

## **CAN AND MAY TWO TOPONYMS FOR A SINGLE FEATURE LIVE SIDE-BY-SIDE?**

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### **Introduction**

Multiple names for a single geographical feature are a widespread fact of life. This truth would normally ensure a positive answer to the first part of the question. But does it? The present paper will investigate the problems of both feasibility and validity of the answers to the question posed by the heading at five levels local, national, trans-boundary, international and maritime.

On 20 February 2006 the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 60/192, which stated *inter alia* (1) to declare 2008 as the International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE); (2) to organize activities to be undertaken ... in collaboration with the U.N. environmental programmes and other relevant U.N. entities [of which UNGEGN, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, is one; *N.K.*]; (3) encourages all member states .... to increase awareness of the importance of Earth Sciences [of which toponymy is one; *N.K.*] for the achievement of sustainable development .

Within the themes of the International Year of Planet Earth there is one, 'Theme Resources', dealing among others with the biosphere (including the oceans). The theme leader, Prof. Yukio Himiyama of Japan, proposes to include the following topics: (1) drawing global and regional maps.... will be an important challenge to geographers; (2) how can we better communicate with society in general, and with students in particular.

Clearly, this indicates the need for correct maps including correct naming procedures. The following brief study tries to propose answers within a limited sector of toponymy and with just a small number of examples, but which in certain cases raise problems between opposing sides.

## **Toponymist vs. Cartographer**

Two professions, chiefly, are involved with the various phases of naming and communicating the designations for geographical features, i.e. their names. The first is the toponymist, the second being the cartographer. The general media, whether printed or broadcast verbally or graphically, are of course involved too, as are the digital professions, but their output should be based on the work of the former specialists and will not specifically be dealt with here.

The term toponymist stands here for the entire spectrum of persons involved with the naming process proposing, collecting, confirming or ratifying and standardizing names for and of geographical features, and this includes as primary agents the national naming authorities such as national name boards. And while geographical gazetteers are an important kind of output of the toponymic naming process, perhaps the most important type of depository of geographical names are maps, whether large-scale topographic maps, medium-scale general geographical maps or small-scale atlas maps. Maps provide perhaps the most widespread information on the whereabouts of geographical names. This stresses the importance of correctness, integrity and completeness of the names component in a map, and indicates the need for involving cartography and the cartographer in this study. While each of the representatives of the two professions mentioned has his or her specific part and responsibility of the toponymic process (the term 'toponymic' covering in this case also the cartographic phase of names placement), it will be shown that in certain cases the toponymist and the cartographer must discuss together how to solve a particular problem.

## **'Can' vs. 'May' the Cartographer's Task**

In a general lexical sense, these two auxiliary verbs can, among others, express the same, namely permission, whereas even in the present sentence 'can' denotes a possibility. In the context of this paper 'can' indeed expresses possibility or feasibility, and chiefly concerns the work of the cartographer inserting or placing the names in his maps. 'May', on the other hand, expresses permission and in the present case permission to use a name, and is, therefore, a more formal requirement usually involving officialdom, while 'can' is more informal. 'May' therefore concerns the activity of the toponymist; and especially the final stage of his work which involves the ratification or otherwise of a particular name.

Let us now assume that a certain additional toponym such as the second member of a 'duo' has been authorized for inclusion in a map, formally or informally, and has therefore passed the 'may' stage to which we shall return below. When the cartographer has to insert this name in a map, whether at the primary planning or design stage of a new map or while updating an existing one, he must take into account a number of considerations, in order to check whether the name can, indeed, be inserted in the map. The first of these is the 'status' of the name and thus its size within the specifications of the particular map, i.e. whether it is the name of a hamlet or village, or of a continent or an ocean. This is a fixed or invariable factor. Next comes the matter of location; where is the name to be inserted: in an urban area, or in a mountainous one or in a valley, or perhaps in a lake or the sea. After this the extent of the location has to be taken into account: in the examples above, how extensive is the area of the valley or the plain or the lake into which the name has to be fitted. Now comes the major consideration of map scale; clearly, the larger the scale, the easier it will be to insert the name in its location, whereas in a map of smaller scale it will be more difficult. The final consideration will be the density of existing names in the particular location among which the additional name has to be added so as not to clash with other names. An area densely covered with names may require some cartographic generalization, because perhaps some name or names from the existing ones will have to be deleted because of 'seniority' of the newcomer. This case might need the cooperation between the cartographer and the toponymist.

