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Activities relating to the Working Group on
Romanization Systems

Romanization of Korean

Prepared by Republic of Korea.

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1. Preface

On July 7, 2000, the Korean government (Ministry of Culture & Tourism) instituted a new Romanization orthography. A system of romanizing the Korean language had originally been created around 1900, when Korea became known to the Western world. As many as ten different orthographies have been introduced since then, but the most internationally known is the McCune-Reischauer system(MR system) that was devised in 1939 by Americans George M. McCune and Edwin O. Reischauer.

The MR system was, however, not easily accepted in Korea. A romanization system that suited the Korean view was preferred and more widely used. Starting in 1984, the Korean government made efforts to adopt and disseminate the MR system as the official orthography of the nation, but to no avail. As such, the Korean government created an orthographic system that fully reflected the characteristics of the Korean language, and adopted it as the official Korean Romanization system.

Since 2000, all official romanization in Korea has been based on the new system. All signs, including road signs, train station names, and books published in a foreign language abide by the new system.

2. Reason for enacting the new Romanization orthography

The Korean government determined that the failure of its ten-year effort to disseminate the MR system across the nation was due to shortcomings inherent in the MR system. The government therefore instituted the new orthography after realing that Koreans could not be persuaded to use a system that did not incorporate important characteristics of the Korean language. The problems of the MR system can be summarized as the following:

(1) Use of diacritical marks

There are 40 different sounds in the Korean language (19 consonants and 21 vowels), but there are only 26 letters in the Roman alphabet. As such, some sounds in the Korean language need to be distinguished using diacritical marks or by combining two or more Roman characters. The MR system stipulates the use of diacritical marks: Korean vowels ` -ⱼ ' and `-~-' are differentiated by using a breve, as in o and o. Consonants ㄱ, ㄷ=ㅌ, ㅅ' and   are differentiated by using an apostrophe ('), as in k, t, p, ch, and k', t', p', ch'.

Diacritical marks were frequently omitted because of the inconvenience in directly typing in or searching for the marks on computers. When diacritical marks are omitted, however, Korean sounds that are actually different are written in the same way. For example, '° ' *(Yeongsuk)* and   *(Yongsuk)* were both written as Yongsuk, and `ᵐᵒₒ₋₋ᴛ' *(Jeongju)* and `ᵐᵒ₀ ₋₋ᴛ ' *(Cheongju)* were also both written as Chongju. Showing the distinction between different Korean characters was impossible with the MR system, which is why Koreans rejected it.

(2) Different romanization between voiced sounds and voiceless sounds

The MR system of differentiating voiced sounds and voiceless sounds in the Korean language is meaningless. A consonant, which is usually a voiceless sound, is pronounced as a voiced sound when it is placed between voiced sounds, but Koreans rarely recognize this difference.

However, the MR system draws this distinction and stipulates that sounds, which are actually recognized by Koreans to be the same, be written differently. For example, the two ` ᴧ' sounds in `71j ' *(Jeju)* are the same to Koreans, but the MR system romanizes this word as `Cheju': the front A is written as *ch,* and the latter A

as j. Koreans did not understand why such a distinction was made, and therefore did not adhere to this orthography.

3. Main details of the new orthography

(1) Removal of diacritical marks

Vowels that were romanized using a breve are written instead by combining Roman characters.

Vowel	MR orthography	New orthography
ㅗ	O	O
0}	O	Eo
ㅜ	U	U
0	U	Eu

Previously, distinction was made between unaspirated and aspirated sounds through the use of an apostrophe O. Now, different characters are used instead.

Consonant	MR orthography,	New orthography
/=i	k/k'	g/k
	tit'	d/t
ㅣ=ㅣ /f-	p/p'	b/p
	ch/ch'	j/ch

(2) Abolishment of the distinction drawn between voiced and voiceless sounds

Voiced and voiceless sounds, which are pronounced without distinction in the Korean language, are now written using the same Roman characters. For example, both k and g were used to write the same sound ㄱ in the past, but now only g is used to express the `ㄱ` sound, while k is used for `9`.

