



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Ref.: E.T. 5/97



*Meeting of the UNGEGN Romano-Hellenic Division
and International Scientific Symposium
Geographical names as intangible cultural heritage
Florence [Firenze], Italy, 25th – 27th March 2015*

**Toponymic Standardization in Cyprus
Geographical Names - Intangible Cultural Heritage**

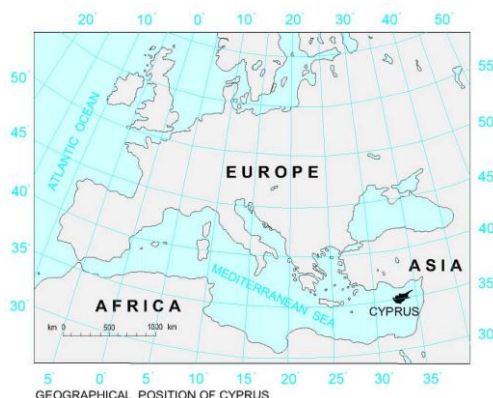
Cyprus Permanent Committee
for the Standardization of Geographical Names (CPCSGN)

Prepared by: Andreas Hadjiraftis

*President of Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names of Cyprus
Senior Lands Officer, Head of Cartography Branch,
Department of Lands and Surveys, Ministry of Interior,
Lefkosia, Cyprus
Tel: +35722447909 | Fax: +35722769694 | email: ahadjiraftis@dls.moi.gov.cy
Website: www.geonoma.gov.cy*

1. Introduction

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean, after Sicily and Sardinia, with an area of 9.251 sq. km (3.572 sq. miles). It is situated at the north-eastern corner of the Mediterranean, at a distance of 350 km north of Egypt, 102 km west of Syria, and 68 km south of Turkey. Cyprus lies at a latitude of 34,5° - 35,7° North and longitude 32,3° - 34,6° East.



The United Nations, with the decision of the Economic and Social Council in April 1961, undertook international efforts for implementing the standardization of geographical names. The Republic of Cyprus, complying to this mandate, and also complying to the related UN resolutions, participates actively in all Conferences,

Sessions and Divisions' meetings, trying always to fulfill its obligations on these very important matters.

The Cyprus Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names (CPCSGN) was officially established by the decision of the Council of Ministers no.15.769 of 21.4.1979 and constitutes the only competent National Authority for the Standardization of Geographical Names in Cyprus. According to law N.66(I)/98 and the regulations ΚΔΠ 443/2001, the Committee operates under the Minister of Education and Culture. The Minister appoints the members of the Committee every five years.

2. Cyprus Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names

The Committee was first created in 1967 and was formalized by the decision no. 15.769 of the Council of Ministers on 21.4.1977. The Committee is the body responsible for the standardization of geographical names in Cyprus. According to Law N.66(I)/98 and regulations ΚΔΠ 443/2001, the Minister of Education and Culture, as the Competent Authority appoints the President and the members of the Committee every five years. The Committee consists of a President and nine members.

The Committee mainly deals with the following topics:

1. Handles all matters related to the standardization of geographical names of the Republic of Cyprus.
2. Records the geographical names of the Republic of Cyprus, studies all related issues, and submits to the Competent Authority for approval its suggestions on standardization and coding of geographical names.
3. Represents the Republic of Cyprus in international meetings of the United Nations (UN) on issues of its competence, and cooperates with the UN and other international organizations, and the corresponding national committees of other countries, to attain the objectives provided in legislation.
4. Advises the competent local authorities for naming or renaming of streets, and the spelling of geographical names.
5. Monitors the implementation of the standardization of geographical names and the Greek to Roman alphabet transliteration system of the Greek Organization for Standardization (ELOT 743), which was accepted by the Fifth Conference of the United Nations, as a standard of the International Standardization Organization (ISO 843.3) and was adopted by the Council of Ministers.

In the exercise of its powers, the Committee selects from the existing types of geographical names, a single type for official and international use, after examining them, based on linguistic, grammatical, aesthetic, social and historical criteria.

The Committee collects data from the fields of history, linguistics, archaeology, literature, cartography and folklore that help the etymology, spelling and standardization of toponyms and names of the municipalities and the communities of Cyprus.

