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Standard Lebanese Geographic Names Romanization Rules*

*** Prepared by General P.S.C. Maroun Khraish, Directorate of Geographic Affairs, Lebanese Army, Ministry of Defense, Lebanon**

STANDARD LEBANESE GEOGRAPHIC NAMES ROMANIZATION RULES

General P.S.C Maroun Khraish
Directorate of Geographic Affairs, Lebanese Army, Ministry of Defense
Yarzeh, Lebanon Tel: 00961-5-556180 Fax: 00961-5-556179
E-mail: dagarmy@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The unification of geographical names in Lebanon and in the world is important due to its historic, religious, social and intellectual value.

As the name of a person is important to identify and differentiate a person. So is the geographic name. In addition, as the name of a person includes the surname, family name, so does the geographical name include the name of the area, district or country it falls into due to the presence of similar names in on area or one country.

OUTLINES

- I- The origin of Lebanese geographical names.
- II- Concept of the meaning of Lebanese geographic locations.
- III- Contemporary Lebanese names.
- IV- The writing of geographic names.
- V- The purpose of the rules.
- VI- Romanization system for Arabic names.
- VII- Romanization rules.
- VIII- Conclusion.

I-The origin of Lebanese geographical names:

Semitic people lived in Lebanon long ago, inhabiting its mountains and plains, and named the cities, towns, rivers and mountains in their languages, and called the area they inhabited Lebanon, a name stated in the Bible over twenty eight times, and that means the whiteness, with regard to the snow, as stated in the bible "safar armia 14.18" or because of its calcareous rocks, Some say its name is derived from the "leban" which is the nice scent, or for its beauty and color.

The oldest inhabitants of Lebanon where the "Ammourites", they lived around 2200 B.C. Arab nomad tribes from the north of the Arab peninsula came into north Syria, and spread into Jordan, Kanaan land and Mount Lebanon. They were known as the Kanaanites ancestors of the Phoenicians.

The bible calls the tribes that went east and occupied "Babel" the "Ammourites", from whom came the original Palestinians. In the letters of tel Al 'amarinah, the name of amar,

and amour was mentioned meaning the current Bekaa valley and the archeologist thalazon thinks that the ammourites are the kannanites.

The only names of amrit and marathus are all what remained from them.

The ammouritis left a lingual and religious civilization used by the kanaanites and the Phoenicians successively. This is because most of the kanaanite and Phoenician names origin from the Ammourites, but were written in the first Phoenician alphabet, as no alphabet existed for the Ammourites.

Their gods names such as hadad, ado, rachaf, rammano, ashtar, and ashirt were used to name some places in Lebanon such as brimana, ayn ar rimana, and adunis.

The Phoenicians created a civilization more advanced then any other old semitic civilization, as stated in the bible, and stated in the writings of Agharite and the letters of tell Al'amarinah that were sent by the princes of Palestine, Lebanon and Syria to Egypt's Pharaon to send military support to them to deter the offensives of the Hythites and the Aramites and the Hebrew tribes. In these letters, the effect of their language is obvious on the history of the area and the Lebanese and Syrian names.

As for the Ammourites, they are tribes that inhabited Syria and Iraq and the north of the Arab peninsula, and went to banks of Euphrates nearly 1500 B.C., then came to Lebanon, Syria and Palestine.

Their Semitic language does not differ much from the Assyrian language still in use today. They established states in Syria among which: Aram of Damascus, and Aram suba, that was contemporary to king David who fought it and imposed taxes upon it. It is said that its capital was Anjar still erected in the Lebanese Beqa' valley previously known as Chalus, that means gold. The Aramites were better in disseminating their letters in all the orient countries to the extent that this language became the public official language and it is believed that the language of the Christ was the Aramic and not Hebrew. Even the Persians used this language officially.

As for the Assyrians, they are Aramite people that followed the Christ and changed their name to Syrian people or Assyrian as known today. The Assyrians learned the Latin, and Greek languages, and translated many books to Assyrian.

After the battle of Issouss in 333 B.C., the Greek entered the Phoenician coasts till Egypt and established the state of the Salouquites, referring to Salouqui Nikator, and the state of the batalistes referring to Batlymos in Egypt.

The state of the Salouquites disappeared with the entry of the Roman in 63 B.C., who kept the Greek names of Phoenician cities Damascus, Raphana, for Beit Shan. Scythopolin for Bissane, Julia for Beirut, and Hiliopolis for Baalbeck.

Then when the Arabs came, they kept some of the geographic names and changed others and built other cities by the name of the Khalifas and some religious names.

II-The concept of the naming of Lebanese geographic locations:

The naming of the Lebanese geographic areas by the people that inhabited it was influenced by the geographic or religious descriptions, by the affiliation to persons or conquerors, or to special incidents or to a certain plant or animal.

