

# Exonyms in Spanish. Criteria and usage in cartography

Irene Sahagún Luis<sup>a,\*</sup>, Bárbara Alonso Tagle<sup>a,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> National Geographic Institute of Spain, [isahagun@mitma.es](mailto:isahagun@mitma.es), [balonso@mitma.es](mailto:balonso@mitma.es)

\* Corresponding author

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## Abstract:

The National Geographic Institute, through the National Atlas of Spain, is the authority responsible of standardising and disseminating the foreign geographical names it uses in the official cartography of Spain. The need to implement standardised practices in our official cartography and the importance of sharing usage criteria applicable to exonyms in Spanish are the reasons behind the publication of this paper, as well as it serves as a national reference, which can be useful for institutions and experts in toponymy in other countries.

Inspired by the statements and opinions on exonyms published by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN, Working Group on Exonyms), we examined the particular characteristics of exonyms in Spanish.

Firstly, we outline the internationally agreed definitions that differentiate endonyms (the name of a geographical feature in a language used in the area where it is located) from exonyms (a name which, unlike the endonym, is in a language not used in the place where the geographical feature is located), considering their specificities and fundamental traits, which have been the subject of numerous reports and clarifications.

Subsequently, we look at the levels of exonym usage in different contexts, and, as issues fundamental to the treatment of exonyms, the problems that can arise from the use of phonetic transcription or transliteration to romanise names that use non-Latin alphabet.

The second part of the publication examines the most commonly observed features in exonym formations (morphological adaptations, orthographic conversion and suffixation) and looks at the romanization of Greek toponyms.

The current usage of exonyms is highlighted by tracing their evolution and describing the various levels of standardisation applied for different geographical entities.

The last section looks at how foreign toponyms are handled in cartography, detailing the criteria applied according to the different types of geographical entities: the basic fields to be included in databases in order to subsequently automate labelling, the use of generic terms, whether preference is given to the endonym or exonym, hybrid toponyms and other aspects of the labelling process.

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## References

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