

11th Meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms

The Working Group on Exonyms met informally out-of-session on 4th May 2011 during the 26th Session of UNGEGN in the Theatersaal of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. The venue away from the UNGEGN Session was intended to allow wider participation. The meeting focused on current themes and questions of the WG, especially on the **endonym/exonym divide** and the status of sea names in this context.

Peter JORDAN outlined his paper “The endonym – name from within a social group” (WP 69) which had been presented to the UNGEGN Session. Paul WOODMAN, who had not taken part in the UNGEGN Session, presented his paper entitled “Endonyms, Exonyms and Language Boundaries: A Clarification”, which recapped the WG’s recent discussions on this subject and aimed at clarifying the author’s view, which he felt had been misconstrued or misunderstood. The paper considered the essence particularly of names for features beyond a single (or any) sovereignty, their nature as endonym or exonym, and how this applied to relevant language communities. The Working Group enjoyed a robust discussion on the nature of the endonym and name classification in general. A particular discussion focused on the nuanced distinction between ‘all over’, meaning at each individual location within a feature, and ‘entire’ meaning the feature in its entirety as a single whole and how these terms had been intended and interpreted in Paul WOODMAN’s paper. The essence of the terms ‘endonym’ and ‘exonym’, either as a fundamental characteristic, or as a reflection of an externally-given status, was also discussed. And the significance of the cultural context, noting that a name might differ in its endonym status according to a specific culture, was also acknowledged. An example was noted by Bill WATT of certain Aboriginal people of Australia who had a close relationship with coastal waters, but whose affinity did not extend to the entire body of water. The ‘entire’ sea might therefore not have what could be considered an endonym in certain Aboriginal languages. The meeting recalled also the WG’s previous consideration of the establishing of **guideline criteria for the appropriate use of exonyms**. A proposal for such guidelines had been considered at the WG’s meeting during the 25th UNGEGN Session in 16 Nairobi, Kenya, though consensus had not been achieved. Peter JORDAN had drafted a revised document “Criteria for the use of exonyms – a next approach” (WP 64) for the WG’s consideration. It was noted that the title *Criteria for the Use of Exonyms* was somewhat suggestive of promoting exonym use, and the WG agreed that any subsequent discussions should be considered with the understanding that the goal was to ‘ensure the politically sensitive use of exonyms’. The Co-Convenor asked the WG to consider whether, in addition to ‘endonym’ and ‘exonym’, a third term might be required where there was contention about the application of either of the existing terms, specifically for **features beyond sovereignty**. The viewpoints of various WG members were again re-stated. Gholamreza KARIMZADEH presented a paper “Mechanism for standardizing the exonyms of features beyond sovereignty”, suggesting historical evidence should be considered when identifying valid exonyms. The WG noted that there could, however, be practical difficulties in determining the validity of such sources. The WG also considered **trends in exonym use**. Maciej ZYCH presented his paper “Polish lists of geographical names of the World” (WP 24) describing the list of exonyms approved for use in Poland, noting that only those Polish exonyms included in the list were recommended for use in Poland. The WG discussed the future direction and appropriate themes to be considered. Suggestions included the categorisation of exonyms (e.g. such as of their phonological/morphological type, or whether they were a translation of a relevant endonym) and an expansion of the current questions into a more focused look at their relevance and application in languages outside Europe, perhaps especially in East Asia.

A next WG meeting prior to the 10th United Nations Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names (to be held in New York, August 2012) and in preparation for it will be held on three days (one day excursion) in the bilingual region of Kashubia in Poland in May 2012. An exact date is still to be defined. The place for this next WG meeting was chosen due to the kind offer of Katarzyna PRZYSZEWSKA and Maciej ZYCH, who will provide for the local organisation. This next meeting will have the character of a workshop, where papers are presented and intensively discussed. As regards topics, the endonym/exonym divide, the status of sea names, criteria for a sensitive use of exonyms, trends in exonym use and the categorisation of exonyms will be in the focus of the agenda. A call for papers will be disseminated towards the end of 2011. Registration will start soon afterwards. Participation is not at all confined to WG members.

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