

Division East Central and South East Europe

Fifth Session of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names

Point 8 of the tentative agenda

Acceptability of Romanizations

Comment on Paper L 106 Romanization of Geographic Names for
International Use, submitted by the U.S.A.

To par.1: In our opinion no system may be to speakers of all
languages.

To par.2. and 3: It is true that there are single receiver nations,
but in case of romanization, we always should consider
the receiver nations as one unit. Otherwise we could
not speak of standardization in the international
sense. In other words: the acceptability or suitability
considered by a single receiver will necessarily lead
to the requirements of one language. That is why we
feel that on international level only the donor
principle can work. Besides, there is no system which
does not diverge "significantly from the orthographic
tradition of /some of⁺/ the projected users".

To par.4: This paragraph intends to maintain that Romanization
should be based on one group of the receivers. This
is not a receiver principle as a whole, but the
principle some receivers, or a region of receivers.
This means that other receivers of the same unit are
left out of consideration thus causing them the same
difficulties shown in this paper.

To par. 5: One must also consider that precise, reversible systems result mostly in more condensed forms than other ones, which is an advantage in cartography.

To par. 7: This means that /as expressed more detailed in the following unnumbered paragraphs/ English usage should be the basis of all romanizations irrespective of the donor country. We accept the fact and appreciate the usefulness resulting from it, that English is widely used and known, but at the present we cannot consider it as an international language. It is therefore unrealistic to suggest English as a universal transcription language or medium.

/ + addition from us/

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Bulgarian: We do not have more information as to the official transcription since the London Conference.

Chinese: Letters have been sent to different organizations. As a result, an official of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Budapest submitted the following verbal information.

"The Chinese Script Reform Committee of the State Council of the People's Republic of China and the Surveying and Cartographic Bureau of the State Council of the People's Republic of China agree in full as well as in details with the proposals submitted by Hungary at the London Conference. The People's Republic of China wishes to take part in the standardization of geographical names as well as in the activity of the GEGN, but they have no possibility to participate at the session of the GEGN this year. The experts of Hungary have been asked to represent the above views at this session. At the same time grateful acknowledgement was expressed for the past and present activity of Hungary in the matter of Chinese transcription."

In addition to the above information some items still have to be cleared. We feel it necessary, therefore, to get information on the availability of Roman transcription for geographical names, possibly a

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full list for the Romanization of Chinese characters in the Pinyin system.

Korean: Letters have been sent to different organizations but no answer received up to now. From an earlier correspondence between the GUGK of the Soviet Union and Korean official place, we have the information that the McCune-Reischauer transcription is regarded as official in the People's Democratic Republic of Korea. As a result, we use this transcription on the World Map 1:2,500 000 as shown in the publication "Schreibung der geographischen Namen auf der Weltkarte 1:2,500 000."

Mongolian: The following letter has been received as an answer. The transcription system referred to is contained in E/CONF.61/1.108 of the London Conference, also given in the publication "Schreibung der geographischen Namen auf der Weltkarte 1:2,500 000" /translation from Russian/

"Academy of Sciences of the M.P.R.
Institute of Geography and Geocryology
1. February, 1973. No.1/23 Ulan-Bator
Prof. Dr. S. Radó
Chairman of the Hungarian Committee on Geographical Names
Member of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names of the U.N.

Dear Professor;

First of all let me apologise for the delay in answering your letter dated 29 November, 1972, as it took some time to reach us through the competent office of our country.

It is the opinion of the Institute of Geography and Geocryology that the Romanization of Mongolian geographical names as shown in your suggestion, is acceptable as a whole for international use.

There is one more letter in the Mongolian language, missing from your suggestion, the sound λ which could be transliterated as LH. I hope you can take into consideration this amendment.

In addition, may I mention that the orthography of the Mongolian Cyrillic script in our country, is yet not fully elaborated, therefore, some changes could be introduced in the future in the spelling of geographical names in the cyrillic script.

Yours sincerely

S. Cegmid

Director, Institute of Geography
and Geocryology, Academy
of Sciences, M.P.R."

Since the presence of an aspirated h in some Mongolian geographical names is known /cf. E/CONF.61/L.5/Add.13/ its inclusion in the transcription is a possible solution. It would mean that the proposal submitted in E/CONF.61/L.108 might get an addition stating that Mongolian cyrillic x would be h after initial k and l, and ch in other cases. Another possibility is to change ch for h. This and other problems not treated in the above letter need further study, and our Division will submit another proposal for the next session agreed in detail with the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

Somali: Although this language does not belong to us, we consider it worthy to submit an information on Somali appeared in the Hungarian weekly "Magyarország" in its 50/1972 issue

"On October 21, 1972, Mohamed Syad Barre, President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, announced in his festal address that the Roman alphabet will be the official Somali alphabet, and he read his speech from a paper written in Roman letters. A week after, the inside page of the weekly "Dawn" /of the Ministry of Information and National Guidance/ appeared in the new official script, in Somali language. Education in the grammar schools in the present term is already in Somali. Officials must learn to write Somali in the new alphabet in three months dated from the above address. Official applications are valid only if written in the new script. The alphabet introduced now, will further develop, as there are suggestions to change the long vowels... The UN Security Council is called in Somali: Golaaha Nabaad-gelyada Ee Jamciiyadada Quruumaha Ka Dhezaaysa... Signed: Cabdirisq Cosman Xassan, in the name of the Union of Somali Students in Hungary."

The information suggests that Somali must be considered as a Roman-script language, but further information is needed, especially for geographical names. In addition we may refer to the dictionary "Kratkij Somali-Russkij i Russko-Somali slovar', sostavili D.I. Stepancenko i Mochamed Chadzi Osman, Izdatel'stvo Sovetskaja Enciklopedija, Moskva, 1969" containing the following geographical names:

In the dictionary	On current maps
Abbe	Abbe
Afgooye	Afgoi
Afmadoow	Afmadu
Baraawe	Brava
Beled Weyne	Belet Uen
Benaadir	Benadir
Berbera	Berbera
Booraame	Borama
Boosaaso	Bosaso, Bender Cassim
Burco	Burao
Buur Hakkaba	Bur Acabo
Doolow	Dolo
Eeyl	Eil
Gaalkacyo	Gallacaio
Hargeysa	Hargeisa
Hiran	Hiran
Hobyaa	Obbia

Xaafuun
Xamar
Xamar Weyn
Isha Baydhabo
Jamaame
Jilib
Juba
Jubada Hoose
Jubada Sarree
Kismaayo
Laas Qoray
Majeerteen
Marka
Mogadiisho
Mudug
Obok
Raps Jumbo
Seylac
Jamhuuriyadda
Soomaalida
Soomaaliya
Shabeelle
Caluula
Cerigaabo

Hafun, Dante
Somali name for Mogadiisho
= Great Mogadiisho, district in
Mogadiisho
Iscia Baidoa
Giamame
Gelib
Juba
Lower Juba
Upper Juba
Chisimaio
?
Migiurtina
Merca
Mogadiscio, Mogadishu
Mudugh
Obock
Gumbo
Zeila
Somali
Republic
Somalia
Shebeli
Alula
Erigavo

The Somali alphabet in this same dictionary reads as follows:
a, b, d, dh, e, f, gh, x, i, j, k, kh, l, m, n, o, q, r, s, sh,
t, u, w, y, c, '. In borrowed words v may occur.