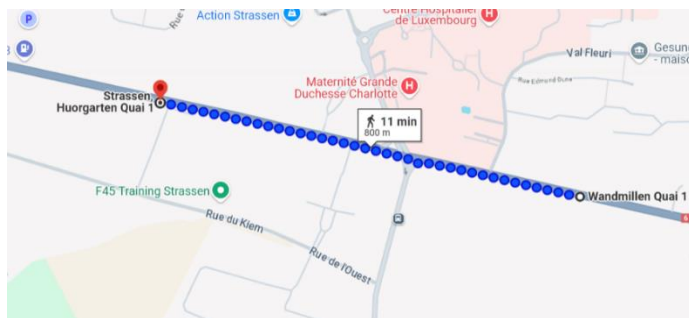
Google Maps itinerary from station Al Molkerei to station Stäreplaz in Luxembourg City

Most public transport stops in Luxembourg are in fact named after places, with about two-thirds of them named after older place names such as *Huergarten* in Strassen near Luxembourg City (hinting at a former cloth-making industry). The remaining third are often named after more modern places, such as the star-shaped intersection *Stäreplaz/place d'étoile* or the no-longer-operational dairy farm, *Al Molkerei*. For a long time, most native speakers simply took these names for granted without paying them any particular attention. They used them as references and adopted them subconsciously without an intuitive understanding or awareness of their background or meaning. In recent years this attitude has changed considerably due to an increased interest in the Luxembourgish language and its cultural heritage. The new focus is partly due to a changing demographic, a new self-awareness, and changing points of view within Luxembourg. The impetus for a change in attitude can also be explained by an ever-increasing interest from foreign-born residents.



Migration, tourism and the international workforce have contributed to Luxembourg becoming more and more cosmopolitan despite its small size. Foreign nationals as well as tourists are keen to learn more about Luxembourg, its culture and subsequently its language. Not only has Luxembourg's identity undergone a metamorphosis, this development has also sparked an increased willingness of native speakers to put the Luxembourgish language into the spotlight. Whereas Luxembourgish used to be seen by many locals as a language that is spoken rather than written, this attitude has changed drastically.

Social media has also contributed to this development as it has facilitated a greater visibility of the language, as well as a more active personal involvement. In addition, a steady rise in literary production, especially in children's books, has ensured that the language reaches all layers of society. House and place names have also benefitted from this revolution. Modern technology has assured that names, hitherto taken for granted or overlooked, now appear on screens in buses and/or on virtual maps. This physical and visual contact ensures that they become more actively integrated into everyday life.



*Google Maps itinerary from station Wandmillen (Luxembourg City) to station Huergarten (Strassen)*

Furthermore, these names are no longer simply part of a linguistic heritage but have also become practical tools for navigating one's surroundings. Both foreign-born residents as well as visitors to Luxembourg take part in this established intangible cultural heritage as they are confronted with the names and use them freely as points of reference.

Another example of preserving and sharing the linguistic heritage of place names includes Luxembourgish districts such as *Verluerekascht* (meaning "lost castle" or "an abandoned fortification"), *Polvermillen* (meaning "powder mill") or *Pafendall* (meaning "valley of the cleric").

Although no real physical evidence remains, these names persist and are used in everyday situations. These districts are also home to, or are frequented by, many foreign nationals who adopt the names, thus actively contributing to the preservation of cultural identity. Whilst these names were often used without questioning their origins or meanings, the aforementioned surge of interest in cultural heritage is once again apparent.

When it comes to cultural teaching, we observe an informal as well as a more formal side. People use house and place names intuitively, but increasingly find themselves wondering about the origins of a name. This is partly due to the revival of the Luxembourgish language, that has sparked interest from across the borders, and from within, particularly among the foreign-born population. It is also due to more frequent visual encounters with these names in everyday situations, be it in bus stops, itineraries or on virtual mapping systems, such as Google Maps and Apple Maps. All this contributes to an incentive for inhabitants – both native and foreign-born – to find out more about their cultural heritage and a willingness to share this newfound appreciation. A further reason for this heightened interest in house and place names is their integration in Luxembourg's intangible cultural heritage. This increased interest ultimately leads to an informal delivery by a multitude of publications and lectures. Additionally, the integration into the intangible cultural heritage framework has led to the more formal lessons about house and place names in schools.

Luxembourg's rapid demographic change leads to an eagerness to not only preserve but also to share cultural heritage and identity. Luxembourg exemplifies the high potential of geographical names to be more than simple pillars of cultural identity, adopting a role as cultural propagators in a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual context.

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# Preserving Malaysia's Cultural Identity: The Role of Geographical Names and Standardization

## Introduction

Geographical names are essential reference tools in communication, serving both practical and symbolic roles. Beyond their utility, they operate on multiple levels, reflecting cognitive, emotive, ideological, and community-building functions that shape the social identities of the communities they represent. In multilingual societies, geographical names carry cultural and political significance, making them key elements in shaping local and national identity (Helleland, 2016).

To ensure the effective use of geographical names, standardization is crucial. Consistency in naming reduces confusion and enhances communication. Recognizing this, the United Nations has long advocated for the standardization of geographical names. The issue was first discussed in 1948, and by 1955, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) had urged countries to participate in this initiative. The first conference on geographical names standardization took place in Geneva in 1967, followed by a second in 1972, which led to the establishment of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNEGGN). This group has since promoted international cooperation on the issue (Multamia RMT Lauder, 2016).

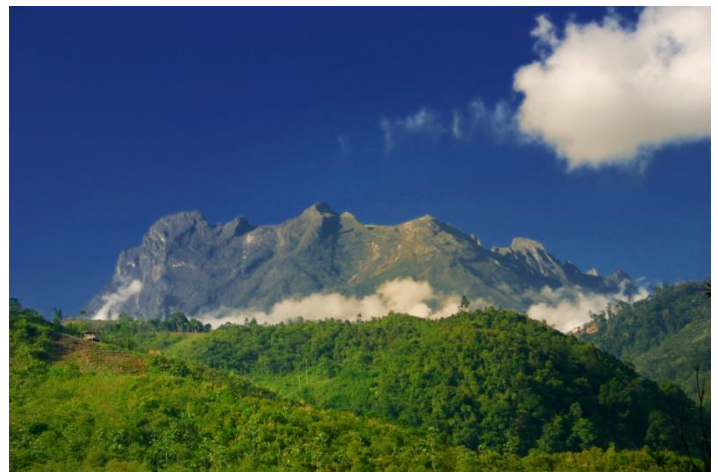
The standardization of geographical names is crucial for effective management. A standardized name reduces ambiguity, prevents multiple names for the same location, and preserves the cultural heritage and natural features associated with the place.

## Malaysia's Standardization Efforts

In response to recommendations from UNGEGN and directives from the Malaysian Cabinet, Malaysia formed the National Committee on Geographical Names (JKNG). This committee, operating under the Department of Survey and Mapping Malaysia (JUPEM) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability (NRES), was established to enhance the nation's geospatial infrastructure. JKNG's primary responsibilities include drafting guidelines for geographical names, developing the National Geographical Names Database, promoting the use of official names, and coordinating nomenclature activities at both national and international levels.

## The Cultural and Historical Significance of Geographical Names

Malaysia's diverse cultural landscape is reflected in its geographical names, which serve as markers of its multi-ethnic heritage. These names hold deep significance, often drawing from the linguistic traditions and histories of the Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous communities. For instance, Gunung Kinabalu (Mount Kinabalu) in Sabah is not just the highest peak in Southeast Asia but also a sacred site for the Kadazan-Dusun people, symbolizing their ancestral heritage and cultural identity. Similarly, the legend of Puteri Gunung Ledang, a folktale centred around a mystical princess on Gunung Ledang (Mount Ledang), is a key element of Johor's cultural history (Bidder & Author, 2023; Hijjas, 2010).



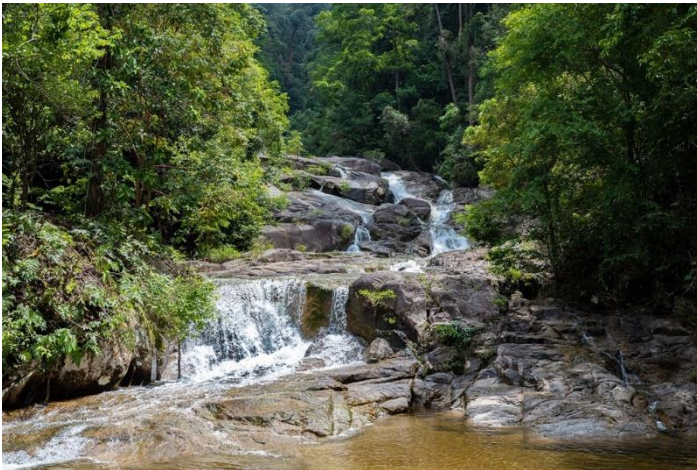
*View of Mount Kinabalu (source: Sabah Tourism)*

Urban areas like Kuala Lumpur preserve cultural names that reflect Malaysia's colonial past and socio-economic development, with street names such as Jalan Raja commemorating the city's pre-independence era (Mariana Isa & Maganjeet Kaur, 2015). In contrast, rural areas often retain names linked to indigenous knowledge and cultural practices. These names act as repositories of environmental wisdom and heritage, preserving the cultural identity of communities like the Orang Asli and Kadazan-Dusun, which may otherwise be threatened by globalization and development.

## Recent Issues

Attempts to preserve the original geographical names in certain locations have recently encountered difficulties that are difficult to control. This is due to some parties seeking to capitalize on these areas to raise real estate market values. As an illustration, Kampung Kerinchi was renamed Bangsar South, Sungai Buloh was renamed Kota Damansara, and numerous other locations close to Kuala Lumpur were similarly renamed.

Even if the government approves alterations to the original geographical names, guidelines must be established to prevent this behaviour from happening again. This will help to preserve a location's original character. We can use Singapore, the nation nearest to Malaysia, as an example. Despite Singapore's extensive urbanization process, some places still retain their original geographical names. The use of the original geographical name is an important cultural practice that must be protected.



*Mount Ledang Waterfall (source: Johor National Parks)*

## Standardization and Preservation Efforts by JUPEM

As part of its mandate, JKNG has created the *Guidelines for the Determination of Geographical Names in Malaysia*, which provides a framework for the consistent naming of locations across the country. The committee also manages the Geographical Names Database (PDNG), an online repository that stores verified geographical names, locations, and historical information for both public and government use. The MyGeoName application offers access

to this database, including names in Jawi script and audio files with pronunciation in both Malay and local dialects. These initiatives are vital in preserving cultural names in the face of modernization. In addition, JUPEM is updating the guidelines for their latest version and translating them into English. This step ensures that foreign users can also refer to the guidelines, helping to standardize geographical names not only locally but also at a global level.

## Conclusion

The importance of standardizing geographical names in Malaysia cannot be overstated. It plays a crucial role in maintaining consistency and clarity in communication, while also preserving the country's rich cultural and linguistic heritage. Through initiatives like the Geographical Names Database and the development of comprehensive guidelines, JUPEM through JKNG are ensuring that Malaysia's geographical names remain both culturally significant and globally recognized. As globalization and modernization continue to influence the country's landscape, these efforts are vital in safeguarding the diverse cultural identities that these names represent.

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## *Ximbutsu, the Land of the Brave Warriors of Gaza (Mozambique)*

### Introduction

According to Blake (2015, 4), cultural heritage is seen as “the total ways of living built up by a group of human beings, which is passed from one generation to the next’, given to them by reason of their birth”. Cultural heritage includes artifacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, and museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific, and social significance. It includes tangible heritage and intangible cultural heritage<sup>11</sup>.

Geographical names are, according to Ghani and Husim (2016), historical monuments that convey a multifaceted image of old generations, experiences, and understanding of the relationship between man and nature. These names are a valuable source of local history, reflecting a rich cultural heritage and an identity that is rooted in the local environment and anchored in Indigenous culture.

This article aims to demonstrate how the use of the Indigenous toponym Ximbutsu from the Xichangana language of Mozambique contributes to the preservation and dissemination of the cultural and historical heritage it represents for local communities in the Chibuto district and for the country as a whole. The article results from a historical and linguistic study based on both bibliographical and field research, applying historical methodology and philology. The Chibuto district is located in the south of Gaza province, near the confluence of the Limpopo and Changane rivers. Xichangana is the dominant local language (autochthonous) spoken by around 96.1% of the population while Portuguese, the country’s official language, is spoken by around 2.4% (MAE 2012, 9-10). Historically, Gaza was the name of a large pre-colonial empire in Mozambique, between 1824 and 1895, founded by the Ngoni people, whose last and most prominent emperor was Ngungunhane, grandson of Sochangane (the founder of the empire)<sup>12</sup>.

### Data collection and discussion

The toponym Chibuto originates from a small elevation known as Ximbutsu, historically a place where traditional rites were held, especially Mbelelo ceremonies. These ceremonies were performed to ask the “gods” for rain to guarantee agricultural production - the primary livelihood of

the population - and to drive away the pests that devastated their fields (MAE 2012:6). According to Nuvunga<sup>13</sup> and Macie<sup>14</sup> (interviewed in 2013, in Chibuto district), drums were often heard in the afternoons and evenings at that location, and clothes of Ngoni and Ndau spirits were sometimes seen spread about. And, because it is a sacred site, Macie notes that the inhabitants of the communities did not visit without permission, only going there to conduct ceremonies.



*INGEMO, IP technicians at the Ximbutsu memorial, during field research in Chibuto District.*

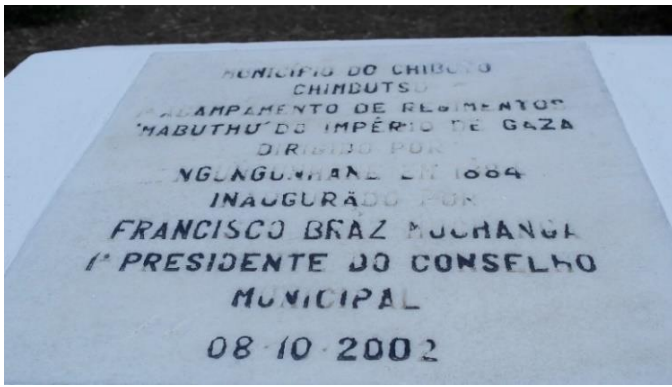
Regarding the origin of the toponym, Nuvunga explains that Ximbutsu derives from *mabuthu*, a Zulu military term denoting a group of warriors. The inscription on the memorial built at this historic site corroborates with Nuvunga saying: “Ximbutsu, the first camp of ‘mabuthu’ regiments of the Gaza Empire, led by Ngungunhane in 1884”. Literally, *mabuthu* means a “concentration of warriors”. The term comes from the Zulu verb *kubutha*, which means “to concentrate or gather”. Thus, Ximbutsu means a “place of *mabuthu*” or “gathering (regiment) of warriors”. This term was introduced into the Xichangana language by the Ngoni people during the M’fecane period (between 1815 and around 1835).

<sup>11</sup> UNESCO. Available on <https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/cultural-heritage>

<sup>12</sup> History of Gaza. Available on <https://www.gaza.gov.mz/por/A-Provincia/Historia-de-Gaza>.

<sup>13</sup> Ernesto Jacani Nuvunga. Native elder were interviewed in Chibuto, in 2013, by technicians from INGEMO, IP, in field research on the origin and meaning of toponyms of Mozambique.

<sup>14</sup> Macie. Native elder were interviewed in Chibuto, in 2013, by technicians from INGEMO, IP, in field research on the origin and meaning of toponyms of Mozambique.



*Inscription on the Ximbutsu memorial about the historical significance of the place.*

According to Machava<sup>15</sup> (interviewed in 2013, in the Chibuto district), the toponym Ximbutsu highlights the bravery of its residents who, when facing difficulties did not give up until they achieved their goals. According to Nuvunga, this reputation began in Maputo, the country’s capital, where the locals would often go to the football fields in their free time. One day, a man from Ximbutsu got involved in a fight, was punched and fell, but moments later, he got up and continued fighting until he won. In order to encourage and recognize his bravery, his friends shouted “*Ximbutsu muzaya xiwa ni kupfuka*”, which means “Ximbutsu my friend, fall and get up”.

From that moment, the toponym Ximbutsu was used to highlight the courage of the Chibuto people, creating a certain fear especially in Maputo, where the incident took place. Thus, for older generations in Maputo and the surrounding province, the toponym *Ximbutsu* represents a brave and warrior-like people, with whom disputes should be avoided.

### Conclusion

The toponym Ximbutsu, tied to both the military history and the bravery of the Ngoni and Ndau people, who during the M’fecane period dominated that region, has gained an added social and cultural meaning. It not only tells the local history, experiences and beliefs, but also symbolizes the bravery of the people of the Chibuto district, through the saying “*Ximbutsu muzaya xiwa ni kupfuka*”.

The toponym also conveys an identity of bravery in different aspects of life, not being afraid of physical confrontation when necessary. Its cultural resonance continues in the

<sup>15</sup> Bululuani José Machava. Native elder interviewed in Chibuto, in 2013, by technicians from INGEMO, IP, in field research on the origin and meaning of toponyms of Mozambique

collective memory, making Ximbutsu, “The Land of Brave Warriors of Gaza.”

From a linguistic point of view, the toponym offers us rich information about the presence of the Ngoni (Zulu) people in the region and their influence on the local language, Xichangana.

Thus, we can conclude that Ximbutsu represents the warrior, powerful and fearsome identity of the Chibuto district inhabitants, empowering the population, to the point of making them “feared” and respected even in the country’s capital.

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<sup>16</sup> Degree in History from Eduardo Mondlane University, Researcher and Director of the Central Standardization Services, at the Institute of Geographical Names of Mozambique, IP. e-mail: [anibaljo2009@gmail.com](mailto:anibaljo2009@gmail.com)



## The role of geographical names in preserving cultural heritage (New Zealand)

### Introduction

New Zealand is a multicultural nation with increasing ethnic and linguistic diversity. The 2023 census shows that our population of 5 million<sup>17</sup> is predominantly New Zealand European at 67.8% with 17.8% Māori.<sup>18</sup> Pasifika, Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American and African make up the balance of cultures.

