Geographic Names Standardization Policy for the Philippines

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 the Philippines for United States Government use. The BGN and its staff work to effect consistent treatment of geographic name spellings in U.S. 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

a.1. Population

According to the 2010 Census, the Philippines has a population of approximately 92 million with population growth of 2.04%, making it the highest growth rate in Asia. The largest population densities are centered in and around major cities. More than one-third of the total population resides in the southern half of the island of Luzon.

a.2. Ethnic Groups

The Philippines is inhabited by different ethnic groups with a majority divided into ethno-linguistic groups whose languages are tied to the Austronesian language group. The Philippine National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) does not account for the ethnicity or ancestry of those residing in the Philippines.

Major Ethnic Groups of the Philippines:
Tagalog: First settlers of present day Manila and surrounding areas.
Kapampangan/Pampagueño: Originate from the central plains of Luzon.
Bicolano: Originate from present day Bicol in southern Luzon.
Ilocano: Inhabitants of lowlands, and coastal areas of northern Luzon.
Visaya/Visayan: An ethnolinguistic group living in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Major Highland and Coastal Tribal Groups:
Igorot: Inhabitants of the highlands of Luzon.
Mangyan: Inhabitants of Mindoro.
Negrito: Original aboriginal settlers of the Philippine Islands, currently residing in remote areas throughout the islands.

Non-Indigenous Ethnic Groups:
Hispanic: Descendants of Spanish settlers, of Spanish or Spanish-Amerindian ancestry from present-day Latin America and Spain.
Chinese: Descendants of Chinese immigrants.
American: Americans who settled in the Philippines during the United States colonial and contemporary period, many of whom are multiracial.

Indian: A minority group made up largely of either Sindhi or Punjabi people that settled in the Philippines as businessmen and traders.

b. Languages
b.1. National and Official Languages

The inhabitants of the Philippines speak over 170 languages. Filipino (fil) is the lingua franca. Filipino is essentially standard Tagalog (tgl). The term Filipino carries with it a national connotation, while the term Tagalog carries a more regional or ethnic connotation. The Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (Commission on the Filipino Language) is the official regulating body of the Filipino Language. The Commission aims to incorporate many loan words from the different languages and dialects of the Philippines. Currently, Filipino does not incorporate the grammatical elements or lexicon of the other regional languages of the Philippines. Filipino falls within the Malayo-Polynesian branch of Austronesian languages. It is closely related to other indigenous languages spoken in the Philippines.

As specified in Article XIV of the 1987 Constitution, Filipino is the national language of the Philippines, and the official languages are Filipino and English. English is the language of choice within the national government, commerce, and education.

Spanish (spa) and Arabic (ara) are designated by the 1987 Constitution as languages that may be "promoted on a voluntary and optional basis."[1] Spanish was the lingua franca during Spanish colonial rule (1565-1898) and following independence from Spain. It was an official language until1987. Arabic is influential as a liturgical language in the Muslim south. English gained some influence following Spanish rule. Due to the nation's history, Filipino geographic names show influence from the Spanish language and, to a lesser degree, the English language. Many Spanish loanwords are written in Filipino orthography and only retain original spelling in some proper nouns and place names.

b.2. Regional Languages

Of the many languages spoken in the Philippines, some are spoken by relatively small populations. Following is a list of the major languages of the country, as determined by either number of speakers or degree of influence.

Major Languages of the Philippines:

Name	ISO 639-3 Code	Approximate Number of Speakers
Filipino/Tagalog	fil/tgl	14,486,888
Cebuano	ceb	20,043,502
Ilocano	ilo	8,000,000
Hiligaynon	hil	7,000,000
Central Bicolano	bcl	2,500,000
Waray-Waray	war	2,437,688

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[1] The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines: Article XIV. http://www.gov.ph/the-philippine-constitutions/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines-article-xiv/. Retrieved January 31, 2013.

