

The Significance of Geographical Names as Transmitters of the Cultural Heritage in Time and Space

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Geographical names¹⁾ as bearers of a multifaceted cultural heritage stand since several years in the focus of attention. The analysis affords an interdisciplinary approach to research the full spectrum. They are part of the language, and like languages dispose of static and dynamic phases.

Chapter 1 deals with the international rules and procedures for preserving the cultural heritage of mankind and of geographical names as cultural heritage by specifying the various documents of the UNESCO²⁾ and the relevant resolutions adopted by the UNCSGN³⁾. In the second chapter geographical names as bearers of cultural values will be highlighted. Focus is laid on the sources for geographical names and on the reliability of sources: one crucial point is the source criticism, which is important to receive solid means of evidence for or against a specific issue. In seven subchapters the characteristics of the most relevant sources will be evaluated. The third chapter is devoted to the 'unsolved political name-cases', as example serve the cases *Donghae / East Sea* and *Nihonkai / Sea of Japan*. The discussion concentrates on the terms centre and periphery, terms known from and commonly used in spatial planning. Here they serve as metaphors for the two conflicting names in an international or global context. Whereas the official and international usage of geographical names is bound to standard forms, which are not as dynamic as one would wish it to be, are geographical names on the national level not solely bound to existing standard forms and can be altered by governments. The government can react faster on political changes: name changes and reinstatements of former (or old) names according to the new (geo)political situations can quicker be implemented (e.g. when the mental names vocabulary is still vivid among the inhabitants and when the 'new' names can be based on solid archival sources).

The goal of naming conflicts should be a consensual solution in regarding UNESCO's definition of culture as "... ways of living together".⁴⁾

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1) The term 'geographical name' is used synonymously with 'toponym'. The ICOS definition is: Toponym = proper name of a place, both inhabited and uninhabited (e.g. of a mountain, water, island, wood, town, village, field, meadow, street, or route etc. ... NOTE: If limited to the planet Earth, toponyms can also be called geographical names. There is reference from place-name to toponym. (See the ICOS website www.icosweb.net).

2) UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

3) United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

4) <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001055/105586e.pdf>.

1. Introduction

During the last years a growing interest in the holistic research of geographical names took place and their important contribution to the cultural heritage of nations as well as of mankind came into the focus of geographers, linguists, ethnologists, historians, politicians, economists and other disciplines at the same time. The United Nations (UNESCO, UNCSGN/UNGEEN) adopted several resolutions and developed programmes for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage and for the promotion of the cultural aspects of geographical names.

Geographical names have and had in all the times a broad cultural significance. When we here speak of toponyms and especially of toponyms in cartography, their cultural significance lies in their multiple functions (address function, identification, language, social, economic and cultural relevance, the whole system of the mental comprehension of natural and cultural environment of peoples) which form the multi-faceted cultural contexts around the names giving act. Names are in the presence and were in the past coined by a social community on a specific cultural background or worldview. In this respect they are vital parts of a people's or nation's cultural heritage but moreover they are also part of the global cultural heritage. Toponyms in cartography are specified as the textless sources, but in analysing them comprehensively one learns to know that they encompass historical processes in a holistic sense (mental landscapes; see the definition for landscape given by Alexander von Humboldt as "...totality of all aspects of a region, as perceived by man"⁵⁾). By means of the historical-linguistic and historico-philosophical method they open us the windows to past ethnic communities, their language(s), economic systems, religion(s) and their natural surroundings, which just affords an interdisciplinary approach to experience their whole style of life and world view. By regarding geographical names through all the centuries, one can observe the coming and going of peoples, languages, economic systems, cultures, political changes. That means that geographical names are not as stable as one would wish it to be. We can observe, that geographical names have a static and a dynamic dimension at the same time. Static and dynamic phases can endure for long, longer or for short periods, the duration is based on different backgrounds; most of the name changes underlie the countries' political and economic developments. The significance of geographical

⁵⁾ See <http://www.pcl-eu.de/project/agenda/mental.php> (15-12-2014).

names as representatives of cultural processes can be seen on the international as well as on the national level. In the following chapters these two levels and the inter-relations with the national and international measures are specified.

2. Rules and procedures for geographical names as cultural heritage on the international level

1) UN related documents⁶⁾:

Mexico Declaration on Cultural Politics (UNESCO 1982): refers to the “...assertion of cultural identity” as a means for the “...liberation of peoples” which encompasses the “...contact with the traditions and values of others.”

