UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
  STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL
  NAMES
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WRITING SYSTEMS

TRANSFER OF NAMES FROM THE **THAI** WRITING
SYSTEM TO ROMAN LETTERS

Submitted by the Government of Thailand

The standardization and romanization of geographical names in Thailand is
the responsibility of the Royal Institute which has a special committee which
determines the proper Thai spelling and their romanizations in accordance with the
official transcription rules.

The transcription of the Thai geographical names into Roman characters is to
enable foreigners to pronounce the name as closely as possible to the Thai sound.
The rules of transcription have been promulgated in the Royal Gazette, volume 56,
part 2, section 85, B.E.2482 (1939 A.D.).[1]/

The nature of Thai official transcription rules are intended to provide
standardized Roman spellings for Thai geographical names. To facilitate lettering
of Roman characters on the maps and to avoid confusion with the map symbols, the
mark representing Thai tones have been omitted. This seems to be in accordance
with a recommendation of the report of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names
set up by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, but however, the true or
exact pronunciation cannot be indicated by the application of the rules for
several reasons as follows:

  (a) The spoken Thai language is tonal, and tonal marks are not used;

  (b) Thai characters for vowels, both long and short vowels, are transcribed
with the same Roman character;

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[1]/ Official rules are annexed to this paper.

(c) Certain sounds of the Thai language are not found in the Roman alphabet and substitutions have to be made.

Various government agencies, primarily the Royal Thai Survey Department and the National Statistical Office, apply these rules for the rcmanization of Thai names. But the application of the official rules has not always achieved standardized spellings. Furthermore non-government publications such as newspapers and books contain spellings derived independently of the official system.

Some of the reasons for the great number of romanized variants of Thai names are:

(a) The official rules have not had sufficient publicity and use throughout all agencies of the Government and are unknown or ignored in public media;

(b) Application of the official transcription rules is difficult because they are very brief and they do not cover all necessary points, such as the word separations, capitalization and hyphenation. Thus, application by different personnel and agencies has often produced different results;

(c) Some government agencies derive romanizations by self-determination without consulting the official transcription rules.

At the present time many agencies, both government and non-government, are making great efforts to standardize Thai spellings and their romanization. The names of the first-hand second-order administrative divisions, i.e. the 71 changwate, 550 amphoes and king amphoes, are among the first groups which have been reviewed by the Royal Institute, and the names standards adopted by the committee have been approved by the Royal Thai Government. These will be published for official use.

Apart from the official transcription rules, there is one paper that should be mentioned. The paper entitled "Romanization Guide for Thai Script: According to the Official System of the Royal Institute" was prepared by the Stanford Research Institute which is working on the Village Information System - Thailand, under co-operation between the Governments of Thailand and the United States of America. This paper is an adaptation of the tables and elaboration of the rules given in the Royal Institute's publication, "Notification of Thai Characters into Roman", Bangkok, October 1954, and in the Royal Thai Survey Department's report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the subject of international co-operation in standardization of geographical names. This paper is very helpful to those who are learning the system, and can read Thai script.

I. THE STANDARD METHOD OF TRANSLITERATION OF THE THAI GEOGRAPHIC NAMES INTO ROMAN

1.   Transliteration of Thai into Roman constituting a transcription of pronunciation will be used according to the notification of the Royal Institute as proclaimed in the Royal Gazette vol. 56, section 85, but for cartographic purposes consonant markings could be omitted and combined vowels be separated.

2.   After omission of markings and separation of vowels mentioned above, corresponding Roman to Thai characters will be as shown in annexure.

3.   Geographic names changed into Roman be transliterated separately word by word according to their pronunciation except those after being separated are meaningless or mean otherwise, be combined, for example,

  Chorakhe (crocodile) must not be separated into Cho Ra Khe which is meaningless

  Samphao (junk) must not be separated into Sam Phao which is meaningless

  Khangkhao (bat) must not be separated into Khang Khao which means otherwise.