Albay Bicolano	bhk	1,900,907
Kapampangan	pam	1,897,378
Pangasinan	pag	1,164,586
Maguindanao	mdh	1,000,000
Tausug	tsg	900,000
Maranao	mrw	776,169

If sources are ever produced in regional languages with geographic names distinct from official Philippines sources, such names would be collected as variant spellings and the appropriate language codes would be applied.

b.3. Mindanao Minority Languages
In recent years the southern regions of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago have been of particular interest to the international community due to the existence of terrorist groups and separatists. Of the major languages of the Philippines, Maguindanao and Maranao are spoken in Southern Mindanao. Tausug is spoken throughout the Sulu Archipelago, although native speakers live mainly on Jolo Island. Several other minority languages are spoken on the island. The Chavacano language (also known as Zamboangueño) is spoken on the section of the Zamboanga peninsula closest to Basilan Island and on the northern parts of Basilan Island. Yakan is the predominant language of Basilan Island.

3. Toponymic Policy

a. Legal Situation and Practical Application in Administration and Official Cartography
Philippine official sources are produced in English. Geographic names from native source maps may be based on Filipino or upon local languages and dialects. Many geographic names are based upon Spanish or English and often retain their original spellings.

b. Alphabet and Transcription

b.1. Alphabet
Filipino is written in the Roman alphabet. The Modern Filipino alphabet (1987-present) consists of all the letters of the English alphabet plus the letters 'ñ' and 'ng'. From 1976 to 1987, the Filipino alphabet included 'ch,' 'll,' and 'rr', which were later dropped in the adoption of the modern Filipino alphabet.

The Modern Filipino Alphabet:

Majuscule Forms
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N Ñ Ng O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Minuscule Forms
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n ñ ng o p q r s t u v w x y z

c. Diacritics

The tilde (~), acute (´), grave (`), and circumflex (ˆ) are sometimes used in Filipino geographic names, although they may occur in positions that are different than what would be permitted in Spanish. For example, the combination 'ñ+g' to give 'ñg' may occur, which is not permitted in Spanish. The diagraphs 'ñg' and 'gñ' are no longer used in the modern Filipino alphabet but may be encountered on older sources.

Letter-Diacritic Combinations

Character	Unicode Value
Á	00C1
á	00E1
À	00C0
à	00E0
Â	00C2
â	00E2
É	00C9
é	00E9
È	00C8
è	00E8
Ê	00CA
ê	00EA
Í	00CD
í	00ED
Ì	00CC
ì	00ED
Î	00CE
î	00EE
Ñ	00D1
ñ	00F1
Ó	00D3
ó	00F3
Ò	00D2
ò	00F2
Ô	00D4
ô	00F4
Ú	00DA
ú	00FA
Ù	00D9
ù	00F9
Û	00DB
û	00FB

d. Capitalization

The first letters of words are capitalized with the possible exception of definite articles (e.g., el, la, lo, los, las, and ang) and prepositions (e.g., de, del, and ng) in medial position. These are

generally shown in approved names as found on native sources. In many instances, the source shows a definite article capitalized as part of the proper feature name, in which case it will be entered as shown in the source.

When source evidence regarding the capitalization of the definite article is mixed, associated features with the same name, if present, will be examined to assist in the decision. In the absence of conclusive evidence, definite articles and prepositions found beyond the initial position are written in lowercase letters in the standardized name form. Example: MESA DE LOS SANTOS (on source) is entered Mesa de los Santos.

e. Orthography

The Commission on the Filipino Language produced a draft version of orthographic guidelines for Filipino in 2007.[2] However, it has yet to produce guidelines that are official. Spanish words absorbed into Filipino for common usage are usually written in a manner consistent with Filipino phonology.

Geographic names follow multiple spelling conventions, based upon their various languages of origin. Most names follow Filipino, Spanish, or English conventions. Names are collected for approved forms, using the orthography in which they appear on the source.

f. Numbers

Numbers used in Filipino geographic names are commonly spelled out in Spanish, although English numbers may be used in names of English origin. The great majority of numbers are cardinal numbers. However, ordinal numbers are also found in names. Filipino numbers are rarely, if ever, found in geographic names.

Arabic numerals are ordinarily expanded in Spanish. For example, La Carlota 2 (on source) is rendered La Carlota Dos, and Palma 2da (on source) is rendered Palma Segunda.

