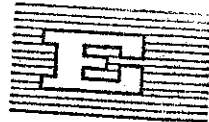


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UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Report of the Working Group on a Single Romanization System  
for each Non-Roman Writing System

1 June 1972 to 16 August 1977

ATH.77-108

1. Between the Second (1972) and the Third (1977) United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names the Working Group has held six meetings, i.e. two meetings during the Fifth Session (1973), three meetings during the Sixth Session and one meeting during the Seventh Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. Beside these personal meetings work was done by circulars. Convenor was Mr. Breu, Austria.

2. The official reports of these activities are contained in the following papers:

- (1) Fifth Session of the United Nations Group of Experts, Working Paper No. 26
- (2) Fifth Session of the United Nations Group of Experts, Working Paper No. 28
- (3) Report of the United Nations Group of Experts, 5th Session, ESA/RT/C/GN 3, 16 March 1973
- (4) Report of the United Nations Group of Experts, 6th Session, ESA/RT/C/GN/4, 17 June 1975

3. The distribution of work amongst the members of the Working Group was as follows:

Mr. Ayoubi	Arabic (together with Mr. Nédélec in the Maghreb area)
Mr. Breu	Amharic, Greek
Mr. Dahlstedt	Somali
Mr. Földi/Mr. Radó	Bulgarian, Mongolian (together with Mr. Nédélec), Korean in North Korea
Mr. Geelan	Burmese, Maldivian (both together with Mr. Sharma)
Mr. Kattan	Arabic
Mr. Komkov	Non-Roman alphabets of the USSR
Mr. Lapesa	Hebrew
Mr. Nédélec	Arabic in the Maghreb area (together with Mr. Ayoubi), Mongolian (together with Mr. Földi/Mr. Radó), Cyrillic alphabets of Yugoslavia
Mr. Page	Japanese, Khmer, Korean in South Korea, Laotian, Persian, Thai
Mr. Qiao Feng	Chinese
Mr. Sharma	Writing systems of the Indian Division (Maldivian together with Mr. Geelan), further Pashtu and Burmese (the latter together with Mr. Geelan)

4. The results of the investigations of the Working Group are given below in the alphabetical order of the non-Roman alphabets:

AMHARIC

The validity of Resolution 7 of the Second United Nations Conference (E/CONF.61/4, p. 11) seems still to correspond to the situation in the country. As no reply has been received from the Convenor's two letters to the Ethiopian Government it can be presumed that no change has occurred.

ARABIC

The Arabic Division endeavours to gain general recognition by all Arabic-speaking countries of the Amended Beirut 1971 System for the Romanization of Arabic Writing as shown in E/CONF.61/4/Add.1, p. 170. A Comparative Romanization Table for seven romanization systems of Arabic as elaborated by Mr. Page in 1974 shows that the divergencies between the main systems in practical use are still important. According to Mr. Nédélec's statements there exists in the Maghreb area (and Mauretania) firmly established systems, divergent from the Amended Beirut System.

Algeria: The National Institute of Cartography at the Ministry of National Defence of Algeria has approved in 1972 the application for official cartography of the "Principes de translittération de l'arabe en caractères latins" edited by the Institut Géographique National français, Paris, April 1967.

Mauretania: The Institut Géographique National français (IGNF), Paris, has adopted in 1969 for all cartographic work which it undertakes in Mauretania under the current aid and co-operation programme a simplified version of the IGNF System of April 1967. In consequence to that the romanized names forms in the official maps of Mauretania edited since 1969 will be rendered in accordance with this simplified IGNF system.

Morocco: The Ministry of Agriculture of Morocco introduced in 1971 and 1972 an official romanization system of Arabic script, which in essence constitutes a modification of the above mentioned IGNF system of April 1967. It is officially used by the Topographic Service of the country.

Tunisia: The Direction of Topography and Cartography of Tunisia has published in April 1972 an official romanization of Arabic script, which greatly differs from the official romanization of the other Maghreb countries, especially in so much as it makes ample use of haccs and cedillas. It was agreed by the Group of Experts that, if it should be impossible to agree on a single system, the Amended Beirut 1971 System be modified to accommodate a limited number of essential variants as set forth in Addendum A to Annex IV of the Report of the 5th Session of the Working Group, ESA/RT/C/GN/3, 16 March 1973, p. 27. The Working Group recommended that the Arab League arrange a regional meeting of the Arab countries for the purpose of solving the romanization problem.

