

Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Armenia

United States Board on Geographic Names
Foreign Names Committee



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1. Introduction

This geographic names standardization policy has been prepared as an aid to those geographic names experts who are the working staff for the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) in the standardization of the geographic names of Armenia for United States Government use. The BGN and its staff work to effect consistent treatment of geographic name spellings in US Government databases, publications, maps, and charts. The country policies are intended to satisfy, in part, the statutory requirements levied upon the BGN in Public Law USC 80-242 to develop principles, policies and procedures for geographic names standardization, and to promulgate decisions with respect to the principles of geographic nomenclature and orthography.

2. Languages and Language Policy

a. Demographics

The population of Armenia is 3.02 million persons, according to the latest official national census, conducted in 2011 by the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia¹. By 2017, the same organization estimated a slight decline in population to approximately 2.98M. Approximately two-thirds of the population resides in the capital city, Yerevan². The population is largely homogenous, with ethnic Armenians comprising the vast majority—over 98%—of the population. Yazidi (Kurd), Russian, Georgian, Assyrian, and other minority groups make up less than 2% of the population.

b. Languages

The official language of Armenia is Armenian (ISO 639-3 code *hye*), an independent branch of the Indo-European languages. The Eastern dialect is most commonly spoken throughout the country and used in official writing, however the Western dialect can be found in pockets of the country as well, although it is more common among Armenian diaspora in the Caucasus and the Middle East. The Armenian alphabet contains thirty-nine (39) characters and remains largely unchanged from the time it was originally composed by the scholar and monk Mesrop Mashtots in 405 AD.

c. Geographic Names Standardization

Armenia's national authority for geographic names is the Center of Geodesy and Cartography (*Geodeziayi ev Kartezagrut'yan Kentron*). Established in 2003, this body falls administratively

¹ National Statistical Service of Armenia (Hayastani Hanrapetut'yan Vichakagrakan Komite)
Results of the 2011 Population Census of the Republic of Armenia

<http://www.armstat.am/> or www.armstat.info address: 3 Government House, Republic Avenue, Yerevan, 0010;
phone: (+37 410) 52-33-56; email: info@armstat.am

² Atlas Hayastani Hanrapetut'yuny Marzerov ev K'aghak' Erevanov, 2016 (The Republic of Armenia by the Regions and Yerevan City [sic] Figures for 2016), National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia,

<http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99505763.pdf>

under the Republic of Armenia State Committee of the Real Property Cadastre (*Hayastani Hanrapetut'yan Karavarurt'yann Arrynt'er Ansharzh Guyk'i Kadastr'i Petakan Komite*). The Center periodically publishes a national atlas with updated economic, demographic, environmental and other data at the national and provincial levels. The latest edition, published in 2007 in two volumes, is available for download in its entirety on the Center's website at <http://www.cadastre.am/atlasA> and <http://www.cadastre.am/atlasB/view>

3. Toponymic Policies

a. Orthography

Geographic names standardization policy will follow Armenian orthographic conventions. The user of Armenian geographic sources should be aware that some non-official sources may occasionally contain variant place names or generic terms in other languages, particularly Russian, as a holdover from Soviet conventions. Depending on the source used, place names or generics near international borders and near disputed areas may also appear in an alternate language, for example Azerbaijani.

b. Romanization

Romanization is in accordance with the BGN/PCGN System for Armenian developed in 1981. A total of 39 Roman letters and letter combinations are used as equivalents to Armenian characters, and reflect the Eastern dialect of Armenian. Please see Appendix A for the complete romanization table.

c. Diacritics

The only diacritical mark encountered in Approved Names for Armenia is a ' (Right Single Quotation Mark,) Unicode value 2019, which is found in conjunction with the characters: Թ (t'), Չ (ch'), Յ (ts'), Փ (p'), Զ (k'). Please reference the romanization system table for additional details.

