



Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.74/L.56
26 August 1982

ENGLISH ONLY

Fourth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names
Geneva, 24 August to 14 September 1982
Item 13 (a)(i) of the provisional agenda*

WRITING SYSTEMS:

CONVERSION OF NAMES FROM ONE WRITING SYSTEM INTO ANOTHER:

ROMANIZATION

Report by the United Kingdom expert to the
Working Group on a Single Romanization System
on each Non-Roman Writing System**

Paper presented by the United Kingdom 1/

* E/CONF.74/L.

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Of the ten non-Roman writing systems under consideration in this paper, five already have a valid United Nations recommendation for the romanization of their geographical names. These are:

- Amharic : Recommendation 7 of the Second Conference
- Hebrew : Recommendation 13 of the Third Conference
- Khmer : Recommendation 10 of the Second Conference
- Persian : Recommendation 13 of the First Conference
- Thai : Recommendation 14 of the First Conference.

The remaining five, without a United Nations recommendation, are treated in greater detail as follows.

Burmese

It is thought that there is still no officially approved romanization system for geographical names in use in Burma. It is not known whether there is a geographical names authority. Two fairly recent official maps, both at a scale of 1:2,000,000, have been examined. The first is a Burmese-script map of 1973, the second a roughly parallel romanized map of 1977, published by the Burmese Director General of Surveys. The selection of geographical names is identical on both sources, so a direct comparison of Burmese and romanized versions can be made.

Interestingly, the romanized names still accord with those found on the Survey of India mapping of Burma. This suggests that the "Tables for the Transliteration of Burmese into English", published in 1908 and used on Survey of India mapping, may still be operative. This is even true of the "conventional" names and spellings traditionally found on Survey of India maps: they are retained on the 1977 official map, as shown by the following examples:

<u>Burmese script 1973</u> <u>1:2,000,000</u>	<u>transliterated form of</u> <u>Burmese script would be</u>	<u>Burmese romanized 1977</u> <u>1:2,000,000</u>
စစ်တွေ	Sittwe	Akyab
ပြည်	Pye	Prome
ကျီကျီ	Kyaikkami	Amherst

Furthermore, the spellings Akyab, Prome and Amherst are provided by Burma for the Union Postale Universelle: Nomenclature Internationale des Bureaux de Poste (1977) and for the Union Internationale des Télécommunications: Nomenclature des Bureaux Télégraphiques (1976).

It is therefore not yet possible to consider a romanization system for the standardization of Burmese geographical names. There is too little Burmese script material available for examination, and there is still evidence that Burma does not use transliterated forms at all for some of its geographical names.

Japanese

There are two principal systems in use for the romanization of Japanese geographical names: Modified Hepburn and Kunrei. The Modified Hepburn system is used on aeronautical charts, geological maps and many foreign maps of Japan, whilst the Kunrei system is used on Japanese topographical mapping and nautical charts. There is every likelihood that these two systems will continue to be extensively used.

Korean

Although the Republic of Korea Ministry of Education system has been introduced on to some general maps of that country, the McCune-Reischauer system continues to be used extensively. Government departments and national libraries in many countries (such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland) use McCune-Reischauer as their standard romanization system. Moreover, the Ministry of Education system has not always been applied with total consistency on sources examined, and it is currently undergoing some degree of modification.

Laotian

No recent material has been examined or recent information received. There is no immediate prospect for a United Nations recommendation.

Maldivian

There is no evidence that any official mapping has ever been published in the Republic of Maldives, and there are no known sources for names in Maldivian script. Geographical names therefore have to be taken from romanized sources such as the 1:1,000,000 International Map of the World. Until suitable official sources in Maldivian script become available, there is no prospect for a United Nations recommendation.

Some confusion may arise between the administrative and geographical names applied to the various atolls comprising the Republic of Maldives. The nineteen administrative division names are based on the names of certain letters of the Maldivian alphabet. They are purely for administrative use and do not affect the true geographical names of the atolls. Examples of these parallel series of names are:

administrative name of atoll

Shaviyani
Noonu
Raa
Baa
Laviyani

geographical name of atoll

Miladummadulu North
Miladummadulu South
Malosmadulu North
Malosmadulu South
Fadiffolu.