The geographic description often presented elevation such as Roum, Romine, Rama, Bterram, and Batrumine, because the origin of these names describes elevation. The

religious description often produced dual names of god and another name such as Qornayel, Majdel Shams, Heliopolis, Deir el-Qamar, meaning peak of God, Sun tower, Sun city, House of the moon respectively. Other religious names Sina, which is a biblical word meaning the moon, and the moon was a biblical god, Ariha, which also means the moon, and Baalbeck which means the Sun God.

The names influenced by persons and incidents are many such as Al-Hadath, Al-Hadythe, Al-jadide and Al Mhyadthah, as the names taken from animal or plant names such as Al-Kamel, Ayn Rimmane, Iqlim Al Kharrub, Hay Al-Jemmayze, 'jaltun, Al-Labwah, and Deir Al-Ghazal.

It's worth mentioning what historic values have the geographic names, and that some names are still unchanged for more than 6000 years, and that each name carries a historic picture to a political, religious, social, war aspect. The religious names show in the cities with names of Gods. God's name, saints, religious leaders such as Kfar Tanit, 'aqtanit, Kfar Shima, Kfar qahel, B'ishtar, Bdadun, Afṣadiq, Salima, Braḥ kiwan, and others, where the names of the gods Tanit, Shima, qahel, 'ashtar, Dad, Hadaq, Salam, and Kiwan.

From the names that reflect social, cultural, and political aspects are considered as an important historic reference, no matter what traces are left from the conquerors, and the inhabitants in the villages and cities before the Semitic and Aramite mass movements, and afterward the pure Arabic names.

III-Contemporary Lebanese Names:

The geographic Lebanese names have not changed drastically since the Ottoman Empire, but some names have evolved and been modified or became dual, one Arabic, and the other Aramic, Syriac, Hebrew, Greek, or Roman. These names came on the few coastal and Mount Lebanon Ottoman maps, or the two emirates established under the protocol of 1860, which was modified in 1864.

The references did not mention the presence of any topographic or geographic maps especially for Lebanon until the end of the Ottoman rule except some general maps for Syria, but we mention the map of Beirut drawn by the vice consul of Denmark in 1876 at a scale of 1:12200, which is the only one left from the Ottoman era.

During the French mandate the Bureau Topographique du Levant affiliated to the French army issued 27 maps of Lebanon at a scale of 1:50.000, between the years 1926 and 1945.

In 1950, the Geographic unit of the Lebanese army updated these maps and added information to them. And they were published in the final state between 1955 and 1964. The maps of Lebanon at a scale of 1:100,000 were produced between 1963 and 1974, and the 1:20,000 maps comprising 121 Arabic and French maps covering all the Lebanese territory were produced, and finally thematic maps of geology, agriculture, hydrology, forests and plantation, precipitation were produced with the assistance and cooperation of the concerned ministries.

In the 90s, an attempt was made to update these maps, especially the 1:20,000 ones. The Directorate of Geographic Affairs in the Lebanese army (DAG) started the update and

Each village was given a code of 5 digits, the first for the Muhafadha, Beirut carrying the 1, Jabal Lubnan 2, Ash Shimal 3, B'albak Al Hirmil 4, Al Biqa' 5, Al Janub 6, Nabatiyah 7, 'akkar 8, and the second digit for the qada'. As for the last 3 digits, they are for the village in the qada'. For example the village of 'Ayn Ibl in the qada' of Bint Jbayl in the Muhafadha of Nabatiyah will have the code 72026, so it is the village number 26 in the qada' of Bint Jbayl coded 2, in the Muhafadha of Nabatiyah coded 7. Also a digital map on CD-Rom was issued with the help of a technical team from the Directorate of Geographical Affairs (DAG) in the Lebanese Army. This CD-Rom is based on a geographic information system which contains a code for each village or city, its name in Arabic and "Romanization system", its coordinates and height, its distance from Beirut, its area expressed in hectares, the map sheet in which it is placed, and whether it has land registry record and municipality or not.

V-The purpose of the Rules:

The purpose of establishing regulations for the writing of geographic names in Latin internationally known as "Romanization" is the transfer of these names from the Arabic letters into the Latin letters in order to write them in a unified way on the topographic maps only, and not on the tourist maps where names could be written in different languages but in a unified manner.

The names on the 1:50000 topographic maps were written according to the French method that was established in conjunction with the Lebanese authorities at the time.

Afterward, this method was adopted by all the Arab Countries as an official transliteration method, next to the Beirut convention on the geographic naming in 1971, and approved by the United Nations as an official method for all the Arab countries in 1972, according to the resolution number 2 issued by the 2nd convention. The absence of Lebanon on the issues related to the geographic naming, led to the modification of the rules to be used by the non-Franco phonic Arab countries, and the use of a different method.

