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Culture, heritage and language recognition: Exonyms

Polish exonyms of buildings and other urban objects

Submitted by Poland **

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Polish exonyms of buildings and other urban objects

The list of Polish exonyms for buildings and other urban objects, titled “Official list of Polish geographical names of the world. Supplement: List of names of buildings and other urban objects”, was published in December 2024.

1. List of Polish exonyms

The “Official list of polish geographical names of the world”, prepared by the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland, was first published in 2013, with a second edition released in 2019. This publication contains Polish names for geographical objects located outside Poland – i.e. Polish exonyms – recommended by the Commission. The list includes Polish names for 13,599 geographical objects. The 2013 and 2019 editions were preceded by earlier publications compiled by the Commission, which also presented recommended Polish names for geographical features outside Poland: twelve volumes of “Geographical names of the world” were published between 2004 and 2010, while four volumes of “Polish geographical names of the world” appeared between 1994 and 1996.

Both editions of the “Official list of polish geographical names of the world” did not include names of buildings and structures, such as temples, monasteries and other places of worship, forts, fortresses, castles, bridges, railway stations, airports, as well as names of streets, squares, cemeteries, necropolises, and city parks (these names may be classified as urbanonyms). Although some objects of this type were included in both the “Geographical names of the world” and the “Polish geographical names of the world”, they were deliberately omitted when compiling the “Official list of polish geographical names of the world”. At the same time, the Commission decided to prepare a separate, systematized list dedicated to such objects.

The “List of names of buildings and other urban objects”, serving as a supplement to the “Official list of polish geographical names of the world”, is the realization of this decision.

2. List of Polish names of buildings and other urban objects

The list retains the traditional division into parts of the world (Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Australia and Oceania) and further categorizes objects by country and territory – limited to those for which Polish names of buildings are recommended – following the structure used in the “Official list of polish geographical names of the world”. It includes names of 1,691 objects from 133 countries and territories.

The basis for this list was the names of buildings and structures found in the “Geographical names of the world” volumes, which contained Polish names of approximately 430 buildings and other urban objects. Later, the Commission expanded this nomenclature by analyzing publications on individual countries. Particularly significant sources included guidebooks and monographs on cities and countries, as well as lexicons and encyclopedias.

During this work, however, it became evident that compiling a complete list of buildings and structures for which Polish names are used was virtually impossible. In travel guidebooks, Polish versions of names are often created ad hoc, especially in the case of buildings and structures where translation is straightforward (e.g. translation of church names or street names). Consequently, it was decided that the basic criterion for selecting objects would be their popularity and cultural significance. Only after identifying these significant objects was it determined whether recommending a Polish name was justified. Understandably, those “more significant” ones are considered from the Polish perspective, resulting in a predominance of objects from Europe and, within Europe, a strong representation of objects from areas historically associated with Poland.

Unlike geographical objects, buildings often do not have an official name and are referred to by commonly used names. Even when an official name exists, non-official variants are frequently used, including in maps and guidebooks. In some cases, even building's administrators use different names or spelling variations in official documents. These variations may concern the use of entirely different names, as well as different generic terms or alternative spellings of the word appearing in the name. Official names of buildings, assigned by their administrators, are often not widely recognized or commonly used. Therefore, in the case of the names of buildings and structures, the Commission tried, first of all, to prioritize names that are actually in use – both the original names (endonyms) and the Polish names.

A specific issue arises with Polish historical names. For buildings located in areas that were within Poland's borders before World War II, guidebooks sometimes use pre-war Polish names, even if names of buildings have since changed. In such cases, the Commission consistently recommends using a Polish name that reflects the contemporary original name rather than to the historical one.

The dispersion of naming also applies to Polish exonyms – often various forms of the name for the same object appear in publications, sometimes differing slightly from each other, sometimes substantially. The Commission tried to identify and recommend the most frequently used and linguistically correct forms.