Roman numerals are expanded in Spanish except for those used in Region names. A number may be expanded in English if the form of the name is predominately English in nature.

g. Abbreviations

Common Filipino abbreviations used in geographic names are:

Abbreviation	Word
Brgy/Bgy	Barangay
Pob	Poblacion
Hon	Honorable
Sen	Senator
Cong	Congressman
Atty	Attorney
Sto	Santo
Sta	Santa
Ma	Maria

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[2] http://wika.pbworks.com/f/ORTOPDF.pdf

Bo   Barrio
Cor   Corner
Sch   School
Vil   Village
Br   Bridge
Subd   Subdivision
Inc   Incorporated
Corp   Corporation

h. Descriptive Adjectives

Words used for descriptive adjectives may be derived from Spanish, English, Filipino, or regional languages.

h.1. Cardinal Directions

There is no standardized language format for cardinal directions used in Philippine place names. Place names use both Spanish and English cardinal directions; Filipino and regional languages are rarely used for this.

Spanish Cardinal Directions
Norte   North
Oriental   East
Sur   South
Occidental   West
Este(East) and Oeste(West) are sometimes used on geographic names

Tagalog Cardinal Directions
Hilaga   North
Silangan   East
Timog   South
Kanluran   West

i. Generic Terms

Generic terms on current official maps are almost always in English. However, many geographic names have a native language or Spanish generic term in the specific name, then an English generic. For example, Rio Grande River ('río grande' meaning 'big river' in Spanish) or Malaquing Ilog River ('malaquing ilog' meaning 'big river' in Filipino).

The word 'poblacion' (frequently shortened to 'pob') is the generic term for a city center or downtown area. However, Poblacion followed by a number (if more than one) is often used as a populated place name for city subdivisions that have not yet been named. The Filipino word Barangay (shortened to Brgy) is also used for this purpose.

Although English generic terms are usually used on Philippine maps, official names of first and second-order administrative divisions are often in Filipino. On rare occasions, on certain Philippine maps, geographic names use local language generics. A glossary of common generic terms can be found in Appendix A.

4. Political Geography Policy

a. Country Name and Capital
Country
Conventional Short Form: Philippines
Conventional Long Form: Republic of the Philippines
Filipino Short Form: Pilipinas
Filipino Long Form: Republika ng Pilipinas

Capital
Conventional Capital Short Form: Manila
Conventional Capital Long Form: City of Manila
Filipino Capital Short Form: Maynila
Filipino Capital Long Form: Lungsod ng Maynila

b. First-order Administrative Divisions

The Philippine first-order administrative divisions are comprised of 80 provinces and 39 independent cities (See Appendix B). Additionally, for purposes of administrative convenience, the Philippines is divided into 17 Regions. The regions do not possess a separate local government with the exception of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Currently the ARMM is in transition to a more autonomous body to be known as Bangsamoro.

Name	FIPS 10-4 Code	ISO 3166-2 Code
Abra	RP01	PH-ABR
Agusan del Norte	RP02	PH-AGN
Agusan del Sur	RP03	PH-AGS
Aklan	RP04	PH-AKL
Albay	RP05	PH-ALB
Angeles	RPA1	N/A
Antipolo	RPH5	N/A
Antique	RP06	PH-ANT
Apayao	RPH6	PH-APA
Aurora	RPG8	PH-AUR
Bacolod	RPA2	N/A
Baguio	RPA4	N/A
Basilan	RP22	PH-BAS
Bataan	RP07	PH-BAN
Batanes	RP08	PH-BTN
Batangas	RP09	PH-BTG
Benguet	RP10	PH-BEN
Biliran	RPH9	PH-BIL

