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**Writing systems and pronunciation:**

**Romanization**

The Rules of Latin Alphabetic Transcription of Korean Language

Submitted by Democratic People's Republic of Korea\*\*

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**The Rules of Latin Alphabetic  
Transcription of Korean Language**

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## **Outline**

Explained in this document are the reason why the rules of the Latin alphabetic transcription of the Korean language are submitted again to the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, and the principles maintained in Romanized transcription of Korean geographical and personal names.

Also given here are an explanation of the rules of transcription of the Korean language established on these principles and some limitations in applying these rules.

## **Introduction**

The Geographical Naming Committee of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on the basis of studying merits and defects of the Rules of Romanized Transcription of the Korean Language submitted by south Korea to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of the Geographical Names in 1987 and the Romanized Transcription of the Korean Language made public by its Ministry of Culture and Tourism in August 2000, submits to the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference, the following revised rules with addition of some exceptions to the Rules of Romanized Transcription of the Korean Language presented to the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

The principles in the Romanized transcription of Korean Geographical and Personal Names are;

- ① to adopt Latin alphabetical letters as closest as possible to the phonetic sounds of the Korean language with full consideration to the phonetic characteristics of the Korean language.
- ② to avoid complications and increase practicability by transcribing many variations of the Korean language and limiting them to a certain extent.
- ③ to respect the tradition and history of the Romanization of Korean. The Romanization of Korean was attempted by westerners and this has even become a usage. It is because that the Romanization itself was based not on the phonetic touch of the Koreans but on that of foreigners and that it is the latter who would use the Romanized geographical and personal names of Korea.
- ④ to maintain the rules of Latin alphabetical transcription of the Korean language as long as the letters remain unchanged with the passage of time.

# Rules of the Latin Alphabetical Transcriptions of the Korean Language

These rules are basically applied to the Latin alphabetical transcription of Korean geographical and personal names in accordance with the standard pronunciation of Korean and the pronunciation of the Latin letters transcribed should follow that widely used internationally.

1. The Korean letters are transcribed in the following Latin letters:

1) Vowels

(1) Monophthongs

ㅏ	ㅑ	ㅓ	ㅕ	ㅡ	ㅣ	ㅞ	ㅟ	ㅛ	ㅜ
a	ǎ	o	u	ǔ	i	ae	e	oi	wi

(2) Diphthongs

ㅑ	ㅓ	ㅕ	ㅗ	ㅛ	ㅜ	ㅝ	ㅟ	ㅛ	ㅜ	
ya	yǎ	yo	yu	yae	ye	wa	wǎ	wae	we	ǔi

2) Consonants

(1) Plosives

Labial sounds	Aspirated sounds	Strong sounds
ㄱ - k,g	ㅋ - kh	ㄲ - kk

ㄷ - t,d	ㅈ - th	ㅌ - tt
ㅂ - p,b	ㅃ - ph	ㅍ - pp

(2) Affricates

ㅈ - j	ㅊ - ch	ㅉ - jj
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(3) Fricatives

ㅅ - s	ㅆ - ss	ㅎ - h
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(4) Resonants

ㅁ - m	ㄴ - n	ㅇ - ng	ㄹ - r,l
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2. Phonetic variations are transcribed as follows;

1) Labial voiceless consonants placed between vowels ㄱ, ㅋ, ㆁ and labial voiceless consonants vocalized between resonant and vowels ㄱ, ㅋ, ㆁ are transcribed with g, d, b.

e. g.	교구동	Kyogu-dong	초도	Chodo
	고비리	Kobi-ri	강동	Kangdong
	금교	Kūmgyo	칠보산	Chilbosan

2) At the. Tip of a syllable or before consonants excepting resonant. the consonants attached to the end of the syllable are transcribed as k, ㆁ and ㅃ as p and ㄷ ㅈ ㅉ ㅊ ㅅ as t.

e. g.	꼭산	Koksan	갑산	Kapsan
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앞산                      Apsan                      샷갓봉                      Satkatbong

- 3) The consonant ㄹ attached to the end of a syllable is transcribed as lateral l, when it is placed before a consonant or at the tip of a word.

e. g. 울산                      Ulsan                      은를                      Ŭnryul

- 4) Twin consonants attached to the end of a syllable, when placed before a consonant or at the tip of a word, are transcribed in the sound of one of them.

e. g. 닭섬                      Taksŏm                      물궂                      Mulkol

But both of the twin consonants are transcribed before a vowel.

e. g. 붉은 바위                      Pulgŭnbawi

          앉은 바위                      Anjŭnbawi

3. The sounds of Korean words when they undergo changes are transcribed as follows;

- 1) The consonants attached to the end of syllables ㄱ ㅋ ㆁ, ㄷ ㅌ and ㄴ ㄹ ㅍ when they come before resonant are transcribed in principle with mg, m, n. But they may be transcribed in the original sounds when necessary.

e. g. 백마산 Paengmasan,                      꽃마을 Kkonmaül

압록강 Amrokgang

- 2) ㄴ placed before resonant ㄹ and ㄴ are transcribed as ll only in case they are considered casehardened.

e. g. 천리마 Chöllima, 한나산 Hallasan, 전라도 Jöllado

- 3) When the preceding element of a compound word ends with a vowel and the next element begins with a consonant save resonant, in case the first sound of the next element is a strong sound, it is transcribed in the strong sound and, in case the next element begins with a resonant, ㄴ is transcribed as n.

e. g. 기대산 Kittaesan      새별읍 Saepöl- ŭp  
뒤문 Twinmun

4. The style of transcription and transcription in peculiar cases

- 1) Hyphen is given when the phonetic sound is intermitted and when the syllabic distinction in Latin alphabetic transcription of Korean is unclear to cause confusion.

e. g. 앞언덕 Ap-öndök      부억안골 Puök-angol  
판교 Phan-gyo      방어동 Pang-ö-dong



2) The first letters of all the geographical names should be capital letters of the Latin alphabet.

e. g. 평안남도 평성시      Phyöngannam-do Phyöngsong-si

3) The classifying words of the proper noun including geographical names are fixed in certain form, their first sounds being presented in letters. In case of an administrative district, hyphen <-> is given between the proper noun and the classifying words.

(1) 산 san    거리 gōri    고개 gogae    대 dae    봉 bong    교 gyo

    골 gol    각 gak    별 bol            곳 got    강 gang

(2) 도 do    시 si            군 gun    면 myōn    리 ri            동 dong

    구 gu    구역 guyōk

4) In case of geographical names combined with figures, the figures are in principle transcribed in Arabic numeral. But it is allowed to transcribe them in Korean pronunciation or translate them.

e. g. 3.1 동 3.1-dong or Samil-dong

    9.18 저수지 September 18 Res

5) Spaces are given between the first and second names of a person and the first sounds of the names are written in capital letters and in the names of Chinese character origin, spaces are given between each letter. When the first sound of the second syllable becomes vocal, it is transcribed in a relevant voiceless letter.

e. g. 김꽃분이 Kim KKotpuni

박동구 Pak Tong Gu

안복철 An Pok Chöl

6) Those which have been casehardened in the course of being widely current internationally are left intact.

e. g. 평양 Pyongyang, 서울 Seoul

※ Exceptions in the use of these rules

The signs used in these rules of transcription may be omitted, depending on circumstances when KK, TT, SS, JJ come at the head of geographical names, one of the letters may be dropped.

e. g. 서포 Söpho—Sopho

짚레골 JJilre-gol Jilre-gol