d. Generic Terms

A generic is a term used to describe a geographic feature, such as 'river,' 'hill,' and 'lake.' If the generic term does not identify the feature, the term should be considered a false generic and should not be added to the generic field of the GNDB. Generic terms are not collected for populated places. Appendix B provides a partial list of common generic terms one may encounter in Armenian geographic names sources. Abbreviated generics found on native sources should be expanded when collecting; see Section 3h. Abbreviations below.

e. Hyphenation, Capitalization, and Spelling

Generics found on Armenian sources may or may not be capitalized. When collecting and

romanizing Armenian names for the Geographic Names Database (GNDB), all generics should be capitalized. For example, a lake listed as Քարի լիճ should be collected as Քարի Լիճ (Non-Roman Script), and K'ari Lich (Approved.)

f. Long and Short Forms

Long and short forms of names of populated places are approved when supported by official evidence.

Short forms are not added for Variant names in the GNDB. Short-form names are to be ranked as the primary approved name and the long form as the secondary approved name.

g. Numbers

Names containing cardinal or ordinal numerals should be treated according to the following guidelines:

- Arabic numbers are generally expanded in the Armenian language; i.e., 2-դ on source should be written as երկրորդ (yerkrord.)
- Roman numerals are most frequently seen on descriptions of historic sites to designate dates, however, this information is not considered to be part of the proper name and should therefore be excluded. If encountered as part of the proper name, Roman numerals should be retained throughout.

These guidelines apply to numerals in both initial and non-initial positions.

h. Abbreviations

Abbreviations are commonly found on cartographic products of Armenia. Abbreviated generics must be spelled out in the GNDB. For example, *Տոլորսի ջրամբար* should be collected as *Տոլորսի Ջրամբար* (Non-Roman Script) and Tolorsi Jrambar (Approved) with *Ջրամբար* (*Jrambar*), or Reservoir, being the generic term.

Aside from generic terms, Armenian sources frequently include the abbreviation մ.է.թ. (m.e.t'.) expanded as մեր թվագրությունից առաջ (mer t'vagrut'yunits arraj) which means "B.C." This marking is written in conjunction with a date, usually in Roman numerals, and with the abbreviations դդ. (դարան/daran/centuries), հազ. (հազարնյակ/hazarmyak/millennium) or թթ. (թվական/t'vakan/years) to label sites of historical significance. For example, the ruins of fortress Շաղատ/Shaghat appear on the source as Շաղատ (մ.տ.ա. VI-IV դդ.). The date is considered extraneous information and only the name Շաղատ (Non-Roman Script) and Shaghat (Approved) is entered in the GNDB.

Another commonly encountered abbreviation is Սբ (Sb.) or its declined form, Սբի (Sbi) which means "Saint" and should be recorded in its expanded form as Սուրբ (Surb) or Սուրբի (Surbi), respectively. For example, Սբ Գրիգոր is recorded as Սուրբ Գրիգոր (Non-Roman Script) and Surb Grik'or (Approved).

Appendix C contains a glossary of commonly found abbreviations and other helpful map terminology. This list is not exhaustive.

i. Unique Linguistic Situations

Alternate Names

Feature names in Armenian sources may appear with alternate names in parentheses. Where supported by evidence, names in parentheses should be entered as Variant names in the GNDB.

Occasionally, the user may encounter place names that have been renamed—some, more than once—throughout different periods in Armenia’s history, particularly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union; thus, it is helpful to be aware of the date and production authority of the source. Most notably, Gyumri, the second largest city in Armenia, was known as *Leninakan* during the Soviet era. Historically, the city was also once known as *Alexandropol* and *Kumayri*.

Declension

In the Armenian language, place names paired with a generic are subject to declension, although sources may or may not list the declined term. Most commonly, the ending *ի* (i) is added to the proper name to demonstrate the possessive form, as in the case of the town of *Միսիան* (Sisian) in southern Armenia, which is situated near a mountain pass by the same name. In the case of the mountain pass, the name changes to *Միսիանի Լեռնանցք* (Sisiani Lerrnants’k’).