Based on resolution 7 issued by the seventh convention for geographic naming held in 1998, the UN urged the Arab countries to keep up the efforts to hold a convention for the geographic naming specialists to reevaluate the methodology issued in 1972. And during the eighth convention held in 2002, the Arab group presented modifications to the old methodology in one paper depicting the Latin letters representing the Arabic letters, pending the acceptance by the Arab League.

The committee formed by the Council of Ministers Decree Number 75/2003 on 17/12/2003, established detailed regulations to write geographic names on topographic maps and issued with the assistance of a technical team from the Directorate of Geographical Affairs in the Lebanese Army a GIS compatible digital database of Lebanese cities and towns names. This database will be the core of a more comprehensive database that will include all the geographic names in Lebanon totaling around 28,000.

In the following section, we will detail the old methodology to transfer Arabic letters to Latin better known as the Beirut paper that was presented by the Arab group in 2002 to the UN convention in Berlin, and finally, the new methodology that was established by the committee in English.

VI-Romanization system for Arabic names:

ROMANIZATION SYSTEM OF ARABIC			
Romanization	Arabic Character	Romanization	Arabic Character
Q	?	A	?
K	?	B	?
L	?	T	?
M	?	TH	?
N	?	J	?
H	? ?????????? ?s ??? ???? ?P??	<u>H</u>	?
W	???????????	KH	?
u	????? μ P??	D	O
DH	?	DH	?
a	G?μ ???P	R	?
a	????s ??P	Z	?
a	G???? ? ?	S	a
a'	G?μ ??? ?	SH	e
u	G?μ ????	<u>S</u>	?
u	????s ???	<u>D</u>	?
i	G?μ ?Gd?	<u>T</u>	?
i	????s Gd?	<u>DH</u>	?
'	G??	'	?
Doubling the letter	G?	GH	?
		F	?

VII-Romanization rules:

First : Names in Arabic are composed of one or several words. Each word is composed of letters. Arabic is written from right to left.

Second: There are twenty nine letters in Arabic, starting with the (Hamza), and ending with (ya') (Alif (Hamza)', Ba', Ta', Ha', Jim, Ha', KH', Dal, DHal, Ra, Zayn, Sin, Shim, Sad, Dad, Ta', THa', 'ayn, GHayn, Fa, Qaf, Kaf, Lam, Mim, Nun, Ha, Waw, Lam Alif, Ya').

We recognize these letters at the beginning, middle or end of a word, as follows:

Arabic character		Roman character	
End of the word	Middle of the word	Beginning of the word	
? ? ? ? ?	?? ? ? ?	? ? ?	,A,U,I,A'
???	???	??	B
? ??	???	??	T
? ??	???	??	TH
? ??	? ??	?	J
? ??	ʃ ??	ʃ	H
? F?	? ??	?	KH
Ø	Ø	O	D
??	??	?	DH
? ??	? ??	?	R
? ??	? ??	?	Z
a β ?	? ɰ ?	?	S
e ? ?	? ??	?	SH
? ? ?	? ɸ ?	?	S
? ? ?	? ɸ ?	?	D
? ??	ʒ ʒ ?	ʒ	T
? f ?	?? ??	?	DH
? ??	?? ??	??	?
? ??	?? ??	??	GH
? ? ?	????	??	F
? ? ?	????	??	Q
? ? ?	?? ??	?	K
? ? ?	????	??	L
???	?? ??	??	M
? ? ?	????	??	N
?? ??	? ??	??	H
? ??	? ?? ? ?	?	W,U
? ? ?	? ? ?	?	LA
? ? ?	???? ? ? ?	??	Y,I

Third: Diphthongs or signs they assist the Arabic speaker in pronunciation they are four:

- The Opener, or (Al Fathah) َ Compatible with the (Alif). And thus it is symbolized (A). Ex : َ َ َ َ **Bayrut** .
- The Closer, or (Al Dammah) ِ Compatible with the (Waw). And it is symbolized thus (U) Ex : ِ ِ ِ ِ **Rub Tlatin** .
- The Breaker or (Al Kasra) ِ Compatible with the (ya'). And symbolized thus (I) Ex: ِ ِ ِ ِ Al Qimmah .
- The Silent or (Sukun) ْ Placed over consonant. Ex ْ ْ ْ ْ buldan.

Fourth: The (Alif) has two aspects: silent and vocal. The silent is the one preceding the (Ya') in the alphabet, known as the (Lam alif) and written with the (Lam) for ease of pronunciation. It is called tender or smooth letter and cannot be at the beginning of talk. Speech in formal Arabic never starts with a silent letter. Silent Alif is written (ا) (a) such as in Lubnan. ا ا ا ا

The accentuated or vocal (Hamza) or (ء) is written under different forms. (ء) , (A,U,I), (see Rule N° 7 below).