English is the most widely used language, with Māori second: 213,849 people (4.3%) can have a fluent conversation.<sup>19</sup> The increase in Māori speakers is the result of revitalization initiatives over the past several decades by central and local government, as well as many other organizations (for example Vodafone's 'Say it Tika' campaign<sup>20</sup>). In particular, the Māori Language Act 1987 (updated in 2016), has been the impetus for Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (the Māori Language Commission) who administer the Act to be instrumental in promoting, preserving and standardizing the language, running programmes and publishing material. Many government agencies uphold the taonga (treasure) of revitalizing the Māori language. Toitū Te Whenua<sup>21</sup> Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) – the government agency administering our national naming authority, the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa<sup>22</sup> (the Board), states in its strategic intentions 2023-2027: *'Our people have the necessary skills and capability to engage with Māori and iwi [tribes], through improved knowledge and understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi [the Treaty of Waitangi], tikanga [protocols] and te reo Māori [the Māori language].'*<sup>23</sup>

Preserving Māori cultural heritage – especially the intangibles such as tradition, language, and knowledge – has become more deliberate as a result. Māori themselves are proactively seeking to re-establish their connection to the whēnua (land) by giving life back to traditional geographical names along with their kōrero (stories). This has been helped

by formal government processes, such as naming reserves, roads, and geographical features/places. Oral traditions have survived despite the introduced European overlay, so that knowledge remains preserved by tribal kaumātua (elders). The restoration and/or correction of Māori geographical names are visible and tangible actions that connect tangata whenua (people of the place) and provide a window into the past enabling a contemporary identity to be built, which in turn helps to feed into an inclusive and informed national identity.

In UNGEGN Bulletin #66<sup>24</sup> New Zealand shared *Restoring New Zealand's original Māori geographical names*. And in UNGEGN Bulletin #63<sup>25</sup> New Zealand shared *Geographical names as indicators of the environment*. Other earlier Bulletin articles from New Zealand offer similar insights into geographical naming connections that help preserve cultural heritage.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi (our founding treaty document of 1840 between over 500 Māori chiefs and the British Crown) reflects three principles: partnership, participation and protection. The restoration of original Māori geographical names gives material effect to these three principles, serving to preserve their cultural heritage. The names themselves offer a window into the past by maintaining connection and restoring identity. If your ancestors were the first people to name a place or feature - whether after an historical event, a significant ancestor, a traditional ceremony, or to describe physical characteristics - then that name holds significant intrinsic heritage value for their descendants. The Board's legislation includes a specific purpose for geographic names *'to provide the means for appropriate recognition to be accorded to cultural and heritage values associated with geographic features.'*<sup>26</sup>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.stats.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/2023-Census-population-counts-by-ethnic-group-age-and-Maori-descent-and-dwelling-counts/Downloads/2023-Census-national-and-subnational-usually-resident-population-counts-and-dwelling-counts.xlsx>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/2023-census-population-counts-by-ethnic-group-age-and-maori-descent-and-dwelling-counts/#:~:text=New%20Zealand's%20population%20continues%20to%20diversify&text=887%2C493%20people%20\(17.8%20percent\)%20as,people%20\(1.9%20percent\)%20as%20MELAA](https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/2023-census-population-counts-by-ethnic-group-age-and-maori-descent-and-dwelling-counts/#:~:text=New%20Zealand's%20population%20continues%20to%20diversify&text=887%2C493%20people%20(17.8%20percent)%20as,people%20(1.9%20percent)%20as%20MELAA)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.thepress.co.nz/nz-news/350440840/growing-diversity-our-population>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GrownUpsNZ/videos/say-it-tikahttpswwwsayittikaconz/1474039336012047/>

<sup>21</sup> From the proverb: Whatungarongaro te tangata toitū te whenua - People come and go, but the land remains

<sup>22</sup> National naming authority, 'memorial markers of the landscape'.

<sup>23</sup>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.linz.govt.nz/sites/default/files/corp/Toitu%CC%84%20Te%20Whenua%20Strategic%20Intentions%202023-27.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs/Bulletin/UNGEGN\\_bulletin\\_no\\_66\\_revised.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs/Bulletin/UNGEGN_bulletin_no_66_revised.pdf)

<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs/Bulletin/UNGEGN\\_bulletin\\_no\\_63\\_22Jun.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs/Bulletin/UNGEGN_bulletin_no_63_22Jun.pdf)

<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2008/0030/30.0/DLM1065419.html>





The importance of cultural heritage is highlighted in one of the five strategic goals in UNGEGN’s Strategic Plan 2021-2029<sup>27</sup>:

*‘UNEGN has encouraged the development of principles and practices to support the less tangible social concepts of geographical naming. These include connection to place through traditional, ancestral, historical, cultural, and language associations. Recognizing the importance of these human needs acknowledges a sense of place and why geographical names matter. Beyond the practical need for communicating location identification, geographical names preserve identity and belonging.’*

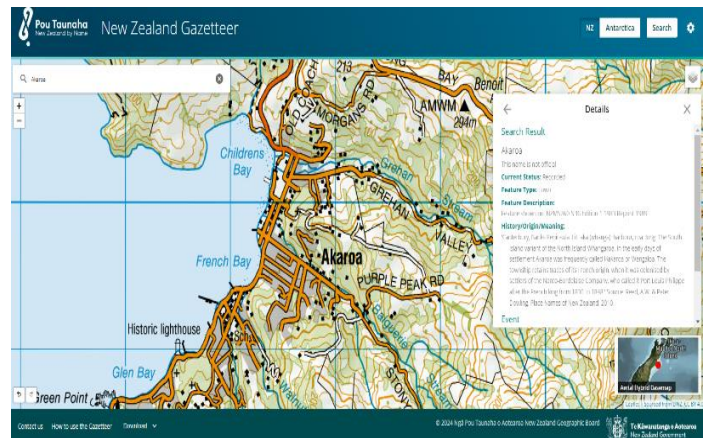
In New Zealand, geographical naming might display these four characteristics:

1. Original Māori – migration, exploration, conquest, ceremony, tradition
2. European – colonial settlement, discovery, sovereignty, conquest, events
3. Contemporary – diversity and gender inclusion, commemorative, descriptive
4. Adopted – names from other languages, cultures, and events

No matter what our ethnic origin is, the long-standing geographical names we grew up with, whether Māori or non-Māori, are part of our personal whakapapa (lineage). From them, we recall our own stories, connections, and identities, shaped by having lived, visited, holidayed, explored, or celebrated at those places. We trace ourselves back to those places even after we’ve left. And while our individual connections and stories may be different, the commonality is in the shared name itself.

### Akaroa<sup>28</sup>

For example, Akaroa in the South Island or Te Waipounamu is the original Māori name for a small settlement on Banks Peninsula near Christchurch. The township retains traces of its French heritage from when it was colonized by French settlers, who called it Port Louis Philippe after their king (1830 to 1848). However, the original Māori name, meaning ‘long harbour’, is preserved. It was and still is the source of abundant seafood, as well as being a quaint holiday destination and a desirable place to live. ‘Akaroa’ holds equal significance, connection, and identity for both the French and Māori descendants.



Akaroa, New Zealand Gazetteer, <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/>.

### Whareakeake<sup>29</sup>

Further south lies another original Māori name, Whareakeake, likely referencing a house associated with the akeake, a small native tree. In 1998 Whareakeake replaced the colonial name ‘Murdering Beach’, which had been given after a dispute with whalers/sealers/prospective settlers: ‘on its way to Tasmania, the brig *Sophia* put into land on 12 December 1817 and was attacked with three of the crew being killed. Captain James Kelly responded by burning the kāinga (village), smashing the canoes, and killing about seventy people.’<sup>30</sup>

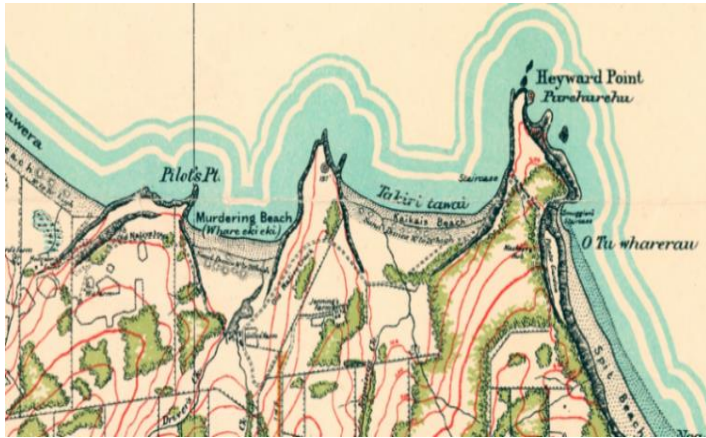
Present-day non-Māori residents maintain a strong connection with the name ‘Murdering Beach’ despite the historical event. In the 1980s, local Māori sought to restore the original Māori name but were thwarted by a media campaign to retain the colonial name. However, a decade later the tribe settled their Treaty of Waitangi claim grievance with the Crown, making an outright official change to Whareakeake – it being the only name of 89 included in their settlement that wasn’t dual-named. For the tribe, it was the massacre being commemorated in a geographical name that was a hurtful and constant reminder of their loss. The restoration offered them healing and reconciliation. There are many similar stories of early conflicts between Māori and Europeans being commemorated in geographical names.

<sup>27</sup> chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpajpcglclefindmkaj/https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/UNEGN\_Strategic\_Plan\_Programme/documents/UNEGN\_N\_Strategic\_%20Plan\_%202021\_V5.2.pdf

<sup>28</sup> <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/place/15238>

<sup>29</sup> <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/place/7511>

<sup>30</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whareakeake>



Whareakeke, NZMS 36, sheet 2 (1922). Crown copyright.

### Te Puna Roimata Peak<sup>31</sup>

On a more contemporary note, this Māori name, which means ‘spring of tears’, is in New Zealand’s area of interest in Antarctica. It was officially assigned in 2001 at the site of a plane crash on Mount Erebus in 1979 which killed all 257 onboard. This contemporary Māori geographical name metaphorically captures the deep sentiment and sadness associated with the catastrophe. Again, preserving the cultural heritage and emotions recognized at that place.



Te Puna Roimata Peak, Mount Erebus memorial cross, koru (coiled fern frond), Daniel O’Sullivan (2009), CC BY-NC-ND 3.

<sup>31</sup> <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/place/10662>

<sup>32</sup> <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/place/59170>

<sup>33</sup> <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/place/28709>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.linz.govt.nz/our-work/new-zealand-geographic-board/place-name-stories/new-zealands-first-world-war-place-names/campaigns/features-named-after-passchendaele>

### Hillpark<sup>32</sup>

Establishing a separate and unique identity by naming a feature or place is common practice, although sometimes the path to the name becoming official can be lengthy and/or controversial. For example, a suburb in the city of Auckland had struggled to assert its separate identity for over 60 years since a housing subdivision had been first developed, being subsumed within its neighboring suburb, Manurewa.<sup>33</sup> Its story derives from ‘The Hill’, the name of the Nathan family’s homestead which had been built in 1910 and rebuilt in 1925 after a fire, and also references the stands of regenerated native forest that were retained as parks. Making ‘Hillpark’ the official name in 2021 ensured its unique connection to the past is preserved, known, and celebrated.



Hillpark suburb, source: New Zealand Geographic Board

### Passchendaele names<sup>34</sup>

In 2018, to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War, we published<sup>35</sup> 30 stories commemorating people and events from the war and approved 16 First World War geographical names as official. Names like Passchendaele Ridge<sup>36</sup>, Passchendaele Ice Fall<sup>37</sup> and Passchendaele Peak<sup>38</sup> commemorate one of the most well-known battlefields in Belgium. The Passchendaele campaign left a permanent mark on the New Zealanders who served, and it played a key part in forging our national identity. Like the soldiers who fought and died, the campaigns of the First World War will never be forgotten in New Zealand – commemorated as they

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.linz.govt.nz/our-work/new-zealand-geographic-board/place-name-stories/new-zealands-first-world-war-place-names>

<sup>36</sup> <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/place/54779>

<sup>37</sup> <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/place/4498>

<sup>38</sup> <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/place/4499>



are through memorials and geographical names throughout the country.



*The France Contingents tour of battlefields in Belgium as part of the World War 100 (WW100) commemorative events and programme. Image: New Zealand Defence Force.*

## Te Korowhakaunu / Kanáris Sound<sup>39</sup>

This dual name recognizes the significant and equal cultural heritage of two different geographical names and their stories. The Māori oral tradition described in *Kā Huru Manu*<sup>40</sup> is that Te Korowhakaunu was created by the great navigator Māui when he leapt ashore at the junction of Te Korowhakaunu and Moanawhenua Pōuri. This junction was named Te Tapuae-o-Māui. There are two accounts of how Māui created the Sound. The first states that Māui slipped over and fell forward, causing both of his arms to instinctively extend out, creating Te Korowhakaunu and Moanawhenua Pōuri. The second account states that Te Korowhakaunu already existed, but that when Māui slipped over, his left foot sent water and mud flying, forming Moanawhenua Pōuri.

The name Kanáris is shown on Jules de Blosseville's 1826 chart as *Bras Canaris*. Kanáris is the modern romanized form of the Greek name and the commonly used spelling since 2000. Therefore, in 2021 we corrected Te Korowhakaunu/Cunaris Sound to Te Korowhakaunu / Kanáris Sound. A mark of respect for Konstantinos Kanaris (c.1793-1877), a hero of the Greek War of Independence (1821-1829).



*Te Korowhakaunu / Kanáris Sound, New Zealand Gazetteer, <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/>.*

## Summary

These few examples demonstrate the role that geographical names have in preserving, commemorating, sharing, and educating about our cultural heritage – both indigenous and introduced. Most of our geographical names reflect historical naming, predominantly original Māori names or those given by early European settlers. More recent ethnic diversity now deserves inclusion and recognition in our contemporary geographical naming. As a colonized nation we are therefore challenged to recognize Māori, European, and other more recently introduced cultures and languages to ensure respectful and equitable recognition of our shared national identity.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/place/59501>

<sup>40</sup> <https://kahurumanu.co.nz/atlas>



# Preserving Oman's Cultural Heritage through Geographical Names: A National and Global Perspective

## Introduction

Geographical names are essential indicators of cultural heritage, reflecting a community's identity and history. They link people to their land and help preserve cultural traditions. Their importance has been highlighted through Geographical Indications (GIs), which protect regional products and support local economies (Gangjee, 2012; Hull, 2014). GIs also bolster cultural identity by enhancing community-territory connections, thus nurturing a "social imaginary" that maintains heritage (Coombe et al., 2014, pp. 208–219). Traditional toponyms encapsulate historical land use and dialects, making their preservation vital for cultural continuity (Bozzini et al., 2013). However, modernization and cultural homogenization threaten these names, prompting initiatives like the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNEGN) to advocate for their standardization as part of global cultural heritage. This article investigates how managing and documenting geographical names can promote cultural resilience and sustainability.

(Ghazal, 2010; Valeri, 2007). Omani toponyms also embody cultural and religious significance, shaped by the forces of Islamic reform and Arab nationalism (Ghazal, 2010). The era of modernization and the advent of oil discoveries in the 1960s gave rise to new names symbolizing infrastructural development and national unity (Limbert, 2010).



## UNEGN's Strategic Plan: Culture, Heritage, and Language Recognition

The UNEG N Resolutions VIII/9 and X/3 advocate for the international standardization of geographical nomenclature, which is crucial for cartographic representation, effective communication, and the preservation of cultural identity. Resolution VIII/9 promotes the standardisation of place names, whereas Resolution X/3 underscores the importance of employing local endonyms to honour indigenous cultures (Perko et al., 2017). These resolutions significantly support international commerce, governmental operations, and emergency response units by encouraging uniformity in geographical names and enhancing spatial data infrastructures (SDIs) (Monten, 2006). The Sultanate of Oman actively engages with these resolutions through transliteration initiatives linking Arabic and English, to enhance accessibility while safeguarding cultural heritage (Kharusi & Salman, 2011). Omani toponyms reflect the nation's cultural heritage and serve as a form of cultural resistance against homogenization, with these initiatives being incorporated into comprehensive development frameworks (Shueili & Mubarak, 2015).



## Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

Geographical names preserve cultural heritage and continuity, establishing connections between historical narratives and contemporary practices. Geographical Indications (GIs) protect regional products and bolster local economies (Gangjee, 2012; Hull, 2014). Traditional place names, or toponyms, represent historical land utilization and are integral to cultural preservation, necessitating digital documentation for the benefit of future generations (Bozzini et al., 2013). Organizations such as UNEG N standardize nomenclature to uphold cultural values and enhance global discourse (Perko et al., 2017). In the context of Oman, traditional toponyms reflect the nation's multifaceted cultural and historical identity, influenced by Islamic heritage and interactions with East Africa. Nomenclature derived from Swahili and African languages, attributable to trade routes predominantly through Zanzibar, exemplifies Oman's cosmopolitan character

## UNEGN Resolutions VIII/9 and X/3: The Sultanate of Oman's Response

UNEGN Resolutions VIII/9 and X/3 emphasize the critical significance of standardizing geographical nomenclature for facilitating effective communication and preserving cultural heritage. These resolutions advocate for economic and social advancement by enhancing geospatial data integration and optimizing global addressing systems (Perko et al., 2017; Coetzee et al., 2008). The participation of Oman in these resolutions signifies a dedication to harmonizing modernization with the preservation of cultural identity, employing a streamlined transliteration system for tourism-related materials to ensure accessibility for individuals who do not speak Arabic (Kharusi & Salman, 2011). Incorporating these initiatives into national planning frameworks seeks to reconcile cultural heritage with the imperatives of modernization (Shueili & Mubarak, 2015).



## Geographical Names Connecting Omanis to Their History

Omani toponyms serve as essential cultural indicators that link the Omani populace to their profound historical narratives, cultural legacy, and socio-political progression. These toponyms encapsulate historical and cultural stories, illustrating Oman's erstwhile trade routes and sophisticated water management practices, which have been indispensable for the sustenance of agriculture in its arid climate (Kharusi & Salman, 2011, 2015). The Omani Renaissance has significantly emphasised the preservation of heritage, wherein place names contribute to the maintenance of cultural identity and the resistance against homogenisation. Nevertheless, the standardisation of these designations presents considerable challenges due to linguistic heterogeneity, with transliteration issues stemming from the phonological discrepancies between Arabic and English (Nabhani

& Nasir, 2008). Furthermore, Omani toponyms unify many cultural components, fostering tourism and aiding in environmental conservation by designating locations of notable ecological importance (Gebauer et al., 2007; Searle, 2014). Historical irrigation systems, such as the falaj networks, have been recognised as UNESCO World Heritage sites, integral to sustainable water management and economic development (Helmi & Nash, 2007). Preserving these names is imperative for protecting cultural heritage, environmental stewardship, and sustainable socio-economic advancement.