Our creative Diversity (UNESCO 1995/1997): in this document we find a comprehensive definition of culture.⁷⁾ Amendments to this document referring to politically volatile issues were published by Th. H. Eriksen (2001, 130)⁸⁾, who stressed, that *The cultural heritage must also be respected – and this should be taken to mean not only one's own but also the heritage of others* and raised the demands for the development of a ‘global ethics’.

Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO 2001): refers to cultures and civilizations under the auspices of globalization.

In 2003 (in force 2006) UNESCO published the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*: in this document the focus is laid on humanity's cultural diversity.

Intangible Cultural Heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces as-

⁶⁾ Hausner, Isolde (2013): Principles and rules of ‘dual names / dual naming (multiple names / multiple naming’ systems in and outside Europe. An exemplary approach to the definition of two (?) new terms in the UNGEGN glossary. In: Sea, Sea Names and Mediterranean Peace. Proceedings of the 19th International Seminar on Sea Names, Istanbul, Turkey 22-24 August 2013, p. 9ff.

⁷⁾ See footnote 4.

⁸⁾ Eriksen, Thomas, Hylland (2001): Between universalism and relativism: a critique of the UNESCO concept of culture. In: Culture and Rights. Anthropological Perspectives, ed. by Jane K. Cowan, Marie-Bénédicte Dembour and Richard A. Wilson. Cambridge University Press, p. 127-148.

sociated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.⁹⁾

A critical comment to this document written by Richard Kurin... *considers the nature of intangible cultural heritage* and stresses the efforts of this convention in his conclusions: “*It seeks government recognition and respect for the varied cultural traditions practised by people within its jurisdiction.*”¹⁰⁾

South Korea has enacted the program *Important Intangible Cultural Properties* for the intangible culture that is officially designated for preservation in accordance with the 1962 Cultural Property Protection Law.¹¹⁾

In all these documents the terms *geographical names* or *toponyms* do not explicitly occur, one can only assume that they are of course included in the intangible cultural heritage.

One paper which contains a short chapter on this issue is the *World Report* of UNESCO with the title – *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue* (2009) when here in a sentence the cultural value of geographical names as parts of languages it is addressed. And it contains the statement that “*The naming of geographic features of the landscape ensures a sense of connection to place and the histories linked to it.*”¹²⁾

UNEGN respectively UNCSGN, the UN forum for geographical names, adopted three resolutions dedicated to geographical names and cultural heritage:

Geographical names as cultural heritage (UNEGN, Res. VIII/9 *Geographical Names as part of (intangible) cultural heritage*): stresses the significance of geographical

⁹⁾ Wikipedia (20141007); Korea ratified it in 2005.

¹⁰⁾ Kurin, Richard (2004): Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 2003 UNESCO Convention: a critical appraisal. In: *Museum International* (Journal vol. 56, Issue 1-2. /doi/10.1111/muse.2004.56.issue-1-2/issuetoc; internet 2014-10-07).

¹¹⁾ See wikipedia.org (11-12-2014).

¹²⁾ http://www.un.org/en/events/culturaldiversityday/pdf/Investing_in_cultural_diversity.pdf (p. 73).

names with respect to local, regional and national heritage and identity.¹³⁾

Geographical names as intangible cultural heritage (UNEGN, Res. IX/4): toponyms and the criteria for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage. It recognizes UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Criteria for establishing and evaluating the nature of geographical names as cultural heritage (UNEGN, Res. X/3): contains inter alia a list of criteria.

Geographical Names as a Part of the Cultural Heritage was the title of a symposium, held in Vienna in 2008. A publication with the same title¹⁴⁾ was issued in 2009, containing 27 papers on this issue seen from the various points of view.

3. Geographical names as bearers of cultural values

If one speaks of the immaterial cultural heritage or of cultural values one must explain what makes the nature of the cultural values and what are the sources for the selection of geographical names and their designation as bearers of 'cultural values'. In this context the critical points referring to the reliability of sources will be discussed.

