Romanization of Arabic geographical names: Towards a single and unified Arabic Romanization system

By

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Roots of the Arabic Romanization Systems

➤ **The need Such methods were needed early on, and the renowned German theologian and orientalist Johann D. Michaelis requested a Romanization system from the significant Danish mission to Egypt, Arabia, and Syria (1761–1767).**

➤ **Instead of following these guidelines, Karsten Niebuhr (1733–1815 AD) substituted a method that was engaging and pleasurable for Arab readers rather than European ones.**

Carsten Niebuhr,(1776), **Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und andern umliegenden Ländern** (Band 2); Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, p.211

umständlichen Beschreibung dieser Gegend erhalten, wornach man den ehmaligen Namen dieser Stadt bestimmen kann, so wie der ehmalige Name der Stadt Damiât nach dem Namen eines solchen Quartiers bestimmt worden ist,*) so will ich hier die Namen der verschiedenen Quartiere der Stadt Baśra einrücken. Man hat mir genannt: مناخ Menâch, مشراق Mischrâk, دنايك Denanîk, ابن عيد Jbn aid, عبايه Abaieh, ميدان العبيد Meidân el abîd, الدوغ Doâgh, ام البلابيل Om el bellabîl, ام البزازين Om el bissasîn, شيخ بادي Schech Badi, شيخ قنبر Schech Kumbar, شيخ جوهر Schech Dssohar, ام الطنوق Om ettonûk, قبله Kâble, شيخ عمر Schech Omar, شيخ حبيب Náher el beinâd, مدبغه Medbuge, معدان Mâadân, مكول Megkûl, جسر اللوح Dssuffer ellauh, حمام كوت Hammam Kud, محمد تخته Mohammed Tachte, القاضي Mehallet el Kadi, العرصه Mehallet el ársa, Me- سيد رمضان hallet Seiid Ramadân, الافغان Mehallet el afghân, حكاك Hakâke, اليهود Mehallet el Jhûd, مرجانه Mehallet Murdssana, خليله Chalilie, شريبانيه Scherebatie, حداده Hadade, حسن داده Hassan dade, قصب Bustân Kassab, بستان Kauâs, كوان Kau- نركان Mehallet Chân Zikfâr, عزالدين As eddîn, archîn, حوش الباشا Hausch el pascha, سيف Sif, القطانه El Kotana, المجموعه Medssemoâ, مغبيره Mogâber, الغربان Dssuffer el gurbân, صمغونيه Samgonîe, محمد جواد Mohammed Dssoâd, عروه Arroâ, عمقه Gâmke, بحارنه Baharna, جسر العبيد Dssuffer el abîd, السياس Belled essiâs, الدوغ Doag, حلل Holâl, مقام Mokâm, الجدن يده Mehallet el dssedide, نظران Nadurân, صبخه Sabchâ, معصره Maasra, مناوي Menaui, محلة الساعي Mehallet essai, الخضر El chodder, دريعه Brâhe, عباس Abbâs, حصيرجيه Hasir tschte, فرسي Firsi, ميم Sei- كوت الكومرلي Kud el kum mar, خضراويه Choddrauie, فتاله Fatale, جسر الحون Dssuffer el haus, مجصصه Medssôssasa, خشابه Cha- merli, schabe.

Dd 2 Das

Ameen Rihani's complaint in 1928 about the absence of a Romanization system:

➢ "The lack of a scientific system for Romanizing names and places in the Arabian Peninsula will lead to an exacerbation of contradictions and differences that disturb scholars and confuse ordinary readers," said Ameen Rihani's 1928 complaint regarding the lack of a romanization system. The muezzin and the person leading the prayer everywhere will pronounce *Muhammad*, but any traveler who follows his imagination or his ear will just cause more confusion since he will hear the Syrian say M'hammed, the Hijazi say M'hammad, and the Asiri say Mehemmed. Why don't we emulate people who understand and value classical Arabic?

IBN SA'OUD
OF
ARABIA

HIS PEOPLE AND
HIS LAND

BY
AMEEN RIHANI

LONDON
CONSTABLE & CO LTD
1928

This demonstrates the peril of Romanizing dialects rather than the nation's universally spoken and understood classical language.
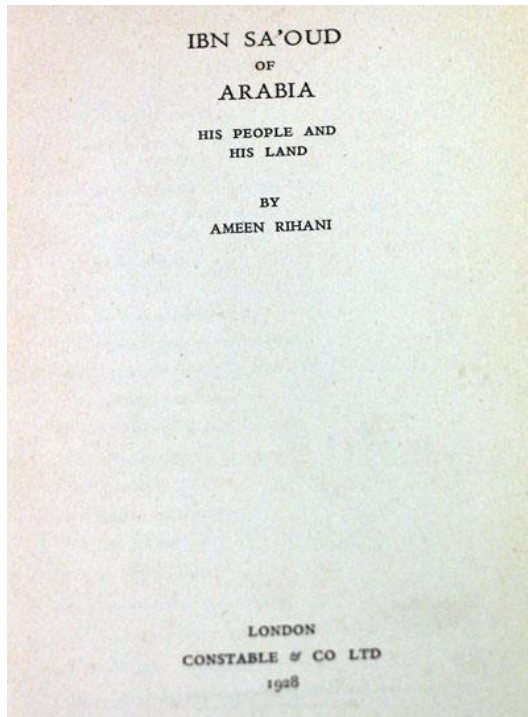
Rihani, Ameen, (1928), Ibn Sa'oud of Arabia: His people and his land, Constable and Co. Ltd., London, p. xi.