## Revitalizing the Working Group on Geographical Names as a Cultural Heritage

They rejuvenated the UNGEGN Working Group on Geographical Names, as Cultural Heritage is integral to preserving cultural identity and historical continuity. Geographical names function as indicators of cultural heritage, encapsulating various regions' historical, social, and political narratives. They are crucial in safeguarding cultural diversity and are pivotal in decolonizing place names within post-colonial frameworks (Uluocha, 2015). The initiatives undertaken by UNGEGN advocate for inclusive methodologies that recognize the cultural importance of minority nomenclature, thereby fostering tourism and economic advancement (Cvijić & Guzijan, 2013). Oman's engagement in the revitalized UNGEGN Working Group helps to enhance navigational efficacy, facilitate the establishment of standardized names, and contribute to a comprehensive geographical database (Nabhani & Nasir, 2008). Strategic planning and the involvement of stakeholders are imperative for Oman to safeguard its heritage while promoting socio-economic development.







## Conclusion

Preserving geographical names in Oman is crucial for maintaining cultural heritage amidst modernization. Translating Arabic names to English presents accessibility challenges, reflecting the tension between modern development and cultural preservation, as seen in urban projects like Port Sultan Qaboos (Al-Hamdani, 2019). Protecting Oman's geological sites, such as the Semail Ophiolite, is vital for cultural and environmental conservation (Searle, 2014). While Oman's advanced cultural heritage protection frameworks are in place (Gugolz, 1996), the challenge remains to balance modernization with cultural identity preservation, ensuring that Oman's heritage is sustained amid rapid change.

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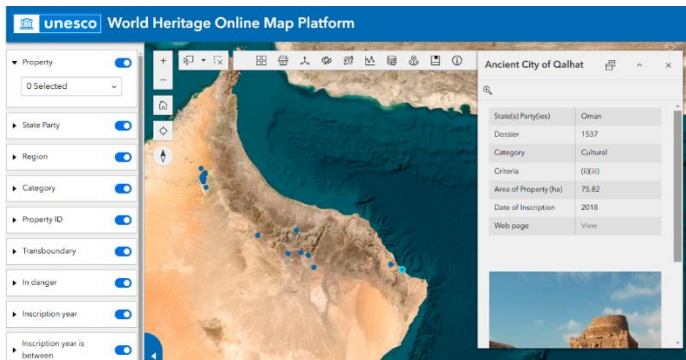
## Qalhat and Mirbat the two Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage in the Sultanate of Oman

UNESCO defines world heritage as "the designation for places on Earth that hold outstanding universal value," while it defines culture as a collection of unique spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional traits of a society or social group. These traits can manifest in forms such as art, literature, lifestyles, communal living, traditions, and beliefs. Thus, tangible cultural heritage encompasses monuments, urban sites, archaeological locations, and artworks that convey and preserve a society's cultural characteristics—its spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional dimensions.

Geographical names also reflect the story of humanity, making them part of our cultural heritage through human life and activity. The Sultanate of Oman, rich in history and cultural diversity, is home to numerous geographical names that reveal its past. Among these, Qalhat and Mirbat stand out as important cultural landmarks. These names do more than identify locations; they encapsulate the histories, traditions, and identities of the people who have inhabited these areas for centuries.

### Qalhat: A Historical Port City

Located on the eastern coast of Oman, Qalhat is well-known for its history as a port city. Once an important center for trade, connecting Oman to East Africa, Persia, and India. The name "Qalhat" likely comes from the Arabic word *qal'a*, meaning "fort," reflecting its role as a fortified settlement.



Ancient city of Qalhat, World Heritage Online map platform

In medieval times, Qalhat was an important trading town along the sea routes of the Indian Ocean. Many key cities grew along the world's coastlines, especially near major trade routes, including those in the Indian Ocean. The trade routes connecting Africa, India, and Arabia were significant along Oman's coast, particularly near the city of Sur. Qalhat became a successful seaport in the 12th century, with its golden age occurring in the 13th and 14th centuries when it was an important political and administrative center. This medieval port was the main trading hub on Oman's coast and a crucial stop on the route between India, Persia, and the Gulf.

Qalhat is one of Oman's major archaeological sites, with a history that spans from the 11th and 12th centuries up to the 16th century AD. Its importance is noted in texts that describe its role in Oman's history and trade, particularly during the time it served as a twin capital of the Hormuz kingdom from the 13th to the 15th centuries. After it was abandoned in the late 16th century, the town remained untouched under its ruins, covering 35 hectares, surrounded by fortress walls. Therefore, Qalhat is a unique reminder of this period, especially since the ancient city of Hormuz has since been completely destroyed.

Although Qalhat is known as one of Oman's key heritage sites, it is largely due to the Bibi Maryam mausoleum, the only surviving monument at the site. This mausoleum, a fine example of medieval Islamic architecture, sits at the foot of the mountain along the old coastal path from Sur to Qurayyat and was an essential stop for travelers. However, few people knew about the city itself, whose ruins lay between the mausoleum and the sea.

The archaeological site of Qalhat is a UNESCO World Heritage Site because it has well-preserved ruins, including parts of a mosque and the layout of the ancient town. The cultural heritage of Qalhat can be seen not only in its buildings but also in the stories and traditions passed down through generations. These stories underscore how important Qalhat was as a center for cultural exchange and its role in Oman's maritime history.

### Mirbat: A Cultural richness

A cultural and historical gem in Dhofar, Oman, Mirbat lies 74 kilometers from the city of Salalah, and is one of the most important historical cities in the Dhofar Governorate. Situated in the Sahl Samhan plain, it overlooks the coast. The name "Mirbat" is derived from the Arabic word meaning "place of gathering," reflecting its historical role as a trading post. Mirbat was famous for its horse breeding and exportation to various Arab and Islamic ports and cities, as well as for its trade in frankincense and other handicrafts. The city is also known for its natural beauty, with several beaches and bays that are popular tourist attractions.



Photo of Mirbat, source: Oman News Agency

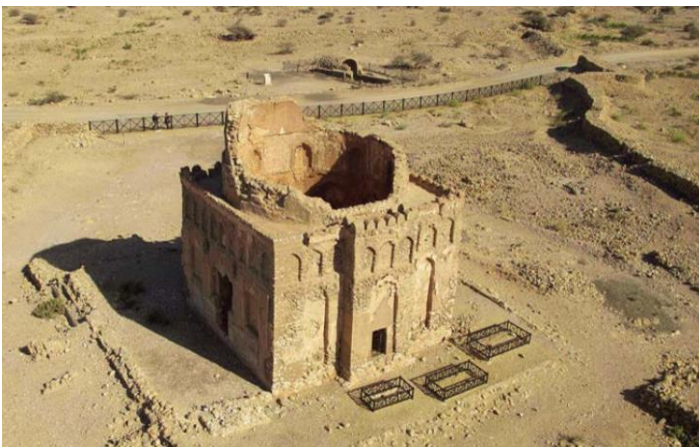


Mirbat is famous for its traditional architecture, including the iconic Mirbat Fort, which stands as a testament to the town's strategic importance in the past. The fort, along with other historic buildings, showcases the craftsmanship and architectural styles that have evolved over centuries.



## The Cultural and Hydrographic Importance of Geographical Names

The geographical names of Qalhat and Mirbat form vital links to the past, embodying the historical narratives and cultural identities of their regions. These names are essential to understanding the social and economic dynamics that have shaped Oman over the years. They reflect interactions between different cultures and communities, highlighting the importance of preserving such names as part of Oman's intangible cultural heritage. Efforts to protect and promote the cultural heritage associated with Qalhat and Mirbat are of paramount importance in today's rapidly changing world. Initiatives by the Omani government, in conjunction with local communities, aim to raise awareness of the significance of these names and their historical contexts. Educational programs, cultural festivals and heritage preservation projects play a vital role in ensuring that future generations appreciate and preserve the legacy of Qalhat and Mirbat.



These geographical names have also been preserved in the hydrographic memory of Oman's waters, and it is worth noting that there are many historical navigational charts that include the geographical names of Qalhat and Mirbat. Studying these historical maps provides details of periods worthy of in-depth study in the two Omani cities' rich heritage and marine history.

## Conclusion

In summary, Qalhat and Mirbat represent more than just geographical place names; they are vital parts of Oman's cultural heritage. These names reflect the rich history, diverse influences, and lively traditions of the Sultanate of Oman. It is important to acknowledge the cultural importance of these geographical names to ensure they continue to be a source of pride and identity for all Omanis. Preserving the heritage of Qalhat and Mirbat honors the past and demonstrates a commitment to the future, promoting a deeper understanding of Oman's cultural landscape.

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## Role of Geographical Names in Preserving Cultural Heritage of the Russian Federation

According to the *Fundamentals of Legislation of the Russian Federation on Culture*, approved by the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation on October 9, 1992, N 3612-1, toponyms are classified as cultural values. Geographical names have been formed over the centuries in close connection with the lives of the peoples inhabiting Russia.

Russia is a multinational state, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Today, over 190 nationalities live on the territory of the Russian Federation, including indigenous minorities and autochthonous peoples. Their crafts, creativity, national traditions, trades, languages and historical events are naturally reflected in toponyms. The peculiarities of the culture and beliefs of the peoples of Russia, as well as the names of crafts and trades, from ancient times have been used in the names of settlements, rivers, lakes and other geographical features. Examples include settlements in Russia whose names indicate the economic activities (crafts and trades) of the local population, such as the city of *Kolomna* (Коломна), located near Moscow (where stone-cutting was once prevalent); the city of *Novokuznetsk* (Новокузнецк), located in the Kemerovo region – *Kuzbass* (Кузбасс) (where blacksmithing was widespread); and the village of *Zhostovo* (Жостово) in the Moscow region (where painted tin trays are made) and many others.



*Representatives of indigenous peoples of the northern regions of Russia. Photo: A. Suloev*

Also, among the toponyms of Russia, there are often names associated with national characteristics and beliefs of the peoples. The village of *Terloy* (Терлой) in the Chechen Republic, for example, is named after one of the nine Chechen *tukhums* (traditional unions of *taipes* - communities). The Chechen *taip* is a unit of organization of the people, self-determined by the common origin of its members, a territorial and/or tribal

association. According to one version, the city of *Kostroma* (Кострома) on the Volga River got its name from the culture and rituals of the ancient Slavs (the Kostroma holiday is very significant in Slavic mythology). In the culture of the Khakass people there has long been a legend about the evil hero *Hara Tag* (Хара Таг, in Russian: *Черная гора*, in English: *Black Mountain*), who lives on mountain *Hara Tigey* (Хара Тузей). According to one version, the name of the city of *Chernogorsk* (Черногорск, in English: *Black Mountain City*) came from this legend. According to another version, the name of the city is associated with the trade of coal mining, which has long been carried out in this area. The settlement of *Troitskaya Gora* (Троицкая гора, in English: *Trinity Mountain*) in the Leningrad Region, traces its history back to the Trinity Church, a cultural object of Christian beliefs. Since ancient times, temples in Russia have traditionally been built on an elevated place, so the name "Trinity Mountain" has taken root among local residents.



*Holiday of the Slavs 'Maslenitsa'.  
<https://shedevrum.ai>*

According to the Strategy of the State National Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025, and according to official data from the Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, approximately 277 languages and dialects are used throughout Russia. The Russian Federation guarantees all its peoples, regardless of their number, equal rights to the preservation and comprehensive development of their native language, freedom of choice, and use of the language of communication.

The linguistic diversity of the numerous peoples of the Russian Federation is widespread and is reflected in toponyms. For example, the village of *Veryakushi* (Верякуши) in the Nizhny Novgorod region owes its name to the language of the Mordovian people, where the word "*vere*" means "*upper*", and "*kushi*" means



"glade", so in translation from the language of the Mordovian people the name of the village is "Upper Glade".



City of craftsmen Kolomna. Photo: A. Slonitskaya

Murmansk (Мурманск), the largest city in the northwest of Russia, has the sound of the Sami language in its name: "mur" means sea, and "ma" means the land. "Sea Land" is an accurate and capacious name, taking into account the natural location of this beautiful seaside settlement.



Traditional crafts of the village of Zhostovo (Zhostovo painted tin tray). Photo: Zhostovo Factory LLC

In the Volga region, Slavic and pre-Slavic names of geographical objects prevail. For example, the Chardym River (река Чардым) flows in the north and central part of the Saratov region and joins the Volga River. The name Chardym River translates as "Forest River", and is based on the word of the Mari language "cherda" meaning "forest". Other examples, such as the settlement names Uzen (Узень), Bikley (Биклей), Belgaza (Белгаза), Valakovka (Балаковка), Bakur (Бакур), Balanda (Баланда), Atkara (Аткара), Arkadak (Аркадак), Altata (Алтата), Alai (Алай),

Abodim (Абодим) also preserve the linguistic characteristics of the peoples of Russia.

The name of Lake Baikal (озеро Байкал) in Siberia, has several versions of its origin. In the Buryat language "Baigal" (from "bai" meaning "stand" and "gal" meaning "fire") signifies "fire-breathing mountain", with legends among the Buryats that the lake was formed on the site of a volcano. The Yakuts have a similar name – "Baigal" which translates as "sea" or "deep waters", while the Turkic language borrowed the name of the lake from the Buryats and adapted it to their language as "Bai-Kel", which translates as "rich lake", indicating its abundant fish resources.



Olkhon Island on Lake Baikal. Custom of indigenous peoples to tie on trees ribbons as an offering to local spirits. Photo: S. Filin

Russia's largest peninsula, Taimyr (Таймыр), has several hypotheses about the origin of its toponym. The most common version is that its name is Evenk in origin, from the ancient Tungusic "tamura" (meaning "valuable, expensive, rich") – the first name the Evenks used was Taimyra River (река Таймыра), due to its abundance in fish. In the XIX century, this name spread to the entire peninsula. In translation from the Nganasan language, "tai mire" means "deer trails" or "country of deer tracks".

In the Russian Federation there are numerous toponyms associated with historical events or with the names of the heroes of such events, which is an integral part of the culture of the Russian people.

For example, the names of the heroes of the Great Patriotic War and their feats are preserved forever in toponyms throughout the territory of the Russian Federation, such as Mount Masalov and Mount Voloshina in the Kemerovo region (Kuzbass), Cape Izmail Zaidulin in the Leningrad region, Matushkin Bank in the Barents Sea (within the exclusive economic zone of the Russian Federation), Cape Admiral Yumashev and Svetetsky Mountain in the Sakhalin region, Afanasy Beloborodov and Ivan Shkadov,



banks within the internal sea waters of the Russian Federation and many others.

*Mount SGE (СТЭ, in English: NHE)* is the highest mountain on the northern island of the *Novaya Zemlya archipelago*. It was named in 1958 in honor of the Northern Hydrographic Expedition (Северная гидрографическая экспедиция), which commemorates the expedition's exploration of the north for several decades, making a significant contribution to the study of the Arctic territories.



*National dance of indigenous peoples of the North Caucasus of Russia. Photo: Caucasian dance ensemble*

The city of *Gagarin* in the Smolensk region is named after its native Yuri Alekseevich Gagarin, the first person in world history to make an orbital space flight.

Summarizing the practice of reflecting historical, social, linguistic, and ethno-cultural features in geographical names of Russia, it should be noted that the value of toponyms is undeniable. They play an important role in the formation of national and, consequently, linguistic consciousness. They consolidate social and historical experience, store and broadcast cultural information.

Studying and documenting toponyms can open access to information about registered geographical names that reflect the creativity, historical events, and linguistic origins of different cultural groups. This contributes to the understanding of history, linguistics, and ethnography, thereby increasing interest in the development of new tourist routes.

Given Russia's diverse population, special attention is placed on preserving historical toponyms, highlighting the peculiarities of life, activity, and traditions of people living in each region. Efforts

are also focused on informing the population about both new and historical place names.

The availability of information about toponyms through digital sources undoubtedly contributes to their study, revealing linguistic and cultural features from interactions among different ethnic groups. This digital access also bridges the past of the people with the present, increasing the interest among young people in their history and cultural heritage.

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## Slovenian Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

### Government Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names

Slovenia is a distinctly transitional area, given its location between the Alps, the Pannonian Basin, the Dinarides, and the Mediterranean Sea. This is also reflected in its geographical names. The settlement of the Slavs in the Eastern Alps in the sixth century laid the foundation for the modern corpus of geographical names. Of course, this area was not devoid of names before then. The ethnic groups that lived there earlier, passed through, or dwelt next to the area, also left linguistic traces in geographical names. The influences on modern Slovenian place names are therefore divided into substrate effects (pre-Slavic), adstrate effects (from neighboring languages following Christianization in the ninth century), and superstrate effects (from the languages of those that settled within or on the edge of contiguous Slovenian territory). Compared to names of Slavic origin, few place names have a proven substrate origin, with most found in ancient sources. The adstrate influences are divided into Romance and Bavarian, while superstrate influences include Ecclesiastical Latin, Tyrolean, Hungarian, South Slavic, and, more rarely, Romance.

Geographical names of Slavic origin and names originating from the influences of other languages mentioned above, form the corpus of geographical names in Slovenia. The register of geographical names includes names for more than 127,000 geographical features and about 16,000 names outside Slovenia's borders. This shows that the area inhabited by ethnic Slovenians is larger than the current political borders of Slovenia. Significant changes in this area were brought about by the peace treaties after the First and Second World Wars. Linguistic communities outside Slovenia still exist today in Italy, Austria, and Hungary. As part of the Slovenian language, Slovenian geographical names play a special role in preserving cultural heritage, particularly as the language is increasingly threatened by assimilation processes outside Slovenia.

Even in the recent history of Slovenia, geographical names were not always safe from various influences and enforced changes. After the First World War, when the western part of present-day Slovenia was annexed to Italy under the London Agreement, the names in this area were Italianized. After the Second World War, however, the communist government that ruled Yugoslavia at the time was very intensely involved in changing place names. After a new law was implemented, 114 settlement names that did not correspond to the spirit of the communist era were changed. These were mainly names associated with the Christian tradition, names from German or Italian, and names associated with feudalism.

Post-war border changes left two recognized ethnic minorities, Italian and Hungarian, in Slovenia. The Slovenian constitution and the law guarantee them the use of their own language and thus bilingual geographical names.

It turns out that, in addition to their identification function, geographical names have many other functions, such as nominative, differentiative (distinguishing and characterizing), connotative (marking), social, emotive, descriptive, and ideological functions. One of the most important functions is their denotative role, signifying a particular place with which it is clearly associated.