The main groups of sources are:

- (1) historical records, historical sources, archive material
- (2) maps, atlases
- (3) literature, legends and myths
- (4) teaching, educational materials
- (5) scientific publications
- (6) media (journals, broadcasting)
- (7) administrative / diplomatic documents

(1) and (2): When one focusses on historical sources, the first task is their evaluation before they are used as means of evidence for or against a specific issue. Source criticism is the most important guarantee for the validity of a piece of evidence and for

¹³⁾ Kerfoot, Helen (2009): Geographical names and cultural heritage: background information from United Nations (UNCSGN/UNEGN) materials. In: *Geographical Names as a Part of the Cultural Heritage*. Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie, Bd. 18, p.13-19.

¹⁴⁾ *Geographical Names as a Part of the Cultural Heritage* (2009). Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie, Bd. 18. Ed. by JORDAN, P., BERGMANN, H., CHEETHAM, C. und HAUSNER, I.

drawing conclusions from a specific source. The old historical maps - like the *Mappae Mundi*/World Maps - serve rather as sources for the humanities (history, political sciences, philosophy, linguistics) than for the precise position of a specific object or region. Many of them aren't produced as means of orientation as such but rather to demonstrate a specific world view. We heard in many preceding symposia numerous papers on the labelling of the names East Sea and Sea of Japan in maps and atlases; all these researches brought very valuable details to light and we dispose now of a vast inventory of the appearance of both of these names during a time span of about two thousand years (as regards the name East Sea). But do we know exactly the backgrounds on each single occasions, how these names came into the diverse maps and atlases, who were the contracting partners and what philosophical worldview, economic or political interests stood behind it? On what political, economic or culture related backgrounds are all these maps produced and what was intended with it? We heard a good example in the Istanbul symposium last year why and what circumstances lead to the specification of the name Sea of Japan in the international context and its consequences which last until today.

(3) Folklore literature is that type of text which always stands for a regional use of names (sometimes also for an invented name). It shows the acceptance of a specific name within the regional community, the inhabitants, inside a period and a space and the dissemination of these names. Again in the last symposium we heard of quite a number of legends, myths and sacrifices around the east coast of the Korean peninsula where ancient customs are still today practised, which are sources of an area in which as far back as thousands of years the name Donghae = East Sea is used. These practises are vivid witnesses for the spiritual wealth of the people living in that region and for the sacredness of the East Sea in the shape of the East Sea god and the dragon king. These mental ties are part of the intangible cultural heritage and constitute the nature of the intangible heritage. One asks if these evidences couldn't be added to the list of Korea's Important Intangible Cultural Properties. It is known that the book of the History of the three Kingdoms is already on the list of the Korean National Treasures.

(4), (5) and (6) Teaching or educational materials at Korean schools, which are produced in Korea use the dual denominations East Sea and Sea of Japan. Korea's geography education comprises a module on the topics geographical names and sea names. Korea initiated the programme APNIEVE (Asia-Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education, 1995), under whose guiding principles range toler-

ance, conflict resolution and respect for the belief and culture of different communities and the sovereignty of other nations.¹⁵⁾ Korea favours a dual naming policy concerning the shared sea between Korea and Japan on the educational level. Schools with their pupils in general dispose of a broad multiplier effect, young people are the bearers of Korean culture and language in the future and disseminate it abroad. In this respect they stand high on the list of reference persons. The same is valid for the academic community. The question remains, if a dual naming policy is carried out on all levels of the governmental organisation. Students and academic teachers as well as their scientific publications care for a broad international dissemination and recognition of the government's naming policy.

The media, such as daily newspapers, broadcasting companies and TV are - similar to pupils and students - the largest group of multipliers to make specific denominations public and to affect the mainstream opinion. In Germany, e.g., the TV news anchormen get assistance by a background names database for the pronunciation, spelling and usage of standard forms of geographical names.¹⁶⁾

(7) Administrative documentation and the diplomatic bodies in general use acknowledged names in their standardized form. Is there a uniform usage of names within the official Korea (such as offices, authorities, agencies; companies etc.)?

