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WRITING SYSTEMS AND GUIDES TO PRONUNCIATION
ROMANIZATION

Romanization system of Pakistan

Paper submitted by Pakistan

ROMANISATION SYSTEM OF PAKISTAN

The national language of Pakistan is Urdu. It is composite of Persian, Arabic and Hindi languages. As the majority of the words have been derived from Arabic and Persian languages, it follows Persian alphabet. To accommodate phones from Hindi language, it has additional and modified letters called aspirated consonants. The regional languages of Pakistan are Punjabi, Sindhi, Pushto, Baluchi, Brahui, Kashmiri etc. These are written in Urdu script with their diacritical and orthographical signs so that there is no difficulty in transliteration of names into Roman characters. The Pakistani system is simple because except for a short bar on vowels a, i and u for denoting long pause, no other diacritical sign is used. The examples of words pronounced in English language are 'father', 'machine' and 'rude' respectively. According to this system, the accent on the last letter of a word is not applied and the dot on i is deleted, when it is accented. This system has been in use in the sub-continent for last one hundred years and is working satisfactorily in Pakistan.

Urdu alphabet consists of 36 letters which are uniformly represented by a corresponding letter in Roman alphabets, such as ا (Alif) for a , ب (Be) for B, پ (Pe) for P etc etc. Most of these letters are common to Persian and Arabic scripts. Three letters ٹ (Te), ڈ (Dal), ر (Re) with their equivalents in English as t, d and r respectively are Hindi letters which are used in Urdu alphabet. In addition to it, there are eleven mixed letters formed of ه (he) with some other letters in Urdu script. These letters are called aspirated consonants such as بھ (Bhe), جھ (Jhe) etc. These are also Hindi letters and form an important part of Pakistani system.

For correct pronunciation into Roman characters, the following 10 diacritical signs are used in writing the names in Urdu script.

- (i) The Zabar (^ˆ) is expressed by 'a' and pronounced as in English word 'woman'.
- (ii) The Zer (_ˆ) is expressed by 'i' and pronounced as in English word 'bit'.
- (iii) The Pesh (^ˆ) is expressed by 'u' and pronounced as in English word 'pull'.
- (iv) The Madd (^ˆ) is expressed by long 'a' and pronounced as in English word 'father'.
- (v) The Tashdid (^ˆ) is expressed by double letters and pronounced as in English word 'Allah'.
- (vi) The Jazm (^ˆ) is expressed by double consonants without any vowel as pronounced in English word 'Waqt'.
- (vii) The Hamza (^ˆ) is used to separate a syllable ending with a vowel from another commencing with a vowel. It is thus used, as a hyphen is used in English word 're-open'. It is transliterated by a hyphen but it is not used in the body of the maps.
- (viii) The Tanwin (^ˆ) appears over an 'alif' at the end of word of Arabic origin and is expressed by adverbial 'n' such 'Maslan'.

- ix) The Alif Maqsura (ا) is a short 'alif' and is placed over a final or to indicate that it sounds like 'à' such as 'Mūsa'
- (x) The definite article 'AL' (ال) often occurs in the names of Arabic origin such as Salāhuddīn.

The homophones are not used in Pakistani system. The aim of transliteration is to give closet phonetic rendering of the Urdu word to those who are not familiar with the Urdu alphabet. Those who know the language can always render the Roman version to Urdu without the help of cedillas and accents. These are omitted in Pakistani system and are not printed in our maps to avoid confusion with other detail.

There are nine vowels and diphthongs in Urdu alphabet which occur at initial, medial and final positions of names. These are transliterated into Roman alphabet exactly in the same positions. These have been described in detail in the pamphlet 'Transliteration of Names to Roman characters on Survey of Pakistan Maps'.

There are however certain exceptions to the above rules of transliteration of names. These relate to the spelling of Pakistani names in the Imperial Gazetteers of British India published in 1908 which are still followed unless the change is approved by the Surveyor General of Pakistan in consultation with the Provincial Government.

Transliteration of geographical names outside Pakistan is done in accordance with the system adopted by the 'Permanent Committee on Geographical Names' of the Royal Geographical Society and the names with correct spelling are given in their published lists.

It is again emphasized that the Pakistani system of Romanization is quite simple and easy to understand. It however does not mean that this system is better than others. Since it meets the ^{national} requirements of Pakistan, it is still being used without any difficulty. More research is however required for making further improvement in the system.