Geographical names are therefore much more than just the identification of a geographical feature in space because they have multifaceted meanings due to their diverse etymology, their naming motivation, and all other functions. It is therefore not surprising that UNESCO adopted the [Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) in October 2003, which recognizes language as the bearer of this heritage and thus geographical names as an inalienable part of a language.

In the past decade in Slovenia, the greatest attention has been devoted to the study of microtoponyms, especially house and field names. This work has been systematically carried out by the geographer Klemen Klinar, who, together with his colleagues, has developed methods for studying these names. Work began in the Upper Carniola region and has so far collected over 15,000 house names. Another important aspect of research on microtoponyms in Slovenia is the dialectal forms of names; Slovenian is one of the most dialectally diverse languages in Europe, and Jožica Škofic has focused on this particular aspect. Representatives of the Slovenian ethnic minority in Austrian Carinthia, in particular Martina Piko Rustia, have also contributed to collecting and studying field names. In total, more than 12,000 field names in Upper Carniola and Austrian Carinthia have been systematically recorded. This research led to Slovenian house and field names being listed in the UNESCO National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Austria in 2010, as reported by the Austrian delegate Peter Jordan at the 2017 UNGEGN conference.



*House name sign on a house in Lesce, Upper Carniola.  
Photo: Matjaž Geršič*

# Ledinska imena Slovenskega Porabja



Založba ZRC

Cover page of a collection of field names in the Rába Valley. Photo: Matjaž Geršič

Over the past three years, researchers from ZRC SAZU, the Anton Melik Geographical Institute, and the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language have applied the methods above to study field names in the Rába Valley, along the Rába River in Hungary, home to ethnic Slovenians who were left in Hungary after the Treaty of Trianon. 350 field names were collected and analyzed in seven settlements, which are officially bilingual or trilingual. Gábor Mikešy, a member of the Hungarian Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names, took part in the research.

This was an excellent example of cross-border cooperation between two UNGEGN member committees. The results of the work resulted in a published volume, as a map with a glossary on the back, which was distributed free to the local population, and a presentation of the project results at the Consulate General of the Republic of Slovenia in Szentgotthárd/Monošter, Hungary. One of the results of the project is a web application that allows users to add the position of possibly unidentified field names onto a map, write down the name, and record his or her voice so that dialectologists can later create a narrow phonetic transcription of the name. Research on microtoponyms abroad is extremely important because this type of name is threatened not only by the modernization of agriculture but also by assimilation processes.

In Slovenia, another type of geographical name is being studied quite intensively: exonyms. A few years ago, we compiled a dictionary that contains over 5,000 exonyms, each with over 30 attributes. This work in Slovenia was headed by Drago Kladnik.

The Government Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names is aware of the importance of geographical names as cultural heritage. In cooperation with relevant professional institutions, we therefore try to pay as much attention as possible to studying, maintaining, and preserving Slovenian geographical names and all geographical names in Slovenia.

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## The Role of Geographical Names in Preserving Cultural Heritage (South Africa)

In the heart of South Africa's complex history and rich cultural tapestry lies a profound sense of place, embedded in the names that mark our landscapes, towns, and rivers. Each name carries the weight of collective memory, embodying a connection to our diverse heritage and the voices of those who lived, loved, and safeguarded our lands. In alignment with the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029, Strategy 4, South Africa stands committed to acknowledging geographical names as critical pillars of our cultural heritage. This strategy emphasizes the need to "declare, promote, celebrate, and demonstrate that geographical names matter because they recognize unique culture, heritage, and language that connect people to physical locations." The South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) plays a pivotal role in this mission, championing initiatives that preserve, celebrate, and transform our cultural landscape in a way that honors our complex past and informs our shared future.

SAGNC was established in terms of Section 2 of the [South African Geographical Names Council Act, 118 of 1998](#) and since 2000, this Council has 1532 names changed.

### Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage - South Africa's Approach

The significance of geographical names in South Africa has been recognized formally and systematically since the establishment of the SAGNC, which serves as a custodian of our nation's toponymic heritage. This mandate is echoed in UNGEGN Resolution VIII/9, which encourages countries to systematically collect geographical names and promote an understanding of these names' historical, cultural, and linguistic importance and hence there is a Chapter 9 institution named Pan African South African Language Board (PANSALB) as part of Council. South Africa's diverse cultural history, defined by Indigenous languages and heritage, as well as colonial legacies, positions us uniquely to examine how geographical names can act as tools of cultural recognition, reclamation, resilience and social cohesion.

Our commitment to heritage preservation includes an active programme of name changes that reflect our indigenous histories and restore cultural dignity to the communities once marginalized. [The SAGNC Handbook for Geographical Names](#) serves as a guiding framework, providing criteria for the collection, review, and approval of

names while recognizing the socio-historical context underpinning these names. As outlined by UNGEGN Resolution X/3, South Africa's criteria for evaluating geographical names prioritize their cultural and historical significance, language alignment, and relevance to the current identity of the community.

### The Process of Name Reclamation and Change

The SAGNC Handbook's protocols for name changes embody a participatory approach to heritage preservation. This method aligns with our recognition that geographical names are not mere labels but cultural signifiers that evoke the heritage and collective memory of communities. To address the legacies of colonial and apartheid-era names, South Africa has initiated numerous renaming projects to reintroduce indigenous names and narratives, fostering a national sense of belonging and cultural pride. These processes include in-depth consultations with communities, ensuring that the selection and reinstatement of geographical names reflect shared values and aspirations as inscribed in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

For instance, in restoring the name *Mbizana* in the Eastern Cape, the SAGNC honored the historical significance of the Xhosa-speaking people in the region. Similarly, renaming Port Elizabeth to *Gqeberha* not only reinstates an indigenous name but also celebrates the isiXhosa language, which represents the culture and heritage of millions in the region. Such changes, while significant to local identity, also serve as a collective remembrance of the diverse histories that shape our present.

### The Socio-Cultural Impact of Geographical Names in South Africa

Geographical names hold the power to foster national unity and reconciliation in post-colonial societies like South Africa. Names such as *Freedom Park* and *Constitution Hill* commemorate our journey toward democracy and serve as reminders of our shared resilience. Meanwhile, by reclaiming names in indigenous languages such as isiZulu, isiXhosa, Setswana, and Sesotho, we assert our commitment to cultural preservation and the inclusivity of South Africa's linguistic heritage. Recognizing names in indigenous languages, as promoted by Strategy 4 of the UNGEGN Programme, is essential to dismantling linguistic erasure and restoring respect for the land's original inhabitants.





Moreover, the systematic collection of these names also underpins our commitment to intergenerational memory. In Africa, the oral transmission of culture has traditionally served as a vessel for community history and values. By embedding these narratives in geographical names, we preserve this heritage in a way that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries, ensuring that future generations inherit a landscape that reflects the truths of their ancestry.

## Global and Local Perspectives: The Role of International Resolutions

South Africa's journey in cultural reclamation and heritage preservation resonates with the objectives of UNGEGN's Strategy 4, which seeks to promote the cultural, historical, and linguistic significance of geographical names. Through adherence to resolutions such as VIII/9 and X/3, South Africa exemplifies the critical role that toponymy can play in fostering cultural resilience and promoting a deeper appreciation of our heritage. Our commitment to these resolutions underscores our alignment with global efforts to recognize that geographical names are essential to identity, cultural legacy, and the rights of indigenous and local communities.

## A Call to Action

While progress has been made, there remains work to be done to ensure that South Africa's geographical names fully reflect the diversity of our society. The SAGNC remains dedicated to advancing this mission, reinforcing a collective appreciation for the cultural value of our geographical names, and prioritizing the alignment of these names with local heritage and identity.

Geographical names are more than markers; they are cultural assets that anchor us to our shared humanity. In embracing this understanding, South Africa and the global community can reinforce a respect for cultural heritage that transcends boundaries, uniting us in the celebration of our unique and collective pasts. Through this commitment, geographical names can continue to foster cultural pride, inclusivity, and resilience in an ever-evolving world.

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## FROM THE COUNTRIES

### *D'un lac à l'autre : corrections géomatiques et toponymiques au Québec (Canada)*

La Commission de toponymie du Québec est l'organisme responsable de la gestion des noms de lieux du Québec. Elle a été instituée en vertu de la *Charte de la langue française* en 1977. Elle s'occupe notamment de l'inventaire et de l'officialisation des toponymes, qu'elle diffuse ensuite dans la *Banque de noms de lieux du Québec* (BNLQ). Une fois officiels, les noms de lieux sont d'usage obligatoire par l'Administration québécoise.

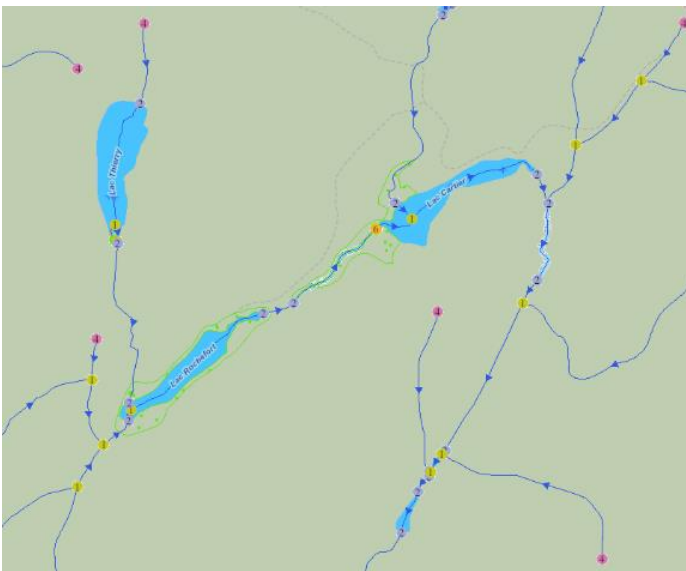
Au Québec, l'information géographique gouvernementale est majoritairement produite par le ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts (MRNF). La Direction générale de l'information géospatiale favorise la coordination et l'optimisation de l'information géographique gouvernementale et produit la référence géographique du Québec. Pour ce faire, elle établit et gère la cartographie officielle du gouvernement du Québec et fournit des services spécialisés de levés topographiques aériens, de cartographie et de télédétection. Elle assure une gouvernance en information géographique et établit des partenariats stratégiques. Elle diffuse, valorise et fait rayonner l'information géographique auprès de la clientèle.

La Géobase du réseau hydrographique du Québec (GRHQ), produite en partenariat entre le MRNF et le ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs (MELCCFP) est le référentiel hydrographique du Québec. La GRHQ est une base de données qui agit comme référentiel commun de l'hydrographie au Québec. Elle représente un réseau hydrographique détaillé permettant de prendre en charge de nombreuses applications liées à l'aménagement du territoire, à l'environnement et à la sécurité civile. C'est, par exemple, la GRHQ qui est utilisée pour représenter les éléments hydrographiques sur les fonds de carte du gouvernement du Québec disponibles en service Web.

#### *Contexte des travaux conjoints de la Commission de toponymie et du MRNF*

Pendant les décennies d'existence de la Commission de toponymie et de l'organisme auquel elle a succédé, la Commission de géographie du Québec, plusieurs milliers de noms de lieux ont été officialisés, puis diffusés avec des coordonnées de localisation parfois approximatives qui correspondaient aux capacités techniques de l'époque en matière de géomatique. Transposées dans les systèmes d'informations géographiques contemporains, ces coordonnées sont dans certains cas suffisantes, mais elles manquent de précision dans d'autres contextes ou peuvent même s'avérer inexactes. En 2023, la Commission de toponymie a entrepris des travaux visant l'amélioration systématique des coordonnées de localisation associées aux noms diffusés dans la BNLQ afin de remédier à cette situation.

La représentation cartographique des toponymes, dont ceux qui désignent des plans d'eau, est ponctuelle dans la BNLQ, c'est-à-dire que les toponymes y sont représentés avec des points plutôt qu'avec des lignes ou des polygones. Par exemple, les coordonnées d'un lac peuvent avoir été déterminées il y a quelques décennies pour être au centre géographique approximatif d'un lac. Bien que situées dans le lac, les coordonnées ne correspondent pas nécessairement au centroïde exact du plan d'eau, et peuvent même se trouver à l'emplacement d'une île ou d'une pointe. Ce genre d'imprécision pose problème lorsque les noms officiels sont utilisés dans d'autres bases de données gouvernementales,



*Extract from the Geobase of the Quebec Hydrographic Network (Government of Quebec, 2024)*



comme la GRHQ. En effet, plusieurs milliers de noms sont rejetés lors de l'intégration automatisée des toponymes dans ces systèmes, faute d'une correspondance exacte entre les noms et leurs coordonnées géographiques.

La Commission de toponymie a approché la Direction générale de l'information géospatiale pour faciliter la correction en lots des coordonnées de localisation qui se trouvent dans la BNLQ. Le projet de coopération initial entre les deux unités gouvernementales visait l'utilisation des éléments vectoriels de la GRHQ qui correspondent à des plans d'eau nommés dans la BNLQ, la localisation exacte de leur centroïde, puis la correction en lots des coordonnées dans la BNLQ. L'intégration dans la GRHQ de l'identifiant unique employé pour les noms diffusés dans la BNLQ a également été prévue afin que les mises à jour soient facilitées. Ce projet de collaboration est ainsi devenu une œuvre de coordination en continu, où la communication joue un rôle clé.

### Résultats de la première analyse

La première analyse menée pour la correction concerne les noms officiels associés aux critères « lac » et « lacs » dans la BNLQ. Plus de 63 000 noms correspondent à ces critères. La majorité des associations entre les noms officiels de la BNLQ et les polygones correspondant dans la GRHQ ont été réalisées avec succès, mais plus de 4 400 erreurs diverses ont été générées, ce qui correspond à environ 7 % du total. Ces erreurs sont dues au manque d'adéquation entre les noms diffusés dans la BNLQ et ceux déjà associés aux éléments vectoriels de la GRHQ. Une fine analyse à la pièce a donc été prévue pour que ces erreurs soient corrigées avant l'intégration dans la BNLQ des nouvelles coordonnées de géolocalisation.

Parmi les problèmes relevés au cours de l'analyse à la pièce, notons le changement de nature de plusieurs entités géographiques qui s'est produit au fil du temps. Par exemple, certains lacs sont devenus des milieux humides à cause de l'eutrophisation de leurs eaux de surface, ou d'autres se sont vus ennoyés par des réservoirs hydroélectriques. L'analyse permettra aussi de cibler de nouveaux noms à officialiser, ces derniers se trouvant dans la GRHQ, mais pas dans la BNLQ, en raison de l'intervention d'autres organismes publics. Les changements de noms officiels effectués durant les dernières décennies par la Commission de toponymie seront également, au terme de ce premier exercice, entièrement intégrés dans la GRHQ.

### Défis et résultats espérés

À la suite de cette première étape qui vise les noms officiels associés aux types d'entités « lac » et « lacs », des travaux seront entrepris relativement aux autres types de plans d'eau, comme les mares ou les étangs, aux parties de plans d'eau, comme les baies ou les anses, et même aux cours d'eau, dont la réconciliation des données représente un défi de taille. En effet, l'usage de certains noms de lieux ne suit pas toujours la convention hydrographique généralement observée au Québec, voulant que ce soit le cours d'eau au débit le plus important qui conserve son nom de sa source à son embouchure. Ainsi, un cours d'eau rencontrant d'autres cours d'eau de plus faible débit peut, en toponymie québécoise, changer de nom; c'est pourquoi une analyse minutieuse lors d'une éventuelle mise en commun des données de la GRHQ et de la BNLQ sera nécessaire. Le besoin d'améliorer les coordonnées de localisation qui figurent dans la BNLQ et d'assurer et la conformité aux noms officiels des noms qui se trouvent dans la GRHQ justifie ces travaux d'envergure menés en toute collaboration par deux unités du gouvernement du Québec.

En savoir plus sur la [Banque de noms de lieux du Québec](#).

En savoir plus sur la [Géobase du réseau hydrographique du Québec](#).

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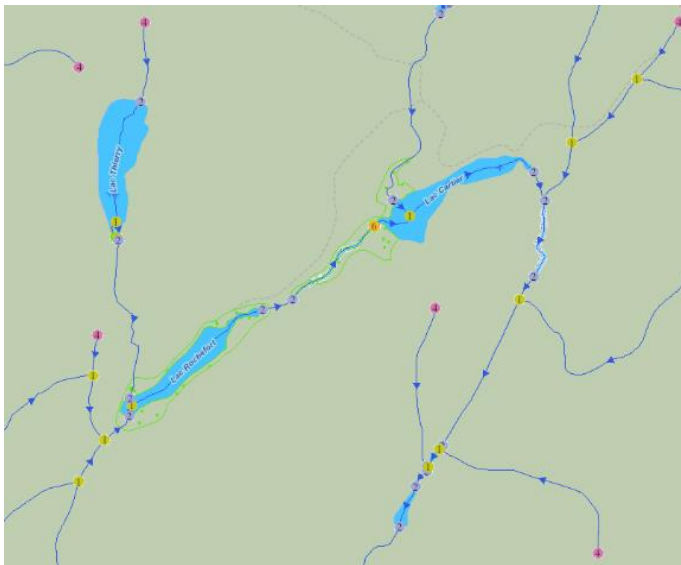
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## From one lake to another: Geomatic and toponymic corrections in Québec (Canada)

The Commission de toponymie du Québec is the authority responsible for managing geographical names in the province of Québec. Created when the *Charter of the French Language* was adopted in 1977, the Commission's primary mandate is to take inventory of and officialize toponyms, which it then disseminates in the *Banque de noms de lieux du Québec* (BNLQ) [Quebec Place Name Bank]. Once official, geographical names are mandatory for use by the Québec government.

Most government geographic information in Québec is produced by the Ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts (MRNF – [Department of Natural Resources and Forests]). The Direction générale de l'information géospatiale (DGIG – [Geospatial Information Branch]) coordinates and optimizes the provincial government's geographic information and produces its geographic reference. This involves establishing and managing the Government of Québec's official maps, as well as providing specialized services including aerial topographic surveys, mapping and remote sensing. The DGIG provides geographic information governance and establishes strategic partnerships. It also disseminates, enhances and promotes geographic information to clients.