Bohol	RP11	PH-BOH
Bukidnon	RP12	PH-BUK
Bulacan	RP13	PH-BUL
Butuan	RPA8	N/A
Cagayan	RP14	PH-CAG
Cagayan de Oro	RPB2	N/A
Caloocan	RPB4	N/A
Camarines Norte	RP15	PH-CAN
Camarines Sur	RP16	PH-CAS
Camiguin	RP17	PH-CAM
Capiz	RP18	PH-CAP
Catanduanes	RP19	PH-CAT
Cavite	RP20	PH-CAV
Cebu	RP21	PH-CEB
Cebu City	RPB7	N/A
Compostela Valley	RPI6	PH-COM
Cotabato	RP57	PH-NCO
Cotabato City	RPB8	N/A
Dagupan	RPB9	N/A
Davao City	RPC3	N/A
Davao del Norte	RPI7	PH-DAV
Davao del Sur	RP25	PH-DAS
Davao Oriental	RP26	PH-DAO
Dinagat Islands	RPI9	PH-DIN
Eastern Samar	RP23	PH-EAS
General Santos	RPC6	N/A
Guimaras	RPJ3	PH-GUI
Ifugao	RP27	PH-IFU
Iligan	RPC8	N/A
Ilocos Norte	RP28	PH-ILN
Ilocos Sur	RP29	PH-ILS
Iloilo	RP30	PH-ILI
Iloilo City	RPC9	N/A
Isabela	RP31	PH-ISA
Kalinga	RPJ7	PH-KAL
La Union	RP36	PH-LUN
Laguna	RP33	PH-LAG
Lanao del Norte	RP34	PH-LAN
Lanao del Sur	RP35	PH-LAS

Lapu-Lapu	RPD4	N/A
Las Piñas	RPK1	N/A
Leyte	RP37	PH-LEY
Lucena	RPD7	N/A
Maguindanao	RP56	PH-MAG
Makati	RPK4	N/A
Malabon	RPK5	N/A
Mandaluyong	RPK8	N/A
Mandaue	RPD8	N/A
Manila	RPD9	N/A
Marikina	RPK9	N/A
Marinduque	RP38	PH-MAD
Masbate	RP39	PH-MAS
Misamis Occidental	RP42	PH-MSC
Misamis Oriental	RP43	PH-MSR
Mountain	RP44	PH-MOU
Muntinlupa	RPL4	N/A
Naga	RPE2	N/A
Navotas	RPL5	N/A
Negros Occidental	RPH3	PH-NEC
Negros Oriental	RP46	PH-NER
Northern Samar	RP67	PH-NSA
Nueva Ecija	RP47	PH-NUE
Nueva Vizcaya	RP48	PH-NUV
Occidental Mindoro	RP40	PH-MDC
Olongapo	RPE3	N/A
Oriental Mindoro	RP41	PH-MDR
Ormoc	RPE4	N/A
Palawan	RP49	PH-PLW
Pampanga	RP50	PH-PAM
Pangasinan	RP51	PH-PAN
Parañaque	RPL7	N/A
Pasay	RPE9	N/A
Pasig	RPL8	N/A
Puerto Princesa	RPF1	N/A
Quezon	RPH2	PH-QUE
Quezon City	RPF2	N/A
Quirino	RP68	PH-QUI
Rizal	RP53	PH-RIZ

Romblon	RP54	PH-ROM
Samar	RP55	PH-WSA
San Juan	RPM6	N/A
Santiago	RPM8	N/A
Sarangani	RPM9	PH-SAR
Siquijor	RP69	PH-SIG
Sorsogon	RP58	PH-SOR
South Cotabato	RP70	PH-SCO
Southern Leyte	RP59	PH-SLE
Sultan Kudarat	RP71	PH-SUK
Sulu	RP60	PH-SLU
Surigao del Norte	RPN3	PH-SUN
Surigao del Sur	RP62	PH-SUR
Tacloban	RPG1	N/A
Taguig	RPN6	N/A
Tarlac	RP63	PH-TAR
Tawi-Tawi	RP72	PH-TAW
Valenzuela	RPO7	N/A
Zambales	RP64	PH-ZMB
Zamboanga	RPG7	N/A
Zamboanga del Norte	RP65	PH-ZAN
Zamboanga del Sur	RPP1	PH-ZAS
Zamboanga Sibugay	RPP2	PH-ZSI

c. Unique Geopolitical Situations

c.1. Disputed Names
In 2012 as a direct result of the escalation of the Spratly Islands dispute, Philippine President Benigno Aquino III signed Administrative Order No. 29 mandating Philippine government agencies to refer to parts of the South China Sea as the 'West Philippine Sea.' The Philippine National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) was tasked to use the name on official maps to signify Philippine claims on the Spratly Islands and Scarborough Reef.

c.2. Disputed Territories
For the latest country-specific boundary dispute information, visit the U.S. Department of State's Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia, or B.A.S.E., at http://base.us-state.osis.gov, under International Land Boundaries.

