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WRITING SYSTEMS AND GUIDES TO PRONUNCIATION: ROMANIZATION

Modification of romanized transcription of Thai

Paper submitted by Thailand**

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1. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

The Royal Thai Government has adopted and employed
the General System of transcription of the Royal Institute
for use in transcribing geographical names within Thailand
since 1939. In the General System the sound of words is
indicated not only by Roman alphabets but also with the diacritical
markings. The mentioned system provides only an approximate
pronunciation for non - Thai speakers. This system after
having some modification has been also adopted as the interna-
tional system for the Romanization of Thai geographical names
by the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of
Geographical Names which held in 1967. Then the application
of this system has been used for the official bilingual map
of Thailand and other documents as well. The transcription
of Thai geographical names into Roman characters is actually
intended to enable foreigners to pronounce the names as closely
as possible to the Thai sound. The modified General System
of transcription is shown in <u>Tables 1 - 2</u>

2.   PROBLEMS OF THE EXISTING TRANSCRIPTION SYSTEM

The above - mentioned General System of transcription has been applied for geographical names including street, railway station, and place names throughout the country. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education, and Universities Affairs also use this system for personal names in English text-books, and official documents such as passports and registration matters. The National Library uses it for bibliographic work. With more use of the system more confusion is revealed.

All the English language newspapers in Thailand and some private sector seem to ignore this system and have invented their own. People in general choose whatever system they prefer or no system at all. Some scholars proposed new system claiming that their new systems are in accordance with the Thai phonetic system or Thai common sense.

3.   IMPROVEMENT TO THE ROMANIZED TRANSCRIPTION OF THAI

The Royal Institute has always been aware of the problems. And the Institute has considered this system has been created for a long time. At present the need to transcribe Thai sounds and words into Roman alphabets is increasing. The Romanized transcription of Thai is not only to enable foreigners to read geographical names but also for the international interchange of data by computerized system. The existing system, which is oriented to pronunciation, is not

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convenient to use because one Roman character represents
several Thai vowels or consonants, and it cannot be
converted back into the original Thai. Therefore on 24
December 1985. The Thai Romanization Improvement Committee
has been appointed by Government to handle the improvement
of Romanization of Thai scripts. The Committee finally
concluded that the requirements shall be devided into two
separate topics because of there are different purposes
of using. They are transliteration and transcription.
The first one is a means of converting the Thai writing
system into Roman alphabet. Thus it is a two - way conver-
sion system where pronunciation is ignored. This paper
will put emphasis on the transcription or the second one.

By transcription, it is assumed that a Thai word
is transcribed into Roman alphabets representing the right
pronunciation. It was decided that since this Romanized
transcription system will be used by general public, a la
the Royal Institute General System, it should be represented
by the 26 Roman characters only. There will be no marking
of tones or of quantities of vowels, i.e. no distinction
between " short " and " long " vowels. In conclusion,
the new Royal Institute General System then has only been
modified some vowel sounds which based on phonetic logic,
the consonant sounds still be the same as the existing
system. This means that the Thai consonant sounds have no

inprovement or any modification owing to they still be
suitable in employing and people were accustomed to tran-
scribed them. Eventhough there are some consonants should
be modified to use another Roman alphabet which based on
phonetic logic better than the existing one. It can be
seen that this newly modified transcription solves certain
ambiguities caused by the use of the same Roman character
for more than one Thai vowel sound especially diphthong
sounds. It could hopefully be applied much better than
the existing one. The newly modified Romanized transcrip-
tion of Thai is shown in Tables 3-4. Comparison between the
two systems, old and new, can be seen in Table 5.

This newly modified Romanized transcription of
geographical names from Thai characters into Roman letters is
submited to this Conference to consider and adopt as the
international system for the Romanization of Thai geogra-
phical names instead of the former one.

