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WRITING SYSTEMS: ROMANIZATION

Guideline for The Romanization of Korean

(Submitted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

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In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the guideline for romanization of Korean was adopted in 1992 and has been compulsorily in use for transcribing Korean including the geographical names and personal names into Roman alphabet since then.

The guideline was already presented to the 6th United Nation's Conference on standardization of geographical names as a basic document for the completion of a single international system for rornanization of Korean.

It is being strictly applied in various fields of press, communications, publication, cartography, and trademarks and so on at both international and national level.

Since the 7th United Nation's Conference on standardization of geographical names, the guideline has been added with more detailed contents through in-deptli review on it, focusing on some problems aroused from the application of romanization of Korean geographical names.

The guideline has been worked out in keeping with the specific features of geographical names and with the principle 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 were.

We wish to present this guideline for romanization of Korean to the 8th United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names as a criterion for a single international system for romanization of Korean.

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 is based on the international practices.

1.Korean letters are transcribed as follows.

1) Vowels

(1) Single vowels

ㅏ	ㅓ	ㅗ	ㅜ	ㅡ	ㅣ	ㅐ	ㅔ	ㅚ	ㅟ
a	6	o	ʊ	ü	i	ae	e	oe	wi

(2) Diphthongs

ㅑ	ㅕ	ㅛ	ㅠ	ㅒ	ㅖ	ㅘ	ㅝ	ㅙ	ㅞ	ㅢ
ya	y6	yo	yu	yae	ye	wa	wŏ	wae	we	üi

2) Consonants

(1) Plosives

ㄱ - k	ㅋ - kh	ㄲ - kk
ㄷ - t	ㅌ - th	ㄸ - tt
ㅂ - p	ㅍ - ph	ㅃ - pp

(2) Affricates

ㅈ - j	ㅊ - ch	ㅉ - jj

(3) Fricatives

ㅅ - s	ㅆ - ss	ㅎ - h

(4) Resonant sound

      ㅁ -rn   ㄴ -n   ㅇ -ng   ㄹ -r

*(5)** In case where a consonant letter (Korean) « ㅇ » is in the first
    Of the word, « ng » of Roman alphabet is not written.
        e. g. in case of putting Korean word «우리사» into
            Roman letters; « ngurisan » should be written
            as«Urisan ».

2. The changes of phonernes are transcribed as follows.

1) The pronunciation of the soft voiceless consonant between
   vowels «ㄱ, ㄷ, ㅂ » and the weak unvoiced consonant « ㄱ
   ㄷ, ㅂ » between resonant sound and vowels are transcribed as
   « g, d, b».

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

2) At the end of syllable or before a consonant except resonant
   Sound «ㄱ, ㅋ» are transcribed as « k », «ㅂ ,ㅍ» as « p »
   and «ㄷ,ㅌ,ㅈ,ㅊ,ㅅ» as «t» .

        e. g. 곡산   Koksan   갑산   Kapsan
             앞산 Apsan   삿갓봉 Satkatbong

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

        e. g. 울산 Ulsan   은률 Ŭnryul

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

           e. g. 닭섬 Taksŏm   물곬 Mulkol

But in the case before a vowel, both consonants are written.
           e. g. 붉은바위 Pulgünbawi
                  앉은바위 Anjünbawi

3. Korean sound values changes as follows.

1) The final consonant of resonant sound 《ㄱ, ㅋ, ㄲ》,《ㅂ, ㅍ》 and 《ㄷ, ㅌ, ㅈ, ㅊ, ㅅ, ㅆ》 are mainly transcribed respectively as 《 ng》,《 m》, 《n》.

If necessary, they may be written as their original phoneme.
           e. g. 백마산   Paengmasan   꽃마을 Kkonmaül
                 압록강   Amrokgang

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

3) When the first element of the joined word ends with a vowel, and its final element begins with a consonant except the resonant sound, the first sound of the second element is transcribed in strong sound, and 《ㄴ》 is transcribed as 《 n 》 when the final element begins with the resonant sound.
           e. g. 기대산 Kittaesan   새별읍   Saeppyŏl- üp
               뒤문   Twinmun

4. Mode of transcription in special cases

1) When there is a need for segmentation or in case of a possible confusion in pronunciation, a hyphen «–» may be used.

    e. g. 앞언덕 Ap- ŏndŏk   구역와골 Puŏk-angol

           판교 Phan-gyo   방어동 Pang-ŏ-dong

2) The first letter of all geographical names is capitalized.

    e. g. 평안남도 평성시 Phyŏngannam-do Phyŏngsŏng-si

3) In the transcription of geographical features and other proper nouns the first 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 gŏri   고개 gogae

      대 dae   봉 bong   교 gyo

      골 gol   각 gak   벌 bŏl

      관 gwan   곳 got   강 gang

(2) 도- do   시-si   군-gun   면 -myŏn

      리-ri   동-dong   구-gu   구역-guyŏk

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.   3.1 동   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.   긴꼳뽄이 Kim Kkotpuni

박동구   Pak Tong Gu

안복철   An Pok Chŏl

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

e.g.   평양   Pyongyang

7) * Some of the symbols can be omitted in this transcription according to the case.

e.g. The Korean word «성간» is transcribed either

«Sŏnggan» or «Songgan».