Extract from the Geobase of the Quebec Hydrographic Network (Government of Quebec, 2024)

The Géobase du réseau hydrographique du Québec (GRHQ), which is produced in partnership between the MRNF and the Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs [Québec Department of the Environment, the Fight Against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks], is a database that serves as Québec's common hydrographic reference. It provides a detailed hydrographic network that supports multiple applications related to land use planning, the environment, and public safety. For example, the GRHQ is used to represent hydrographic features on the Québec government's online basemaps.

### Context of joint work by the Commission de toponymie and MRNF

During the decades of the existence of the Commission de toponymie and its predecessor, the Commission de géographie du Québec [Québec Geographic Names Board], many thousands of geographical names have been standardized and disseminated, sometimes with approximate coordinates that reflected the technical geomatics capabilities of the time. Transposed into current geographic information systems, these coordinates are adequate in some cases but lack precision in others or may even be inaccurate. In 2023, to rectify this situation, the Commission de toponymie undertook work to systematically improve the coordinates associated with the geographical names disseminated in the BNLQ.

Toponyms, including those designating water bodies, are represented in the BNLQ by points rather than lines or polygons. For instance, the coordinates of a lake may have been established decades ago as the lake's approximate geographic centre. Although the coordinates indicate a location within the lake, they do not necessarily correspond to the exact centroid of the water body and may even align with an island or a point. This lack of precision becomes problematic when official geographical names are used in other government databases, such as the GRHQ. In fact, several thousand geographical names were rejected when toponyms were automatically integrated into these systems due to inconsistencies between the names and their geographic coordinates.



The Commission de toponymie approached the DGIG to facilitate the batch correction of coordinates in the BNLQ. The goal of the initial collaborative project between the two government authorities was to use vector elements corresponding to named water bodies in the BNLQ and the exact location of their centroids to carry out the batch correction of the coordinates in the BNLQ. The project also involved integrating the unique identifier used for geographical names disseminated in the BNLQ into the GRHQ to facilitate updates. This has become an ongoing collaborative project that requires continuous coordination, with communication playing a key role.

### Results of the initial analysis

The initial analysis of the batch correction of coordinates focused on official names associated with the criteria “lac” and “lacs” [“lake” and “lakes”] in the BNLQ. More than 63,000 geographical names meet these criteria. While most associations between official names in the BNLQ and the corresponding polygons in the GRHQ were successful, more than 4,400 errors of various kinds were generated, representing approximately 7% of the total. These errors were due to non-correspondence between the geographical names disseminated in the BNLQ and those already associated with vector elements in the GRHQ. A closer, individual analysis was planned to correct these errors before the new geolocation coordinates are integrated into the BNLQ.

One of the problems uncovered during this individual analysis was the changes over time in a number of geographic features. For example, some lakes have become wetlands due to eutrophication of their surface waters, while others have been flooded due to the impoundment of hydroelectric reservoirs. The analysis will also be able to identify new geographical names that need to be standardized (those found in the GRHQ but not in the BNLQ) as a result of the intervention of other public bodies. In addition, official name changes made by the Commission de toponymie over the last few decades will be fully integrated into the GRHQ at the end of this initial exercise.

### Challenges and desired outcomes

Following this initial step focusing on official names associated with “lac” and “lacs” entities, work will be undertaken in relation to other water bodies, such as ponds and basins (“mares” and “étangs”); parts of water bodies, such as bays and coves (“baies” and “anses”); and even watercourses, where data reconciliation will present a significant challenge. The use of certain geographical names does not always follow the hydrographic convention generally observed in the province, whereby the watercourse with the largest flow retains its name from source to mouth. However, in Québec toponymy, a watercourse that encounters other watercourses with a lower flow may change names; that is why a detailed analysis will be required when data from the GRHQ and BNLQ are eventually combined. The need to improve location coordinates in the BNLQ and ensure the GRHQ’s geographical names align with official names justifies this major collaborative undertaking between two Québec government authorities.

For more information about the [Banque de noms de lieux du Québec](#). [in French only]

For more information about the [Géobase du réseau hydrographique du Québec](#). [in French only]

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# Activities in the Field of Standardization of Geographical Names in the Republic of Croatia in 2023

## Introduction

This article presents the activities on the standardization of geographical names in the Republic of Croatia, as a member of UNGEGN East Central and South-East Europe Division, during 2023.

In 2023, the Government of the Republic of Croatia appointed a new president of the Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names and convened its second assembly. To ensure the quality of the Register of Geographical Names and to spread awareness about geographical names, the Commission adopted two documents. Additionally, the Commission actively participates in the implementation of the Law on Settlements.

The functionality of the network application for the Register of Geographical Names was improved and its website upgraded. The revision of the records in the database of the Register of Geographical Names began at the end of 2023.

Activities in the field of standardization of geographical names in 2022 were presented in the 66th UNGEGN Information Bulletin, as well as in the East Central and South-East Europe Division's report for the 2023 UNGEGN Session.

## The Commission for Standardization of Geographical Names

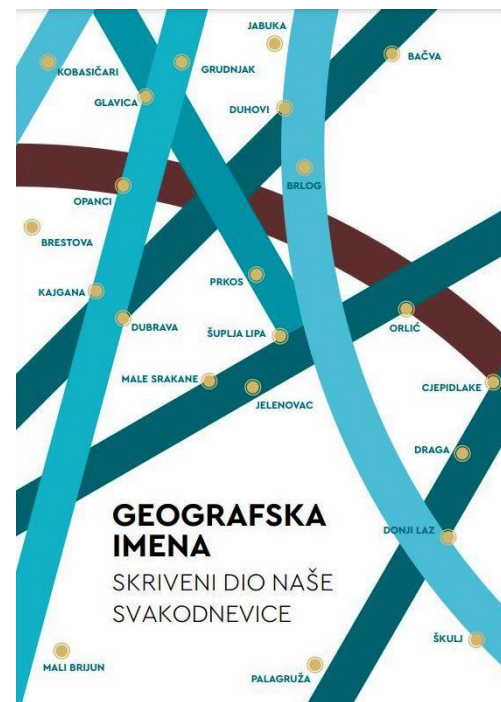
In mid-January 2023, the Government of the Republic of Croatia appointed a new president of the Commission ([URL1](#)), and in mid-April 2023 appointed the second convocation of the Commission ([URL2](#)). The commission consists of the president and eleven members. The President of the Commission is Antonio Šustić, Director General of the State Geodetic Administration of the Republic of Croatia ([URL3](#)), as a representative of the central state administration authority responsible for the Register of Geographical Names.

In 2023 the Commission held eight sessions and consequently adopted one strategic document for the purpose of quality assurance of the Register of Geographical Names (Recommendations for standardization of geographical names in the Republic of Croatia – naming islands and peninsulas, [URL4](#)) and one document/publication in order to spread awareness about geographical names (Geographical names - a hidden part of our everyday life, [URL5](#)).

The Commission actively participates in the implementation of the Law on Settlements ([URL6](#)) and Law on State Survey and Real Estate Cadastre ([URL7](#)). In 2023, the Commission issued 55 Opinions and 1 Recommendation on the proposal for geographical names in certain local self-government units (cities and municipalities) and consequently standardized 98 geographical names of settlements, streets, and squares.

In October 2023, the State Geodetic Administration, in cooperation with the Commission, organized the national conference on geographical names (Days of Geographical Names 2023, [URL8](#)). The scientific and professional conference was a gathering place for important Croatian participants in the field of geographical names and a base for the exchange of opinions and experiences as well as an overview of the current geographical names standardization situation in Croatia.

To raise awareness about geographical names, members of the Commission published several publications on geographical names.



Additionally, the Commission regularly provides expert opinions to users / interested public, related to the suggestions for naming and/or changing the geographical names of geographical objects in the Republic of Croatia.

## The information system of the Register of Geographical Names

In terms of technical infrastructure, the information system of the Register of Geographical Names consists of three basic parts: a website dedicated to geographical names, a database of geographical names, and an online application for managing the Register of Geographical Names. The dataset of geographical names is publicly available through various network services. A dedicated server supports viewing and downloading these datasets ([URL9](#)).





In 2023 the functionality of the online application ([URL10](#)) was improved and migration to the new server and to the new operating system was completed. The application offers the possibility to suggest changes to the records in the database of the Register of Geographical Names by the public. Also, the online application was adapted for portable devices and online services for viewing and downloading data from the Register of Geographical Names database, and it is available to public users.

In November 2023 the revision of the records in the database of the Register of Geographical Names began. After the end of the pilot project (April 2022), certain typical problems were recorded which will be addressed in the future process, especially when it comes to the language component and to a lesser extent the geographical one.

All activities conducted in the field of geographical names are available through the website dedicated to geographical names ([URL11](#)).

### International cooperation

At the international level, in January 2023 a national report on activities in the field of standardization of geographical names in the Republic of Croatia for 2022 ([URL12](#)) was submitted to the UNGEGN East Central and South-East Europe Division. Also, in December 2023, the Commission for Standardization of Geographical Names and the State Geodetic Administration presented activities (Information Bulletin of UNGEGN no.66, [URL13](#)) on the standardization of geographical names in the Republic of Croatia in 2022.

These efforts underscore the Republic of Croatia’s commitment to the standardization and preservation of geographical names and to raise awareness about geographical names in the Republic of Croatia.

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## Compilation of a comprehensive book on toponymy of Iran

### Introduction

**T**oponymic Guidelines of Iran is a resource that assists users in the correct pronunciation, transcription, spelling, and usage of geographical names in Iran. The book's main contents include the methods and standards for phonetic transcription and romanization, the use of characters (letters) and orthography, an introduction to the standard language and other languages, the scope of usage, and their geographical position. The toponymy guide has been developed from a local perspective, following the recommended model of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).

The standardized transcription of place names ensures their correct and consistent pronunciation for all users. Including phonetic information in maps, atlases, encyclopedias, geographic dictionaries, books, and other documents is an important step in standardizing the geographical names of places and geographic features. Using a unified method of transcribing place names across educational and research centers, related executive agencies and institutions, map designing centers, and geographical institutions is a necessity that can prevent distortions in the spelling and pronunciation of place names. Furthermore, a unified method preserves geographical names as a part of Iran's cultural heritage and geographical identity. Using this guide allows place names to be transcribed and recorded as they are pronounced in standard Persian and also in the local languages. A toponymy guide also provides a guide for the correct, systematic, and uniform writing of place names in Persian orthography.

### Contents of Toponymic Guidelines of Iran

The initial chapter delves into the foundations of phonetics and phonology. It covers a broad spectrum of topics including the nature and history of phonetics, speech organs, mechanisms of airflow, and principal features in describing consonants (voice, velum position, laterality or being central, place of articulation, and manner of articulation). It also explores the main articulatory features for describing vowels (tongue height, tongue position, and lip rounding), vowel length, diphthongs, secondary articulation, the concept of syllables, and their various types. Suprasegmental features and methods for extracting phonemes from spoken language are also discussed. To aid understanding, the chapter concludes with comprehensive tables that list the symbols used in the book for transcribing consonants and vowels, their descriptions, and examples from Persian or other common languages spoken in Iran, including their meanings.

The second chapter focuses specifically on the phonetic symbols of the Persian language. There are two tables showing the letters (characters) and symbols used for writing Persian consonants and vowels in Persian orthography, along with their corresponding phonetic symbols. The tables also provide descriptions of these symbols, with examples in Persian orthography and their transcriptions.

Chapter three provides a concise summary of the Persian orthography, as approved by the Academy of Persian Language and Literature in 2022. The general rules and characteristics of the Persian orthography are discussed in this chapter, and deliberately avoid including information that is not essential for the correct writing of geographical names.

Other languages commonly spoken in Iran are explored in chapter four. These languages are examined in alphabetical order. For each language, the following details are provided:

1. The approximate or primary geographic distribution, precise information about where the language is spoken, down to the village level.
2. The language family and language group to which it belongs.
3. An overview of the various dialects and their geographic distribution.
4. Tables detailing the consonants and vowels of the language. Each table includes the phonetic symbol, a linguistic description, examples, and their meanings.

The geographic distribution of languages was primarily determined through a rigorous analysis of linguistic research and then verified through other sources. This book focuses primarily on the phonemes of each language or the language varieties, avoiding a detailed analysis of allophones.

Only living languages spoken by a majority or a significant population in at least one county of Iran are included in this book. The determination of the languages commonly spoken in Iran was based on reliable academic sources. Three primary sources were used:

1. Typology of Iranian Languages (1402): Mohammad Dabir-Moghaddam
2. The Guidelines for Iranian Languages (1390-1393): Rüdiger Schmitt.
3. [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com).



## Languages Commonly Spoken in Iran

The languages commonly spoken in Iran can broadly be categorized into two groups: Iranian and non-Iranian languages. Iranian languages constitute a group of related languages that, along with Indo-Aryan languages, form the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. The term "Iranian" is derived from "Iran", a vast region with no clearly defined cultural boundaries, where Iranian languages were prevalent in ancient times. In this context, Iranian languages are not limited to the political borders of present-day Iran. Instead, they extend over a wide area, stretching from the Caucasus in the northwest (where Ossetic is spoken) to the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman in the southeast (Balochi-speaking regions). To the south, they reach the Musandam Peninsula of Oman in the south (where Kumzari is spoken), and from the upper Euphrates in the west (home to Kurdish speakers) to the Hindu Kush and Pamir Mountains in the east.

Iranian languages have historically evolved through three periods: Old Iranian, Middle Iranian, and New Iranian. The New Iranian languages have been in use since the 8th or 9th century AD and are spoken across a vast geographic area, predominantly found in Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. They can be divided into three major categories:

1. Western Southern Iranian languages: such as Persian, Lori and Larestani.
2. Western Northern Iranian languages: such as Kurdish, Balochi, Gilaki, Mazandarani, Tati and the languages of the central Iranian plateau.
3. Eastern Iranian languages: primarily spoken outside Iran's modern political borders, such as Ossetian (Caucasus), Pashto (Afghanistan and Pakistan), and Pamir languages (in the border regions of Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, and Tajikistan).

In addition to Iranian languages, the most significant non-Iranian languages spoken in Iran include Turkish, Turkmen, and Arabic.

## Phonetic Symbols Used

For the transcription of consonants and vowels common to both Persian and other languages spoken in Iran, the guide primarily uses the phonetic symbols from the "General Transcription Guide for Geographical Names of Iran" (2012) developed by the Iranian Committee for Standardization of Geographical Names. For other transcription symbols and phonemes that are not covered in standard Persian, the guide uses the phonetic symbols from the "Guide to Collecting Iranian Dialects" (2021) by the Academy of Persian Language and Literature. Where neither source provides sufficient symbols, we have resorted to the "Americans Phonetic Alphabet" (APA). This alphabet is more widely recognized in Iran and is often used by Iranian linguists. The "General Transcription Guide for Geographical Names of Iran" was also developed using this alphabet. Due to certain limitations of APA, additional phonetic symbols have been taken from the "International Phonetic Alphabet" (IPA). A comprehensive table at the end of the first chapter, maps all the phonetic symbols (consonants and vowels) used in the book to their corresponding IPA equivalents.

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# Jordanian National Committee for Geographical Names: Forty Years of Dedication (1984-2024)

Established 40 years ago, the work of the Jordanian National Committee for Geographical Names has been vital in unifying the geographical names used across all governorates of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. In this article, we will take you through the inception of the committee and its functions, as well as highlights from its chairmanship of the Arabic Division Committee for the United Nations Experts on Geographical Names

The Committee now consists of 13 members representing various stakeholders directly involved in geographical nomenclature.



(UNGEGN).

## Establishment

Established in 1984 by a decision of the Prime Minister, the Jordanian National Committee for Geographical Names includes representatives from ministries, universities, and the Royal Jordanian Geographical Center. Since 2000 it has also included the Ministry of Kindred Affairs (now CLP), along with other relevant ministries and organizations. In 2001, and again in 2018, the committee declared its authority regarding geographical name formation, the romanization of names as well as the approval process for newly proposed or altered names through official communiqués.

Some of its more critical tasks are:

1. Standardization of geographical names across Jordan.
2. Maintaining and publishing the Jordanian Geographical Names Index:
3. Recommending new or alternative names for geographical locations to the Prime Ministry for approval.
4. Adopting a system for writing names in Roman letters (*naqhara*) of Arabic names, in accordance with the romanization system approved by the United Nations.
5. Establishing a database of alternative and new names, highlighting significant historical figures, martyrs, and cultural icons.
6. Monitoring developments in geographical nomenclature in Arab and global contexts.

## Achievements

Since its inception, the committee has undertaken various initiatives, either independently or in collaboration with other entities. Key accomplishments include:

1. **Jordanian Geographical Names Index:** The committee supervised the creation of a comprehensive index for the Kingdom’s geographical sites, with the first version launched in 1990. It includes over 13,000 names of cities, villages, historical sites, and natural landmarks, complete with geographical coordinates. Versions are available in print and digital formats (Excel, PDF, Access) for distribution within Jordanian institutions.



Geographical names should be digitally documented using technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and interactive maps, which make them easy to access and study, as digital documentation is considered one of the criteria for identifying and evaluating geographical names as cultural heritage.

2. **Dictionary of Jordanian Regions:** Together with the Royal Jordanian Geographical Center, the committee released dictionaries for the Balqa and Jarash governorates, with more planned for other regions.
3. **Jordan Geographical Names Database (JGN):** Developed to align with UNGEGN standards, this database contains information on Jordanian cities and villages. An updated version, following a population census in 2025, will be shared with the United Nations to check areas with a population of more than 100,000 people.
4. **Interactive Maps (dashboard):** The committee has created detailed maps showing geographical names, historical information, coordinates, and land registry details. These serve as resources for researchers and stakeholders, ensuring accurate and accessible information and allowing for comparison between names and locations to verify information and events.



5. **Raising Awareness:** Training courses on geographical nomenclature have been organized for local and regional trainees, in collaboration with the Arabic Division of UNGEGN. These sessions aim to educate officials and experts on the significance of geographical names and standardization methods.
6. **Map Production:** Numerous maps have been developed for various regions and purposes, incorporating bilingual names (Arabic and romanized versions), serving as essential references for geographical information.
7. **Atlas of Jordan and the World:** A new edition of the atlas was published in both Arabic and English, covering Jordan, the Arab region, and global territories. The atlas includes romanized names based on the unified Arabic Romanization system.
8. **International Engagement:** Jordan has actively participated in international and Arab conferences on geographical names since the 1980s, contributing research and insights.
9. **Regular Meetings:** The NCGN convenes monthly to ensure continuous progress and updates on its activities.

