

## Amharic

The United Nations recommended romanization system was approved in 1967 (resolution I/17), based on the *Amharic to English Transliteration System* (2nd revised edition, August 1962) by the Imperial Ethiopian Mapping and Geography Institute. The table has been published in volume II of the conference report<sup>1</sup>.

The UN-approved system is not being used in Ethiopia, instead a simple version without diacritical marks is used. In international cartographic products mostly the BGN/PCGN 1967 system is used which differs from the former mainly by using diacritical marks differently. Often the same spellings are used without any diacritical marks.

Amharic uses the Ethiopic syllabic script whereby each syllable denotes a combination of a consonant and a vowel. It has 34 basic characters, each character having several different forms, usually called orders, according to the vowel with which the basic character is combined. The system is mainly reversible with the exception of some syllables of the 1st order which are pronounced in the same manner as the syllables of the 4th order, and some consonants.

### Romanization

Combinations with W and Y<sup>C</sup>:

	1	2	3	4	5	6 <sup>(A)</sup>	7	(1)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(4)
1	ሀ	ሁ	ሂ	ሃ	ሄ	ህ	ሆ					ሆ	
	ha <sup>B</sup>	hu	hi	ha	he	hi	ho					hwa	
2	ለ	ሉ	ሊ	ላ	ሌ	ል	ሎ					ሊ	
	le	lu	li	la	le	li	lo					lwa	
3	ሐ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሐ						
	ha <sup>B</sup>	hu	hi	ha	he	hi	ho						
4	መ	ሙ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ					ሚ	ሜ
	me	mu	mi	ma	me	mi	mo					mwa	mya
5	ሠ	ሡ	ሢ	ሣ	ሤ	ሥ	ሦ						
	se	su	si	sa	se	si	so						
6	ረ	ሩ	ሪ	ራ	ሪ	ር	ሮ					ሪ	ሮ
	re	ru	ri	ra	re	ri	ro					rwa	rya
7	ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ሰ	ሶ					ሲ	
	se	su	si	sa	se	si	so					swa	
8	ሸ	ሹ	ሺ	ሻ	ሼ	ሽ	ሾ					ሺ	
	she	shu	shi	sha	she	shi	sho					shwa	
9	ቀ	ቁ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ	ቇ	ቈ	቉	ቊ	ቋ	ቌ
	k'e	k'u	k'i	k'a	k'e	k'i	k'o	k'we	k'wi	k'wa	k'we	k'wi	

10	በ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ						ቧ
	b <u>e</u>	bu	bi	ba	be	b <u>i</u>	bo						bwa
11	ተ	ቱ	ቲ	ታ	ቲ	ቲ	ቶ						ቷ
	t <u>e</u>	tu	ti	ta	te	t <u>i</u>	to						twa
12	ቸ	ቹ	ቺ	ቻ	ቼ	ች	ቾ						ቿ
	ch <u>e</u>	chu	chi	cha	che	ch <u>i</u>	cho						chwa
13	ህ	ሁ	ሁ	ሁ	ሁ	ሁ	ሁ	ኸ	ኹ	ሁ	ሁ	ሁ	ኸ
	h <u>a</u> <sup>B</sup>	hu	hi	ha	he	h <u>i</u>	ho	hw <u>e</u>	hwi	hwa	hwe	hw <u>i</u>	
14	ነ	ኑ	ኒ	ና	ኔ	ን	ኖ						ኗ
	n <u>e</u>	nu	ni	na	ne	n <u>i</u>	no						nwa
15	ኘ	ኙ	ኚ	ኛ	ኜ	ኝ	ኞ						ኟ
	ny <u>e</u>	nyu	nyi	nya	nye	ny <u>i</u>	nyo						nywa
16	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ	አ						አ
	a <sup>B</sup>	u	i	a	e	<u>i</u>	o						
17	ከ	ከ	ከ	ከ	ከ	ከ	ከ	ኸ	ኹ	ከ	ከ	ከ	ኸ
	k <u>e</u>	ku	ki	ka	ke	k <u>i</u>	ko	kw <u>e</u>	kwi	kwa	kwe	kw <u>i</u>	
18	ከ	ከ	ከ	ከ	ከ	ከ	ከ						ከ
	h <u>e</u>	hu	hi	ha	he	h <u>i</u>	ho						
19	ወ	ወ	ወ	ወ	ወ	ወ	ወ						ወ
	w <u>e</u>	wu	wi	wa	we	w <u>i</u>	wo						
20	ዐ	ዐ	ዐ	ዐ	ዐ	ዐ	ዐ						ዐ
	a <sup>B</sup>	u	i	a	e	<u>i</u>	o						
21	ዘ	ዘ	ዘ	ዘ	ዘ	ዘ	ዘ						ዘ
	z <u>e</u>	zu	zi	za	ze	z <u>i</u>	zo						zwa
22	ኸ	ኸ	ኸ	ኸ	ኸ	ኸ	ኸ						ኸ
	zh <u>e</u>	zhu	zhi	zha	zhe	zh <u>i</u>	zho						zhwa
23	የ	የ	የ	የ	የ	የ	የ						የ
	y <u>e</u>	yu	yi	ya	ye	y <u>i</u>	yo						ywa
24	ደ	ደ	ደ	ደ	ደ	ደ	ደ						ደ
	d <u>e</u>	du	di	da	de	d <u>i</u>	do						dwa
25	ጅ	ጅ	ጅ	ጅ	ጅ	ጅ	ጅ						ጅ
	j <u>e</u>	ju	ji	ja	je	j <u>i</u>	jo						jwa
26	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ኸ	ኹ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ኸ
	g <u>e</u>	gu	gi	ga	ge	g <u>i</u>	go	gw <u>e</u>	gwi	gwa	gwe	gw <u>i</u>	
27	ጠ	ጠ	ጠ	ጠ	ጠ	ጠ	ጠ						ጠ
	t' <u>e</u>	t'u	t'i	t'a	t'e	t' <u>i</u>	t'o						t'wa
28	ጭ	ጭ	ጭ	ጭ	ጭ	ጭ	ጭ						ጭ
	ch' <u>e</u>	ch'u	ch'i	ch'a	ch'e	ch' <u>i</u>	ch'o						ch'wa
29	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ						ጸ
	p' <u>e</u>	p'u	p'i	p'a	p'e	p' <u>i</u>	p'o						