Fifth: the stretching letters:

These are the letters that precede vowel letters. (Alif, Waw, or Ya'), called Al ('Illah) letters. Its accentuation is in harmony with the ('Illah) letters as the vocal stretches it on pronunciation, example : **Kamal, Damanhur, or Abu Qir.**

Here the (M) is stretched by the (alif) (a) in **Kamal**, ا ا ا by the (Waw) or (u) in **Damanhur**, ا ا ا ا and by the (Ya') or (i) **Abu Qir**, ا ا ا ا . If the ('Illah) letter is silent or its accentuation is not in harmony with the precedent letter accentuation, it is written in its original form, Waw or Ya', example: sawda', or mas'udyyah or Riyad. The (Alif) is always a stretching letter, as for the (waw) and (Ya') it is only a stretching letter, when the sign preceding it, is compatible. Therefore the (alif) is always written: A, a

If the (Alif) occurred after a (Hamza) it is written as a stretched (alif Maddah), (ء); example: **Ma'ab ء ء**

If the Hamzah occurred between two (alifs) it is written in its original form: (ء)('); example: **Qira'at. ء ء ء**

Sixth: The solar and lunar letter:

The solar letters are: Ta', THa, Dal, THal, Ra', Zayn, Sin, SHin, Sad, Dad, Ta', DHa', Nun.

The lunar letters are: ba', jim, ha', kha', 'ayn, ghayn, fa', qaf, kaf, lam, mim, ha', waw, ya'.

If the recognizer "Al" preceded a solar letter, the L is assimilated in pronunciation with this solar letter. So the solar letter is doubled; examples: **Ash SHams, Ar Riyad.**

In the lunar letter case, the (Al) remains an (Al); examples: **Al Qamar, Al Jabal.**

Seventh: The (Hamza) (ء).

At the beginning of the word:

If its sign is an opener or (Fathah), it is written: A;

Example: **Abu Kamal ء ء ء ء ء**

If its sign is a closer or (Dammah), it is written: U;

Example: **Um Qasir ء ء ء**

If its sign is a breaker or (Kasrah), it is written: I;

Example: **I'at ء ء ء**

In the middle of the word:

If it is silent, it is written preceded with the sign of the preceding letter;

Examples: **Ma'rib, Lu'lu'ah, Dhi'b. ء ء ء ء ء ء ء**

If it is accentuated, and the preceding letter is silent, it is written with its own symbol;

Examples: **Yas'al, Yal'um, Yay'as a ء ء ء ء ء ء ء ء**

If both the (hamzah) and the preceding letter is accentuated, it is written with its own symbol followed by the letter compatible with its own accent (A,A,U,U,I,I);

- 1- We can omit the (i) equivalent to the (kasrah), preceding the doubled letter (ya').like in simqanyyah, and mas'udyyah.
- 2- After the doubled (ya') we should use the (fathah) (a) instead of the (kasrah), (i) used in some Arabic slang languages (mas'udyyah) instead of (mas'udiyh).

Tenth: The letter (ya') in which the dots are omitted is written (Alif Maqsurah) and pronounced as the silent alif (a): example: **Marsa Matruh.** **?? ???? ??** not **Marsa' Matruh.**

Eleventh: Initial definite articles and prepositions.

Should be capitaliz ed, and hyphens should not be used to connect parts of names: examples: **Dayr Al Qamar, As Simqanyyah ???????d ??? ??????o . Not Dayr-Al-Qamar, or As-Simqanyyah.**

Twelfth: the original (Ta') at the end of the word is written often without dots (Ta' Marbutah), and lightened to a ha'. It is transliterated H silent, except when followed by another word in the same composed geographic name, it is transliterated (t),

Ex: **Al Qinnabah, Qinnabat Brummana ?????? ?????? ??????**

Thirteenth: Infrequently the use of the letters **t, k, d, or s** followed by the letter h can cause some equivoque due to the use of the two-letter symbols **th, kh, dh, and sh**. This problem can be solved by the use of a slant line to separate the h from a preceding **t, k, d, or s**.

Examples: **Shaylih** and **Dhayb** may indicate in Arabic **شايهيه** **دحايب** **شايهيه**

The use of the slant line between S and h in this word can eliminate the equivoque. **S/haylih, D/hayb.**

Fourteenth: In transliteration, all Arabic word endings are silent. The classical nunation (tanwin) is omitted.

Fifteenth: The foreign words follow the international rules applied by the country origin of these words. Example : (bologna) (Weygand) (foch) (Gouraud)????? ???? ?e ???? .

VIII-Conclusion:

We recommend:

- 1- The approval of the Romanization rules set by the Lebanese committee mentioned above, by the countries of the Arab League and by the United Nations.
- 2- The use of these rules to write geographic Arabic names on all topographic maps.
- 3- The adoption of the new gazetteer of the Lebanese cities and towns geographic names.