

Lao

No romanization system for Lao (Laotian) has been approved at the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names. Currently there is no national romanization system in Laos. In 1966 the BGN and the PCGN jointly adopted a system of romanization that was based on the earlier Lao Commission Nationale de Toponymie (CNT) system, to which a complete vowel table and supplementary notes had been added.

System of romanization

The **BGN/PCGN 1966 System** gives the following romanization¹:

I. Consonant characters

Lao characters are romanized in two ways depending on whether they denote syllable-initials or syllable-finals. The romanization of syllable-finals is indicated in parentheses. Some other consonant characters which are not accompanied by a vowel character form a full syllable when used within a word: ຂ *kkha*, ອ *kkha*, ຈ *tcha*, ສ *tsa*, ຊ *tsa*, ຕ *tta*, ຖ *ttha*, ທ *ttha*, ປ *ppa*, ພ *ppha*, ພ *pfa*.

1	ກ	k (k)	11	ຖ	th	21	ຢ	y
2	ຂ	kh	12	ທ	th	22	ຣ	r
3	ອ	kh	13	ນ	n (n)	23	ລ	l ^B
4	ງ	ng (ng)	14	ບ	b (p)	24	ວ	v, o ^C
5	ຈ	ch	15	ປ	p	25	ຫ	h ^D
6	ສ	s	16	ຜ	ph	26	ອ	(^E)
7	ຊ	x	17	ຝ	f	27	ຮ	h
8	ຍ	gn (y) ^A	18	ພ	ph			
9	ດ	d (t)	19	ຟ	f			
10	ຕ	t	20	ມ	m			

^A Character variation ງ is used at the end of a syllable (ຂາງ *khay*), after ຫ (ຫງາບ *gnap*) and between consonants (ສງງ *siang*).

^B Subscript variation: ລ, e.g. ຫຼາມ *lam*.

^C See note 4.

^D See note 2.

^E See note 3.

II. Vocalic nuclei (ກ stands for any consonant character)

1	ກະ	a	2	ກັກ	a	3	ກາ	a
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4 ກິ	i	17 ກົກ	ô	30 ກຽກ	ia
5 ກີ	i	18 ໂກ	ô	31 ເກືອະ	ua
6 ກື	u	19 ເກາະ	o	32 ເກືອກ	ua
7 ກື	u	20 ກ້ອກ	o	33 ເກືອ	ua
8 ກຸ	ou	21 ກໍ	o	34 ກົວະ	oua
9 ກູ	ou	22 ກອກ	o	35 ກັວກ	oua
10 ເກະ	é	23 ເກືະ	eu	36 ກົວ	oua
11 ເກັກ	é	24 ເກົກ	eu	37 ກວກ	oua
12 ເກ	é	25 ເກີ	eu	38 ໄກ	ai
13 ແກະ	è	26 ເກົກ	eu	39 ໂກ	ai
14 ແກັກ	è	27 ເກ້ງະ	ia	40 ເກົາ	ao
15 ແກ	è	28 ກ້ງກ	ia	41 ກໍາ	am
16 ໂກະ	ô	29 ເກ້ງ	ia		

III. Reduplicating mark

1 ງ (e.g. ແຊອງ *xèoxèo*)

Notes

1. Tone marks ˊ, ˊˊ, ˊˊˊ, ˊˊˊˊ should not be romanized.
2. At the beginning of a syllable, the character ຫ unaccompanied by a vowel or tone mark and occurring immediately before ມ *gn*, ນ *n*, ມ *m*, ຣ *r*, ລ *l* or ວ *v* should generally not be romanized: ຫລວງພຣະບາງ *Louangphrabang*. Often ligatures ຫມ, ຫນ, ຫຼ are used in such cases.
3. At the beginning of a word ອ should not be romanized: ອີກ *ik*. At the beginning of a syllable within a word the character should be romanized by a hyphen: ຊະເອມ *xa-ém*, ບ້ານແກ້ງອີ *Ban Kèng-I*.
4. The character ວ at the beginning of a syllable should be romanized *v*: ທັນວາ *thanva*. As the second character of a combination, ວ should be romanized *o*. At the end of a syllable the character is romanized *o* generally (ນາວ *nao*, ແກວ *kèo*, ດົວ *diao*) but after *i* it is romanized *ou* (ຄົວ *khiou*, ຕົວ *tiou*).
5. In consonant combinations where the second character is ຣ *r*, ລ *l* or ວ *v*, it should be romanized character by character, even if the second character may represent no pronounced sound: ບ້ານວັດພຣະໄຊ *Ban Vatphraxai*, ອຸ້ສຕຽນ *Khhlitsatian*, ສວາງ *soay*, ແຂວງ *khoèng*.
6. A vowel which is not represented in Lao writing occasionally occurs in the pronunciation of certain words. The presence of that vowel should be indicated in romanization by insertion of the letter *a*: ສວັນນະເຂດ *Savannakhét* (also written ສະຫວັນນະເຂດ), ຂວາວ *khavao* (but cf. ຂວານ *khoan*).
7. In some words of foreign origin the variant ຣ *r* occurs: ເບີຣ *beur*.

Reference

1. *Romanization Systems and Roman-script Spelling Conventions*. Prepared by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names Foreign Names Committee Staff. Published by the Defense Mapping Agency. 1994, pp. 63-67.