Similarly, a source could list *Որոտան Լեռ* (Vorotan Lerr) to designate the Vorotan mountain but *Որոտանի Լեռնանցք* (Vorotani Lerrnants’k’) to designate the Vorotan mountain pass. Names should be transliterated and recorded in the GNDB as they appear on the source. In this example, the correct entry for the Approved Name would be Vorotani Lerrnants’k’ and Lerrnants’k’ would be listed as the Generic.

The ending *ա* (a) can also indicate declension, as in the case of Armenia’s largest lake, *Սևան* (Sevan) which becomes *Սևանա* (Sevana) when combined with the generic *լիճ* (lich, or lake). The correct entry for the Approved Name would be Sevana Lich, with Lich listed as the Generic.

Fonts

The reader of Armenian map sources should be aware that several letters in the alphabet appear significantly different depending on the font they are written in, and whether they are typed or handwritten. For example, the upper-case of the thirty-first character in the alphabet, may appear as **S** when typed, but **Տ** when handwritten; its lower case appears as **ս** when typed, but **ս** when handwritten. Similarly, the upper-case of the twentieth character appears as **Մ** when typed, but as **մ** when handwritten.

Cross-Border Features

Cross-border features may appear in Armenian with the Georgian, Azerbaijani, Turkish, or even Russian name as a variant. The user should be aware of ongoing developments in the

geopolitical environment, especially those related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which heighten sensitivity to border demarcations. Please see discussion on Disputed Territories and Enclaves and Exclaves below.

4. Political Geography Policy

a. Country Name

Conventional short form:	Armenia
Conventional long form:	Republic of Armenia
Armenian short form - romanized:	Hayastan
Armenian short form – Native Script:	Հայաստան
Armenian long form - romanized:	Hayastani Hanrapetut'yun
Armenian long form – Native Script:	Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն

b. Capital Name

Approved name:	Yerevan
Native Script:	Երևան

c. First-Order Administrative Divisions

Armenia has eleven first-order administrative divisions: ten districts, or *marzan* (singular: *marz*) and the capital region, or *k'aghak'*, of Yerevan City. Each *marz* has an administrative center, or *marzayin kentron*. Please see Appendix D for a map depicting the first-order administrative divisions in Armenia.

First-order administrative divisions of Armenia

<i>Name</i>	<i>Generic</i>	<i>GEC</i>	<i>GENC</i>	<i>Seat</i>
Aragatsotn	Marz	AM01	AM-AG	Ashtarak
Ararat	Marz	AM02	AM-AR	Artashat
Armavir	Marz	AM03	AM-AV	Armavir
Geghark'unik'	Marz	AM04	AM-GR	Gavarr
Kotayk'	Marz	AM05	AM-KT	Hrazdan
Lorri	Marz	AM06	AM-LO	Vanadzor
Shirak	Marz	AM07	AM-SH	Gyumri
Syunik'	Marz	AM08	AM-SU	Kapan

<i>Name</i>	<i>Generic</i>	<i>GEC</i>	<i>GENC</i>	<i>Seat</i>
Tavush	Marz	AM09	AM-TV	Ijevan
Vayots' Dzor	Marz	AM10	AM-VD	Yeghek'nadzor
Yerevan	K'aghak'	AM11	AM-ER	--

For the latest information on country-specific boundary disputes, consult the US Department of State Office of the Geographer and Global Issues.

Disputed Territories

The most significant territorial dispute involves Armenia's claims on the eastern territory of Nagorno-Karabakh (Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի Հանրապետություն/Lernayin Gharabaghi Hanrapetut'yn), a claim not recognized by the United States. Internationally, this region is recognized as part of Azerbaijan, and the Armenian form should not be used on US Government products.