Alois Musil Romanization System:

➢ **Alois Musil was one of those who answered these appeals; he created his own system and published it in his book *Arabia Petraea* in 1908.**
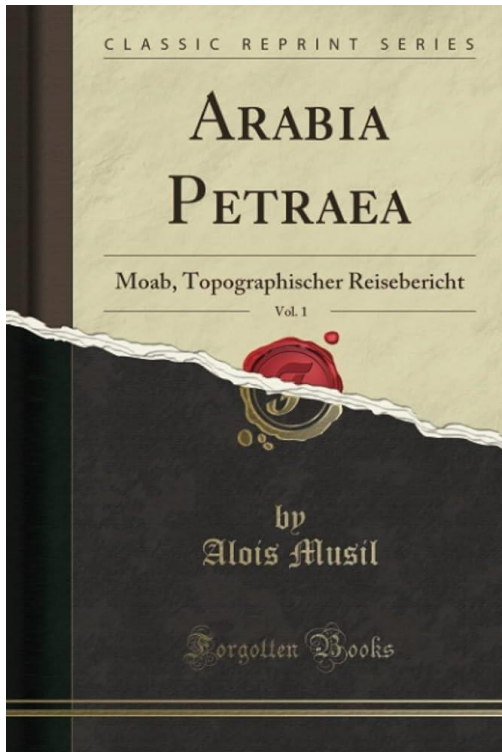
Musil, Alois, (1908), Arabia Petraea, Ethnologiscer Reisebericht, No. 3. Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, Vienna, Austria.

Transkription.

Die Unterstreichung (_) des umschriebenen Buchstaben bezeichnet die aspirierte, die Unterpunktierung (.) die emphatische und die Überstreichung (˙) die palatalisierte Aussprache.

ʼ = í, ·	z = ز (s in Rose)	ḳ = ق (dunkles k)
b = ب	s = س (ss)	ž = ق (tsch)
t = ت (ts)	š = ش (sch)	k = ك (gk)
t = ث (ts)	ṣ = ص (ssh, sz)	č = ك (zsch)
ǧ = ج (dsch)	ḍ = ض (dh, dah)	l = ل
ḥ = ح (ch in ich)	ṭ = ط (th)	m = م
ḫ = خ (ch in Cherub)	ẓ = ظ (zh)	n = ن
d = د	ʽ = ع (Kehllautanstoß)	h = ه
ḍ = ذ (ds)	r = غ (ghr)	w = و (un)
r = ر	f = ف	j = ى

Abkürzungen.

ʽAb = ʽAbbâd	Ḥn = Ahâli Ḥanzîra	Nm = Naʽêmât
ʽAd = ʽAdwân	Ḥr = Ḥrejše	
ʽAm = ʽAmârîn	Ḥṭ = Ḥwêṭât	Ḳw = Ḳwârne
ʽAz = ʽAzâzme	ḤṭT = Ḥwêṭât eṭ-Tihama	Šb = Ahâli-š-Šôbak
Bḳ = Belḳâwijje	Ḥw = Ḥêwât	Sd = Saʽîdijjîn
Bl = Balâwne		Šḥ = Šḥûr
Bṣ = Ahâli Buṣejra	Kb = Kaʽâbne	Sl = Salâjṭa
	Kf = Kufrabba	Sn = Ahâli Senefḥe
Dǧ = Daʽǧe	Kr = Ahâli el-Kerak	
Ḍn = Ahâli Ḍâna		Tb = Terâbîn
	Lj = Lijâṭne	Tf = Ahâli-ṭ-Tafîle
ʽEj = Ahâli el-ʽEjma		Th = Tijâha
	Md = Ahâli Mâdaba	
Ḥm = Ḥamâjde	Mn = Maʽânijje	Zl = Zullâm
Ḥn = Ḥanâǧre		

Other Romanization Systems:

➤ **The seventeenth and nineteenth centuries saw the development of numerous systems for Arabic Romanization, such as dictionaries of Arabic with vowel-free Romance languages. International attempts to Romanize vowels started in the 20th century, and the most significant ones are:**

