

TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM FOR PERSIAN
BGN/PCGN 1958 System

The BGN/PCGN 1958 System for the Persian alphabet was adopted by the BGN in 1946 and by the PCGN in 1958. It is used for the romanization of standard geographic names in Iran.

The Persian alphabet is the same as the Arabic alphabet except for the addition of four consonant symbols for sounds which do not occur in Arabic. Therefore, the same conversion values are used for the Persian alphabet as for the Arabic alphabet wherever phonetically valid. Where letters common to the two alphabets have different pronunciation in the two languages, conversion values reflecting the Persian pronunciation are provided in the Persian system.

It may be noted that neither the system of pointing nor the conversion values for vowels and diphthongs are the same for Persian as for Arabic.

Persian presents the same problems of vowel pointing as Arabic in that the short vowel symbols necessary for the proper rendering of short vowels, long vowels, and diphthongs are almost always omitted from written Persian. It follows that, in order to produce transliterations in terms of standard written Persian, the transliterator must be able to identify the words used in names and must know their standard written Persian spelling, their proper vowel pointing, and how to eliminate peculiarities due to dialectical variation.

The notes and special rules explain details of transliteration not stated in the tables.

TABLE I

TRANSLITERATION OF THE CONSONANTS

(The isolated forms of the letters are given here; see any Persian grammar or standard reference work for the combining forms in initial, medial, and final position and for consonant ligatures.)

PERSIAN LETTER	NAME OF LETTER	TRANSLITERATION	EXAMPLES AND REMARKS
ا	alef	omit initially	اصفهان Eṣfahān. See Notes 2 and 5.
ب	be	b	بندر شاه Bandar-e Shāh
پ	pe	p	پتک Patak
ت	te	t	تهران Tehrān
ث	še	š	ثوامر šavāmer
ج	jīm	j	جهان آباد Jahānābād
چ	che	ch	چشمه سفید Chashmeh Safīd
ح	ḥe	ḥ	حسینیه Ḥoseyniyeh. See Note 3.
خ	khe	kh	خوزستان Khūzestān. See Note 4.
د	dāl	d	دزفول Dezful
ذ	žāl	ž	ذالباğ Žālyāb
ر	re	r	رشت Rasht
ز	ze	z	زیبا Zibā. See Note 4.
ژ	zhe	zh	ژان Zhān. See Note 4.
س	sīn	s	سرتنگ Sartang. See Note 4.
ش	shīn	sh	شیراز Shīrāz. See Note 4.
ص	šād	š	صفه Šafḥeh. See Note 3.
ض	zād	z	ضیاء آباد Zīā'ābād
ط	ṭā	ṭ	طاق Ṭāq. See Note 3.
ظ	ẓā	ẓ	ظلم آباد Ẓolmābād. See Note 3.
ع	'eyn	'	عزیز آباد 'Azizābād
غ	gheyn	gh	غرقه Gharqeh. See Note 4.
ف	fe	fe	فردوس Ferdows
ق	qāf	q	قزوین Qazvīn

PERSIAN LETTER	NAME OF LETTER	TRANSLITERATION	EXAMPLES AND REMARKS
ک	kāf	k	کاشان Kāshān. See Note 4.
گ	gāf	g	گراوند Garāvand. See Note 4.
ل	lām	l	لایان Leylān. See Note 7.
م	mīm	m	مشهد Mashhad
ن	nūn	n	نائین Nā'in
و	vāv	v	ویس Veys. See Note 5.
ه	he	h	هما Homā. See Note 4 and Special Rule 5.
ی (ي)	ye	y	یزد Yazd. See Notes 5 and 8.

TABLE II

TRANSLITERATION OF THE PERSIAN VOWELS,
DIPHTHONGS, AND SPECIAL DIACRITICAL MARKS

PERSIAN LETTER	NAME OF LETTER OR SYMBOL	TRANSLITERATION	EXAMPLES AND REMARKS
ـَ	fatḥeh	a	هرم Harm
ـِ	kasreh	e	دزگان Dezhgān
ـُ	zammeh	o	هرمز Hormoz
اَ	fatḥeh alef	ā	بارانگرد Bārāngerd
اِ (ـِ)	alef maqṣūreh	á	موسی آباد Mūsáābād
آ	alef maddeh	ā	آهنگران Ahangarān
ی (ـِ)	kasreh ye	i	میانه Miāndeh
و (ـُ)	zammeh vāv	ū	شوش Shūsh
ی (ـِ)	kasreh ye sāken	ey	حسین آباد Ḥoseynābād
و (ـُ)	zammeh vāv sāken	ow	نوده Now Deh
ـُ	sokūn	omit	مرودشت Marv Dasht
ـْ	hamzeh		پائین آب Pā'in Āb. See Note 5.
ـ	tashdid	doubling of consonant	محمدی Moḥammadi. See Note 7.
ـ، ی، ـِ	ezāfeh	-e, -ye	کوه پوشت Kūh-e Pūst,
			کوبای گنو Kūhhā-ye Genū,
			قلعه نظر Qal'eh-ye Naẓar. See Notes 5 and 8.

NOTES

1. The Persian writing system, in its generally used form, employs only the symbols found in Table I, and the *alef maddeh* (آ) of Table II. The symbols in column 1 of Table II are traditional auxiliary symbols used by Persians only sporadically to indicate the exact reading of a given word. In the case of *i*, *û*, *ey* and *ow*, a choice of symbology exists, one system adhering to the Arabic tradition, the other being a modification of it. Likewise, there are two ways of writing *alef maqṣūreh*.