The list includes contemporary names – if an object has changed its function, it is listed under the name corresponding to its current purpose (e.g. *Rotunda of St. George* [rotunda Świętego Jerzego] (church) in Thessaloniki, not *Mausoleum of Galerius* [mauzoleum Galeriusza], or *Selimiye Mosque* [meczet Selima] in Nicosia, not *St. Sophia Cathedral* [katedra Świętej Zofii]). However, an exception is made for religious buildings converted into museums, concert halls, or other facilities – if such an object is primarily known by its original name (e.g. *St. Paul's Church* in Frankfurt am Main – nowadays a conference and exhibition building), this name is included in the list.

For certain objects, publications contain either fully Polonized names or the original name with only a translated generic term. In such cases, an exonym is included in the list only if the Polish name is more commonly used. If the original name is predominant (e.g. *Notre-Dame Cathedral* [katedra Notre-Dame] rather than *St. Mary's Cathedral* [katedra Najświętszej Marii Panny] in Paris, *Ponte Vecchio* rather than *Goldsmiths Bridge* [most Złotników] in Florence, *Gare du Nord* rather than *North Station* [dworzec Północny] in Paris), the object is excluded from the list, as the Commission does not recommend an exonym in such cases. Additionally, a number of well-known names where only the generic term is Polonized are omitted, as the translation of the generic term into Polish can be done ad hoc if needed.

The list also limits the names of memorial monuments by omitting those whose names consist solely of a generic term (monument, statue, column, etc.) and the name of the historical figure to whom a monument is dedicated, e.g. *St. Wenceslas Statue* in Prague, *Peter I Statue* in Saint Petersburg, or *Nelson's Column* in London. These names can be easily translated when necessary.

In the case of institutions such as museums or universities, the list includes only the names of the buildings housing these institutions, and not the names of the institutions themselves. For that reason, some well-known museums and universities are omitted from the list unless they are also known for the buildings they occupy.

With regard to complexes of buildings, such as complexes of ruins, monasteries, or lavras, Polish names are generally listed in the publication for the complex as a whole rather than for individual buildings within it. Similarly, non-self-contained parts of larger buildings are omitted, such as the *Borgia Apartments* within the Papal Palace in Vatican City.

Concerning transport facilities, such as airports and railway stations, Polish usage generally favors the original names, sometimes with the generic term translated – e.g. *Berlin Hauptbahnhof*, *Grand Central Terminal*. Therefore, the list includes only a few names of objects of this type – those for which exonyms exist. Names of cities found within the names of railway stations and airports can be

translated ad hoc, provided that Polish exonyms for these cities exist, hence no reason to include them in the list.

3. Layout of the publication

The list is divided into six parts (chapters) containing names of objects from a specific part of the world (i.e. Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Australia and Oceania). Within each chapter, names are arranged according to countries and non-self-governing territories. Names of objects from the areas of individual countries and non-self-governing territories are arranged by 16 categories.

Each entry related to particular geographic features presents the Polonized form (exonym) first, followed by its genitive and locative form or information that the name is undeclinable. Then an adjective derived from the exonym is given if it is derived from a given name. In the next part of the entry the original name (endonym) is listed in the official language(s) of the country or territory. The language in which the name appears is indicated before the name itself. For names in non-Roman writing systems, both the original form of the name and its romanized form (i.e. converted to the Roman script) are provided. In such cases, the transliteration is provided first then the transcription of the original name, or in other words, the phonetic conversion of the name into Polish, usually in letters of the Polish alphabet. The names are followed by the geographical coordinates of the feature, usually accurate to one arc second (Fig. 1).

