Sea names in concurrence: examples from Europe

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1. Introduction

If we speak about "Sea Names" in concurrence, the most widely known conflicts which are mentioned in this context are namely the conflict of "East Sea" versus "Sea of Japan" or "Persian Gulf" versus "Arabian Gulf". To widen up the discussion on other geographical regions, I have searched for other examples which I would like to present today.

It is my intention to talk about concurrence of "Sea Names" no matter whether there have been conflicts around these names or not. The examples which I would like to present all have an European background, but have different roots and different characteristics.

I will discuss the following examples:
„North Sea" versus „German Ocean" versus „West Sea",
„Pomeranian Bay (Pommersche Bucht) versus „Oder Bay (Oderbucht)" and
"Bay of Piran" versus "Bay of Savudrija".

2. North Sea / German Ocean / West Sea

"Mare Germanicum" und die "North Sea" im Osten

In June 2007, a german-austrian-swiss communal programme aired a two-part telecast with the title „North Sea (Nordsee)". The telecast was introduced as follows: „In the English Oxford Dictionary one can read up: 'North Sea' also known as 'German Ocean'. Strange, as the North Sea lies in the East of Great Britain and the name 'German Ocean' is also not clear. Germany owns the smallest coastal line of all bordering states of the 'North Sea'. The fact that this sea between Great Britain, Norway, the North Pole and Friesland has received the name 'North Sea' is caused historically. However the Romans explored the sea first and called it 'Mare Germanicum'" (3sat.online 2007).

„Nordsøen" and „Vesterhavet"

In Denmark, which lies to the east of the North Sea, the name „Vesterhavet" (eng. "West Sea") is equally used besides the name „Nordsøen" (eng. „North Sea"). However, the level on which both names are used is argumentative. Often both names are used alternatively for the whole North Sea. Nevertheless, there are also voices which speak of two levels: "There are two level of names when you are talking about the North Sea. 'The

North Sea' = 'Nordsøen', this is the name for all the area covered with water between Denmark and UK. But the North Sea is divided into smaller areas (this is important for sailors). Some of these parts are 'Vesterhavet' which is the part of the North Sea close to Jutland between Blåvandshuk and Hanstholm. There are other parts: 'Tyske Bugt' = 'Deutsche
Bucht' = 'German Bay'; etc." (Jens Hansen 2004).

„German Ocean" – official name in Great Britain till the First World War

On the 4th International seminar on the Naming of Seas in 1998, Bela Pokoly presented a paper about the history of the sea names "North Sea" and "German Ocean" under the title "On the History of Naming the North Sea", so that I would like to attach here only some short remarks.

Remarkable is not only that also Englishmen call the North Sea "German Ocean", but the fact that the Englishmen were the ones who stuck on this name for a long time and changed it only in 1914 on account on the First World War when all German was considered unacceptable.

At this time in Germany the sea was called "North Sea" already for a long time. The German Pierer's encyclopedia (1857) cites: "The North Sea (German Sea, called West Sea from the Danish). Under the name "German Sea" one finds 1.) the North Sea but also 2.) the Lake of Constance". Today one finds the name "German Ocean" still in the Scottish Wikipaedia-Website (http://sco.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Ocean).

3. Pomeranian Bay / Oder Bay

„Renamed after 1945"

On the 6th meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms, Prague, 16th -18th May, 2007 Paul Woodman presented a paper with the title "A compilation of exonyms as used in the United Kingdom for features in the Czech Republic, Germany & Poland", which had been provided within the scope of the "English-language exonyms for the EuroGeoNames project".

On the list the Pomeranian Bay is registered as follows: „Pommersche Bucht [DE] = Pomorska, Zatoka [PL] Pomeranian Bay" (Woodmann 2007). In a footnote Woodman mentions: "Oderbucht is sometimes seen as the DE endonym".

What are the backgrounds for forming the name "Oderbucht (Oder Bay or Oder Bight)"?

"Pomeranian Bay" is the traditional name. The name "Oder Bay" was introduced at GDR times. For the Eights session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in New York, 5th-16th March 1979 a Working Paper with the title "Geographical names on the Baltic Sea coast of the German Democratic Republic" was introduced through the Surveying and Mapping administration of the Ministry of the Interior of the German Democratic Republic. In the preface of this paper it is explained: "The spelling of the geographical names on the Baltic Sea coast of the German Democratic Republic was prepared and stipulated in cooperation wit the hydrographic service of the German Democratic Republic (SHD of the GDR). In nautical charts as well as in all other cartographic products published in the GDR, the names are reproduced in a

standardization of geographical names in the GDR.