One of the main tasks of the Committee is also to address the Turkish arbitrariness which, in a burst of cultural ethnic cleansing, tries to impose new geographical

names, to erase and eliminate the historical geographical names of Cyprus in the occupied areas of the country. In any international forum, such as the United Nations, the Committee strives for the historical names of Cyprus, and manages to be respected and Turkish arbitrariness be canceled.

According to Law N.71(I)/2013, which was recently voted for by the Parliament, an amendment was added to the basic law, by creating a new article, which criminalizes the alteration of geographical names and toponyms and the illegal issue, import, circulation, supply, distribution and trade of maps, books or other documents, in conventional or digital form, which contain geographical names and toponyms of the Republic, imprinted differently than those specified in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Law, or those contained in the official Toponymic Gazetteer.

The Committee has issued various independent publications that help in understanding the issues which relate to geographical names, and contribute to the solution of problems arising. The creation of its website (www.geonoma.gov.cy) is another step forward in upgrading its services and activities.



CPCSNG Website – www.geonoma.gov.cy

In this website you will find information on the history, the law and the Committee's operating regulations, information with respect to its members, communications and activities, texts from its participation in conferences and events, reports on efforts to tackle Turkish arbitrariness and illegal alteration of historical names of Cyprus, maps, material for the transliteration of names into the Roman alphabet, etc.

The CPCSNG continues the tasks for the collection, the standardization and the Romanization of the Greek alphabet, according to ELOT 743, of the geographical names of the Republic of Cyprus. Almost all toponyms were gathered by appropriate and authorized bodies during the mapping of Cyprus in 1878 and later periods. The methodology and the procedure of collecting and recording the toponyms and microtoponyms of Cyprus, and their further processing, are described in detail below.

3. History and Culture

The History and Culture of Cyprus is among the oldest in the world. The first signs of civilization traced in archaeological excavations and research date back approximately 9,000 years to the 7th millennium BC. This rich cultural landscape involves hundreds of archaeological sites scattered throughout the island, representing various historical periods in the island's evolution.



*Bronze plate found in ancient Idalion, Cyprus, in 470 B.C.
One of the most important examples of Cypriot syllabic script. Provides important
information regarding the political system, socioeconomic conditions, ownership and taxation.*

To a significant extent, geography determined the historical destiny of Cyprus because of its geostrategic location, at the meeting point of three continents, namely: Europe, Asia and Africa. For certain periods, Cyprus 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. In 2008, the Republic of Cyprus joined the Euro Zone and adopted the euro as its national currency.

4. Geographical Names in Cyprus

Cyprus is privileged to have most of its geographical names bequeathed in ancient texts from Homer to Herodotus, the tragic poets and Strabon, up to ancient cartographers, like Claudius Ptolemaeus, and from medieval cartographers, like Abraham Ortelius, up to 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.



Map of Cyprus (Abraham Ortelius), 1573

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, which survived through the centuries in writing or in oral tradition until 1960, which was 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, historical documents, left by the British and the Ottoman Turks and other previous conquerors. All the conquerors of Cyprus were imposing their own systems, but they did not ever proceed to massive changes of the traditional geographical names. However, Turkey, since its invasion and occupation of approximately 37% of the territory of the Republic in 1974, is systematically changing and renaming in an arbitrary way the internationally accepted official geographical names that survived through the centuries, violating in this way the relevant resolutions of the UN Conferences on the standardization of geographical names.

5. Geographical Names Historical Background

Cyprus belongs to the Mediterranean world, having a written history with tangible evidence of at least three thousand years. Naturally, the historical sources of Cyprus refer also to toponyms. Taking as a basis the Greek presence in Cyprus, which is the dominant long-lived presence, 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. Most toponyms remain unchanged through the centuries, following only the changes which take place in the historical evolution of the language. However, some of them are altered, as time goes on. The changes of toponyms are mainly based on the introduction of new ones, which usually refer to natural entities, man-made works and new ownership.

It may be possible to compile a large archive of Cypriot toponyms in digital form by sorting out the sources from ancient times till today, texts, inscriptions, codes, maps, catalogues, and local manuscripts. This task constitutes a challenging project which may be implemented in the near future.