### Conclusion

The NCGN remains dedicated to expanding cooperation and to learning from other countries' experiences to refine and develop its efforts. The committee continues to engage with global experts to stay abreast of best practices and innovations in the field of geographical names.

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# National Report of Malaysia for 2023-2024

## Introduction

This report outlines geographical naming activities in Malaysia from May 2023 to September 2024, along with upcoming plans until the end of 2024. It includes various projects, meetings, publications, and programs conducted by committees under the National Committee on Geographical Names (JKNG) of Malaysia

Established on September 11, 2002, JKNG is responsible for overseeing geographical naming activities in Malaysia. Led by the Director General of Survey and Mapping Malaysia, the committee comprises members from both federal and state agencies. Its key tasks include creating national naming guidelines, developing a geographical names database, promoting official place names, and participating in international geographical naming efforts. JKNG also focuses on formulating criteria to determine the official geographical name for national interest, ensuring alignment with government requirements, and collaborating on national geospatial infrastructure activities.

In order to ensure the active implementation of geographical naming activities in accordance with the guidelines in Malaysia, various committees have been established at both the national and state levels (refer to Figure 1).

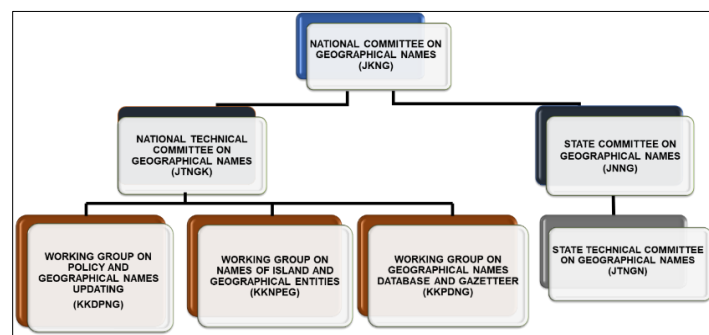


Figure 1 The organizational structure of JKNG

At the national level, the National Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGK) oversees three working groups. The Working Group on Policy and Geographical Names Updating (KKDPNG) focuses on principles, policies, and procedures of geographical name updating. The Working Group on Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer (KKPDNG) is responsible for the development and maintenance of the Geographical Names Database (PDNG). The Working Group on Names of Island and Geographical Entities (KKNPEG) identifies proposed names for islands and marine entities in Malaysia.

In each state and federal territory, the State Committee on Geographical Names (JNNG) is established to coordinate geographical naming activities, chaired by the State Secretary or Secretary General of the Ministry of Federal Territories. The JNNG members comprise representatives from local authority offices. Additionally, each JNNG has a State Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGN) to assist with geographical naming activities within the respective state or federal territory.

## Activities on National Standardization of Geographical Names

There are several initiatives and focal points aimed at consistently and dynamically strengthening the national standardization of geographical names. The activities include:

- National Committee and Working Groups Meetings:** Regular meetings are held to discuss and coordinate efforts related to geographical naming. These meetings involve the National Committee and various working groups.
- Establishment of Geographical Name Database (PDNG):** A comprehensive database of geographical names, known as the Geographical Name Database (PDNG), has been established. This database serves as a centralized repository for accurate and up-to-date geographical naming information.
- Workshops and Briefings:** Workshops and briefings are conducted to enhance awareness and understanding of geographical naming principles, policies, and practices. These sessions provide valuable knowledge and guidance to stakeholders involved in geographical naming activities.
- Portal for Geographical Names Updates:** A dedicated online portal has been developed to facilitate the timely and efficient updating of geographical names. This portal allows authorized users to submit and review name updates, ensuring accuracy and consistency in the naming process.
- Publications:** Various publications, such as guidelines, mock-up documents, reports, or strategic framework documents are produced to disseminate best practices and promote standardization in geographical naming. These publications serve as valuable resources for individuals and organizations involved in geographical naming efforts.

These activities collectively contribute to the ongoing enhancement and harmonization of geographical naming practices in line with national standards.





National and international meetings, conferences, symposiums, publicity and publications

No	Activities	Details
<b>1</b>	<b>National Committee and Working Groups Meeting</b>	
a)	4 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of KKDPNG	<b>Date:</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2024 <b>Location:</b> Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia <b>Gist:</b> Proposal to expand the development of the Geographical Names Database (PDNG) Phase III to other states in Malaysia.
b)	16 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of KKDPNG	<b>Date:</b> 21 <sup>st</sup> May 2024 <b>Location:</b> Putrajaya, Malaysia <b>Gist:</b> Presentation on the progress of the Strategic Framework Document of PDNG and National Gazetteer and Prototype Application of MyGeoName Version 2.0 to improve the PDNG updating workflow procedures.
c)	22 <sup>nd</sup> Meeting of KKNPEG	<b>Date:</b> 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2024 <b>Location:</b> Perlis, Malaysia <b>Gist:</b> Progress of the publication of the book - Book 3 - Names of Island and Geographical Entities including Undersea Features
d)	26 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of JTNGK	<b>Date:</b> 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2024 <b>Location:</b> Perlis, Malaysia <b>Gist:</b> Presentation of reports for the three working groups - KKDPNG, KKPDNG and KKNPEG.
e)	20 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of JKNG	<b>Date:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> September 2024 <b>Location:</b> Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia <b>Gist:</b> Presentation of reports from JTNGK and state level.
<b>2.</b>	<b>International Meetings</b>	
a)	International Training on Toponymy Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage	<b>Date:</b> 19 <sup>th</sup> – 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2023 <b>Location:</b> Bali, Indonesia <b>Gist:</b> Attended the workshop on toponymy and geographical names as cultural heritage.
b)	12th Divisional Meeting of the UNGEGN ASE Division	<b>Date:</b> 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2023 <b>Location:</b> Bali, Indonesia <b>Gist:</b> Reported on activities related to geographical naming in Malaysia from 2022 to 2023 and activities planned to be held until the end of 2024.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Geographical Name Database (PDNG)</b>	
a)	Phase I	<b>Completed</b> Development of PDNG and MyGeoName application which was completed in 2019.
b)	Phase II	<b>Completed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of PDNG at a scale of 1:50,000.</li> <li>• As of September 2024, a total of 76,146 geographical names have been verified and updated in the PDNG.</li> </ul>
c)	Phase III	<b>On-going</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of PDNG for urban areas at a scale of 1:5,000 and 1:10,000.</li> <li>• As of September 2024, a total of 7,453 geographical names have been verified and updated in the PDNG.</li> </ul>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Workshops and Briefings</b>	
a)	Workshop on Updating the Geographical Names Database for the Federal Territory of Putrajaya with PGN	<b>Date:</b> 15 <sup>th</sup> December 2023 <b>Location:</b> Putrajaya, Malaysia
b)	Verification of Geographic Entities	<b>Date:</b> 16 <sup>th</sup> February 2024 <b>Location:</b> Selangor, Malaysia
c)	Workshop on Review and Updating the Geographical Names Database for the State of Terengganu	<b>Date:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> – 4 <sup>th</sup> July 2024 <b>Location:</b> Terengganu, Malaysia
<b>5.</b>	<b>Publications</b>	

No	Activities	Details
a)	Publication of the Third Edition of the Guidelines for Determining Geographical Names Book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project under JKNG aims to coordinate geographical name determination activities in Malaysia</li> <li>Expected to publish in December 2024</li> </ul>
b)	Publication of the English Edition of the Guidelines for Determining Geographical Names Book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The English Edition is published to meet the needs and use of foreigners</li> <li>Expected to publish in December 2024</li> </ul>
c)	Strategic Framework Document for Geographical Names Database (PDNG) and National Gazette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This document serves as a reference and guide for the comprehensive implementation of PDNG, as well as for the development of the MyGeoname Application Enhancement</li> </ul>
d)	Book 3 - List of Islands and Geographical Entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Covers the state of Sabah and the Federal Territory of Labuan</li> <li>To be published in December 2024</li> </ul>
e)	Book 4 - List of Islands and Geographical Entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Covers the state of Sarawak</li> <li>To be published in June 2025</li> </ul>
f)	State Gazetteer Mock-up Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starting in 2017 until 2024, 14 documents representing fourteen 14 states and federal territories have been published, with only two states remaining</li> </ul>



*20th National Committee on Geographical Names (JKNG) Meeting*



*26th National Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGK)*





*22<sup>nd</sup> Working Group on Names of Island and Geographical Entities (KKNPEG)*



*4<sup>th</sup> Working Group on Policy and Geographical Names Updating (KKDPNG) Meeting*

## Future / Planned Activities

### Meeting

- a. 21<sup>st</sup> National Committee on Geographical Names of Malaysia (JKNG);
- b. 27<sup>th</sup> National Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGK);
- c. 5<sup>th</sup> Working Group on Policy and Geographical Names Updating (KKDPNG);
- d. 17<sup>th</sup> Working Group on National Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer (KKPDNG);
- e. 23<sup>rd</sup> Working Group on Island Names and Geographical Entities (KKNPEG);
- f. State Committee on Geographical Names (JNNG);
- g. State Technical Committee on Geographical Names (JTNGN);
- h. 13<sup>th</sup> Divisional Meeting of United Nations Committee of Experts on Geographical Names - Asia South-East (UNEGN-ASE); and
- i. 2025 Session of United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNEGN)

### Geographical Names Database (PDNG)

- a. Phase III - The database will be continuously and consistently updated until the selected areas are completed.
- b. Expansion of PDNG Phase III to five selected areas in Malaysia namely Bandar Yong Peng, Johor; Bandar Nibong Tebal, Pulau Pinang; Bandar Serian, Sarawak; Pekan Membakut, Sabah; and Bandar Beaufort, Sabah.

### Publications

- a. Book: List of Islands and Geographical Entities (Sarawak) - The book is anticipated to be released in June 2025.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the National Report of Malaysia for 2023-2024 highlights significant efforts and achievements in geographical naming activities. Through JKNG and its various committees, Malaysia has shown its commitment to standardizing geographical names and promoting best practices.

The report details ongoing activities aimed at national standardization, including regular committee meetings, the establishment of the Geographical Names Database (PDNG), workshops, briefings, and the development of an online portal for name updates. These efforts enhance and harmonize geographical naming practices, supporting safety, sustainable development, economic opportunities, and national sovereignty.

Regular meetings at federal and state levels facilitate discussions and problem-solving. The publication of the Guidelines for Determining Geographical Names, the Strategic Framework Document for the PDNG, and the List of Islands and Geographical Entities supports name standardization, benefiting both economic and social aspects.

Looking ahead, Malaysia plans to hold future meetings for various committees, complete the PDNG for selected urban areas, and expand to five other states, along with participating in international conferences. These initiatives will further strengthen standardization efforts and contribute to the development of accurate, universally recognized geographical names.

Overall, Malaysia's commitment to geographical naming activities demonstrates its dedication to promoting standardization, accuracy, and effectiveness in geographical names, leading to significant economic, social, and developmental benefits for the country.

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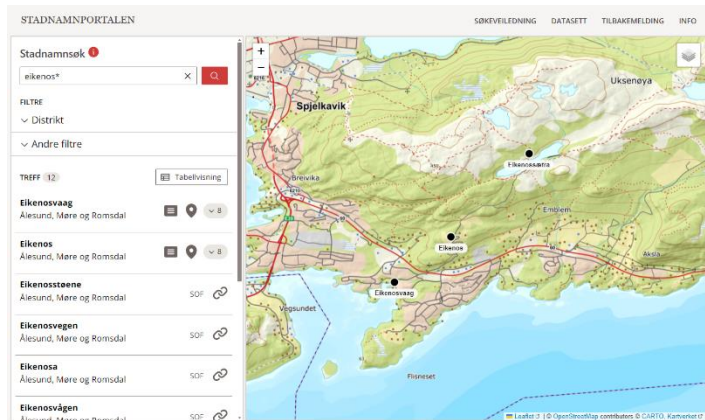
## The Geographical Names Portal *Stadnamnportalen* (Norway)

### Millions of Names in Time and Space

The geographical names portal, [Stadnamnportalen](#), is an exciting new Norwegian initiative, offering one of the largest online databases of geographical names in Norway. With a staggering 1 million entries and 3.8 million source forms, the Portal is a treasure trove for researchers, geographical names administrators, and the public, interested in the language and cultural history of Norway.

### A New Approach to Geographical Names

Norway has a long history of digitizing place name resources, with early initiatives resulting in a diverse range of datasets and portals. However, these early efforts created fragmented data that was often incomplete, with some lacking essential features like geographical coordinates and even standardized administrative codes. To remedy this, the Norwegian Language Collections created the *Stadnamnportalen*.

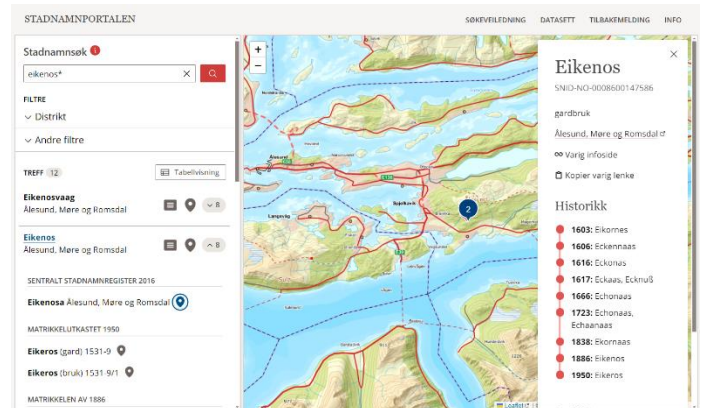


*Search result from the general search on the truncated text 'eikenos\*'. The search result is shown in the left column and hits on the map are shown in the map view to the right. © Norwegian Language Collections*

The goal was ambitious: to gather all available historical as well as modern geographical names datasets, standardize them, and link them across time and space. This would provide a holistic view of Norway's place names, including their historical spellings and geographical locations. In 2018, work began on, augmenting and organizing these datasets, and by 2024, we were able to launch the geographical names portal.

The *Stadnamnportalen* has been designed with flexibility in mind, catering to both casual users and professional researchers. It allows users to search across the entire database or narrow their focus to specific datasets, regions, or historical periods. Filters for counties and municipalities make it easy to find local information, and various viewing options—list view, hierarchical view, and table view—provide different ways to engage with the data.

For example, a search for the place name "Eikenosa" in Ålesund yields 9 results, including historical spellings and geographic information. The user can explore these entries in detail, viewing maps, historical spellings, and even scanned documents relating to the name. The Portal offers a wealth of information on the pronunciation, origins, and usage of place names, making it an invaluable tool for those interested in Norway's linguistic heritage.



*Information about the entry form 'Eikenos' can be activated by clicking on the entry form. And if there are multiple source entry datasets, you can see them by clicking on the dropdown menu to the right on the entry line. © Norwegian Language Collections.*

### A Living Resource with a Dynamic Future

One of the Portal's key strengths is its ability to provide multiple views of the same data. Many datasets are digitized versions of historical records, such as the 1838 cadastre, where geographical names are linked to specific properties. Users can explore these records through a hierarchical register, starting from broader categories like counties and parishes and drilling down to individual farms and holdings. This hierarchical approach is particularly useful for navigating older documents, where spellings and administrative boundaries may have changed over time.

The geographical names Portal is far from a static resource. New datasets are being added continuously, with future updates expected to include volunteer and crowdsourced collections, census data, and postal address information. This ongoing expansion will make the Portal even more relevant for administrative purposes, providing insights into the everyday usage of geographical names in Norwegian society.

STADNAMNPORTALEN

SØKEVEILEDNING DATASETT TILBAKEMELDING INFO

**Eikenos**  
Ålesund, Møre og Romsdal

SENTRALT STADNAMNREGISTER 2016

**Eikensa** Ålesund, Møre og Romsdal

MATRIKKELUTKASTET 1950

**Eikeros** (gard) 1531-9

**Eikeros** (bruk) 1531-9/1

MATRIKKELEN AV 1886

**Eikenos** (gard) 1531-9

**Eikenos** (bruk) 1531-9/1

MATRIKKELEN 1838

**Ekornaas** (gard) 1531-10

**Ekornaas** (bruk) 1531-10.27

BUSTADNAVREGISTERET

**Eikenos** 1531-9

MØRE OG ROMSDAL

Eikenos 9. 108440 Borgund

Eikenos på - nps'no

Ligg nokså høgt oppe i fjelleida (Emlemsfjellet).  
Her er ei typisk nos, framspringande fjellhause.

Kristianplassen, hpl.

side 1/1 Skjul metadata A. Muri 1961

**Seddel: 108440 Eikenos**

Stempel	Oppslagsord	Herred	Fylke	Gårdsnummer
108440	Eikenos	Borgund	Møre og Romsdal	9

Skannede sedler  
<a href=?manifest=https://iif.test.uib.no/iif/manifest/6d28dc2c-1126-349b-9417-2edf51425310.json?00145166</a>

Example of an image view of a scanned card from the Residence Name Register. The card's metadata is shown below the image and at the bottom shows the name locality's placement. ©Norwegian Language Collections.

Shortly, it will be possible to download data from the portal and access it through an API-connection. We also plan to offer multilingual support, including English, Norwegian Bokmål and Nynorsk, and eventually in Kven, and Sami languages.

## Get Started with the Geographical Names Portal

Although the portal is still evolving, it is already a powerful tool for anyone interested in Norway's place names. Whether you're a researcher, an administrator, or just curious about the geographical names of Norway, the Norwegian Language Collections team? invites you to explore the rich tapestry of names that define Norway's geography. Give it a try here:

<https://stadnamnportalen.uib.no/>

### Peder Gammeltoft

Expert of Norway

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## Artificial Intelligence in Evidence-Based Standardization of Historical Geographical Names: A Norwegian Case Study

An evidence-based approach to geographical names standardization is the process of creating standardized, official versions of geographical names based on a systematic evaluation of historical, linguistic, and geographic evidence. This is done with the aim to preserve cultural and linguistic heritage while promoting clarity, consistency, and usability in maps, legal documents, databases, and public records. In this method, geographical names are evaluated using historical records, local and indigenous languages, and dialectal variations to ensure that the chosen name accurately reflects the region's historical and cultural identity. It is commonly employed by geographical names authorities to provide a standardized framework that respects local heritage while meeting the practical needs of navigation, administration, and information management.

### Current Challenges in Historical Documentation

The standardization of geographical names based on historical evidence faces considerable obstacles. Historical records often remain fragmented and incompletely digitized, with many sources damaged by time or circumstance. Digital access presents additional complications, particularly in less-resourced regions where digitization isn't prioritized. Even when records are available digitally, poor quality and inadequate metadata often impede effective research and standardization efforts.