In this connection it should be mentioned that in the area bordering the Polish People's Republic the 'Pommersche Bucht' and 'Stettiner Haff' were renamed after 1945, the new names being Oderbucht and Oderhaff. Consequently, the terms 'Pommersche Bucht' and 'Stettiner Haff' are historically outdated and should be used only on historical maps and in historical texts" (Surveying and Mapping Administration of the Ministry of the Interior of the German Democratic Republic 1979a).

The GDR has used the name "Oderbucht" (Oder Bay) in her official and also even today the name "Oderbucht" is used mainly by citizens from the former GDR equally with the name "Pommersche Bucht" (Pomeranian Bay). In some scientific papers on environmental problems in the Oder estuary region the concepts of "Pomeranian Bay" and "Oder Bay" are synonymously used within the same article. In maps sometimes even both names are used together.

Map 1: Pomeranian Bay (Pommersche Bucht ,Oder Bucht) Szczecin Lagoon (Stettiner (Oder-) Haff)
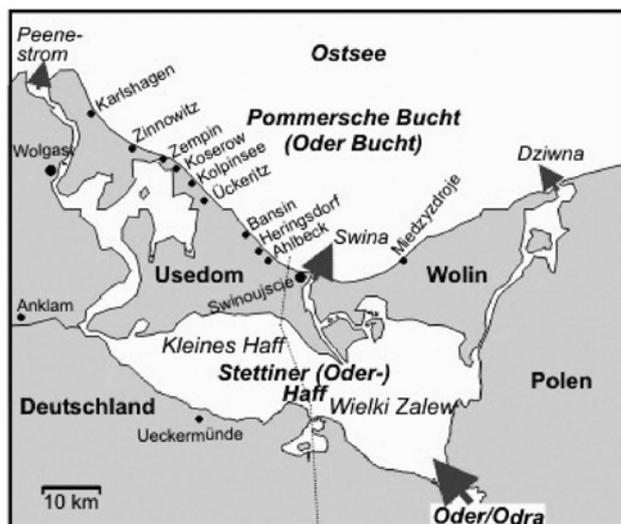
Taken from: Dorendorf (2007, 8)

StAGN takes „Pommersche Bucht" and „Zatoka Pomorska" as standardised names

When between 2001 and 2005 the „Constant Committee for Geographic Names" (Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen; StAGN),which had been founded 1959 on suggestion of the German society for cartography, standardized the names of geographic objects of the German coastline, the traditional name "Pomeranian Bay" was introduced again as standardized name.

The Name "Oder Bay" which was introduced in GDR times was not used anymore, however, the Polish name "Zatoka Pomorska" was used again, as the bay partially belongs to the German and partially to the Polish territory. (Grothenn 2005, 126)

The intercity train 2454 which operates between the Baltic Sea resort Binz and the West German city Dusseldorf received the name "Pomeranian Bay".

1947: The province „Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania" is renamed to „Mecklenburg"

Why was the name "Oder Bay" (Oderbucht) introduced at GDR times and the name "Pomeranian Bay" (Pommersche Bucht) was avoided? Except the Working Paper of 1979 from the GDR submitted to the Eight session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in New York, I have found no reason for the renaming.

Let us begin therefore with the name "Pomerania". Pomerania (German: Pommern, Polish: Pomorze) describes on the one hand a region in the north-east of Germany and in the northwest of Poland. More specifically it calls the Prussian province Pomerania which had continuance till 1945. Historically the province exited of Western Pomerania to the west of the Oder River and Eastern Pomerania to the east of the Oder River. Pomerania was conquered in spring 1945 at the end of the Second World War by he army of the Soviet Union and was divided by the definition of the German-Polish border along the Oder-Neisse line.