Toponymy of Cyprus – Part of Map of Cyprus (Mercator Hondius), 1633

6. Procedure of collecting and recording geographical names

In 1878, when the British undertook the administration of Cyprus, one of the first steps taken was the survey and mapping of Cyprus. A preliminary survey was completed in 1882 with the production of a topographical map at the scale of 1 inch:1 statute mile (1:63360) covering the whole island.

In 1883, an intensive cadastral survey was initiated and was completed in 1929. A series of cadastral plans was prepared at scales: 1:2500 and 1:5000, for rural areas, and 1:500, 1:1000 and 1:1250 for build-up areas.



Map of Cyprus (Surveyed by Kitchener), Scale 5 miles:1 inch, April 8, 1885

Before 1878 there were no significant mapping activities recorded, except of a small number of maps and nautical charts of Cyprus at scales 1:250,000 and 1:500,000 and other smaller scales, that were prepared by foreign cartographers.

From 1929 to 1960, detailed topographical and other mapping activities were of secondary importance, as a great emphasis was given on cadastral mapping. It was confined mostly with the production of the Administration and Road Map of Cyprus and other thematic maps of lower importance.

In 1969, a photogrammetric unit was installed in the Department of Lands and Surveys and a mapping project at scale 1:5000 was launched and continued until 1980, covering most parts of the island (south part). Unfortunately, due to the Turkish military invasion and occupation of its northern part since 1974, this task could not be completed.

From the beginning of the cadastral survey work in 1883, the recording of toponyms was a continuous task. It continued after the declaration of independence in 1960, and is still being carried out sporadically in our days. At first, the recording of toponyms was done for the purpose of land registration and for the declaration of immovable property, since the geographical names constitute one of the required elements of identification in administrative and legal documents.

Although formal written instructions regarding the procedure of collecting and recording toponyms could not be located, based on notes in Greek, English, and Turkish, the competent mapping authority, followed the following procedure:

Step 1: Establishment of special working groups of Land Surveyors and Cartographers from the Department of Lands and Surveys.

Step 2: Site visits and direct contact with the Community Authorities and the inhabitants.

Step 3: Appointment of experienced representatives by the Community Authorities and participation in special working groups in the field.

Step 4: The special working groups were charged for executing all field work and mapping activities, as well as for recording on sketches all of the sites declared by the Community authorized representatives, and for cross checking this information with the inhabitants.

Step 5: As the recording of toponyms was directly connected with the registration of properties, it was communicated for checking to the inhabitants. The preliminary cadastral plans which included among other information all toponyms, were exposed at the local Community Offices, for validation by the inhabitants.

Step 6: The Community Authorities submitted their comments or objections, to the Director of the Department of Lands and Surveys. Therefore all toponyms were democratically collected, validated and registered.

Step 7: Besides the names of towns and villages, toponyms, and other geographical names, there are thousands of microtoponyms, depicting all different

localities, which also have a historical importance. New toponyms were created, to state a certain human-geographical entity or a certain ownership. All these constitute an essential part of property ownership, which are not necessarily shown on cadastral plans. All of these microtoponyms were collected by experienced local enquiry land clerks, and were cross checked and recorded in conjunction with the official toponyms that were included on cadastral plans. These microtoponyms were included in the land registers and the title certificates, which again were validated by the inhabitants.

7. Standardization of Geographical Names

Up to 1967, the year of the 1st UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, no significant work was done in relation to standardization, except the verification of the material collected after field checking and minor orthographical corrections.

After 1967, the Department of Lands and Surveys, complying with all relevant UN resolutions, within the context of the systematic mapping project, which was initiated in 1969 (at scale 1:5000) and it was based on photogrammetric methods, decided to proceed systematically with the collection of supplementary names and the standardization of all geographical names.

The methodology adopted was the following:

Step 1: On every completed photogrammetric plot at scale 1:5000, all the toponyms were transferred from the cadastral plans that were already approved.

Step 2: An experienced team of cartographers and land surveyors visited the area covered by each photogrammetric plot (1X1.5 Miles), and came into direct contact with the respective Community Authorities and the inhabitants.

Step 3: The Communities appointed their experienced representatives who accompanied the team in the field.

Step 4: A re-verification or correction of the toponyms that already were transferred on the plot was done, and where necessary new toponyms were recorded.