Populated largely by ethnic Armenians, this territory was part of Azerbaijan under the Soviet Union. Escalating tensions culminated in a war between 1988–1994, after the territory's parliament voted to secede from Azerbaijan and to unify the region with Armenia. The war ended after an internationally-mediated ceasefire in 1994, however, sporadic fighting has broken out in the region on numerous occasions since. Although internationally, the region is recognized as part of Azerbaijan, many Armenian official maps and atlases include Nagorno-Karabakh.

The status of the region is still in negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the United States does not recognize the Armenian claims on Nagorno-Karabakh.

Enclaves and Exclaves

Artsvashen within Geghark'unik'i Marz (ADM04), is an Armenian enclave located inside Azerbaijan at approximately 40°38'25" N, 045°31'32" E. Prior to 1992, this territory was occupied predominantly by ethnic Armenians. Since 1992, this territory has been occupied by Azerbaijan. The United States does not recognize the Azerbaijani occupation of this territory.

Likewise, there are five small Azerbaijani exclaves located inside Armenia and occupied by Armenia. Please refer to the Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Azerbaijan for more information.³ The United States does not recognize Armenian occupation of these territories.

³ http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/Policies/Azerbaijan_Country_Policy_webversion_Jun2014.pdf

d. Conventional and Anglicized Names

Conventional Names

<i>Name</i>	<i>UFI</i>	<i>UNI</i>	<i>Designation</i>
Aras River	-3053542	-4278751	STM
Transcaucasia	-3043994	-4267324	RGN
Lake Sevan	-2325361	11148656	LK
Caucasus	-2326446	406443	RGN

5. Sources

The preferred authority for Armenian map and chart sources is the Center of Geodesy and Cartography (Geodeziayi ev Kartezagrut'yan Kentron) whose contact information is below:

35/1 Komitas Avenue

Yerevan 0051, Armenia

<http://www.cadastre.am/page/Geodesy>

Additional sources referenced in writing this standardization policy are below:

1. GEC Country Codes: Armenia
<http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/countrycodes.html>
Accessed April 23, 2018
2. Geopolitical Entity Codes: Armenia (GENC)
<https://nsgreg.nga.mil/genc/view?v=268773&month=4&day=23&year=2018>
Accessed April 23, 2018
3. National Statistical Service of Armenia (Hayastani Hanrapetut'yan Vichakagrakan Komite)
Results of the 2011 Population Census of the Republic of Armenia
<http://www.armstat.am/> or
www.armstat.info

3 Government House, Republic Avenue, Yerevan, 0010
(+37 410) 52-33-56 info@armstat.am
4. Atlas Hayastani Hanrapetut'yuny Marzerov ev K'aghak' Erevanov, 2016
(The Republic of Armenia by the Regions and Yerevan Sity [sic] Figures for 2016)
National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia
<http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99505763.pdf>

Appendix A: Romanization System for Armenian (BGN/PCGN 1981)

	Armenian		Romanization		Armenian		Romanization
	<i>Upper Case</i>	<i>Lower Case</i>			<i>Upper Case</i>	<i>Lower Case</i>	
1.	Ա	ա	a	21.	Յ	յ	y
2.	Բ	բ	b	22.	Ն	ն	n
3.	Գ	գ	g	23.	Շ	շ	sh
4.	Դ	դ	d	24.	Ո	ո	o/vo ²
5.	Ե	ե	e/ye ⁴	25.	Չ	չ	ch'
6.	Զ	զ	z	26.	Պ	պ	p
7.	Է	է	e	27.	Ջ	ջ	j
8.	Ը	ը	y	28.	Ր	ր	rr
9.	Թ	թ	t'	29.	Ս	ս	s
10.	Ժ	ժ	zh	30.	Վ	վ	v
11.	Ի	ի	i	31.	Տ	տ	t
12.	Լ	լ	l	32.	Ր	ր	r
13.	Խ	խ	kh	33.	Յ	յ	ts'
14.	Ծ	ծ	ts	34.	ՈՒ, ՈԼ	ու	u
15.	Կ	կ	k	35.	Փ	փ	p'
16.	Հ	հ	h	36.	Ք	ք	k'
17.	Ձ	ձ	dz	37.	ԵՎ	եվ, և	ev/yev ³
18.	Ղ	ղ	gh	38.	Օ	օ	
19.	Ճ	ճ	ch	39.	Ֆ	ֆ	
20.	Մ	մ	m				