4. The field of 'unsolved political name-cases' or conflict-laden names

1) As examples serve the names East Sea and Sea of Japan (but these are not the only ones on the globe!): A new window for the discussion of such cases can be opened by introducing a new aspect, namely to discuss it under a space-related aspect which should deliver a further contribution to objectivity for the resolution of this conflict. In spatial planning we know the terms centre and periphery, a model for analyzing economic, political, social or cultural relations between nations or regions; economic geography makes also use of this concept. Both terms are interrelated: centre is defined by good infrastructure, education, health systems, socio-systems, powerful economy, and so on, while periphery stands for bad infrastructure, minor education, low health and social systems, underdeveloped economy and so on. That means that as seen from the

¹⁵⁾ www.beecoswebengine.org/servlet/Web?s=1575730&p=APNIEVE_About (15-12-2014)

¹⁶⁾ ARD Aussprachedatenbank (www.ard.de)

observer names can be either in the centre (of attention) or on the periphery, depending on the perspective of the viewer or agent. Centre and periphery is not a static but a dynamic concept. That entails also that the names can come and go, mostly depending on changing political, sociological and economic developments. Names can come into the focus of attention and fade out of memory, the processes of name changes, creation of new names, the extinction of names and the reinstatement of names in the course of time are well known. We remember the reinstatement of names in areas where autochthonous minorities live (e.g. Australia with an official dual-naming policy), mostly accompanied by a dual naming policy. What new findings can be deduced from historical processes and their analysis for the future, for the administrative bodies in pursuing a liberal names policy? Generally, officially adopted names count rather to the static parts of our linguistic vocabulary (it can also be seen in the grammar, in the spelling with the preservation of old word forms etc.) and cannot be changed *ad libitum*; this serves the protection of names. The readiness for name changes on the administrative level is limited, needs good justification, a consensual solution or long patience. In the example of the names East Sea and Sea of Japan, where an international names policy relying on an now overcome geopolitical system codified the single name Sea of Japan/Nihonkai in the first quarter of the 20th century, which serves still as the only valid name for international official bodies like the IHO despite of the fundamentally altered political circumstances. In the times of its codification in 1929 (IHO Publication Limits of Oceans and Seas) Korea was under Japanese sovereignty. Japan stood at that time in the geopolitical centre, Korea on the periphery, and under these circumstances the name Nihonkai ranged in the centre of political attention, and likewise could the name Donghae be deleted or neglected. Now, more than 90 years later Korea moved up to the centre and we recognize since some decades two centres, the two sovereign states Korea and Japan. What are the indications for centre respectively periphery? Centres are characterized by good technical and social infrastructures, institutional structures, high educational standards, auspicious economic structures, and so on. All that was established in Korea over the past nearly seven decades and pushed since the New Community Movement during the 1970ies. From the Korean perspective the name Sea of Japan stands not solely in the centre and the reinstatement of the Korean name Donghae with its two thousand years old tradition should rightfully be taken into consideration. One must recall that in historical maps the location of the Sea of Japan was somehow unclear, the name was not only used for the sea between the two states

but in some older maps is also known as denomination of the sea east of Japan (see the various *Mappae Mundi* and other maps). The name designated not always the same object, whereas the name Donghae = East Sea (alternating with Sea of Korea) was always the name for the sea between the two countries. The present situation does not mirror the wide-reaching (geo)political changes during the last 70 years. The reinstatement of the old Korean name East Sea – together with the name Sea of Japan - could be of cultural value for both sides: Korea could take together with Japan a leading position in future cultural and peacekeeping co-operations in and for the Pacific area and on the other side it would be appreciated as a generous sign of an open minded Japan by the international community.

2) Another situation is given with the use of geographical names on the regional (and unofficial) level: here we find a rather dynamic process and people very soon adopt new names into their mental vocabulary going hand in hand with new developments (e.g. when the unification of the two German states took place, former autochthonous city names were reinstated while the imposed names during the German Democratic Republic faded out of memory very soon). The old names were still part of the mental vocabulary of the inhabitants and therefore were no obstacle for its quick reinstatement.

In our cases this mental vocabulary exists on both sides of the conflicting parties, on the Korean side an overwhelming number of inhabitants use the name Donghae; the respective names are for both sides central questions: a reinstatement of the old Korean name is equalized with the regaining of identity in its whole scope on the Korean side and with the loss of power and political influence on the Japanese side and the. The present single-name solution disregards the right of a sovereign country to save its cultural heritage. The above-mentioned political factors for maintaining a 'colonial' name have come out of time, also on the international floor, it needs only a small step forward to re-adjust a lost name to establish appropriate conditions. The surplus value which lies in a dual name (or even in a compromise solution for a single name) is undoubtedly given for both sides on the cultural level: Culture in the UNESCO definition is understood as "... ways of living together".¹⁷⁾

¹⁷⁾ See footnote 4.