Step 5: After the completion of the field work for every photogrammetric plot, all geographical names were transferred in special lists with their co-ordinates, along with the description of each item.

Step 6: The lists were examined by linguists, who submitted them to the Cyprus Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names (CPCSGN) for checking and approval.

Step 7: The CPCSGN, proceeded next with the transliteration of the Greek alphabet into the roman system ELOT 743. This system has the advantage of reversibility and can be computerized.

All of the above described toponyms which were gathered in the field by authorized bodies and checked repeatedly, constitute all the official toponyms, Greek and Turkish of the Republic of Cyprus, which are used by its people. Many of the above

geographical names belong to ancient texts from the depths of history and these include works by such notable names as Homer, Herodotus, and Strabon up to ancient cartographers, like Claudius Ptolemaeus and from medieval cartographers, like Ortelius up to the 19th Century (1878) when the British undertook the rule of the island.

8. Standardization of Odonyms

Odonyms (street names) in Cyprus are given and maintained by Municipal and Community Councils. These odonyms, are under the approval of the respective District Officers, which operate under the Ministry of Interior. All official street names are communicated to the Cyprus Permanent Committee for Standardization of Geographical Names, for checking and correction, in order to achieve uniformity all over the island.

The Greek odonyms, as these are expressed with the terms “Οδός/Odos” (Street), Λεωφόρος/Leoforos (Avenue), Πλατεία/Plateia (Square), are all in genitive case. For the Greek odonyms of Cyprus, the following principles are applied:

- a) All given names are complete (they are not abbreviated), to identify the persons, in honour of whom these are given.
- b) Names in ancient language are recorded in the genitive case of each ancient name, as it happens with surnames of citizens. The names in modern language are recorded in the genitive case of each modern name.
- c) The transcription to the approved Roman system, where it is applicable, is obligatory.
- d) In the road signs, the Greek names are written on top and the Roman type at the bottom. The Roman transcription is done following each letter of the Greek names. The same principle is followed for foreign names as well. The foreign writing of foreign names is not used on road signs.

9. CPCSGN Editions and Current Activities

CPCSGN prepared a variety of editions to serve several purposes.

A Booklet/Guide for the Standardization of Names was compiled and published in December 2007. This Guide is in the Greek language and includes a large number of items to cover all the sectors involved with geographical names and is suitable especially for local use and needs. The Committee continues to distribute this booklet to academic institutions, schools, government and semi-government departments, cultural centers, and individuals interested in the topic.

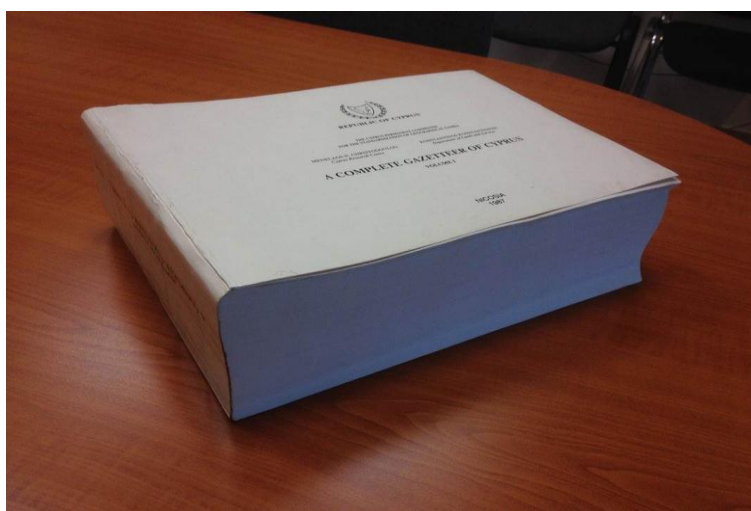
A Promotional Brochure, was prepared in both the Greek and the English languages, and it was published as 2nd Edition in 2009. This Brochure was distributed also to all of the above sectors, and continues to be distributed when needed.

The “Toponymic Guidelines” presented in draft form during the 22nd UNGEGN Session have already been revised and amended accordingly.

A list of names of countries and capitals was submitted during the 10th UN Conference and the 27th Session of UNGEGN, and was also distributed to many government departments, ministries, academic institutions, schools, and other interested bodies. It is also available on CPCSGN's website.