MODIFIED GENERAL SYSTEM OF TRANSCRIPTION FOR VOWELS

VOWELS	
Thai	**Roman**
-ะ -ั -า	a
-ำ	am
ิ ี	i
ึ ื ือ -ุ -ู	u
เ-ะ เ-็ เ-	e
แ-ะ แ-	ae
โ-ะ โ- เ-าะ -อ	o
เ-อะ เ-อ เ-ิ	oe
เ-ียะ เ-ีย	ia
เ-ือะ เ-ือ -ัวะ -ัว -ว	ua
ไ- ใ- -ัย ไ-ย -าย	ai
เ-า -าว	ao
-ุย -ูย	ui
โ-ย -อย	oi
-ิว	iu
เ-็ว เ-ว	eo
เ-ย	oei
เ-ียว -ัวย	uai
แ-ว	aeo
เ-ียว	ieo

TABLE 1

MODIFIED GENERAL SYSTEM FOR CONSONANTS

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

TABLE **2**

ROMANIZED TRANSCRIPTION OF THAI

Thai Vowels	Transcription	Examples
อะ อะลดรูป อั อา	a	- กะ = ka - ถลา = thala - วัง = wang - ป่า = pa
อำ	am	- ลำ = lam
อิ อี	i	- กิน = kin - มีด = mit
อี อื	ue	- บึง = bueng - ปืน = puen
อุ อู	u	- ขุด = khut - ลูก = luk
เอะ เอ็ เอ	e	- เตะ = te - เย็น = yen - เฌ = che
แอะ แอ็ แอ	ae	- และ = lae - แข็ง = khaeng - แดง = daeng
โอะ โอะลดรูป โอ เอาะ ออ ั (ก็)	o	- โต๊ะ = to - คน = khon - โจร = chon - เงาะ = ngo - พ่อ = pho - ก็ = ko
เออะ เออ เอิ	oe	- เลอะ = loe - เผลอ = phloe - เดิน = doen
เอียะ เอีย	ia	- เกี๊ยะ = kia - เปีย = pia
เอือะ เอือ	uea	- เรือ = ruea

Table 3

Thai Vowels	Transcription	Examples
ัวะ ัว -ว	ua	- ผัวะ = phua - บัว = bua - ทวน = thuan
ใอ ไอ ัย ไอย อาย	ai	- ใจ = chai - ไก่ = kai - วัย = wai - ไทย = thai - ควาย = khwai
เอา อาว	ao	- เหล้า = lao - ข้าว = khao
อุย อูย	ui	- ทุย = thui - อูย = ui
โอย อ็อย ออย	oi	- โดย = doi - ผล็อย = phloi - ดอย = doi
เอย	oei	- เลย = loei
เอือย	ueai	- เฉือย = chueai
อวย	uai	- รวย = ruai
อิว	io	- ปลิว = plio
เอ็ว เอว	eo	- เร็ว = reo - เหว = heo
แอ็ว แอว	aeo	- แผล็ว = phlaeo - แมว = maeo
เอียว	iao	- เที่ยว = hiao
ฤ (รึ) ฤา	rue	- ฤดิ = ruedi
ฤ (ริ)	ri	- ฤทธิ์ = rit
ฤ (เรอ)	roe	- ฤกษ์ = roek
ฦ ฦา	lue	- ฦาชา = luecha

Table 3

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ROMANIZED TRANSCRIPTION OF THAI

The 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 (ออกเสียง "ด")	d	t
ฎ ฏ	t	t
ฐ ฑ ฒ ท (ออกเสียง "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 (ออกเสียง "ซ") ศ ษ ส	s	t
ห ฮ	h	-

Table 4

COMPARISON OF MODIFIED TRANSCRIPTION

Thai Vowels	Old	New	Examples	
อี อือ	u	ue	- บึง	= bueng
			- ปืน	= puen
อุ อู	u	u	- ขุด	= khut
			- ลูก	= luk
เอือะ เอือ	ua	uea	- เรือ	= ruea
			- เนื้อ	= nuea
อัวะ อัว -ว	ua	ua	- ผัวะ	= phua
			- บัว	= bua
			- ทวน	= thuan
เอือย	uai	ueai	- เฉื่อย	= chueai
			- เรื่อย	= rueai
อวย	uai	uai	- สวย	= suai
			- รวย	= ruai
อิว	iu	io	- ปลิว	= plio
			- สิว	= sio
เอียว	ieo	iao	- เที่ยว	= thiao
			- เดียว	= diao

Table 5