

Amharic

1. Origin of the system

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 report¹.

2. Implementation

In all likelihood the UN-approved system is not being used in present-day Ethiopia. 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.

3. Brief characterization

Amharic uses an Ethiopic syllabic script whereby each syllable denotes a combination of a consonant and a vowel. It has 34 basic symbols, each symbol having several different forms, usually called orders, according to the vowel with which the basic symbol 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.

4. Romanization

	1	2	3	4	5	6 ¹	Combinations with W and Y:						
							7	(1)	(3) ³	(4) ³	(5) ³	(6) ³	(4) ³
1	ሀ ha ²	ሁ hu	ሂ hi	ሃ ha	ሄ he	ህ hi	ሆ ho			ኃ hwa			
2	ለ le	ሉ lu	ሊ li	ላ la	ሌ le	ል li	ሎ lo			ላ lwa			
3	ሐ ha ²	ሑ hu	ሒ hi	ሓ ha	ሔ he	ሕ hi	ሖ ho						

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)

4	መ me	ሙ mu	ሚ mi	ማ ma	ሜ me	ም mi	ሞ mo		ሟ (ሟ)		ሟ mya
5	ሠ se	ሡ su	ሢ si	ሣ sa	ሤ se	ሥ si	ሦ so				
6	ረ re	ሩ ru	ሪ ri	ራ ra	ራ re	ሪ ri	ሮ ro		ሯ		ሯ rya
7	ሰ se	ሱ su	ሲ si	ሳ sa	ሴ se	ሰ si	ሶ so		ሷ		
8	ሸ she	ሹ shu	ሺ shi	ሻ sha	ሼ she	ሽ shi	ሾ sho		ሿ		
9	ቀ k'e	ቁ k'u	ቂ k'i	ቃ k'a	ቄ k'e	ቅ k'i	ቆ ቆ k'o k'we	ቇ ቇ k'wi	ቈ (ቃ)	቉	ቊ k'wi
10	በ be	ቡ bu	ቢ bi	ባ ba	ቤ be	ብ bi	ቦ bo		ቧ		
11	ተ te	ቱ tu	ቲ ti	ታ ta	ቲ te	ቲ ti	ቶ to		ታ		
12	ቸ che	ቹ chu	ቺ chi	ቻ cha	ቼ che	ች chi	ቾ cho		ቿ		
13	ኀ ha ²	ኁ hu	ኂ hi	ኃ ha	ኄ he	ኅ hi	ኆ ኆ ኆ ho hwe hwi		ኇ ኇ ኇ	ኈ ኈ ኈ	኉ ኉ ኉ hwa hwe hwi
14	ነ ne	ኑ nu	ኒ ni	ና na	ኔ ne	ን ni	ኖ no		ኗ (ኗ)		
15	ኘ nye	ኙ nyu	ኚ nyi	ኛ nya	ኜ nye	ኝ nyi	ኞ nyo		ኟ		
16	አ a ²	አ u	አ i	አ a	አ e	አ i	አ o				
17	ከ ke	ከ ku	ከ ki	ካ ka	ኬ ke	ክ ki	ኮ ኮ ኮ ko kwe kwi		ኰ ኰ ኰ	኱ ኱ ኱	ኲ ኲ ኲ kwa kwe kwi
18	ኸ he	ኹ hu	ኺ hi	ኻ ha	ኼ he	ኽ hi	ኾ ho				
19	ወ we	ወ wu	ወ wi	ወ wa	ወ we	ወ wi	ወ wo				
20	ዐ a ²	ዐ u	ዐ i	ዐ a	ዐ e	ዐ i	ዐ o				
21	ዘ ze	ዘ zu	ዘ zi	ዘ za	ዘ ze	ዘ zi	ዘ zo		ዘ		
22	ዝ zhe	ዝ zhu	ዝ zhi	ዝ zha	ዝ zhe	ዝ zhi	ዝ zho		ዝ		
23	የ ye	የ yu	የ yi	የ ya	የ ye	የ yi	የ yo		የ		
24	ደ de	ደ du	ደ di	ደ da	ደ de	ደ di	ደ do		ደ		
25	ጅ je	ጅ ju	ጅ ji	ጅ ja	ጅ je	ጅ ji	ጅ jo		ጅ		

26	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ ገ ገ	ገ	ገ	ገ
	ge	gu	gi	ga	ge	gi	go gwē gwi	gwa	gwe	gwi
27	ጠ	ጠ	ጠ	ጠ	ጠ	ጠ		ጠ		
	t'e	t'u	t'i	t'a	t'e	t'i	t'o	t'wa		
28	ጮ	ጮ	ጮ	ጮ	ጮ	ጮ		ጮ		
	ch'e	ch'u	ch'i	ch'a	ch'e	ch'i	ch'o	ch'wa		
29	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ				
	p'e	p'u	p'i	p'a	p'e	p'i	p'o			
30	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ	ጸ		ጸ		
	ts'e	ts'u	ts'i	ts'a	ts'e	ts'i	ts'o	ts'wa		
31	ፀ	ፀ	ፀ	ፀ	ፀ	ፀ				
	ts'e	ts'u	ts'i	ts'a	ts'e	ts'i	ts'o			
32	ፈ	ፈ	ፈ	ፈ	ፈ	ፈ		ፈ (ፈ ፍ)		ፈ
	fe	fu	fi	fa	fe	fi	fo	fwa		fya
33	ፐ	ፐ	ፐ	ፐ	ፐ	ፐ				
	pe	pu	pi	pa	pe	pi	po			
34 ³	ፒ	ፒ	ፒ	ፒ	ፒ	ፒ				
	ve	vu	vi	va	ve	vi	vo			

¹ the vowel of the sixth order (i) is eliminated in spelling except when the actual pronunciation requires it (e.g. not *Menigisitī* but *Mengist*)

² sounds identical to fourth-order form

³ 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 elsewhere in the table

5.

Other systems of romanization

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

UN	BGN/PCGN
e	e
i	ī
e	ē
i	i

The syllables *gwē*, *hwē*, *kwē*, *k'wē* of the UN system are treated as variations of the syllables *go*, *ho*, *ko*, *k'o* in the BGN/PCGN system.

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), ṣ' (row 31).