BULGARIAN

Resolution 5 of the 2nd United Nations Conference (E/CONF.61/4, p.11) is still valid, but there exists uncertainty regarding the status of an alternative group of characters. There is no unanimity within the Working Group whether this alternative group of characters was in a subsidiary status or in an equal one. Therefore rephrasing of Resolution 5 by the 3rd United Nations Conference seems to be advisable.

BURMESE

The practical situation in the country is widely unknown. Burma did not reply to a United Nations inquiry on the status of world mapping in 1976. According to Mr. Geelan the only evidence that in any way reveals Burmese practice in the spelling of geographical names is found in "Nomenclature des Bureaux Télégraphiques, Union Internationale des Télécommunications", 24th edition, Geneva 1976. Spellings are in consonance with the 1907 version of the "Tables for the Transliteration of Burmese into English" published in Rangoon in 1908 by the Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma. Mr. Sharma stated that Burma was publishing now maps only in Burmese script and that the authorities were not contemplating a romanization system for the near future. The transliteration tables of 1907 would have no official status in Burmese mapping.

CHINESE

Mr. Qiao-Feng described in great detail the development and establishment of the romanization system "Pinyin" in his country. He stated that "Pinyin" was taught in elementary schools, employed in maps and charts, and used in post and telegraph offices. Names at railroad stations in China appeared both in Chinese and in Roman ("Pinyin") writing. The United Nations Group of Experts has charged the Working Group with the working out of a draft resolution on the subject of the romanization of Chinese.

The Working Group presents the following draft:

"The Conference,

Noting that China has officially adopted and used for many years a system for romanizing Chinese geographical Names from Chinese script,

Noting also that this system is in consonance with scientific linguistic principles relating to transference between writing systems,

Noting further that a substantial body of Chinese geographical names exists in terms of this romanization system,

Recommends that the system set forth by the Government of China in the publication entitled, in English translation, Revised Draft of the Plan of Phonetic Script of the Chinese Language (October 1957) and generally known as Pinyin System be adopted as the international system for the romanization from Chinese script of Chinese geographical names."

Mr. Qiao-Feng asserted that China will increase in the near future the amount of names material in terms of the Pinyin System in order to facilitate the practical application of this system. Mr. Geelan stated that at present 3,750 names are available in Pinyin. Whereas the Wade-Giles System was applicable to Chinese characters irrespective of the ethnic origin of the names involved, the Pinyin System, by contrast, was applicable to names of minority languages - Mr. Geelan asserts - only insofar as such names are accessible in their original form.

#### GREEK

The Working Group considered the draft romanization system for the Greek alphabet prepared by Greek and Cypriot authorities as set forth in Addendum B to Annex IV of the Report of the 5th Session of the Group of Experts, ESA/RT/C/GN.3, 16 March 1973, pp. 28-31, acceptable as an international system. At the 6th Session of the Group of Experts the Group noticed a number of changes to this system set forth in Working Paper No. 13 of that Session. These alterations had been agreed upon by both Greek and Cypriot authorities. Afterwards the Convenor learned by letters from the Greek expert that a final acceptance of the above mentioned romanization system by the competent Greek and Cypriot authorities has not yet taken place.

#### HEBREW

Resolution 9 of the 2nd United Nations Conference, E/CONF.61/4, p. 12, is still valid. The situation in Israel has not changed.

#### INDIAN DIVISION, ALPHABETS OF THE:

Resolution 11 of the 2nd United Nations Conference, E/CONF.61/4, p. 12, is still valid. Mr. Sharma stated that the Government of India was likely to adopt for official use in the near future the tables presented by him. Mr. Sharma has contacted authorities in Sri Lanka on the romanization problem of Sinhala, but had received no reply. Nothing is known of the position of the authorities of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal concerning the romanizations of the alphabets of the respective national languages. Also doubtful is the situation in the Maldives. Mr. Geelan states that there was no evidence that there has ever been a locally produced map in either English or the Maldivian alphabet. The problem of the romanization of Urdu in Pakistan will be solved together with Pashtu. For detailed information see under Pashtu.