### **'May' vs. 'Can' Permission, Formal and Informal**

Who can give permission to use a toponym? Once more, a definition is needed: what is meant by using a geographical name? The answer seems to be clear: 'using' a name here means publicizing it, which may be done in different ways, of which printing it in a map, in a geographical gazetteer or in any of the public media or transmitting it over the internet are the chief examples, while employing it in personal communication is not regarded as 'use' within the present context. Now we turn to permission. Here one has to distinguish between two cases. Formal permission to use a name is normally given if the name has been ratified by a national, regional or other officially instituted names authority. However, there are very many geographical names in the world which have never been formally recognized by an official body, and still are in circulation. We shall meet some examples below. If these are found in any kind of document, and no restriction on their use has been issued e.g. by a legal authority, they can be regarded as open for use. A well-known example of a name *not* having been given

permission to be employed is the name Republic of Macedonia, used by the south-eastern component of the former Yugoslav Federation, to which Greece objected and which was 'banned' by the United Nations, being replaced by the name 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' and the acronym FYROM. This toponym can also serve as an example of a name being used unofficially by many countries, headed by FYROM/Macedonia itself, while the United States, for example, has 'legalized' the use of the name Macedonia, thus overriding the decree of the United Nations.

Having presented the purely cartographic reflections as well as the formal ones, we shall now proceed step by step with the matter of feasibility *vs.* permission, and begin with the local case. It should be mentioned that the discussion will deal primarily with endonyms, i.e. local name forms, and not (with the exception of a few examples) with exonyms, names applied in languages which have no official status in the country of the toponym dealt with.

Therefore: can and may two toponyms for a single feature live side-by-side?

### **The Local Case**

Local cases of names involving problems concerning the 'may', i.e. the permission to be used, are few; after all, most places wish to be known. If formal permission is required (and this is dealt with in different ways in different countries), this is normally provided by application to some relevant local authority. The question of 'can' has been dealt with above. An interesting example is supplied by a new Bedouin village in Israel following transhumance from nomadic to a settled life form. This had officially been given the name Shibli, after the Bedouin tribe of the (slight) majority of the inhabitants. However, a delegation of sheikhs from the (large) minority tribe subsequently met with the Names Commission and demanded a change of name to that of their tribe, Sbeikh. And no dual names, they claimed! They tried to explain where each component of the population was located in the village. Being illiterate but, perhaps naturally, 'graphicate', they drew a crude plan of the village but could only point to the different locations but could not write the names a case of "no 'may' and no 'can'".

### **The National Case**

Here one must distinguish between two situations. In multi-lingual countries many geographical features carry two (or more) names, often having equal official status

such as Cape Town and Kaapstad in South Africa, while in others priority is involved, e.g. in Switzerland where Genève precedes Genf, and the nearby lake is named both Lac Léman and Genfer See. But in small-scale maps only the name in the language of the map producer is usually found, unless there is enough space for both.

The other situation in which dual names might be encountered involves exonyms. Thus, Hungary has its own Hungarian names for a number of places in southern Slovakia and regards these as Hungarian official names, whereas Slovakia regards them as Hungarian exonyms having no legal status in Slovakia. The same is true of German names in Poland such as Breslau for Wrocław or Danzig for Gdansk. These twin toponyms then co-exist but with different legal status, and often not simultaneously in the maps of their respective countries.

Court cases may also be involved, and one more example will be presented from Israeli toponymy. A certain new agricultural settlement was named by its inhabitants Nevé-Tsuf, while the Government Names Commission, for reasons of historical geography, assigned the name Halamish to the place. The Inhabitants turned to the courts of justice, but in a final verdict the High Court held up the decision of the Government Names Commission and ratified the latter name. But the two names do exist both, though not side-by-side: the latter in all official documents such as maps, gazetteers and postal stamps, the former unofficially in daily use by the inhabitants.

### **Trans-Boundary Cases**

Trans-boundary names are toponyms of geographical features which extend over parts of more than a single sovereignty. In many cases, if not in most, these features carry different names in their respective countries. Sometimes these are related to each other by phonological assimilation, such as the river Duero (Spain) and Douro (Portugal), Rhein (Germany), Rhin (France) and Rijn (the Netherlands), or Dicle (Turkey) and Dijla (Iraq, better known in the West by the exonym Tigris.). In other cases completely different names are applied, such as the river Yarlung in Tibet/China which becomes the Brahmaputra in India, or the river Vardar (in FYROM/Macedonia) which becomes the Axíos in Greece. The same is true of mountain ranges, an example being the Pyrinées in France which are the Pirineos in Spain, and even of single mountains: the Matterhorn on the border between Switzerland and Italy also carries the name Monte Cervino, while Mount Everest is Sagarmatha in Nepal and Qomolangma Feng in Tibet/China. All these toponyms live peacefully side-by-side, no problem of 'may'

being encountered in their use.