For a complete and most up-to-date reference on the Romanization system for Armenian, including Unicode values and additional notes, please refer to <http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/romanization.html>

1. The character է should be Romanized **ye** initially and after the vowel characters ա, է, ի, յ, ն, ու, and օ. In all other instances, it should be Romanized **e**.
2. The character ո should be Romanized **vo** initially except in the word ով, which should be Romanized ov. In all other instances, it should be Romanized **o**.
3. In Soviet-era sources, the upper case digraph character is found as ԵՎ. The lower-case character may be seen either in digraph form as եվ or in single character form as և. This characters should be Romanized as yev initially, in isolation, and after the vowel characters ա, է, ի, յ, ն, ու, and օ. In all other instances, these characters should be Romanized as ev.

Appendix B: Common Generic Terms

Transliteration	Generic	Translation	Designation Code*
aghbyur	աղբյուր	well, spring, fountain	SPNG
astichan	աստիճան	incline, hill, step	HLL
bats'archak	բացարձակ	plain, open area	FLD
blur	բլուր	hill	HLL
byur	բյուր	well, spring, fountain	SPNG
get	գետ	river	STM
getaberan	գետաբերան	mouth of river	STMM
hovit	հովիտ	valley	VAL
jrambar	ջրամբար	dam, pond, reservoir	PND/RSV
jrant's'k	ջրանցկ	channel, canal	CNL
jratar	ջրատար	water pipe, water conduit, canal	CNL
jrvezh	ջրվեժ	waterfall, small irrigation/gutter	FLLS
k'aghak'	քաղաք	city, town	PPL/PPLA
kghzi	կղզի	island	ISL
lerr	լեռ	mountain	MT
lerrnagagat'	լեռնագագաթ	mountaintop, peak	PK
lich	լիճ	lake	LK
lerrnants'k'	լեռնանցք	mountain pass	PASS
marg	մարգ	field, meadow	FLD
neghuz	նեղուց	channel, isthmus	CHN, ISTH
t'erakghzi	թերակղզի	peninsula	PEN
vank'	վանք	monastery, convent	CH
yekeghets'i	եկեղեցի	church	CH

*Appropriate designation codes should be carefully evaluated based on source information and context.

Appendix C: Glossary of Abbreviations and Common Map Terms

Abbreviation	Term	Transliteration	Definition
գ.	գետ	get	river
թ-կղ.	թերակղզի	t'erakghzi	peninsula
լ.	լեռնագագաթ	lerrnagagat'	mountain top, peak
լ-ներ	լեռներ	lerrner	mountains
լ-ցք	լեռնանցք	lerrnants'k'	mountain pass
կղ.	կղզի	kghzi	island
համ.	համայնք	hamaynak'	community
հանր.	հանրապետություն	hanrapetut'yun	republic
--	հին	hin	old
հս.	հյուսիս	hyusis	north
հվ.	հարավ	harav	South
մ.ե.թ.	մեր թվագրությունից առաջ	mer t'vagrut'yunits arraj	B.C. (seen on annotations near ruins and historical sites)
նեղ.	նեղուց	neghuz	channel, isthmus
--	ներքին	nerk'in	lower
--	նոր	nor	new
ջրմբ.	ջրամբար	jrambar	dam, pond, reservoir
--	վերին	verin	upper
Սբ.	Սուրբ	surb	Saint
--	փոքր	p'ok'r	small, little
ք.	քաղաք	k'aghak'	city, town