

**Group of Experts on
Geographical names**

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Report on activities in Thailand

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Group of Experts on Geographical Names

THAILAND

ROMANIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

A Modified General System on Romanization of the Royal Institute of Thailand was adopted at the First United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names in 1967 for International Use. Geographical and place names on Thai maps have been romanized in accordance with this system since then. At present, the Royal Institute has set up the Committee approved by the Government on the Revision of Romanization for the Transliteration and Transcription. Due to the existing romanization established and determined by the Royal Institute, which has been used for more than 46 years. Since the increasing application of the Transliteration of Thai characters is widely required, i.e. the transcription of geographical name, common nouns for foreign reading, interexchange of telecommunication data requiring much more accuracy. The mentioned transliteration system is considered inappropriate since a single Roman letter stands for many consonants and vowels in Thai causing confusion. It is now necessary to be amended and improved for worldwide application and being used in various fields as in Geographical Names, international information exchange, and other international communication and cooperation as well. Hopefully, to be accomplished and can be submitted to the next United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names for consideration and acceptance.

The reason and necessary for revision of Romanization attached to this paper.

*Project of Updating the Transliteration and Transcription of
Thai Characters into Roman Letters*

Principle

Updating the method of transliteration and Transcription of Thai characters into Roman for practical application.

Background

The Royal Institute of Thailand has created two standard systems for transliteration of Thai characters into Roman Letters : the General System and the Precise System since 1939. In the General System, the sound of words is indicated by Roman letters only and without any diacritical markings. The Precise System indicates tones and unpronounced letters thus showing the derivation of the words. In the Precise System, there is a Roman equivalent for every Thai consonant and this system employs diacritical marks, many of them being tonal marks.

The Royal Thai Government issued an official proclamation on March 6, 1939 adopting the General System for use in the transliteration of Thai characters into Roman letters. Later on, the Sub-Committee on Geographical Names of the Royal Thai Survey Department submitted the proposed General System for use in the transliteration of geographical names within Thailand to the First United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names held in Geneva, Switzerland in 1967 and then was approved as International System in transliterating Thai geographical names into Roman letters.

Cause and Reason of Updating

Since the increasing application of transliteration of Thai characters is widely required, for example - the transcription of geographical names, common nouns for foreign reading, interexchange of telecommunication data requiring much more accuracy. The General System is considered inappropriate since a single Roman letter stands for many consonants and vowels in Thai causing confusion and eventhough the Precise System indicates tones and unpronounced letters showing the derivation of words, it should be updated for worldwide application.

Furthermore, the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) assigned its Technical Committee (TC 46 - Documentation) to carry out the standardization for worldwide use. TC 46 has circulated the Draft International Standards to the member countries for review and comment. For Thailand, the Thai Industrial Standards Institute (TISI), the member body to the ISO disapproved in principle, the Draft International Standards. Resolution adopted at the TC 46 Meeting appointing Thailand (the Royal Institute and TISI) to carry out the work of transliteration of Thai characters into Roman letters prior approval as International Standards.

Procedure

1. An Ad Hoc Committee is set up as " Technical Committee for Updating the transliteration of Thai Characters into Roman "
2. The final standards would be submitted to ISO for approval and acceptance as International Standards.

Conclusion

The complete commitment of International Standards will be worldwide useful in application.