Map2: The German Empire 1871
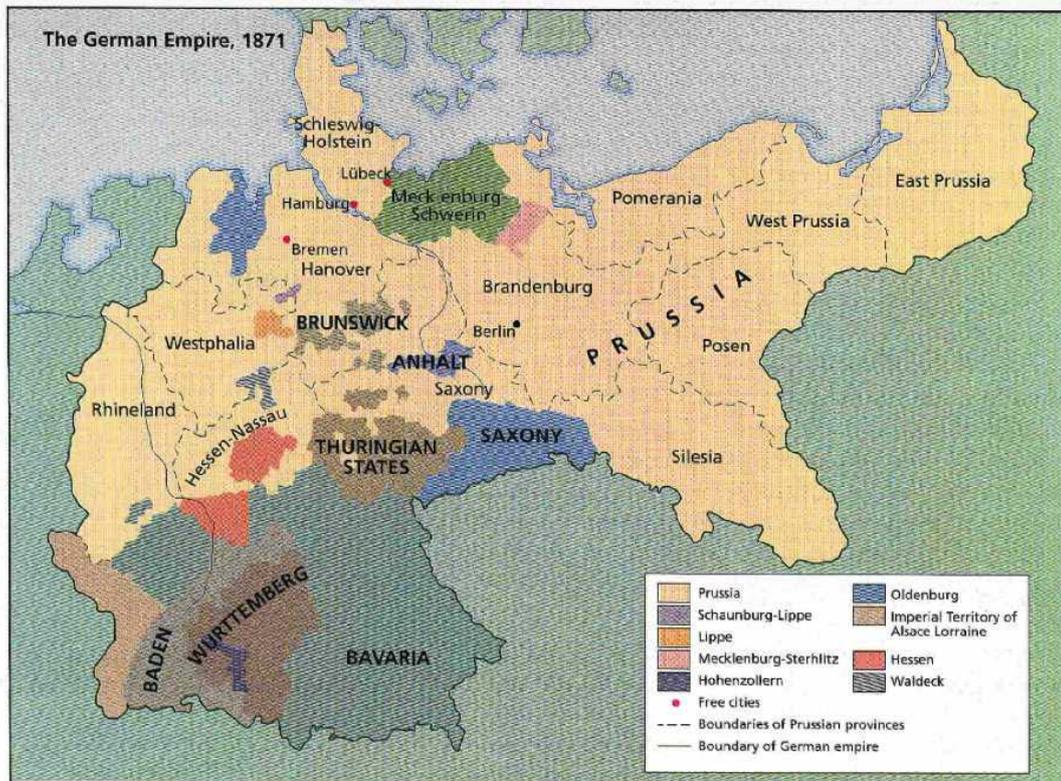
Taken from:
http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ziemer/POMMERN/pommern.htm

Nowadays one calls the part belonging to Germany "Western Pomerania" (Vorpommern) and the part belonging to Poland "Eastern Pomerania" (Hinterpommern).

Western Pomerania was integrated by the Soviet military administration into the country of Mecklenburg in 1945.

Now, for our question is interesting that the government called itself "Provincial Government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern" which was prohibited in the beginning of 1947 by the Soviet military administration with the tip, it would be only authorized to be called "Provincial Government of Mecklenburg", what also happened then. This gives us a hint that he Soviet Union probably wanted to prevent that "Pomerania" becomes a part of German geographic names. "Mecklenburg-West Pomerania" was transformed to "Mecklenburg" and the "Pomeranian Bay" became "Oder Bay". By the way, in 1990 the province of Mecklenburg was renamed to Mecklenburg-Vorpommern after the German reunion.

Szczecin Lagoon – Oder Lagoon

Already in 1945 border conflicts between German and Polish communists arose around the area to the west of the Oder river situated city of Szczecin (in German: Stettin) which finally became a part of Poland. Originally the city of Szczecin was administered by German and Polish communists together. The "Szczecin Lagoon" (in German: Stettiner Haff, in Polish: Zalew Szczecinski) was renamed as a result of that to "Oder Lagoon" (in German: Oder Haff). If one had wanted to name the lagoon furthermore after the city of Szczecin/Stettin, one would probably have to give it the name "Szczecin Haff", following the Polish endonym for the city, how it was also done in the case of Gdańsk Bay (pol. Zatoka Gdańska; dt. Danziger Bucht), wich the GDR authorities called „Gdańsker Bucht" instead of „Danziger Bucht". (Surveying and Mapping Administration of the Ministry of the Interior of the German Democratic Republic 1979b) In the Federal Republic of Germany however the name "Danziger Bucht" is common.

Other exonyms for the Szczecin Lagoon are Szczecinski Lagoon (English) and Pommersche Haff (German)

Map3: Stettiner Haff / Zalew Szczeciński

Taken from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:UsedomWolin.png

The map above shows the German and Polish endonyms. On German homepages like www.vorpommern.de also the English terminus "Lagoon of Szeczecin" is used.

Quarrels around the sea border within the Pomeranian Bay

In the second half of the 80's a quarrel round the sea border within the Pomeranian Bay stepped up between the GDR and Poland. Warsaw had considerably expanded his territory in the Pomeranian Bay before Szczecin unilaterally in 1977. East Berlin reacted with sharp protest, which however did not lead to any reaction and then followed accordingly in 1985. The quarrel lasted more than 4 years. The reasons for this quarrel are varied and complicated. It was about the free access for Polish ships through the Pomeranian Bay to the open sea and about fishing rights. Then in 1989 a compromise which flowed into a contract between the GDR and Poland came up. This contract was recognized after the reunion also from the Federal Republic of Germany. Since 2001 the German and Polish circles work together in the Oder region within the scope of agenda 21 for the solution of environment protection problems.

It can be held on that the GDR gave up the names "Pomeranian Bay" and "Szczecin Lagoon" in favor of "Oder Bay" and "Oder Lagoon" after 1945. Nevertheless, after the reunion the old names are officially used again.

4. "Bay of Piran" / "Bay of Savudrija".

