

STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL TERMINOLOGY AND TRANSCRIPTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL TERMS AND NAMES

Report presented by Yugoslavia*

In cartography transcription means the process of transposing geographical terms and names from one language into the writing system of the map-user.

Five methods of transcription may be distinguished: orthographic, phonetic, traditional, the translation method and the transliteration method.

The orthographic method consists in writing geographical terms and names in the same way as they are written in the original language.

The phonetic method is the method of writing terms as they are pronounced in the original foreign language.

The traditional method generally means the use of traditional terms, employed in a few better-known population centres, which have become familiar in a foreign language and are distinct from the terms of the original language. This method is commonest in literature.

The translation method is the method of writing geographical terms as they are expressed after translation from the foreign language into that of the map-user.

The transliteration method consists in assigning to one graphic symbol a corresponding graphic symbol in another writing system, without taking the pronunciation of the individual words into account.

We have cited these definitions of transcription methods, which are well known, because we consider them simpler and more specific than those recommended by the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held at Geneva in 1967.

It is a well-known fact that there are two official alphabets in Yugoslavia, the Roman and the Cyrillic; this creates an initial difficulty in the presentation of all kinds of written information, whether plans, maps, atlases or any other publication. In addition, Yugoslavia, which is a country made up of several republics, applies the principle of the right of each nation and national minority to use its own language and alphabet for all writings. It may be concluded therefore that, as far as the standardization of geographical terms is concerned, Yugoslavia, although a relatively small country, provides an example which is worthy of study by experts and scholars throughout the world.

In order to standardize geographical names and terms — names of localities, rivers, orographic features and areas within the borders of Yugoslavia — in maps, atlases, and all vocational and scientific documentation (with the exception of literature, in which the traditional method of writing geographical terms predominates), the following methods are generally used:

Whether the Roman or the Cyrillic alphabet is used, all geographical terms are given the same spelling and the same pronunciation as those adopted by the nation inhabiting the region in question;

If the Roman alphabet is used, all geographical terms or names from other countries are written and pronounced as spelt and pronounced in the national language of the area concerned;

If the Cyrillic alphabet is used, all geographical terms or names from other countries are written phonetically as pronounced in the language of the nation concerned;

Geographical terms and names written in other graphic symbols (from languages of the USSR, Chinese, Arabic etc.) are transcribed into the Roman or Cyrillic alphabet according to their pronunciation in the language of the nation concerned.

Consequently, we would like to propose, for the transcription of the geographical terms of nations which do not use the Roman alphabet, that the latter should be used with the same letters and pronunciation as are used in transcriptions into Serbo-Croat,¹ supplemented, if necessary, by combinations of letters for sounds which do not occur in Serbo-Croat. If this is accepted, the principal rule of Serbo-Croat should be adhered to, which is to write as one speaks: this means that the pronunciation of the letters of the Roman and Cyrillic alphabets is strictly phonetic, i.e. each letter is always pronounced in the same way. In applying this rule, it would be necessary to adopt, to indicate the pronunciation of the Roman letters of Serbo-Croat, a well-known international system of transcription, such as that of the International Phonetic Association (IPA).

It should be noted that the letters of Roman alphabet are used this way in all central European nations. It should also be remembered that the Roman letters of Serbo-Croat have been used for the romanization of Russian Cyrillic. Such a romanization system is presented in the USSR State rules for transliteration from the Cyrillic to the Roman alphabet, published in 1957.

To sum up, the method of transcription which uses the Roman letters of Serbo-Croat could be used for the transliteration of geographical terms written in different graphic symbols, and their pronunciation would be phonetic. Geographical terms written in the Roman alphabet would be written and pronounced as they are written and pronounced in the language of the nation concerned.

The three tables below illustrate the phonetic transcription of the Roman letters of Serbo-Croat.

¹ The expressions "Serbo-Croat" and "Croato-Serbin" have exactly the same meaning.

Table 1. Phonetic pronunciation of the Roman letters of Serbo-Croat

Roman letters of Serbo-Croat	Phonetic pronunciation in symbols of the International Phonetic Association (IPA)
A a	a
B b	b
C c	ts*
Č č	ts

* The original text of this report, submitted in French, was contained in document E/CONF.61/L.7.

