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on Geographical Names

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Report of the Working Group on a Single Romanization System

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I. The tasks assigned to the Working Group by the Geneva Conference of 1967 and by the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, New York Session 1970 were:

a) To undertake comparative studies of existing romanization systems for each non-Roman writing system of cartographic importance;

b) To seek ways to accomplish the adoption of a single romanization system for each non-Roman alphabet or script for international application;

II. The Working Group held its first meeting on 19 February 1970 in New York, where Mr. Gómez de Silva was elected unanimously as Chairman. At its second meeting on 20 February 1970, the Working Group decided to carry out its work by means of correspondence. Subsequently the Chairman issued four circulars, and the other members fourteen. At the beginning of the Third Session of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, 2 February 1971, three written statements were distributed by members of the Working Group, and in the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Gómez de Silva, Mr. Breu accepted appointment as Chairman pro tempore of the Working Group.

III. Third Session of the Working Group, 3 February 1971

a) Attending were Mr. Breu, Chairman pro tempore, and the following members: Messrs. Geelan, Hovda, Konkov, Médélec, Page, and Sharma. Present as observers were the following experts, Mr. Masabi of Iran, and Mr. Wang of the Republic of China.

b) The meeting was begun with a general review of the activities of the members during the past year. It was stated that material on the writing systems of the following languages has been distributed to all members of the Working Group: Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Assamese, Azerbaijani, Bengali, Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Kazakh, Kashmiri, Khmer, Korean, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Persian, Russian, Sinhalese, Tamil, Telugu, Thai and Urdu.

c) It was recognized that the present title of Recommendation 9 of the Geneva Conference (and of the Working Group as well) has led to misinterpretation. Therefore the Working Group suggests replacement by the title: "A Single Romanization System for each non-Roman Writing System for International Application".

d) The need for definition of certain terms for use within the Working Group was recognized and the following were agreed upon as they appear in Working Paper II, presented by Mr. Page.

Script:

A set of graphic symbols which may be variously employed in representation of the phonological and/or morphological elements of a language or languages. (The items of an alphabetic script typically represent phonemes; those of a syllabic script; syllables; and those of an ideographic script; morphemes).

Alphabet:

A specific set of graphic symbols which may be employed in representation of the phonological elements of a particular language.

Transcription:

The process of recording the phonological and/or morphological elements of a language in terms of a specific writing system.

Transliteration:

The process of recording the graphic symbols of one writing system in terms of corresponding graphic symbols of a second writing system.

Romanisation:

The process of recording in Roman script either the phonological elements of a language or the graphic symbols of a non-Roman writing system.

a) The following general principles for recommendation of romanisation systems were agreed upon:

1. Systemic reversibility should be sought insofar as practical
2. Consistent employment of graphic symbols within any given romanisable system should be sought.

b) The meeting agreed to deal with romanisation systems for all State languages of sovereign states, comparative studies to be prepared as follows:

1. Greek - Mr. Gómez de Silva
2. Amharic - Mr. Breu. In reference to paragraph 52 of the Report of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, 29 April 1970, Mr. Breu is requested to study the implications of the Ethiopian reply to inquiry by the Cartography Section of the United Nations.
3. Hebrew - Mr. Gómez de Silva
4. Arabic - Mr. Breu. The meeting further recommended that the expert for the Arabic Group contact authorities in the various Arabic speaking countries with a view to implementing Resolution 12 of the Geneva Conference
5. Persian - Mr. Gómez de Silva. The meeting further recommended that the expert for Iran ascertain whether alterations to the recommended system for transliteration of Persian names cited in "Transliteration of Farsi Geographic Names to Latin Alphabet" September 1966, had

- been or were to be supplemented in cartographic or other geographic publications. In such a case Resolution 13 will have to be amended
6. Russian - Mr. Geelan. Particular consideration will be given to UN/ECCSCG/E/CONF.57/L.61, 22 October 1970.
 7. Somali - Mr. Gómez de Silva
 8. Serbian - Mr. Gómez de Silva is asked to prepare a draft resolution for the Second Conference. Special consideration should be given to the fact that Serbo-Croatian appears in both a Cyrillic and a Roman script system
 9. Macedonian - Mr. Médélec
 10. Bulgarian - Mr. Geelan
 11. Mongol - Mr. Médélec
 12. Moldavian - Mr. Geelan
 13. Burmese - Mr. Geelan
 14. Thai - Mr. Page. The meeting further suggested that Mr. Page enumerate alterations to the recommended system for transliteration of Thai names as cited in "Romanization Guide for Thai script" April 1968.
 15. Khmer - Mr. Page's comparative study revealed some inconsistencies in the joint Cambodian and EGM/FOCM 1962 System referred to in paragraph 51 of Report of the Second Session of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, 29 April 1970. These will be drawn to the attention of the authorities of the Khmer Republic in the hope that a finalised system may be presented to the Second Conference for adoption.
 16. Laotian - Mr. Page
 17. Chinese - In the last sentence of paragraph 50, Report of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, 29 April 1970, the East Central and South European Group will submit to the fourth meeting of the Group of Experts a report on the romanization of Chinese script. The United Kingdom Group will also prepare a statement.
 18. Korean - Mr. Page
 19. Japanese - Mr. Page
 20. In regard to the languages of the Indian Group, it was recommended that the transliteration tables distributed by Mr. Sharma be circulated for consideration, and comments should be directed to Col. Sharma in time for discussion at the Second full Conference, in relation to paragraph B, Recommendation D, Resolution A, of the Geneva Conference.

The writing systems of the following languages are involved: Hindi, Nepali, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Oriya, Bengali, Assamese, Urdu, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, Kashmiri, Sinhalese and Bhutanese.

21. Concerning the languages of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Mr. Komkov said he would be presenting a statement on the romanization of Russian at the Second Conference in 1972. Subsequently he would give consideration to romanization systems for the State languages of the constituent Republics other than the R.S.F.S.R. (Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Moldavian, Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmen, Kirghiz, Kazakh, Azerbaijani, Armenian and Georgian). In this connection, it was proposed that the following modifications should be made to Recommendation D of Resolution 4 of the First Conference: Paragraph (a) should be redesignated (d); and a new paragraph (c) should be inserted with the following wording: "Give a recommendation as to which linguistic form or forms should be used for international standardization".