In case where «KK, TT, PP, SS, JJ» are in the first of the word these double consonants can be replaced by single consonants.

e.g. The Korean word «꾀꼴봉" is transcribed either

«Kkoekkolbong» or« Koekkolbong ».

" * " This mark indicate newly added contents in the guideline.

In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the following principle has been maintained in romanization for the Korean geographical name.

1)   The Korean geographical name has been romanised by applying the transcription instead of the transliteration.

Historically, the Korean geographical name was transcribed into roman letters by the specific means of neither transliteration nor transcription.

But under the circumstances of the development of the scientific research work, there arise realistic task to solve the linguistic problem correctly to meet the requirement of the times of information, the transcription and transliteration should be in right use in romanization of Korean geographical name, and therefore we find a conclusion that it is more rational and efficient to rely on the transcription.

In particular, since Korean and Roman are different each other in the phonetic structure and the system of letters and the geographical names are heard and spoken on many occasions, the transcription began to be applied in consideration that it is more practical to depend upon.

2)   As not like the transliteration, the transcription has the voice as a level we transcribe closely to the Korean sound on the basis of the profound consideration of the phonetic characteristic.

Korean consists not of the system of the consonant by the confrontation of the voiced and unvoiced like the India-European language but of the system of three liquids voiced. So, the thorough transition cannot be found in the transcription or the transliteration that makes two languages with the stmcture of different phoneme cowespondent each other.

For example, if Roman consonant "g" is used equivalently to Korean consonant "ㄱ" of the geographical names such as; "김책시 (Kimchaek-si)" "길성도 (Kilsongdo)", "경주 Kyongju)", "계룡산 (Kyeryongsan)", "교주리 (Kyojuri)" the pronunciation will be different from the exact pronunciation of Korean as follows;
"짐책시 (Gimchaek-si)", "질성도 (Gilssongdo)", "정주 (Gyongju)", "계룡산 (Gyeryongsan)", "죠주리 (Gyoju-ri)".

If Roman consonant "k" is used as an equivalent of Korean consonant "ㄱ", we could hear little awlcward sound in comparing with Korean, but it is closer to Korean thaii using "g" "킴책시 (Khimchaek-si)", "킬성도 (Khilsongdo)", "컹주 (Khyongju)", "켸룡산 (Khyeryongsan)", "쿄주리 (Khyoju-ri)".

Based on this mode of transcription, we adopted Roman vowels "o" and "u" for Korean proper vowels"ㅓ"and "ㅡ".

3)   In transcription of Korean into Roman, many variants were to be transcribed, but limits of certain degree were set in order to avoid the complicatedness and to enhance the practicality.

For example, Korean unvoiced "ㄱ" have several variants, we considered only 4 cases.

- The soft voiceless consonant "ㄱ" between vowels pronounced as a voiced sound, and it is transcribed with voiced consonant "g".
    e.g. 교구동 Kyogu-dong, 사기리 Sagi-ri
- The soft voiceless consonant "ㄱ" between a resonant sound and a vowel is transcribed with voiced consonant "g".
    e.g. 강계 Kanggye , 딸기골 Talgigol
- The final consonant "ㄱ" before a resonant sound is transcribed "ng".
    e.g. 백마산 Paengma-san, 석림리 Songrim-ri
- The single final consonant "ㄱ" before a vowel is transcribed "g".
    e.g. 백암 Paegam , 곡우리 Kogu-ri

4)   We have paid regard to the tradition and histoiy of the romanization of Korean, which counts more than 100 years.

In the romanization itself, instead of the Korean people, the West European people's sense of sound is in the center. That reason is related with the fact that the West European people are the first who began romanization of Korean geographical and personal names, which are unique.

Through statistic analysis of more than 30 alternative proposals, we formulate the guideline for romanization of Korean on the basis of seeking a similarity in corresponding the Korean to Roman letters.

5)   We have maintained the principle that the transcription of Korean geographical names should not be changed rapidly, but rather smoothly.

If the romanization of a nation's language changes from time to time without consistency, it will cause only confusion in linguistic life.

Therefore, we submit to this Conference a revised edition of the guideline for romanization of Korean, which formulated on the principle of avoiding confusion and enhance convenience in linguistic life.