❑ *Refer to the attached document for the full orthography.*

4. Efforts to unify the languages of ROK and DPRK

The linguists of the Republic of Korea(ROK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea(DPRK)have been discussing the matter of unifying the languages of the two nations since the 1990s. Since 2001 especially, top-level organizations in both countries for language policies — the National Institute of the Korean Language in ROK and the Linguistic Research Center of the Academy of Social Sciences in DPRK — have met to discuss linguistic standards, including Roman orthography. As a result, the two parties reached an agreement in 2005 to publish a `unified dictionary,' merging the languages of the two nations.

Currently, they are conducting joint research projects on various dialects and detailed discussions on the matter of unifying standards for the dictionary compilation. No detailed agreement has been reached between the two Koreas regarding the Roman orthography as yet, but it is predicted that continued discussions between the two parties will lead to a mutually acceptable method of unification in Romanization.   [The End]

[Attachment]

The Romanization of Korean

(Ministry of Culture and Tourism proclamation No. 2000-8)

1. Basic Principles of Romanization

   (1)   Romanization is based on standard Korean pronunciation.
   (2)   Symbols other than Roman letters are avoided to the greatest extent possible.

2. Summary of the Romanization System

   (1) Vowels are transcribed as follows:

˙ simple vowels

}		-ㅓ-	**T**	—	ㅓ	�N	~ㅓ	11	~]
a	eo	o	u	eu	i	ae	e	oe	wi

•diphthongs

		J-	Tr	li	11	1}	~N	-r]	¶11	-1
ya	yeo	yo	yu	yae	ye	wa	wae	wo	we	ui

Note 1 : ㅢ is transcribed as *ui,* even when pronounced as   .

Note 2 : Long vowels are not reflected in Romanization.

   (2) Consonants are transcribed as follows:

˙ plosives(stops)

	Ti		ㄷ	cc	E	b	bb	ㅍ
g, k	kk	k	d, t	tt	t	b, p	pp	p

• affricates   ˙ fricatives

	ㅈ jj	ㅊ ch	ㅅ s	ㅆ ss	ㅎ h

nasals			. liquids
ㄴ n	ㅁ	ㅇ ng	ㄹ z

Note 1 : The sounds ㄱ, ㄷ, and ㅂ are transcribed respectively as g, d, and b when they appear before a vowel; they are transcribed as *k, t,* and *p* when followed by another consonant or form the final sound of a word. (They are Romanized as pronunciation in [   ]•)

e.g.

구미	Gumi
백암	Baegam
	Hapdeok
[ ]	Wolgot
한밭 [한받]	Hanbat

영동	Yeongdong
	Okcheon
	Hobeop
[==] beotkkot	

Note 2 : ㄹ is transcribed as r when followed by a vowel, and as l when followed by a consonant or when appearing at the end of a word. ㄹㄹ is transcribed as *ll.*

e.g.

구리	Guri
	Chilgok
울릉	Ulleung

설악	Seorak
	Imsil
대관령 [대괄령]	Daegwallyeong

3. Special Provisions for Romanization

(1)   When Korean sound values change as in the following cases, the results of those changes are Romanized as follows:

A. The case of assimilation of adjacent consonants

e.g.

2

· ıo ıı g O[]   Baengma   Sinmunno

k.[g.]   Jongno   ˝ᴄı ≥ı[$ Wangsimni

LN ['A 21]   Byeollae   I!   [~2E]   Silla

B. The case of the epenthetic l- and E.

e.g.

ᵍ-O1'[o–LI]   Hangnyeoul   ▼[≥ᵏ]   allyak

C. Cases of palatalization

e.g.

off   01[o[1.7Cl]   haedoji   01[71- 1]   gachi

% º₁⁴[D ICI•]   machida

D. Cases where ¯ı, c, H , and   are adjacent to

e.g.