The existing national gazetteers prepared by the CPCSGN in 1982 and 1987 respectively are:

- (i) The “*Concise Gazetteer of Cyprus*” (about 2000 entries)
- (ii) The “*A Complete Gazetteer of Cyprus*” (about 67000 entries)

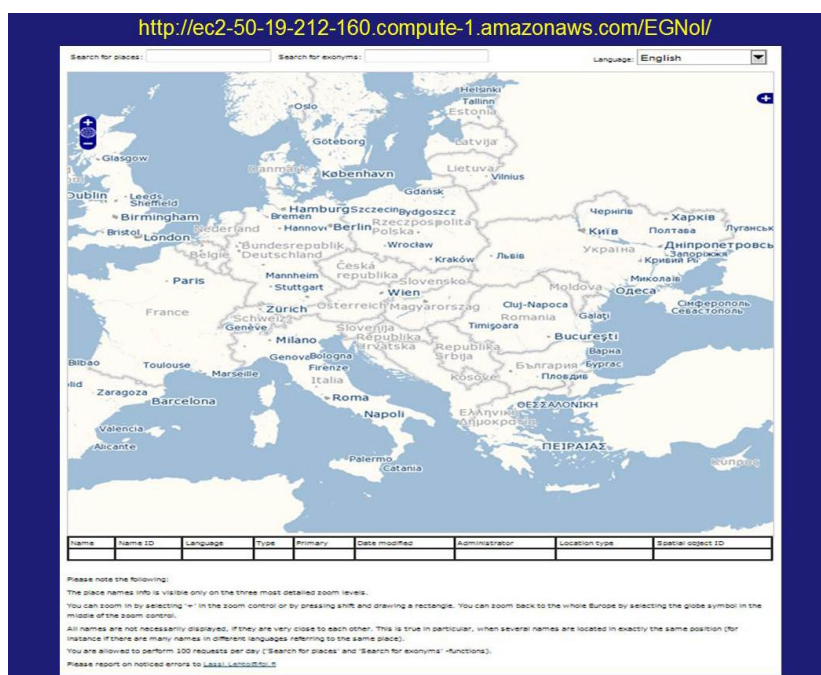


Complete Gazetteer of Cyprus, 1987

All geographical names and toponyms included in these gazetteers were derived from the official large scale cadastral map series of the Department of Lands and Surveys. The Complete Gazetteer of Cyprus was recently digitized, and is currently available on CPCSGN's website.

All cadastral maps of Cyprus have already been digitized and their information was categorized and stored in digital relational databases and Geographical Information Systems (GIS). Based on these databases, it is possible today to produce a new, more precise gazetteer.

All geographical names and toponyms were included in a distributed European database named EuroGeonames through EuroGeographics, and they are available on line at: <http://ec2-50-19-212-160.compute-1.amazonaws.com/EGNol/>



EuroGeonames Database

Provides on-line access to the major geographical names of Europe including Cyprus

During the last three years more than 3000 odonyms have been examined and processed, offering services to government, and local government authorities, for the standardization and transcription from the Greek Alphabet to the Roman script according to ELOT 743.

10. Work in progress

The following tasks are currently being scheduled:

1. The preparation of a new and improved edition of the Concise Gazetteer consisting of about 2000 names.
2. The compilation of volume II of the “Complete Gazetteer of Cyprus”. For the implementation of this task, close cooperation was established with the University of Cyprus and the Department of Lands and Surveys. Further research and field work is needed to complement the whole project.
3. The preparation of a catalogue of geographical names for hydrographical features. Cooperation has been established with the Geodetic and Hydrographical Branch of the Department of Lands and Surveys.
4. The preparation of a Complete Odonoms Gazetteer.
5. The compilation of a glossary under the title «Generic terms in Geographical Names of Cyprus».

12. Conclusion

The CPCSGN strongly supports the efforts undertaken by the U.N. for the standardization of geographical names and aims to comply and implement the U.N. and UNGEGN Conferences resolutions for the standardization of geographical names.

The Republic of Cyprus gives a great importance on the implementation of the U.N. Conference resolutions on the standardization of geographical names, as a part of its duties for safeguarding the cultural heritage.