The BGN/PCGN transliteration system presupposes forms fully pointed with the Persian symbols represented in Table II, though these are omitted from the examples given below.

2. *Alef* (ا) occurs with the following uses:
- Initially, it indicates that the word begins with a vowel or diphthong, and the *alef* itself is not transliterated, e.g., *anjireh*, انجيره Eyvānī.
 - Initially with *maddeh* (آ), it indicates *ā*, e.g., *ābādān*, آبادان.
 - Medially and finally it represents *d*, e.g., *ābādān*, آبادان Tūkā.
 - With *hamzeh*. See Note 5.
3. Where special considerations are paramount, the sub-dot (*h*, *s*, *t*, *z*) may be used in place of the cedilla (*ḥ*, *ṣ*, *ṭ*, *ẓ*).
4. The two-letter symbols *kh*, *zh*, *sh*, and *gh* are convenient for use and easily comprehensible. The infrequent sequences of *kāf*, *ze*, *sīn*, and *gāf* followed by *he* can be unequivocally transliterated for bibliographical purposes by the use of a slant line ("shilling," "solidus") to separate true *h* from a preceding *k*, *z*, *s*, or *g*; that is, *kh* represents *khe*, but *k/h* stands for *kāf* followed by *he*.
5. *Hamzeh* (ه) is not regarded as a letter of the Persian alphabet, but as a diacritic mark, and as such is not always expressed in actual writing. In fully pointed words, however, it appears in several graphic forms, standing alone or written in conjunction with *alef*, *vāv*, or *ye* (the *ye* in this instance being undotted). All these forms are transliterated

simply with the apostrophe in the form resembling a small raised figure 9 ('), e.g., *joz'*, جوز, *safrā'*, صفر, *ma'khaž'*, مخاض, *mo'taman'*, مؤتمن, *pā'īn*, پایین.

Occasionally a word may appear pointed according to the strict Arabic tradition so as to indicate an initial *hamzeh*. This initial *hamzeh* is never transliterated, but only the vowel which it carries, e.g., *anjireh*, انجيره, whether pointed *انجيره* or *انجيره*, is transliterated simply Anjireh.

Hamzeh is also sometimes written over final *he* or *ye* to represent the *-ye* form of the *eẓāfeh*, cf. Note 8.

6. *Alef maddeh* is used initially to indicate *ā*, e.g., *ābādān*, آبادان. Noninitially it indicates *ā* in words of Arabic origin, and must be so transliterated, e.g., *qor'ān*, قرآن, *ma'āb*, ماآب.
7. *Tashdīd* (ّ) indicates doubling of the consonant over which it is written and is represented in transliteration by writing the consonant twice, e.g., *Moḥammad*. The sequence *kasreh ye ye* (written *یه یه*) is transliterated *iy*. In names of Arabic origin containing the definite article, the vowel of the article is transliterated according to its Persian pronunciation and the *lām*, when followed by a "sun letter" (*t*, *ṣ*, *d*, *ḏ*, *r*, *s*, *sh*, *z*, *ṣ*, *ẓ*, *ḏ*, *l*, *n*) is assimilated. The article is written in lower case and separate from the preceding and following word, e.g., *zayn od Dīn*, زين الدين, *Zeyn ed Dīnī*. Cf. Special Rule 1.
8. The relational suffix (*eẓāfeh*) is transliterated *-e* after final consonants (except for silent *h*). After silent *h* and after vowels, it is transliterated *-ye*. It is usually not expressed in Persian writing after a consonant (*kasreh* being understood), e.g., *Kūh-e Marghūb*. After final *alef* or *vāv* it is written with *ye* (ی), e.g., *Pā-ye Ab*, پای آب, *Jū-ye As*, جوی اس. After *ye* (ی) and silent *he* it is written as *hamzeh* over the letter, e.g., *Dahāneh-ye Mambar*, دانه به ممبر, *Salasi-ye Bozorg*, سلسی بزرگ.

SPECIAL RULES

1. In Persian names of Arabic origin, the word division used for transliterating Arabic will obtain, except that names ending in the word *Allāh* will be written solid and the *a* of *Allāh* will be replaced by *o*, e.g., 'Abdollah. The Arabic definite article when not subject to assimilation will be written *al* in name-initial position but usually *ol* elsewhere, e.g., Al Ḥā'ī but Zū ol Faqār. Cf. Note 7 above.
2. In Persian names in general, in sequences of name elements pronounced as a single unit, division into separate words will be made after Persian letters written in the word final form. (But see the Rule immediately below.)
3. The word *ābād* which occurs very frequently at the end of place names will be written solid with the preceding word; e.g., Allāhābād, not Allāh Ābād.
4. Persian derivational endings such as *vand* and Turkish and other endings such as *lar*, *lī* and *lū* will be written solid with the preceding word, whether so written in Persian script or not.
5. The letter *he*, when used in Turkish fashion for word internal *e*, will be transliterated *eh* as usual but will be written solid with the remainder of the word.
6. *Khe* plus *vāv* followed by long vowel or *khe* plus *vāv* followed by *zammeh* will be rendered *khv* although the *v* is not pronounced.