Table 1 (continued)

Roman letters of Serbo-Croat	Phonetic pronunciation in symbols of the International Phonetic Association (IPA)
Dž dž	dʒ
Đ đ	dj*
E e	e
F f	f
G g	g
H h	h
I i	i
J j	j
K k	k
L l	l
Lj lj	lj*
M m	m
N n	n
Nj nj	ɲ
O o	o
P p	p
R r	r
S s	s
Š š	s̥
T t	t
U u	u
V v	v
Z z	z
Ž ž	ʒ

* Approximate pronunciation.

Table 2. Equivalence between the Cyrillic letters of Russian and the Roman letters used in Serbo-Croat

Cyrillic letters used in Russian	Corresponding letters in Serbo-Croat
а	a
б	b
в	v
г	g
д	d
е (following a consonant)	e
е (initially, and following ъ and ь)	je
ё (following consonants other than ж, ч, ш, щ)	jo
ё (initially, and following ъ and ь)	jo
ё (following ж, ч, ш, щ)	jo
э	e
ж	ž
з	z
и	i
и (following ь)	ji
й	j
к	k
л	l
м	m
н	n
о	o
п	p
р	r
с	s
т	t
у	u
ф	f
х	h
ц	c
ч	č
ш	š
щ	šč

Table 2 (continued)

Cyrillic letters used in Russian	Corresponding letters in Serbo-Croat
Ъ (not pronounced)	
Ы	i
Ь (finally and before consonants)	,
Ь (not pronounced before a vowel)	(omitted)
Ю (following a consonant)	'u
Ю (initially, and following ъ and ь)	ju
Я (following a consonant)	'a
Я (initially, and following ъ and ь)	ja

Table 3. Equivalence between the Roman letters and diphthongs of Serbo-Croat and those of English

Roman letters of Serbo-Croat	Corresponding letters of English
	<i>Roman letters</i>
a	{ u <u>S</u> underland (s <u>an</u> dede) a <u>D</u> arwin (d <u>av</u> in) b <u>B</u> oston (b <u>ost</u> en)
b	
c	
č, ĉ	ch <u>C</u> hina (č <u>aj</u> ne)
d	d <u>D</u> anube (denj <u>ub</u>)
dž	{ j <u>J</u> apan (dž <u>ep</u> en), soldier (souldž <u>e</u>) g <u>G</u> ermany (dž <u>em</u> ini), Belgium (beldž <u>em</u>)
d	
e	{ a <u>A</u> merica (em <u>er</u> ike) e <u>B</u> elgium (beldž <u>em</u>) ea <u>H</u> ear <u>t</u> (h <u>er</u> t)
f	f <u>F</u> rance (fr <u>an</u> s)
g	g <u>G</u> ambia (g <u>em</u> bie)
h	h <u>H</u> arvard (h <u>av</u> ed)
i	{ i <u>G</u> il (g <u>il</u>), e <u>E</u> ngland (in <u>gl</u> end) ea <u>e</u> ast (j <u>st</u>), y <u>Y</u> ugoslavia (j <u>ug</u> oslavie)
j	
k	{ k <u>K</u> ent (k <u>ent</u>), c <u>C</u> anada (k <u>ene</u> de) qu <u>Q</u> uebec (k <u>uib</u> ek)
l	l <u>L</u> ondon (l <u>and</u> en)
lj	lj <u>L</u> ure (l <u>jue</u>)
m	m <u>M</u> adrid (m <u>ed</u> rid)
n	n <u>N</u> ile (n <u>ail</u>)
nj	nj <u>N</u> ew York (n <u>ju</u> -jok)
o	{ a <u>B</u> altic (b <u>olt</u> ik) au <u>S</u> aul (s <u>ol</u>) o <u>O</u> xford (o <u>ks</u> fed)
p	p <u>P</u> aris (p <u>er</u> is)
r	r <u>E</u> ome, (r <u>ou</u> m)
s	{ s <u>S</u> umatra (s <u>umat</u> re) c <u>C</u> eylon (s <u>il</u> on) c <u>C</u> yprus (s <u>aip</u> res) c <u>C</u> icero (s <u>is</u> erou)
š	{ sh <u>S</u> hannon (š <u>en</u> en) ss <u>R</u> ussia (r <u>as</u> e)
t	t <u>T</u> ahiti (t <u>ah</u> iti)
u	{ u <u>S</u> udan (s <u>ud</u> en) o <u>B</u> oleyn (b <u>ul</u> in) oo <u>H</u> oover (h <u>uv</u> e)
z	{ z <u>Z</u> anzibarr (z <u>enz</u> iba) s <u>S</u> ilesia (s <u>ail</u> izie)
ž	g <u>B</u> ru <u>g</u> es (br <u>už</u>)
	<i>Diphthongs</i>
ai	i <u>i</u> slend (a <u>il</u> end)
au	o <u>t</u> own (t <u>au</u> n)
ei	a <u>B</u> elgrade (bel <u>gre</u> id)
ju	u <u>B</u> udapest (b <u>ju</u> depest)
ou	o <u>D</u> over (d <u>ou</u> ve)