The technical challenges of processing historical documents are equally significant. Optical character recognition (OCR) systems struggle with historical typefaces and degraded documents. Non-standardized spellings and archaic symbols further complicate automated processing, often necessitating extensive manual intervention and correction.

### AI Solutions for Historical Name Processing

Recent developments in artificial intelligence offer promising solutions to these challenges. Two key technologies have shown potential: Named Entity Recognition (NER) and spelling alignment technologies. NER systems can identify and classify geographical names within historical texts, even when dealing with inconsistent or antiquated spellings. Spelling alignment technologies bridge the gap between historical and modern forms through machine learning and sequence alignment techniques.

A practical implementation of these technologies was tested using the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* (DN), a digital compendium of medieval Norwegian texts. The process involved two main phases: proper noun markup with metadata extraction, and alignment with modern forms.

### Implementation Process and Results

The initial phase focused on identifying proper nouns through multiple indicators, including capitalization patterns and contextual clues. The system successfully processed complex medieval name structures such as "Porælfuo garðe" and "Allra hæilagra kirkiu," maintaining original spellings and special characters. Each identified entity received multiple layers of metadata, including hierarchical classifications for places and demographic information for persons.

The second phase aligned this data with modernized forms from the *Regesta Norvegica* (RN). This process utilized document identifiers and contextual matching to connect medieval and modern name forms. Where direct matches were unavailable, the AI system generated suggested modern forms based on learned patterns. The system successfully identified various forms of the same name (e.g., Judarðe/Vddarðr/Vddarðar as Uddard) and provided context for historical figures and places, see figure 1.

### Technical Implementation

The implementation employed Anthropic's Claude AI model (version 3.5 Sonnet), selected after comparative testing of various language models. The system processes multiple languages simultaneously, distinguishing between Old Norse, Middle Low German, and Latin entries. This capability is crucial when working with medieval texts where several languages often appear in the same document.

The resulting database maintains reference numbers throughout the process, enabling seamless integration with existing research tools. The system has significantly reduced processing time compared to traditional methods while maintaining high accuracy standards.



DN ID	Proper Noun	Type	RN ID	RN Register	Suggested modern name
DN 1:6	Honorius	person	2041	Honorius III, pave	-
DN 1:6	S[culoni]	person	6269	Skule Bårdsson, jarl/hertug	-
DN 1:6	Norwegie	place	-	-	Norge
DN 1:6	Romanam	place	-	-	Roma
DN 1:6	Petri	person	6423	St Peter	-
DN 1:6	Laterani	place	3155	Lateranet	-
DN 1:7	N[ikulas]	person	4668	Nikolas Arneson, biskop av Oslo	-
DN 1:7	Oslo	place	4945	Oslo	-
DN 1:7	Judarðe	person	-	-	Uddard [= Odardus]
DN 1:7	Vælli	place	7085	Voll [Grue 22]	-
DN 1:7	Gravar	place	1437	Grue [sogn]	-
DN 1:7	Skæphæimum	place	-	-	Skipping
DN 1:7	Jolund	place	2825	Jeløya	-
DN 1:7	Vddarðr	person	6915	Uddard [= Odardus]	-
DN 1:7	Mariu	person	3577	Maria, jomfru	-
DN 1:7	Eðmundi	person	6403	St Edmund	-
DN 1:7	Howðœy	place	2110	Hovedøya kloster	-
DN 1:7	Vddarðar	person	6915	Uddard [= Odardus]	-
DN 1:7	Gregores	person	-	-	Gregor, geistlig
DN 1:7	J.	person	2812	J. geslengr, geistlig	-
DN 1:7	Geslengr	person	2812	J. geslengr, geistlig	-
DN 1:7	Jon	person	2926	Jon bataðr	-
DN 1:7	Jon	person	2948	Jon naso, mester	-
DN 1:7	Bataðr	person	2926	Jon bataðr	-
DN 1:7	Guðleikr	person	1449	Gudleik, prest	-
DN 1:7	Jon	person	2955	Jon, skolemester	-
DN 1:7	Hughleikr	person	-	-	Hugleik, person
DN 1:7	Asbjorn	person	241	Asbjørn kopr	-
DN 1:7	Hallkæl	person	1550	Hallkjell merr	-
DN 1:7	Olafr	person	4801	Olav gjaldker	-

Figure 1. A tabular overview of AI assisted data generation. Orange and green coloured columns represent the two datasets *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* (orange) and *Regesta Norvegica* (green) respectively. The blue column is identical in both datasets and enables data-joining. The purple column represents final stage name suggestions based on the preceding merging of datasets.

## Limitations and Considerations

While AI offers significant advantages in processing historical documentation, it should not be used uncritically. The technology can produce hallucinations – results that appear plausible but are incorrect – depending on the model used and the quality of training data. Additionally, consistency remains a challenge, as identical inputs may sometimes produce varying outputs.

These limitations necessitate continuous human supervision and verification of results. The role of AI should be viewed as a productivity-enhancing tool rather than a replacement for expert analysis. Regular output checking and prompt optimization remain essential parts of the process.

## Future Implications

The successful implementation of AI in processing historical geographical names documentation suggests several promising directions for future development. Priority should be given to:

1. Expanding digitization efforts with attention to quality and accessibility
2. Developing standardized metadata practices
3. Creating open-access digital archives with consistent cataloging standards

4. Establishing protocols for AI-assisted processing of historical documents

## Conclusion

Artificial intelligence presents a powerful tool for addressing long-standing challenges in evidence-based geographical names standardization. While the technology requires careful supervision and verification, its ability to process large volumes of historical documentation efficiently marks a significant advance in the field. The Norwegian case study demonstrates that AI can successfully bridge the gap between historical and modern name forms while preserving cultural and linguistic authenticity. This approach could serve as a model for similar projects in other regions, particularly where historical documentation presents comparable challenges.

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## FROM THE DIVISIONS

### *Baltic Division*

#### 23rd Meeting of the Baltic Division of UNGEGN

The 23rd Meeting of the Baltic Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was organized by the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language, and the National Land Service under the Ministry of Environment. It took place on 2 to 3 October 2024 in Vilnius, Lithuania, at the headquarters of the Ministry of Environment. The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with approximately 60 participants from four member states of the division (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland) and Ukraine (an observer) – half attending in person and half online, with a large group of Lithuanian local government representatives participating online.



The meeting was opened by Saulius Urbanas (Lithuania), the Vice-Chair of the Baltic Division, and Daiva Matusevičė, Deputy Minister of Environment, who emphasized the importance of geographical names as elements of the spatial information infrastructure.

Fourteen papers were presented during the meeting. Maciej Zych (Poland), Chair of the Baltic Division, presented an overview of the division's and UNGEGN's activities since the 22nd meeting of the division, which took place on 15–17 March 2023 in Warsaw. He provided updates on the 22nd meeting of the Baltic Division, the 2023 UNGEGN Session, the 26th meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms and the UNGEGN Bureau and Linguistic/Geographical Division Chairs meetings. Additionally, he shared information on the upcoming 2025 UNGEGN Session.

Reports on the standardization of geographical names in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Ukraine were presented next. These reports covered various topics, including the legal basis for geographical names, the principles of standardization for both domestic and foreign geographical names (exonyms), recent name changes and the development, content and accessibility of geographical names databases. The reports also featured the use of geographical names in state registers, recent publications on geographical names, and activities aimed at promoting these names, as well as planned work related to their standardization.

Subsequent presentations discussed in more detail, individual topics related to geographical names and their standardization. This included information about the standardization of geographical names in Lithuania for 2023-24. Geographical names must be written in the standard form of the Lithuanian language, with the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language responsible for establishing these standards. As a consultative body in the field of geographical names, the Commission addressed approximately 100 inquiries regarding toponyms in 2023 and about 60 inquiries by September 2024.

Minority geographical names in Estonia was another topic discussed that featured the historical changes in the ethnic composition of Estonian lands. The presentation highlighted the languages that influenced local names over the centuries and examined the regulations concerning minorities introduced after World War I, when Estonia gained independence, and again post-1991, when Estonia regained independence.

The Latvian State Address Register and changes in street names were also discussed. Managed by the State Land Service, the Register includes information on registered objects such as administrative units, localities, streets and their spatial locations, buildings, plots and their spatial locations, historical addresses postal codes among others. As of September 2024, the Register contained 543,986 buildings, farmsteads and land units intended for building (including 223,240 building names), 18,565 streets, and 6,349 localities (cities, towns, villages, small villages) and 547 territorial division units (counties, parishes). All of this



information is available through the portal of the State Land Service of the Republic of Latvia (kadastrs.lv).

The meeting also addressed Livonian geographical names. The Livonian language was formerly used in a large part of today's Latvia, but it was gradually replaced by Latvian. At the beginning of the 20th century, Livonian was used only on the coast of the Courland Peninsula (the so-called Livonian Coast) and in Soviet times the language almost became extinct. Today, it holds the status of an indigenous language (not a minority language) allowing for Livonian geographical names to be used alongside Latvian ones in its traditional region. A significant research project from 2020-2023 documented and mapped Livonian local names, resulting in the creation of a database of Livonian geographical names (livonian.tech). Since 2023, bilingual road signs have been installed on the Livonian Coast, and in 2024, the Livonian Language Commission was established within the State Language Center.

The Place Names Database of Latvia (vietvardi.lgia.gov.lv) was discussed in detail. The public version of this database provides access to 140,000 names for 111,000 geographical features, offering details such as object identifiers, primary names, names as recorded in the address register, object types and status, number of inhabitants, administrative affiliation, geographic coordinates, data sources, earlier population data, and other information. The functionalities of the public version of the geographical names database and the methods of using it were presented separately.

Another key topic discussed was the standardization of local names in Lithuania originating from minority languages. Studies indicate that many geographical names used by minorities are of Lithuanian origin. During the standardization process lexical and morphological criteria are applied to determine name origins. Geographical names with non-Lithuanian suffixes are not modified or Lithuanianized during standardization, while geographical names of Lithuanian origin are adapted to standard forms of the Lithuanian language.

Expectations and the perspectives from cartographers and scientists regarding the creation and management of geographical name databases were also discussed. It was

noted that these databases should not only provide object locations but also the extent of named objects. Historical geographical names should also be included, as well as objects that no longer exist. Various challenges may arise associated with geographical names databases including limited availability, high access fees, insufficient updates, lack of interoperability, inaccuracies, data duplication, incompleteness, and poor quality. It was suggested that institutions that maintain these databases should solicit feedback from users.

During the meeting, a discussion session focused on various topics related to geographical names management. Key points addressed included legal regulations concerning geographical names standardization and geographical name databases management in different countries, examining which solutions were most beneficial and which would need improvement due to inefficiencies. Discussions included strategies for enhancing the efficiency of updating lists and databases of geographical names and expanding the availability of standardized geographical names. Practical cases of using geographical names within national spatial data infrastructures were also reviewed. Additionally, participants considered how geographical name data and e-services could be adapted to machine-readable formats and AI-friendly technologies. The group also discussed whether geographical names databases should include name variants, historical forms, and versions of names without diacritics.

In summary, participants agreed that the meeting facilitated the sharing of experiences and best practices among countries regarding guidelines, specifications, methodologies, and practices. It was decided that the meeting presentations would be made available on the divisional website (<https://arhiiv.eki.ee/knn/ungegn/>) for all interested parties.

**Maciej Zych (Poland)**

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## East Central and South-East Europe Division

With 19 member states, the East Central and South-East Europe Division (ECSEED or ECSEE Division) is one of the largest divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNEGGN).

The previous meeting of the division, held under the Czech presidency, took place in May 2023 in New York. The delegates met in Prague on 16 May 2024 for their 28<sup>th</sup> joint meeting in the building of the Surveying and Cadastral Offices in Kobylišy, Prague. The meeting was also held virtually. Some delegates had already spent two days in Prague attending the two-day meeting of the Working Group for Exonyms (WGE UNEGGN). Recordings of both meetings were made available for download to participants for their use.

Since the end of 2021, Czechia has held the presidency of the ECSEE Division, following Slovakia. In accordance with Czech law, the standardization of geographical names is carried out by the Land Surveying and Cadastre Department (Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping and Cadastre - ČÚZK, including the Land Survey Office and regional cadastral offices and workplaces). The Prague meeting was prepared and organized by the Secretariat of the Czech Commission on Geographical Names (CCGN), which played a large part in facilitating the pleasant environment and the successful course of the event.

The meeting was opened with remarks from the Director of the Land Survey Office, Karel Brázdil. Guests of honor, Pierre Jaillard and Kohei Watanabe delivered introductory speeches.

The first part of the meeting featured national reports from Czechia, Croatia, Slovakia, Poland, and Slovenia, with a written report submitted by Ukraine. Delegates were provided with information from the 3rd session of UNEGGN, virtual meetings within UNEGGN, and reminded of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029.

National reports often provide inspiration for activities related to standardization, storage, and accessibility of toponyms. Participants agreed that easy accessibility of geographical names and user-friendly interfaces were important and that it was appropriate to provide geographical names free of charge for browsing and possibly downloading. Names in minority languages and exonyms were often mentioned in national reports.

The expert contributions were very diverse, they included:

1. “Macau – history and changes of the name(s)” prepared by Vladimír Liščák (Czechia)



*Delegates of member states of ECSEED UNEGGN and guests (from left: Irena Švehlová, Kohei Watanabe, Matjaž Geršič, Maciej Zych, Helena Pavletič, Gábor Mikesy, Zuzana Michalková, Davor Kršulović, Mária Kubicová, Andrea Bölskei, Eva Miklušová, Vladimír Liščák, Michal Zídek, Ivana Crljenko, Peter Jordan, Alexandros Stavropoulos, David Michalec, Klára Steinerová, Tomislav Ciceli and Bogusław Zagórski)*

2. “Czechs in Hungary” prepared by Andrea Bölskei and Gábor Mikesy (Hungary)
3. “Highly accurate and detailed digital terrain model and its use in the field of geographical names” prepared by Eva Miklušová (Slovakia)
4. “Online Atlas of Field Names” prepared by Matjaž Geršič and others (Slovenia)
5. “Storage and data management of geographical names in Slovenia” prepared by Marija Brnot and presented by Matjaž Geršič (Slovenia)
6. “The difficult approach towards a decision/resolution on exonyms as parts of the cultural heritage” prepared by a guest of the meeting, expert Peter Jordan (Austria)
7. “Collecting, storing, and publishing of Croatian exonyms” prepared by Ivana Crljenko (Croatia)

A general discussion followed the presentations. A joint dinner was arranged for the delegates of the Division and WGE experts before the Division meeting. On Saturday a professionally guided field trip was organized that explored Prague’s historical role as a multinational and multilingual city.

Hungary is expected to take over the ECSEED presidency beginning in January 2025. National reports and presentations are available on the UNEGGN divisional website:

<https://ecseed.zrc-sazu.si/Sessions>

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## Romano-Hellenic Division

The Romano-Hellenic Division (RHD) of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNEGGN), held its fourth International Scientific Symposium focused on “Toponyms as a means of expressing identification, location, possession, belonging, division, and respect for peoples’ cultures” in Roma [Rome], Italia, at the headquarters of the Italian Geographical Society (IGS), from 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2024. The symposium was organized in close cooperation with the Italian Geographical Society and the Italian Geographic Military Institute (IGMI), with the auspices of the Italian Associations of Geography and Cartography.



The RHD welcomed 70 requests for participation from 10 countries and hosted 34 oral presentations by experts from UNGEGN, academics, and scholars in geography, history, linguistics, and cartography.

Scientific contributions were preceded by greetings from the President of IGS, Prof. Claudio Cerreti, the Commander of IGMI, Major General Luigi Postiglione, the Chair of UNGEGN, Mr. Pierre Jaillard (France), the Honorary Chair of UNGEGN, Ms. Helen Kerfoot (Canada) via web, and Prof. Carla Masetti on behalf of the Italian Geographical Societies and Associations (SOGEI).

RHD’s Chair Andrea Cantile (Italia) introduced the symposium with a presentation focused on “Identification, location, possession, belonging, division, and respect for peoples’ cultures: many aspects to consider for a toponymic ethics”.

### Session Highlights:

**The first session** was chaired by Elena Dai Prà (Chair of the International Geographical Union Commission on Toponymy, jointly with the International Cartographic Association - University of Trento - Italy). During this session the following presentations were made:

1. Pierre Jaillard (Chair of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names - France), *Exchanges of geographical names among lexical borrowings*;
2. Helen Kerfoot (Honorary Chair of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names - Canada), *Some thoughts on geographical names as source of conflicts*;

3. Simonetta Conti and Domenico Proietti (University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli” - Italia), ‘With feet on the ground’: toponymy as an object and research tool between geography and linguistics;
4. Cosimo Palagiano (Emeritus Sapienza - University of Roma and Academy of Lincei - Italia), The renewed attention to Toponymy by Italian scholars;
5. Giuseppe Muti (University of Insubria - Italia), In the name of peace. Toponymy, conflict, peace making and peace building processes.

**The second session** was chaired by Catherine Cheetham (Permanent Committee on Geographical Names - United Kingdom). During this session the following presentations were made:

1. Andrea Cantile, Gabriele Ciacci, and Claudio Rocchini (Commission for Italian Official Toponymy, Italian Geographic Military Institute - Italia), The first version of the new Italian National Toponymic Database (INTDB 1.0);
2. Paolo Benetton and Gianpiero Zaffi Borgetti (Revenue Agency, Institute for Finance and Local Economy and National Association of Italian Municipalities - Italia), House numbers and street names’ national registry (ANNCSU);
3. Camilla Giantomasso (Sapienza - University of Roma), and Bruno Di Stefano (University of Roma Tre - Italia), The politics of naming between aesthetics of power and identity construction: the case-study of the Quartiere Africano of Rome;
4. Anna Rosa Candura, Luca Fois and Emanuele Poli (Universities of Pavia, Modena and Reggio - Italia), For a toponymy of Somaliland: cartographic premises;
5. Girolamo Lombardo (Former Director of Landscape Units of Sicilian Region - Italia), The toponymy of the ancient Sicilian road system;
6. Cosimo Palagiano (Emeritus Sapienza - University of Roma and Academy of Lincei - Italia), Central Places and their Changes in the History of Cartography;
7. Domenico Proietti (University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli” - Italia), “Di qua dal Faro”: toponymic and onomastic reflections of the organization of the territory in the Norman and Swabian ages in Southern Italy;
8. Arturo Gallia and Mirko Castaldi (University of Roma Tre - Italia), Adriano Balbi and the Naming of the World. The relationship between geography and cartography in the construction of a scientific geographical lexicon (first half of the 19th century);
9. Tika Dwi Saputri, Harry Ferdiansyah, and Yohanes Seffan Handana (Geospatial Information Agency - Indonesia), The Evolution of the Mountain Names in the West Java Province Based on Cartographic Sources;
10. Mandana Kolahdouz Mohammadi (Payam-e Noor University, Teheran - Iran), Navigating Corpus-Driven Approach Toward Decoding Village and Town Names of East and West Azerbaijan.