One more case should be mentioned: single names existing (officially) in two different scripts. These are found in countries which are bi-scriptual, i.e. which have two different scripts, either for a single language, such as Macedonian in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia a.k.a. FYROM (e.g. Петровце and Petrovec), or for two languages such as Hebrew and Arabic in Israel, e.g. Tel-Aviv being תל-אביב in the former and تل-أبيب in the latter. But as mentioned above, in these cases there is really only a single name.

## **International Cases**

By international cases are meant here cases of international intervention concerning a toponym. The following two relevant examples illustrate this. Many years ago, in 1977 when the undersigned first represented his country at a United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, the U.S.S.R. still strongly objected to the name Bundesrepublik Deutschland, demanding (unsuccessfully) the form preferred by East Germany for its western neighbor, Deutsche Bundesrepublik. The second example has already been dealt with briefly above, namely that of FYROM. The reason for the intervention of the United Nations in this case was that Greece objected to the name Macedonia (or rather Makedonija) because this was also the name of Greece's northern province, and the fear that the new republic would one day demand or annex this part of Greece. The latter country's appeal to the U.N. resulted in the long form and its acronym.

## **Finally Maritime and Lacustrine Names**

Here, again, distinction between two situations will be made. The first concerns multiple names in water bodies belonging to a single country, including names of lakes (Lac Léman and Genfer See were mentioned already above) as well as of territorial waters, whatever the definition of this term (which is different for different countries). The English Channel and the French la Manche immediately come to mind the Dead Sea, being the recognized English exonym for the endonyms Yam HaMelah (Israel) and Bahr al-Mayyit (Jordan), is another example. These double names generate no friction or problems, and usually it is either the map scale or the language of the publisher that dictates whether both are included in a map or only one.

The other case deals with large water bodies which are not within the jurisdiction of a

single sovereignty, e.g. outwith territorial waters. Whereas the sea areas within territorial or coastal waters of any country may have names applied by the relevant country and recognized as endonyms, no official endonym can usually be given to the entire seabecause no single country has jurisdiction over it, and any country can apply its own preferred name. Kara Deniz (Turkish) and ЧЕРНОЕ Море (Russian) are the respective names for the entire Black Sea, but formally only of the territorial waters. The Mediterranean Sea (English exonym) carries the following names: Mer Méditerranée (French), Mare Mediterraneo (Italian), Μεσογείος Θάλασσα (Greek), البحر الأبيض المتوسط (al Bah̄r al Abyadh al Mutawassit, Arabic), ים התיכון (Yam HaTikhon, Hebrew); the Baltic Sea has among others the German Ostsee and the Swedish Bottenhavet, while the North Sea also carries the Danish name Vesterhavet, the Western (and not Northern) Sea. All these names are uncontested.

Two exceptions should finally be mentioned. The gulf between Iraq on the West and Iran on the East is called by Iran the Persian Gulf, this name being used also by all western countries. But the countries bordering this oil-contaminated sea on its western and south-western side employ the name Arabian Gulf. Lately Iran has been demanding that only the name Persian Gulf be used, to the exclusion of any other name. The second exception is the sea between Korea in the West and the Japanese archipelago in the East. The Republic of Korea has turned to the United Nations with the request that this body of water will also carry the name East Sea, Tong Hae in Korean. Japan has consistently refused to recognize this name and is unwilling to enter negotiations concerning it, demanding that the name Sea of Japan extend as the only name over the entire area and not only over its territorial waters. This problem is as yet unresolved.

### **Finally a Recommendation**

If no peaceful solution can be found for contested cases in international situations like these last two, neither by national nor by international institutions, where the 'can' component is easily attainable the 'may' can only be solved informally. One possibility, already adopted by the Republic of Korea, is to turn to the international cartographic fraternity, presenting it with the reasons for including both contested toponyms in their maps where scale and the other considerations detailed above permit this. Still, it is hoped that the peaceful solution, adopted by Norway, Sweden and Denmark concerning the form of the maritime name Skagerrak, will be followed by other countries.

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