❖ **1- The Romanization systems and the Latin spelling conventions adopted by the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) and the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for Official British Use (PCGN).**

Roman Unicode value (lower case)	Example		
	Pointed Script	Unpointed Script	Roman Script
-	أَبُو ظَبْي	أبو ظبي	Abū Z̧aby
2019	بِئْر زَيْت	بئر زيت	Bi'r Zayt
-	أَمّ العَمَد	أم العمد	Umm al 'Amad
0062	البَحرَين	البحرين	Al Baḩrayn
0074	الكُوت	الكوت	Al Kūt
0073+0304	الثُّلَيْثُوَات	الثليثوات	Ath Thulaythuwāt
006A	الجَزِيرَة	الجزيرة	Al Jazīrah
1E29	المَحْمُودِيَّة	المحمودية	Al Maḩmūdīyah
006B+0068	خَيْبَر	خيبر	Khaybar
0064	دَمَنْهُور	دمنهور	Damanhūr
007A+0304	ذَهَب	ذهب	Dhahab
0072	الرَّوْضَة	الروضة	Ar Rawḑah
007A	زُوَارَة	زوارة	Zuwārah
0073	السُّلَيْمَانِيَّة	السليمانية	As Sulaymānīyah

❖ **2- The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) (1972, 1973).**

❖ **3- The system of the National Geographic Institute (IGN) (1973), which is compatible with French writing and is preferred in French-speaking countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Lebanon.**

❖ **4- The Romanization of the Arab Division of Experts on Geographical Names (ADEGN) (2007) differs from UNGEGN (1972, 1973) in two ways (ظ): is dh instead of z̧; and the subscript of cedilla is replaced by a subscript (_) in all letters containing cedilla.**

❖ **5- Other systems such as the American Library Association and the Library of Congress. It is close to the Romanization of the German Oriental Society and the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft and Hans Wehr, which are used internationally in scientific publications by Arabs, and other different systems in Germany, as well as the International Standards Organizations (ISO).**

Examples in Literary Arabic

Arabic	أمجد كان له قصر	UNGEGN	إلى المملكة المغربية	UNGEGN
Arabic with diacritics (normally omitted)	أَمْجَدُ كَانَ لَهُ قَصْرٌ		إِلَى الْمَمْلَكَةِ الْمَغْرِبِيَّةِ	
IPA	/ʔamdʒadu kaːna lahuː qasˤr/	Amjad Kana Lahu Qaṣr	/ʔila‿l.mamlakati‿l.maɣribij.jah/	Ilá Al Mamlakah Al Maghribiyyah
ALA-LC	Amjad kāna lahu qaṣr	Amjad Kana Lahu Qaṣr	Ilá al-mamlakah al-Maghribīyah	Ilá Al Mamlakah Al Maghribiyyah
Hans Wehr	amjad kāna lahū qaṣr	Amjad Kana Lahu Qaṣr	ilā l-mamlaka al-maḡribīya	Ilá Al Mamlakah Al Maghribiyyah
DIN 31635	ʾAmğad kāna lahū qaṣr	Amjad Kana Lahu Qaṣr	ʾIlā l-mamlakah al-Maġribiyyah	Ilá Al Mamlakah Al Maghribiyyah
UNGEGN	Amjad Kana Lahu Qaṣr	Amjad Kana Lahu Qaṣr	Ilá Al Mamlakah Al Maghribiyyah	Ilá Al Mamlakah Al Maghribiyyah
ISO 233	ʾʾamğad kāna lahu qaṣr	Amjad Kana Lahu Qaṣr	ʾʾilaỳ ʾʾalmamlakaẗ ʾʾalmaġribiȳaẗ	Ilá Al Mamlakah Al Maghribiyyah
ArabTeX	am^gad kAna lahu qa.sr	Amjad Kana Lahu Qaṣr	il_A almamlakaT alma.gribiyyaT	Ilá Al Mamlakah Al Maghribiyyah
English	Amjad had a palace	Amjad had a palace	To the Moroccan Kingdom	To the Moroccan Kingdom

(IPA)	International Phonetic Alphabet	**UNGEGN**	United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.
ALA-LC	American Library Association – Library of Congress	**ISO**	International standard
Hans Wehr	Hans Wehr transliteration system	**ArabTeX**	ArabTeX
DIN	Deutsches Institut für Normung (DIN) standard for the transliteration		

Conclusions:

○ **The significance of the Arabic language for scholars, orientalists, travelers, knowledge pioneers, and writers is demonstrated by the vast number of Arabic Romanizations.**

○ **But it also demonstrates how urgently the pieces of these systems must be assembled into a single, authorized, straightforward, and mechanically applicable system.**

○ **The National Committee on Geographical Names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Arab Division of Experts on Geographical Names pledge to speak with the parties involved in these systems and explore the potential for creating an all-inclusive, comprehensive, and unified system for Arabic Romanization.**