**The third session** was chaired by Andreas Hadjiraftis (President of the Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names of Cyprus - Kipros). During this session the following presentations were made:

1. Stefano Piastra (University of Bologna - Italia), *Cloning a placename: the toponym 'Shanghai' in Italy*;
2. Annamaria Bartolini and Giovanni De Santis (University of Perugia - Italia), *From Italy to America: the Franciscan legacy in toponymy*;
3. Brahim Atoui (Former Vice-Chair of UNGEGN - Al Jazā'ir), *Toponym as title deed in Algerian pre-colonial societies*;
4. Junio Valerio Tirone (University of Trento - Italia) and Ileana Schiavelli (Aeronautical Geo-topographic Information Center - Italia), *Regulatory processes and systematization of toponymy in Italian territories of Africa in the 1930s*;
5. Serena Lo Monaco and Emanuela Zammarchi (Graduating students at University of Firenze - Italia), *The White gold of Prato and the hydronyms of the "gore" (ancient artificial canal system)*;
6. Catherine Cheetham (Permanent Committee on Geographical Names - United Kingdom), *Toponymy in the United Kingdom*;
7. Rebekka Dossche and Carla Pampaloni (University of Genova - Italia), *Enclaves without borders: the toponomastic case of Carrega Ligure (Piedmont, Italy)*;
8. Annalisa D'Ascenzo (University of Roma Tre - Italia), *Toponymy: traveling and naming from the Earth to the Cosmos*;
9. Gianluca Casagrande (European University of Roma - Italia), *"Naming the first steps": geographical remarks about outposts and the act of exploration at the extreme boundaries of human reach*.

**The fourth session** was chaired by Domenico Proietti (University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" - Italia). During this session the following presentations were made:

1. Guido Lucarno (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milano - Italia), *Complexity of toponymy in the Aosta Valley, between officiality and recovery of vernacular terms*;
2. Ettore Sarzotti, Dino Buffoni, Nicola Gabellieri and Federico Gestri (University of Trento - Italia), *From place names to environmental resources: analysis of the nineteenth-century toponyms of Alpine woodlands through the use of geohistorical sources and historical GIS*;
3. Elena Dai Prà and Sebastiano Rossi (University of Trento - Italia), *Conquering the names: the use of toponymy as a symbol of territorial control in a multiethnic region. The case of Eastern Trentino during the Great War*;
4. Andrea Masturzo (Independent researcher PHD in Geography at University of Bergamo - Italia), *Cartography and toponymy*

5. Peter Jordan (Austrian Academy of Sciences - University of the Free State [South Africa] - Austria), *Multicultural identity building supported by place names. The example of the Val Canale in the Northeast of Italy*;
6. Gerardo Tolentino, Goran Floridan, and Laura Sgubin (Friuli-Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region - Italia), *The importance of preserving the toponymic heritage of historical linguistic minorities in Friuli Venezia-Giulia*;
7. Matjaž Geršič (Co-Chair of Joint IGU/ICA Commission on Toponymy, Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Anton Melik Geographical Institute - Slovenia), *Italian geographical names in Slovenia - from roots to standardization*;
8. Valentina Campesi (Graduating student at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart Milano - Italia), *Toponymy policies in alloglot towns of Calabria: Case studies of Guardia Piemontese, San Demetrio Corone, Bova, and Bova Marina*;
9. Silvia Siniscalchi, Pierluigi De Felice, and Emiro Hernan Rodriguez Vargas (University of Salerno - Italia), *Toponymy as a Source for the Recovery and Enhancement of Territorial Identity: The Case of Aragonese Toponyms in the Province of Salerno*.

### Side events:

The first side event was a cartographic exhibition focused on "Maps and Toponyms from our World to other Worlds", curated by Gianluca Casagrande (European University of Roma), Annalisa D'Ascenzo (University of Roma Tre), and Alessandro Frigeri (Italian National Institute for Astrophysics in Rome).

The second was a guided visit to the *Forma Urbis Romae Museum* in Rome, which houses the ancient map of Rome engraved on marble between 203 and 211 AD, at a scale of approximately 1:240, with the original Roman toponyms.

As usual, the proceedings of the symposium will be published by IGMI and are expected to be available next year.

### Andrea Cantile (Italia)

Chair of the Romano-Hellenic Division

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## FROM THE WORKING GROUPS

### *Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy*

The newly founded Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy (WGFTC) has been in existence since the 2023 United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNEGN) Session. Its main objectives are to secure funding for UNGEGN activities, such as bringing select experts from developing countries to UNGEGN Sessions, as well as organizing training courses in toponymy.



*Illustration: Engaged participants at the training course fieldtrip, at the 11<sup>th</sup>-century Goa Gajah Cave. Picture, Peder Gammeltoft*

#### Training Activities

Post-Covid, there has been one training course organized with the WGFTC from 19-23 June 2023. UNGEGN, in partnership with Indonesia's Geospatial Information Agency (BIG), conducted an international training course on toponymy in Bali, Indonesia. The course, themed *Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage*, brought together 78 participants from seven countries, including Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Over five days, the training covered key topics such as the standardization of geographical names, data collection methods, and managing toponyms as cultural heritage. It included 32 hours of lectures, group discussions, and 12 hours of fieldwork at cultural heritage sites like Pura Tirta Empul. The training fulfilled a goal of the UNGEGN Asia South-East Division Work Plan (2019-2022), postponed due to Covid-19. The event concluded with an assessment, and participants received e-certificates.

The trainers were Peder Gammeltoft (Norway), Cecille Blake (USA), Ade Komara Mulyana (Indonesia), Tjeerd Tichelaar (Netherlands), Ni Komang Aniek Purniti (Indonesia), Harry Ferdiansyah (Indonesia), and Jasper Hogerwerf (Netherlands).

For 2025, a Training Course in Toponymy is being planned to take place somewhere in Africa. The course is still in its early planning stages with talks regarding the venue and timing ongoing. It is envisaged that the course will run Monday to Friday, including on-site training as well as fieldwork. More information on this will be posted in the next Bulletin or at the 2025 UNGEGN Session.

To better understand the training needs of toponymic experts, the Working Group is conducting a survey to aid in the planning of future UNGEGN training courses and webinars. The survey will gather feedback from UNGEGN experts and participants to identify key topics, skill gaps, and preferred training formats. It will also help assess demand for both in-person and virtual training, while identifying potential funding sources and partnerships. The data gathered will enable the Working Group to design relevant, targeted training programs, ensuring effective capacity-building and supporting the global standardization of geographical names in line with UNGEGN's objectives. You can [access the survey](#) here, or through the separate survey notice elsewhere in this Bulletin.

#### Funding Efforts

The Working Group is actively identifying funding opportunities to support the participation of experts from developing countries in the 2025 UNGEGN Session. This work is ongoing.

#### Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy will take place during the 2025 UNGEGN Session, from 28 April to 2 May 2025, in New York. Updates on the meeting venue and time will be issued in due course as planning for the session progresses.

#### **Peder Gammeltoft**

*Convenor, Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy*

*Email: [Peder.Gammeltoft@uib.no](mailto:Peder.Gammeltoft@uib.no)*



## Survey of Need for Training Courses and Webinars in Toponymy

We are conducting a survey for the Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy that is essential to effectively plan and deliver future training courses and webinars for the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). The survey will gather input from Member States, their experts, and participants to identify priority topics, skill gaps, and preferred formats for capacity-building initiatives.



The survey will help assess the demand for both in-person and virtual training, ensuring that future courses address the diverse needs of participants across UNGEGN Divisions and geographical regions. Additionally, the survey will provide insights into potential funding sources and collaborations, allowing the Working Group to better allocate resources and secure financial support. By understanding the needs and preferences of the global toponymy community, the Working Group can tailor its training offerings to maximize engagement, knowledge transfer, and the standardization of geographical names, ultimately supporting UNGEGN's mission more effectively.

**To access the Survey, please click here:**

[Training Courses in Toponymy Survey \(https://skjemaker.app.uib.no/view.php?id=17864849\)](https://skjemaker.app.uib.no/view.php?id=17864849).

The Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy is eagerly awaiting your responses and will take your suggestions into consideration.

**Peder Gammeltoft**

*Convenor*

*Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy*

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# Working Group on Romanization

## PLEASE SUPPORT THE WORK OF WORKING GROUP ON ROMANIZATION SYSTEMS

The Working Group on Romanization Systems is conducting a survey on Romanization systems used at the national level - whether these are UN-approved systems, national systems, other alternatives, or a combination of these! If you or others in your country could assist by providing this information, please contact [geoinfo\\_unsd@un.org](mailto:geoinfo_unsd@un.org)

We look forward to hearing from you!

Thanks.

**Catherine Cheetham**

*Head, Permanent Committee on Geographical Names  
United Kingdom  
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Ψαθιά, τὸ	Psathia
Ψαθουριές, αἱ	Psathouries
Ψαθουριές, αἱ	Psathouries
Ψαλίδες, οἱ	Psalides
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## SPECIAL PROJECTS AND NEWS ITEM

### *An Update on the UNGE GN and UN-GGIM Collaborative Project: “Shared Good Practices between National Mapping Agencies and National Names Authorities”*

In many countries, National Mapping Agencies (NMAs) and National Names Authorities (NNAs) operate separately, often leading to duplication of efforts, inconsistent data, and inefficient use of resources. Even when housed within the same organization, these entities may have limited interaction. A lack of awareness about the significance of geographical names, budget constraints, and insufficient prioritization of standardization further hinders progress and productive arrangements.

In response, the Collaborative Project aims to strengthen ties between the two UN bodies (UNGE GN and UN-GGIM) and to identify, compile, and document good practices to help NMAs and NNAs improve productivity and efficiency across Member States.

As stated in the report of the Fourteenth Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), under Agenda Item 16: Collaboration with the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGE GN), Indonesia and the United States were appointed as co-leads for this project. Dr. Ade Komara Mulyana from the Geospatial Information Agency of Indonesia and Dr. Michael Tischler from the United States Geological Survey are leading the initiative.

Starting in June 2024, the joint committee has convened four meetings. The meetings are regularly attended by representatives from the Geospatial Information Agency of Indonesia/Badan Informasi Geospasial (BIG), the United States Geological Survey, the United States Census Bureau, facilitated by the Chair of UNGE GN and the UNSD as the UNGE GN secretariat. The meetings led to agreements on the project implementation, including developing a user-friendly questionnaire aligned with the project's objectives. The next steps involve conducting beta testing of the questionnaire, distributing it to all UN-GGIM and UNGE GN member countries, analyzing the collected responses, and compiling them into a final report. The final report is tentatively set to be presented at the Fifteenth Session of the UN-GGIM in August 2025, while a progress report is expected to be presented at the 2025 Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in April-May 2025. To increase awareness and generate interest to participate in the project an overview was presented during a side event at the Fourteenth Session on UN-GGIM (Fig. 2).



Figure 1. The First Meeting of the Joint Committee on 12 June 2024



Figure 2. Presentation of the project overview during the side event of the Fourteenth Session of the UN-GGIM

The joint committee is currently at the stage of refining to finalize the questionnaire, considering inputs collated from 10 Member States including Armenia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Cyprus, Germany, Jordan, New Zealand, Oman, the Russian Federation, and Saudi Arabia, as published in UNGE GN Bulletin #67, “Good Practices Emerging from Relations Between National Mapping/Geospatial Data Management Agencies and Geographical Naming Authorities.” The questionnaire has been aligned with the nine Integrated Geospatial Information



Framework (IGIF) Strategic Pathways, with "Cultural" added as an additional category. Furthermore, the committee has agreed to send one consolidated questionnaire to each country, addressed to NNA and NMA. There was also discussion on whether responses should be consolidated at the country level or whether separate responses from NMA and NNA should be accepted. It was generally agreed that separate responses would offer valuable insights into inter-agency cooperation. In addition, the committee has established the following tentative timeline:

Year	Month	Activity
2024	Mid-November	Commence beta testing for a period of two weeks.
	December	Finalize the questionnaire based on feedback received.
2025	January	Distribute the questionnaire to Member States, allowing a one-month response window.
	28 April - 2 May	Present preliminary findings at the UNGEGN upcoming session.

The joint committee looks forward to the Member State’s engagement and contributions in the upcoming beta testing phase and the full survey session. Interested Member States are encouraged to contact Cecille Blake at [blake1@un.org](mailto:blake1@un.org). The contributions are crucial to the success of this initiative, as they will provide valuable insights into the current state of collaboration between NMA and NNA. Sharing the specific conditions of NMA-NNA collaboration will help to identify good practices, address existing challenges, and develop comprehensive strategies to enhance the standardization and management of geographical names.

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**Tika Dwi Saputri**

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## UNGEGN participates in the fourteenth session of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)

The fourteenth session of the Committee of Experts was held from 7 to 9 August 2024 in conference room four at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Gathered were over 330 representatives, delegates and observers. There were 240 delegates from 75 Member States and 72 entities from the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations including representatives from international geospatial societies, academia and the private sector.

Opening remarks were delivered by Mr. Navid Hanif, Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. He spoke on the need for collaboration and the need for joint decision making and consensus across the substantive agenda items before the Committee. His remarks are available here:

[Fourteenth session opening remarks ASG.pdf](#)

Fourteen substantive agenda items were considered and deliberated on by the Committee and attracted over 250 statements and interventions from Member States including regional committees. Observing entities provided another 50 interventions.

### Presentation of UNGEGN’s report and Interventions

Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu - Germany and Ade Komara Mulyana - Indonesia jointly introduced UNGEGN’s report [E/C.20/2024/18/Add.1](#) on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> August during the fifth meeting of the fourteenth session of the Committee of Experts.

For agenda item 16 – Collaboration with UNGEGN, there was a total of 21 interventions. -

- Sixteen were from Member States (listed in the order as delivered) Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Chile, Belgium, Jamaica, Colombia, Singapore, Burkina Faso, Canada, Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, India, Morocco, Tonga, and Oman;
- three were from the UN-GGIM Regional Committees for Europe (delivered by Germany), Africa (delivered by Nigeria) and the Americas (delivered by Brazil) and
- two were from Observers, the International Cartographic Association, and the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH).

Countries supporting the creation of a Unique Identifier for cities were Chile, Jamaica, and Mexico. Countries supporting the collaborative project on the development of a compendium of institutional arrangements and operational good practices aimed at strengthening relations between the Committee of Experts and the Group of Experts were: Saudi Arabia, Belgium, Brazil, Singapore, Argentina, Mexico, Germany, and Morocco. The decision 14/114, under agenda item 16 is accessible on page 19 of the report [E/2025/46-E/C.20/2024/19](#) on the fourteenth session of the Committee of Experts.



*Representatives from Germany and Indonesia introduced the UNGEGN Report*





Interventions from the Fourteenth Session on UN-GGIM- August 2024		
	Agenda Name	Total Interventions
item 8	Global geodetic reference frame	38
item 3	Enhancing Global GIM Arrangements	36
item 7	UN-IGIF	34
item 6	Future Geospatial information Ecosystem	25
item 10	GI for climate and resilience	23
item 4	Contribution of Regional Committees	22
item 11	Integration of Geo and Statistics	22
item 12	Application of GI to land admin and mgmnt	21
item 16	Strengthening relations UNGEKN	21
item 13	Integrated marine geospatial information	17
item 15	Standards for the geospatial community	16
item 9	GI for SD	15
item 5	Contribution of Thematic Networks	14
item 14	Policy and Legal	9
		<b>313</b>

*Interventions made across all UN-GGIM agenda items*

### Side Event

The Regional Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific as the secretariat of the UN-GGIM Regional Committee for Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with UNSD, organized an in-person meeting on the sides of the fourteenth session of the Committee of Experts on Thursday 8 August 2024 from 8:00 to 9:30 am. The objective of the meeting was to agree on a work plan among all five UN-GGIM Regional Committees that would further strengthen coordination, collaboration, and knowledge sharing among the Committees.

The first agenda item was a special presentation on the **United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEKN) and UN-GGIM collaborative project** on identifying good practices between national mapping agencies and national geographical names authorities, delivered by the co-lead from the Badan Informasi Geospasial (BIG)/the National Geospatial Agency of Indonesia. The chairs of the UN-GGIM Regional Committees were invited to support the project by becoming beta testers of the products prepared and to encourage

their member countries to contribute to the data collection exercise by completing self-assessment surveys. The results of the project are to be delivered at the 2025 session on UNGEKN and at the fifteenth session of the Committee of Experts in August 2025. The Regional Committees endorsed the UNGEKN and UN-GGIM collaborative project and offered to support beta testing and the self-assessment exercises. (See dedicated article on this project in this Bulletin under the Special Projects and News Items section). For additional information on the fourteenth session of the Committee of Experts see [the session webpage](#).

**Cecille Blake**  
 UNGEKN Secretariat  
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## *Sponsorship Opportunity to Participate in the 2025 UNGEGN Session*

**A**re you in need of funding to participate in the 2025 Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names 28 April- 2. May 2025 in New York?

To determine the need for funding for participation in the upcoming UNGEGN Session in 2025, we invite experts who know they will have difficulty in obtaining funding to apply to the UNGEGN secretariat (E-mail: [geoinfo\\_unsd@un.org](mailto:geoinfo_unsd@un.org)). The UNGEGN secretariat will then distribute the applications for review to a special UNGEGN funding committee who will attempt to identify funds and select the successful experts. Only applications submitted using the UNGEGN application will be eligible.

**Download the application form here:**

[https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/documents/UNGEKN\\_funding\\_form\\_PG.docx](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/documents/UNGEKN_funding_form_PG.docx)

The deadline for submission of applications is **31 January 2025**. It should be stressed that neither the Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy, nor the UN Statistical Division can guarantee funding. Prioritization will be made at the discretion of the special funding committee.

All persons granted funding to attend the session will be required to submit a report to the UNGEGN Secretariat and the funding committee no later than 5. June 2025, 1 month after the session.

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