Table 3 (continued)

<i>Roman letters of Serbo-Croat</i>	<i>Corresponding letters of English</i>
ž	g Bruges (bruž) <i>Diphthongs</i>
ai	i islend (āilend)
au	o town (taun)
ei	a Belgrade (belgreid)
ju	u Budapest (bjudepest)
ou	o Dover (douve)

These three tables show that the sounds of Russian and those of English can be written phonetically using the Roman letters of Serbo-Croat. It will be for linguists to establish a more exact relationship between the different languages and writing systems.

In the transcription we propose, the orthographic,

phonetic and transliteration methods of transcription are used in combination. At first glance, it might seem that the amalgamation of these three methods of transcription is its major defect. However, it is certain that such a complex problem as that of standardizing geographical names in different languages and writing systems cannot be solved simply and by means of a single rule without becoming unacceptable to a large number of people.

We consider that this system is particularly suitable for application where written forms of geographical terms do not yet exist. This is especially true of several African and Asian languages, the geographical terms of which must be catalogued according to their pronunciation by reording them on tape.

It should also be remembered that all nations are beginning to give some thought to simplifying the writing of words in their own languages.

WRITING SYSTEMS*

Report presented by Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland

THE TRANSFER OF NAMES FROM ONE WRITING SYSTEM INTO ANOTHER

Wherever a given romanization system has been officially introduced and is employed in practice by a country for a language that is spoken on its territory and uses a non-Roman alphabet, that same romanization system, irrespective of its scientific qualities, should be recommended for international use.

If preparatory work aiming at devising such a romanization system is being carried on in a country, no resolution on that matter should be passed until the preparatory work has yielded practical results.

If, or while, no official system of the kind described above for the romanization of languages using non-Roman alphabets exists and no preparatory work for one is observable, it is recommended that a system of romanization that has proved workable in international use, especially in linguistics, libraries and documentation, be adopted. If more than one such romanization

* The original text of this report was contained in document E/CONF.61/L.21.

system exists for a language, preference should be given to a system which enables reconversion to be performed with a maximum of exactitude and simplicity.

Among the possible instances of conversion from one writing system into another, only conversion from non-Roman alphabets and from ideographic scripts into Roman script falls within the scope of the international standardization of geographical names.

THE WRITING OF NAMES FROM UNWRITTEN LANGUAGES

For practical reasons the question of writing names from unwritten languages should be dealt with under item 9 of the agenda ("National standardization"), since the establishment of written forms of names from unwritten languages is a task for the national administration and is of no immediate interest for international standardization until such names have passed from the unwritten language into the official language of the country. International standardization is not to be expected to face the problem of taking over any names directly from unwritten languages, it being safe to presume that no unwritten language has the status of an official national language.

THE ROMANIZATION OF CHINESE*

Report presented by the joint regional conference of the East Central and South-East Europe and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics linguistic/geographic divisions

The regional conference of the East Central and South-East Europe and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics linguistic/geographic divisions suggested that the Conference adopt the so-called Pinyin system ("Hanyu

pinyin"), the official system of romanization in the People's Republic of China, as the international system for the romanization of Chinese geographical names. In support of the proposal, the following points are mentioned:

* The original text of this report was contained in document E/CONF.61/L.28.

The Pinyin system is an officially approved romanization system in China. While there is no example of the