

Korean

1. Current status

No romanization system for Korean has been approved at the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names, although systems for the romanization of Korean have been presented at several sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). Experts at the sessions have repeatedly expressed their wish that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea should continue their efforts in aspiring to agree on a single international system for the romanization of Korean geographical names.

In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea there is a national system adopted in 1992 and presented to the 17th session of UNGEGN in 1994¹.

In the Republic of Korea the Ministry of Education had adopted on 13 January, 1984, guidelines for the romanization of Korean, presented to the Fifth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1987². The Conference recommended that the guidelines be referred to UNGEGN for consideration (resolution V/20).

Apart from national systems the most widely used international system is that of McCune-Reischauer (1939) which has also been adopted by the BGN and the PCGN³.

A transliteration system that was provisionally agreed upon by the ISO experts of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea, is the standard ISO TR 11941:1996 (a provisional technical report, not enforced as a standard)⁴.

In linguistics also the so-called Yale system of romanization is widely accepted⁵.

¹ *Guidelines for Romanization of Korean* (Democratic People's Republic of Korea). UNGEGN, 17th Session. New York, 13-24 June 1994, WP No. 57.

² Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Montreal, 18-31 August 1987. Document E/CONF.79/INF/68.

³ *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. 57-61.

⁴ The summary of it was published at the Internet site <http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/kskim/11941.html>.

⁵ See e.g. *The World's Writing Systems*. Edited by Peter T. Daniels and William Bright. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996, pp. 218-227.

Korean uses an alphabetic script in which the characters are grouped graphically together into complex syllable blocks. So, the geographical name P'anmunjŏm is written 판문점, not 파나무너저름.

5. Other systems of romanization

The transliteration of Korean script into Latin characters in the standard **ISO TR 11941:1996** is as follows.

ㄱ	k/g	ㅈ	ch/c	ㅊ	eo	ㅠ	yo
ㅋ	kh/k	ㅊ	cc/jj	ㅌ	o	ㅠ	yu
ㆁ	kk/gg	ㅅ	s	ㅍ	u	ㅍ	yae
ㄷ	t/d	ㅆ	ss	ㅡ	eu	ㅍ	ye
ㅌ	th/t	ㅎ	h	ㅣ	i	ㅍ	wa
ㄸ	tt/dd	ㅇ	' ¹ , - ¹ , ng ²	ㅍ	ae	ㅍ	weo
ㅍ	p/b	ㄴ	n	ㅍ	e	ㅍ	wi
ㅍ	ph/p	ㄹ	l, r ³	ㅍ	oe	ㅍ	wae
ㅍ	pp/bb	ㅁ	m	ㅍ	ya	ㅍ	we
ㅈ	c/j	ㅂ	a	ㅍ	yeo	ㅍ	yi

¹ word-initially

² at the end of a syllable

³ at the beginning of a syllable

Notes

- Where there are pairs of romanizations, the first corresponds to Method I and the second to Method II.
- To avoid ambiguity an apostrophe is used to denote the beginning of the next syllable in a polysyllabic word.

By Method I it is needed in the following cases:

- if the consonant ⁰ is at the initial position of a non-initial syllable of a polysyllabic word: 꽃이 *kkoch'i*, 강에 *kang'e*, 앞아라 *anc'ara*;
- if the five double consonants appear at the initial positions of the non-initial syllables of polysyllabic words: 아까 *a'kka*, 흰떡 *hyin'tteok*;
- if the four aspirated consonants appear at the initial position of the non-initial syllables of polysyllabic words: 유쾌하다 *yu'khwaehata*;

By Method II the apostrophe is needed in the following cases:

- if the consonant ⁰ is at the initial position of a non-initial syllable of a polysyllabic word: 꽃이 *ggoc'i*, 강에 *gang'e*, 앞아라 *anj'ara*;
- if the five double consonants appear at the initial positions of the non-initial syllables of polysyllabic words: 아까 *a'gga*, 흰떡 *hyin'ddeog*.

The McCune-Reischauer 1939 System is as follows.

ㄱ	k	ㅋ	k'	ㆁ	ya	ㅏ	yae
ㄴ	n	ㆁ	t'	ㅑ	o	ㅓ	e
ㄷ	t	ㆁ	p'	ㅕ	yo	ㅗ	ye
ㄹ	r,n,l	ㅎ	h	ㅛ	u	ㅛ	oe
ㅁ	m	ㆁ	kk	ㅜ	yu	ㅜ	wi
ㅂ	p	ㆁ	tt	ㅡ	ü	ㅡ	üi
ㅅ	s	ㆁ	pp	ㅣ	i	ㅣ	wa
ㅇ	ng, (1)	ㆁ	ss	ㅚ	ae	ㅚ	wō
ㅈ	ch	ㆁ	tch			ㅚ	wae
ㅊ	ch'	ㆁ	a			ㅚ	we

¹ not romanized syllable-initially

Note. There are complicated rules based on pronunciation that determine the conversion of Korean syllables into Roman. Most changes concern consonants which are often assimilated when used in combinations. For reasons of economy these rules are not reproduced in this report.

The **national system of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea** largely coincides with Method I of the provisional standard ISO TR 11941:1996. In addition, rules on reflecting the assimilation of consonants and other phonetic changes have been supplied.

The **national system of the Republic of Korea** largely coincides with the McCune-Reischauer system. Differences lie in the notes on its application and in the conversion of some syllables, e.g. the syllable ㅅㅣ is romanized *shi*, not *si*: ㅅㅣ안 *Shinan*.