#### JAPANESE

No change was stated since the 2nd United Nations Conference (Report of the Conference, vol. I, E/CONF.61/4, p. 6). The two principal systems (Modified Hepburn and Kunrei) continue to be used by public and private entities in Japan and abroad, also for the rendering of geographical names. Mr. Page thinks that there appears to be no prospect of change.

#### KHMER

No change has been noted since the adoption of Resolution 10 of the 2nd United Nations Conference (E/CONF.61/4, p. 12).

KOREAN

The South Korean Ministry of Education System has been introduced extensively in that country in road and railroad signs and in a few small scale tourist maps, and has been suggested to the US BGN for adoption. As of the present time, the BGN continues to adhere to the McCune-Reishauer System. No information was available of the situation in North Korea.

LAOTIAN

No change had occurred since the 2nd United Nations Conference (Report of the Conference, vol. I, E/CONF.61/4, p. 6).

MONGOLIAN

Mr. Radó has undertaken the task to correspond with the Mongolian Academy of Sciences in this matter. No results of his endeavours are known.

PASHTU

Mr. Ganji states as a member of the Group of Experts that an approaching conference to include representatives from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, would make a final decision in the matter of Pashtu, as well as of Urdu (in Pakistan). Nothing is known till now if such a conference has taken place. According to Mr. Sharma, in the meantime, Afghanistan had introduced a romanization system in a map of the country, which according to Mr. Ganji's statement can have provisional character only.

PERSIAN

The recommendation contained in Resolution 13 of the 1st United Nations Conference, E/CONF.53/3, p. 13, is still valid. An approaching conference to include representatives from Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, which will deal with Pashtu and Urdu, necessarily will consider also Persian, but no change is contemplated, also under Pashtu.

SOMALI

Since Somalia has adopted the Roman alphabet in 1973 Somali is no longer the concern of the Working Group. No maps have been seen in the new Somali alphabet, but a study of the Government newspaper Xiddin a Oktoobar by Mr. Geelan shows continuing inconsistency in the spelling of geographical names, typical for a period of transition.

THAI

No changes had taken place since 1967, and the recommendation contained in Resolution 14 of the 1st United Nations Conference (E/CONF.53/3, p. 14) is still valid.

USSR, THE NON-ROMAN ALPHABETS OF THE

In the period covered by this report of the non-Roman alphabets of the USSR only the Russian alphabet has been discussed. Mr. Komkov described in Working Paper No. 12, submitted to the 6th Session of the Group of Experts in 1975, two systems of romanization of the Russian alphabet now in official use in his country. First the state standard GOST 16876-71, approved in 1973, for more general purposes, and second the romanization system worked out by the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1951-1956. This second system (Academy of Sciences System) is largely used in cartography (World Atlas, Moscow 1967; World Map 1:2,500,000 etc.), and the expert of the USSR recommends it for international use in the romanization of geographical names.

Two essential points were made in the discussion on this system. First the linguistic evaluation. Here Mr. Lewis felt that there were disadvantages in the treatment of the Russian letter ё. A detailed linguistic evaluation has been distributed by the convenor to the members of the Working Group; it will be submitted to the Conference as a Working Paper.

The second point concerns the "donor principle". The majority of the members of the Working Group declared themselves in favour of this principle, but the convenor stated that that would not relieve the Working Group of its duty to analyse systems presented by individual countries and make proposals for improvement to the countries concerned before approval of a given system by a United Nations Conference. In the case of the Academy of Science System the above mentioned linguistic evaluation (enclosure to Circular No. 17 of the Convenor of the Group) contains both an analysis and suggestions for alternative solutions.

YUGOSLAVIA, THE CYRILLIC ALPHABETS OF

The situation is stable and unchanged. See Resolution 6 in the Report of the 2nd United Nations Conference, vol. I, E/CONF.61/4, p.6.