Reasons for the emergence of exonyms

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Abstract:

When countries like most recently Turkey or already earlier Ivory Coast, Swaziland and others require from the international community to use the endonymic forms of their country names (*Türkyie, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini,* respectively) also in international communication and in all other languages, the question arises, why and for which purpose do we have exonyms in the sense of place names not used by the local community and why have these exonyms emerged. It is also interesting to see that although the United Nations and its Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) had for several decades a rather restrictive attitude towards exonyms resulting in corresponding resolutions and although the bloc of Communist countries in Europe after World War II had banned exonyms as expressions of nationalism, exonym use persisted and re-emerged in the countries of eastern Europe immediately after the implosion of Communism. Obviously, exonyms are functional and useful at least in some fields of communication.

The paper will highlight some major reasons for the emergence of exonyms, but also try to explain why in other cases under similar conditions (ceteris paribus) exonyms do not emerge or are not used anymore. Do exonyms always emerge spontaneously or is there sometimes some language planning behind it, is there something like invented or politically intended exonyms? The question why exonyms emerge, because they are obviously needed and functional as well as the question for invented and politically intended exonyms are not just academic but affect very much also map making and especially editors of school and world atlases who have for features of major importance usually the choice between endonym and exonym.

References

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