4.   Names which are combinations of words and the last consonants of words being pronounced, be transliterated as single words to retain their original pronunciations and forms, for example,

  Ratchakhram is transcripted from the Thai word which, without the above notation, its transliteration should be Rat Khram

  Aranyaprathet is transcripted instead of Aran Prathet.

5.   Names which constitute many syllables of which the last and the first character of the first and second syllable respectively are vowels be separated by a hyphen, for example, Saing is written Sa - ing.

6.   Foreign names in the Thai territory such as Malayan words for island called Pulo, point called Tanyong, be changed into Thai. The Ministry of the Interior will issue a notice to this effect, but exception will be given to well-known names by also writing these names in parantheses. Common nouns of foreign names outside the Thai territory will be translated into Thai prior to the writing of those names in Thai, but Romanization will follow the English language, for example, Pulo Langkawi Victoria Point.

7.   The words, Changwat, Amphoe and Tambon may be omitted unless it is desirable.

8. Proper nouns in other language which appear in the List of Communities of the Ministry of the Interior be accepted without translation into Thai, because they are proper names.

9. All kinds of water courses, either artificial or natural, be called Khlong.

10. The following rules be observed in transliteration of geographical names:

(a) Thai names pertaining to geographical features such as mountain (Khao), island (Ko), river (Mae Nam), be transliterated into Roman without translation into English for example, Khao Bo Thong (Bo Thong Mountain), Ko Yung (Yung Island);

(b) Thai names which clearly identify themselves, such as road (Thanon), monastery (Wat), be transliterated without translation into English for example, Thanon Maha Rat, (Maha Rat Road), Wat Maha That (Maha That Monastery);

(c) Only proper nouns of the Thai names not pertaining to geographical features and not self-explanatory be transliterated into Roman, but the common nouns will be translated into English for example, Hua Lamphong Station. Exception be given to names of governmental organizations, which will be translated into English directly, such as, Custom House, Post Office, Hydrographic Department etc.

(d) Names of private organizations or geographical names given after any individuals which have been written differently in Roman be adopted without any modification such as East Asiatic Co. Ltd., Hin Loftus etc.

II. <u>VOWELS</u>

(Note :- Italian Vowels except that

      ae : sound of ea in English "bear"

      oe : sound of eu in French "peuple")

อะ อ้ อา	a
อำ	am
อิ อี	i
อื อื้ อุ อู	u
เอะ เอ็ เอ	e
แอะ แอ	ae
โอะ อ(–) โอ เอาะ ออ	o
เออะ เอิ เออ–เอื	oe
เอียะ เอีย	ia
เอือะ เอือ อัวะ อัว	ua
ใอ ไอ อัย ไอย อาย	ai
เอา อาว	ao
อุย	ui
เอย ออย	oi
เอย	oei
เอือย อวย	uai
อิว	iu
เอ็ว เอว	eo
แอว	aeo
เอียว	ieo
ฤ (เสียง รึ) ฤา	ru
ฤ (เสียง ริ)	ri
ฤ (เสียง เรอ)	ree
ฦ ฦา	lu

III. CONSONANTS

(Note :- English consonants except that

Initial k p and t are unaspirated as in French.

Final k p and t are unexplosive and unaspirated.

        kh : k aspirated.

        ph : p aspirated-not English ph.

        th : t aspirated-not English th.

        ch : hardened form of ch as the cz in Czech and

            always as in English "Church"

        ng : as in English "Singer", never as in "Linger")

Consonants	Initial	Final
ก	k	k
ข ฃ ค ฅ ฆ	kh	k
ง	ng	ng
จ ฉ ช ฌ	ch	t
ญ	y	n
ฎ ฏ ฑ (บางคำ)	d	t
ฏ ฎ	t	t
ฐ ฑ ฒ ท ธ ฒ	th	t
น ณ	n	n
บ	b	p
ป	p	p
ผ พ ภ	ph	p
ฝ ฟ	f	p
ม	m	m
ย	y	-
ร	r	n
ล ฬ	l	n
ว	w	-
ซ ทร ศ ษ ส	s	t
ห อ	h	-