30	ጸ	ጹ	ጺ	ጻ	ጼ	ጽ	ጾ		ጸ	
	ts'ḗ	ts'u	ts'i	ts'a	ts'e	ts'ḯ	ts'o		ts'wa	
31	ፀ	ፁ	፺	፻	፼	፽	፾			
	ts'ḗ	ts'u	ts'i	ts'a	ts'e	ts'ḯ	ts'o			
32	ፈ	ፉ	ፊ	ፋ	ፍ	ፎ	ፏ		ፉ	ፊ
	fḗ	fu	fī	fa	fe	fḯ	fo		fwa	fya
33	ፐ	ፑ	ፒ	ፓ	ፔ	ፕ	ፖ			
	pḗ	pu	pī	pa	pe	pḯ	po			
34 <sup>C</sup>	ሸ	ሹ	ሺ	ሻ	ሼ	ሽ	ሾ			
	vḗ	vu	vi	va	ve	vḯ	vo			

<sup>A</sup> The vowel of the sixth order (ḯ) is eliminated in spelling except when the actual pronunciation requires it (e.g. not *Mḗnigisiti* but *Mḗngist*).

<sup>B</sup> Sounds identical to fourth-order form.

<sup>C</sup> Row 34 and most combinations with W and Y are not present in the original table. These Amharic syllable characters have been taken from the BGN/PCGN 1967 table, preserving however the indication of vowels as it is done elsewhere in the table.

### **Other systems of romanization**

The **BGN/PCGN 1967 System** is practically very close to the system above, except for the diacritical marks used with vowels:

	UN	BGN/PCGN
1st order	ḗ	e
1st order	a	ā ( <i>ፀ hā, ሐ hā, ጐ hā, ኣ ā, 'ā, ዐ 'ā</i> )
3rd order	i	ī
5th order	e	ē
6th order	ḯ	i

Other differences:

1. The vowel characters in row 16 should be romanized in the BGN/PCGN System *ā, u, ī, a, ē, i,* and *o* initially and *'ā, 'u, 'ī, 'a, 'ē, 'i,* and *'o* in all other positions.
2. The characters in row 20 should be romanized in the BGN/PCGN System *'ā, 'u, 'ī, 'a, 'ē, 'o* or *'i,* and *'o*.
3. The syllables *gwḗ, hwḗ, kwḗ, k'wḗ* of the UN system are treated as variations of the syllables *go, ho, ko, k'o* in the BGN/PCGN system.
4. For documentation purposes the following consonants may be romanized with diacritical marks in the BGN/PCGN system: ḥ (row 3), š (row 5), ḥ (row 13), ḥ (row 18), ts' (row 31).

### **References**

1. *Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.* London, 10–31 May 1972. Vol. II. *Technical papers*, pp. 165–168 (Table 2).