The Bay in old maps

On the event GeoNames 2008 in Vienna Primož Pipan from Slovenia presented a paper with the title: „Gulf of Piran as example of politically controversial geographical names and as an expression of cultural relations". He explained that the "Gulf of Piran" was called "Largon Sizol" and "Golfo Largon" in the 16th century. The gulf became frequently associated with the village Sečovlje (ital.: Sicciole) which is famous for his salines and which lies on the Dragonja river and the Gulf.

Map 4: Sea border according to the Račan-Drnovšek Agreement

Taken from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_of_Piran

Names for the gulf with relation to the village of Piran arose in the 19th century. The first map is proved for 1806 and showed the name "Rade de Pirano". Then names for the gulf with reference to Piran became usual. However, since 2002 the gulf mostly from Croatian side is also known as "Bay of Savudrija" (Savudrijska vala). The story tells that the name was inherited through a Croatian fisherman; however, it was also used by the Croatian government. Pipan could show that names are substantially more frequent for the bay which carries "Piran" in the name instead of the ones which carry the place "Savudrija" in the name of it. Nevertheless, he avoided explaining the political

backgrounds of the upcoming of the name "Bay of Savudrija" closer. I would like o to this here very briefly and it does not depend on me finding out who is right in this conflict. My aim is merely to show how political discussions can influence the naming of waters.

Disputes around the sea border between Slovenia and Croatia

Slovenia and Croatia were originally republics of former Yugoslavia. Slovenia is a member of the EU since 2004, the EU entry of Croatia is planned for 2009. Within Yugoslavia the border river was the Dragonja between both republics. In the contract of Osimo from 1975 the sea border had been fixed between Italy and Yugoslavia. Now the independency of the new states Croatia and Slovenia led to the fact that Slovenia disposes no access to international waters. This would be able to minimize the growth of the seaport Koper (ital.: Capodistria) which stands in direct competition to the Italian harbour of Trieste and to the Croatian harbour of Rijeka. Slovenia is therefore dependent on the goodwill of one of its both neighbours (Italy or Croatia), an irritating situation. It came to incidents, because Slovenian fishermen did not want to accept the border in the middle of the bay. Conflicts originated with Croatian fishermen. The disputes are also discussed in connection with the EU entry of Croatia, although one does not assume from the fact that they can seriously endanger the entry. The international standard on sea borders is that the border is a thought line between the two states highness territory. This also corresponds to the present drawn border between both countries within former Yugoslavia. This border was also confirmed by the Badinter Arbitration Committee which had been used by the European Community for the purification of juridical questions in former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, already in 1993 Slovenia claimed four fifths of the bay of Piran whereas Croatia wanted the international approved regulation to be used. In 2001 the Slovenian government reached at negotiations with the Croatian government a solution favorable for them, which became known as „Račan-Drnovšek Plan". This awarded Slovenia four fifths of the bay and also a corridor to international waters. The Croatian Prime Minister had initialed the contract, had delivered i.e. a declaration of intent. Later Račan regretted his action later on. The plan was rejected by the Croatian public, violently criticized by the Croatian parliament and therefore was not ratified. If necessary, Croatia is ready to consult the international court of law for legal sea issues in Hamburg or another international institution. In Slovenia there are also voices which want to associate the EU entry of Croatia with these border problems. On the other hand the economy of Slovenia depends very strongly on Croatia and there are also forces in Slovenia which do not want to allow to create bigger conflict with that. Anes Alic observed following processes: „The media in both countries referred to the dispute as a 'bloodless war'." According to a public poll from two weeks ago, 62 percent of Slovenian citizens would block Croatia's EU entry if Zagreb refused to the demands, while 22 percent said they were against blocking their neighbor's entry into the bloc.

Just to keep things going, the Croatian government for its part published a different map in local media. Slovenia promised to answer with a diplomatic note, not only because of "one more provocation concerning borders," but because Croatia renamed the Bay of Piran the 'Bay of Savudrija' (referring to a part of the bay clearly on the Croatian side) on the map" (Alic,2007).

5. Conclusio

I have introduced three examples of sea names in concurrence from Europe which are all very different. Nevertheless, in all three examples it was the government who changed the name:

- Great Britain has changed the official name „German Ocean" in "North Sea"
- the GDR has changed the names „Pomeranian Bay" and „Szczecin Lagoon" into „Oder Bay" and „Oder Lagoon"
- the Croatian government uses „Savudrijska vala" instead of „Piranski zaljev"

Another common characteristic is that in each case a sea name named after an administrative unit (a state, a province or a town) did not fit anymore into a new political environment and therefore was changed.

All three examples show that sea names, named after an administrative unit, can give occasion for name changes or name quarrels according to the political situation, as well as the examples "Persian Gulf" and "Sea of Japan" show.

6. Literature

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