Za[ʸa]   joko   ▼CI•[ᴱ_F]   nota

~o~[7Cf II~]   japyeo   ⁱXI[LI•1]   nachi

However, aspirated sounds are not reflected in case of nouns where -s follows -1, c, and H , as in the examples below.

e.g.

                                        Jiphyeonjeon

3i'   Mukho

Note : Tense (or glottalized) sounds are not reflected in cases where morphemes are compounded, as in the examples below.

e.g.

	Apgujeong	~~	o^f	Nakdonggang
	Jukbyeon		E_H	Nakseongdae
$~ o	Hapjeong		g_o	Paldang
$_H^{dg}$	saetbyeol		LE	Ulsan

(2) When there is the possibility of confusion in pronunciation, a hyphen " - " may be used.

e.g.

	Jung-ang	'L^E EH	Ban-gudae
Aid °	Se-un	off ° CI{	Hae-undae

(3) The first letter is capitalized in proper names.

e.g.

T $^{`E}$ Busan g Sejong

(4) Personal names are written by family name first, followed by a space and the given name. In principle, syllables in given names are not separated by hyphen, but the use of a hyphen between syllables is permitted.

e.g.

° I o of Min Yongha (Min Yong-ha)

o LI- El   Song Nari (Song Na-ri)

   (⌐ Assimilated sound changes between syllables in given names are not transcribed.

e.g.

LE g Han Boknam (Han Bok-nam)

   Lf Hong Bitna (Hong Bit-na)

     Romanization of family names will be determined separately.

(5) Administrative units such as   ., ^{A}I,   , F, °, '6,   , -W.–, and ^{7f} are

transcribed respectively as *do, si, gun, gu, eup, myeon, ri, dong,* and *ga,* and are preceded by a hyphen.   Assimilated sound changes before and after the hyphen are not reflected in Romanization.

e.g.

충청북도   Chungcheongbuk-do

제주도   Jeju-do   의정부시   Uijeongbu-si

양주군   Yangju-gun   도봉구   Dobong-gu

               Sinchang-eup   삼죽면   Samjuk-myeon

인왕리   Inwang-ri   당산동   Dangsan-dong

봉천 1동   Bongcheon 1(il)-dong

종로 2가   Jongno 2(i)-ga

퇴계로 37[Toegyero 3(sam)-ga

Note : Terms for administrative units such as 시, 도 may be omitted.

e.g.

청주   Cheongju   함평   Hampyeong

순창   Sunchang

   (6) Names of geographic features, cultural properties, and man-made structures may be written without hyphens.

e.g.

남산   Namsan   속리산   Songnisan

금강   Geumgang   독도   Dokdo

경복궁   Gyeongbokgung   무량수전   Muryangsujeon

연화교 Yeonhwagyo   극락전   Geungnakjeon

안압지 Anapji   남한산성   Namhansanseong

화랑대 Hwarangdae   불국사   Bulguksa

현충사 Hyeonchungsa   Dongnimmun

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SZ	Ojukheon		Chokseongnu
gR	Jongmyo	CEi	Dabotap

(7) Proper names such as personal names and those of companies may continue to be written as they have been previously.

(8) When it is necessary to convert Romanized Korean back to Hangeul in special cases such as in academic articles, Romanization is done according to Hangeul spelling and not pronunciation. Each Hangeul letter is Romanized as explained in section 2 except that ㅡI, ㅌ, ㅂ and E. are always written as g, *d, b* and ₁. When ㅇ has no sound value, it is replaced by a hyphen. It may also be used when it is necessary to distinguish between syllables.

e.g.

	jib			jip
	bakk	a		gabs
	buskkoch	ㅇ		meogneun
El	doglib	` El		munli
	mul-yeos	2- 0I		gud-i
1- ᶜE	johda	7 1 7		gagog
0	jolangmal	d~°~~—I ᶜE		eobs-eoss-seubnida