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WRITING SYSTEMS AND GUIDES
TO PRONUNCIATION:
ROMANIZATION

Guideline to the Romanization
of Korean

Submitted by the Democratic
People's Republic of Korea
GUIDELINE
FOR THE ROMANIZATION OF KOREAN

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People’s Republic of Korea

Pyongyang, 1992
The guideline for the Romanization of geographical names has been worked out in keeping with the specific features of geographical names and with the principles of phonetics. It is simple and easy to transcribe Korean into Roman alphabets. It is guided by a principle that the common long-standing transcriptions are used as they are.
GUIDELINE FOR THE ROMANIZATION
OF KOREAN

Romanization is mainly based on standard Korean pronunciation. This writing system is applied to geographical and personal names. The pronunciation of transcribed Roman letters are based on international practices.

1. Korean letters are transcribed as follows:

1) Vowels
   (1) Single vowels
      ㅏ ㅓ ㅗ ㅜ ㅡ ㅣ
       a o u ü i ae e oe wi

   (2) Diphthongs
      ㅑ ㅕ ㅛ ㅠ ㅡ
       ya yo yo ye wa wae we üi

2) Consonants
   (1) Plosives
      ㄱ - k ㅋ - kh ㄲ - kk
      ㄷ - t ㅌ - th ㄸ - tt
      ㅅ - p ㅍ - ph ㅃ - pp

   (2) Affricates
      ㅈ - j ㅊ - ch ㅉ - jj

   (3) Pricatives
      ㅅ - s ㅆ - ss ㅈ - h
(4) Resonant sounds

□ - m    L - n    O - ng    ⌂ - r

2. The change of phonemes are transcribed as follows:

1) The soft voiceless consonants between vowels ㄱ, ㄷ, ㅂ, ㅈ, ㅊ, ㅋ, ㅌ, ㅍ, ㅎ and those between resonant sounds and vowels are transcribed as ㄱ, ㄷ, ㅂ.

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

2) At the end of syllable or before a consonant except resonant sound, ㄱ, ㄷ, ㅂ are transcribed as ก, ㄷ, ㅂ as ㄹ and ㄷ, ㅌ, ㅈ, ㅊ, ㅋ as ㅌ.

   e.g. 곡산 Koksan 감산 Kapsan
         앞산 Apsan 삿갓 봉 Satkatbong

3) ㄹ is transcribed as ㄴ before a consonant or at the end of a word.

   e.g. 울산 Ulsan 은률 Ŭnryul

4) Double consonants in the end of a word or in front of a consonant, only one of them is written.

   e.g. 닭섬 Taksŏm 물굼 Mulkol

But in the case before a vowel, both consonants are written.
e.g. 붉은바위 Pulgŭnbawi, 얇은바위 Anjŭnbawi

3. Korean sound values change as in the follows:

1) 《ㄱ, ㄲ, ㅋ》, 《ㅂ, ㅃ》, and 《ㄷ, ㄸ, ㅌ, ㄸ, ㅅ, ㅆ》 are mainly transcribed respectively as 《ng》, and as 《m》, 《n》. If necessary, they may be written as their original phoneme.
   e.g. 백마산 Paengmasan, 꽃마을 Kkonmaul
       압록강 Amrokgang

2) Before 《ㄹ》 and 《ㄲ》, 《ㄸ》 is transcribed as 《ll》 only when it is considered to be long-standing.
   e.g. 천리마 Chŏllima, 한나산 Hallasan
       전라도 Jolla-do

3) When the first element of the joined word ends with a vowel, and its second element begins with a consonant except the resonant sound, the first sound of the second element is transcribed in strong sound, and 《ㄸ》 is transcribed as 《n》 when the second element begins with the resonant sound.
   e.g. 기대산 Kittaesan, 새별음 Saeppyŏl-ŭp
       뒤 문 Twinmum

4. Special provisions for transcription

1) When there is a need for segmentation or when there is a possibility of confusion in pronunciation, a hyphen 《-》
may be used.

E.g. 앞안덕 Ap-ǒndók 부억안골 Puǒk-angol
판 교 Phan-gyo 방어동 Pang-ǒ-dong

2) The first letter of all geographical names is capitalized.
E.g. 평안남도 평성시 Phyǒngannam-do Phyǒngsǒng-si

3) In the transcription of geographical features and other proper nouns the first letter is written by a voiced consonant and in the case of administrative units a hyphen ⟨−⟩ may be inserted between proper noun and unit.

(1) 산 San 거리 görì 고개 gogae 대 dae
봉 bong 교 gyo 골 gol 각 gak
벌 bǒl 관 gwan 꼭 got 강 gang

(2) 도 -do 시 -si 군 -gun 면 -myǒn
리 -ri 동 -dong 구 -gu 구역 -guyǒk

4) In the transcription of geographical names combined with figures, Arabic numerals are mainly used. In some cases they may be transliterated or translated.
E.g. 3.1동 3.1-dong or Samil-dong

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5) Personal names are written by family name first, followed by a space and then the given names with the first
letter capitalized. Each letter of the name of Chinese character origin is written separately. In spite of the voiced consonant in the first letter of the second syllable, it is transcribed by a voiceless consonant.

e.g. 김꽃분이 Kim Kkotpuni
     박동구 Pak Tong Gu
     안복철 An Pok Chŏl

6) Some proper names which cannot be abruptly changed in view of international practices and long-standing transcriptions, may remain intact.

   e.g. 평양 Pyongyang