Parts of the Spratly Islands, a group of islands, reefs, and rocks in the South China Sea, are claimed by the Philippines, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei. Tensions over the islands have been high since 1968, when oil and gas reserves were discovered in the region. Lucrative fishing rights also contribute to the dispute.

5. Source Material

a. Map Series Containing Standardized Names

Maps produced by the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) contain the most authoritative names. US produced maps prior to Philippine Independence (1946) and maps co-produced by the Philippines and the US after 1946, are to be considered authoritative. Since most NAMRIA maps are based upon maps originally produced by the United States, most geographic names on U.S. maps are identical in spelling and position with NAMRIA maps. Other maps considered authoritative in lieu of NAMRIA sources include map series produced by the Philippine Bureau of Coastal and Geodetic Survey (PCGS). All items are available at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) Research Center. The following list shows the types of authoritative maps available:

Philippines, 1:250,000 topographic maps, NAMRIA, 1946-2010
Philippines, 1:50,000 topographic maps, NAMRIA, 1946-2010
Philippines, 1:25,000 topographic maps, NAMRIA, 1946-2010
Philippines, 1:10,000 topographic maps, NAMRIA, 1946-2010
Philippines, 1:50,000 topographic maps, PCGS, 1946-2010
Philippines, 1:25,000 topographic maps, PCGS, 1946-2010

b. The National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB)

The Philippine National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB)[3] provides authoritative data for first and second-order administrative divisions as well as populated place names for the Philippines.

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[3] http://www.nscb.gov.ph/
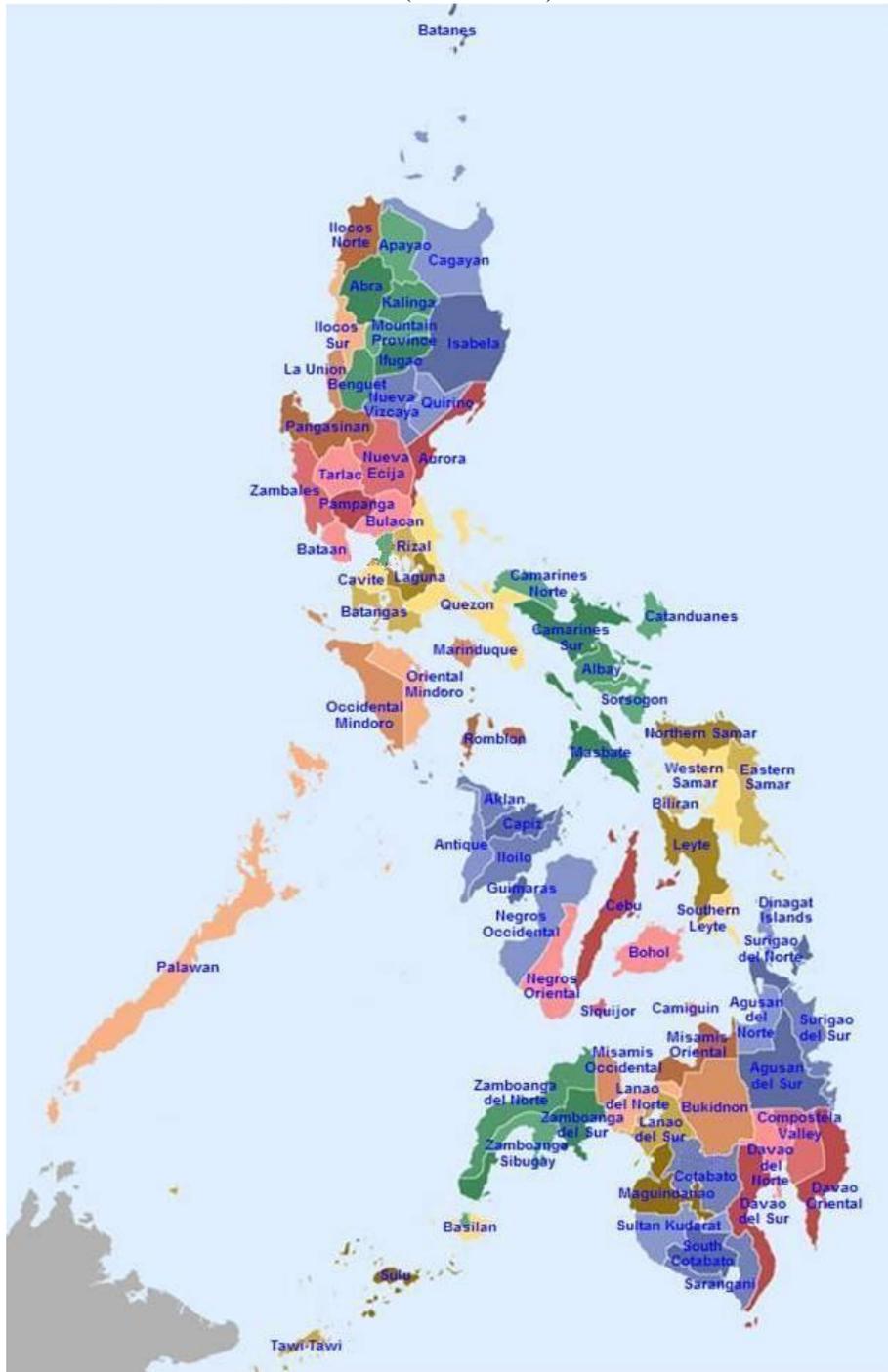
Appendix A: Toponymic Glossary