In some cases, Polish variant names or Polish equivalents of official names are also included. In such instances, the first name listed is the one that the Commission considers most appropriate, however, alternative forms are also acceptable. Square brackets at the end of entries contain additional information and notes such as the city in which the object is located, additional characteristics of the object or its location, and selected historical Polish names of the object (Fig. 1).

aleja Wolności, *D.* alei Wolności, *Mc.* alei Wolności; *ukr.* проспект Свободи – prospekt Svobody (*trl.*), prospekt Svobody (*trb.*); 49°50'20"N, 24°01'45"E ↔ 49°50'40"N, 24°01'34"E [Lwów; hist.: *Wąły Hetmańskie*]

bazylika Narodzenia Pańskiego, *D.* bazyliki Narodzenia Pańskiego, *Mc.* bazylice Narodzenia Pańskiego; *arab.* كنيسة المهد – Kanīsat al-Mahd (*trl.*), Kanīsat al-Mahd (*trb.*); كنيسة القيامة – Kanīsat al-Qiyāmah (*trl.*), Kanīsat al-Kijama (*trb.*); 31°42'15,7"N, 35°12'26,7"E [Betlejem]

Biała Fara, *D.* Białej Fary, *Mc.* Białej Farze; *ofic.* **kościół Przemienienia Pańskiego**, *D.* kościoła Przemienienia Pańskiego, *Mc.* kościoła Przemienienia Pańskiego; *blr.* касьцёл Перамянення Пана – kasciōł Pieramianiennia Pana (*trl.*), kasciōł Pieramianiennia Pana (*trb.*); *ros.* костёл Преображения Господня – kostēl Preobraženija Gospodnja (*trl.*), kostiōł Priobraženija Gospodnia (*trb.*); 53°36'05"N, 25°49'49"E [Nowogródek]

brama Niebiańskiego Spokoju, *D.* bramy Niebiańskiego Spokoju, *Mc.* bramie Niebiańskiego Spokoju; *chiń.* 天安门 – Tian'anmen; 39°54'26,4"N, 116°23'28,5"E [Pekin]

cmentarz Kukijski, *D.* cmentarza Kukijskiego, *Mc.* cmentarzu Kukijskim; *gruz.* კუკიის სასაფლაო – K'uk'iis Sasaplao (*trl.*), Kukiis Sasaplao (*trb.*); 41°42'57"N, 44°48'45"E [Tbilisi]

Eurotunel, *D.* Eurotunelu, *Mc.* Eurotunelu, *przym.* eurotunelowy; *ang.* Channel Tunnel; 51°00'55"N, 1°29'56"E ↔ 51°05'49"N, 1°09'21"E (50°55'22"N, 1°46'49"E ↔ 51°05'49"N, 1°09'21"E) [również Francja]

Hagia Sophia, *D.* Hagii Sophii, *Mc.* Hagii Sophii; *tur.* Ayasofya; Ayasofya Camii; *ofic.* Ayasofya-i Kebir Camii; 41°00'31"N, 28°58'48"E [Stambul; hist.: *kościół Mądrości Bożej*]

Fig. 1. Examples of the scope and arrangement of entries.

At the end of the publication, an index of Polish names included in the list is provided, preceded by an explanation of its arrangement. The name index includes only the Polish names from the list (excluding original names), including those listed as historical. Names are arranged in alphabetical order without considering diacritics not used in the Polish language. The name of each object is given separately in the index, even if several objects, including those on the same page, have the same name.

The publication is available exclusively in digital format (as a PDF file) and can be downloaded free of charge from the website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland: <https://www.gov.pl/web/ksng-en/official-list-of-polish-geographical-names-of-the-world-supplement-list-of-names-of-buildings-and-other-urban-objects3>.

Conclusion

The list of Polish names of buildings and other urban objects, published at the end of 2024, serves as a supplement to the basic, constantly updated list of Polish geographical names of the world (Polish exonyms). Its development was a response to the needs of recipients who had complained about the lack of lists and guidelines for Polish names, not only for foreign geographical features but also for other types of objects, such as buildings, located outside Poland.

Points for discussion

The Group of Experts is invited to:

- (1) Take note about the list of Polish names of buildings and other urban objects as another type of lists containing exonyms.
- (2) Share experiences related to similar work conducted in other countries.
- (3) Provide comments and opinions on whether there is a need for similar lists in other languages.