Letters in parentheses identify the principal languages in which the following generic terms occur or from which the terms were derived: Bicolano (bcl), Cebuano (ceb), Filipino (fil), Hiligaynon (hil), Kapampangan (pam), Spanish (spa).

Generic	Feature Designation Name	Language
Bagbenwa	Municipality	ceb
Bancal	Intermittent Stream, Stream	
Banuaan Kan	Municipality (of)	bcl
Barangay	Populated place	fil
Barrio	Populated place	spa
Batan	Intermittent Stream, Stream	
Batasan	Marine channel	fil
Bayan ng	Municipality	fil
Bud	Hill, Mountain	
Bukid	Field/s	fil
Bulkan	Volcano	fil
Buncol	Intermittent Stream, Stream	
Bundoc	Hill, Mountain	fil
Bundok	Hill, Mountain	fil
Burol	Hill, Mountain	fil
Cañon	Gorge	spa
Ciudad	City	bcl, ceb, hil, pam, spa
Dagbenwa	Municipality	hil
Dagbenwa sang	Municipality	hil
Dakbayan sa	Municipality	ceb
Pueblo	Populated Place	spa
Estero	Estuary	spa, fil
Gembagel G'benwa	Municipality	ceb
Ilog	Intermittent Stream, Stream	fil
Isla	Island	spa, fil
Laguna	Lake	spa, fil
Lakanbalen	Province	pam
Lalawigan	Province	fil, pam
Lungsod	City	fil
Mont	Hill, Mountain	spa
Monte	Hill, Mountain	spa
Municipalidad	Municipality	spa
Provincia	Province	spa, fil
Pulo	Island	fil
Pulo-pulo	Islands	fil
Punto	Point	punto

Rio	Intermittent Stream, Stream	spa
Sapa	Intermittent Stream, Stream	fil, pam
Sapang	Intermittent Stream, Stream	fil, pam
Syudad san	City	bcl
Villa de	Populated Place	spa

Appendix B: Maps of First-order Administrative Divisions

Provincial-level First-order Administrative Divisions (80 Provinces)

City-level First-order Administrative Divisions (39 Highly Urbanized and Independent Component Cities)