

A Note on the Spellings

Culin's spellings against the two romanisations in use today. The book keeps his; this card is how you look anything up.

<i>Culin, 1895</i>	<i>Revised Romanisation</i>	<i>McCune–Reischauer</i>	<i>What it is</i>
nyout	yut	yut	the game; <i>yunnori</i> as an activity
nyout-nol-ki	yunnori	yunnori	“nyout playing”
tjyang-keui	janggi	changgi	Korean chess
pa-tok	baduk	paduk	go
ssang-ryouk	ssangnyuk	ssangnyuk	backgammon, “double sixes”
tjyou-sa-a	jusawi	chusawi	dice
tjyong-kyeng-to	jonggyeongdo	chonggyōngdo	the game of promotion
ko-no	gonu	konu	the line-game family
kon-tjil	gonjil	konjil	merrells
kol-hpai	golpae	kolp’ae	dominoes, “bone tablets”
ho-hpai	hopae	hop’ae	dominoes, “foreign tablets”
htou-tjyen	tujeon	t’ujōn	playing-cards
san-htong	santong	sant’ong	the lottery; the lot-tube
kyei	gye	kye	the rotating credit club
mal	mal	mal	the men or pieces; “horses”
hpan	pan	p’an	board, as in <i>nyout-hpan</i>

Culin’s Korean is spelled in a way no modern reader will recognise: *nyout*, *tjyang-keui*, *ssang-ryouk*, *htou-tjyen*, *pa-tok*, *kol-hpai*. It looks like corruption and it is not. **Nothing in this edition’s Korean has been respelled.**

The system is French. The dictionaries and grammars available to Culin in 1893 were the work of the French missionaries of the Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris, and their transcription assumes a French ear and French spelling conventions. Hence *ou* where an English system writes *u*; *tj* where a modern one writes *j*; *eu* for a vowel English has no letter for; and initial *h* written after the consonant it aspirates, so that *hp* and *ht* are single aspirated sounds rather than clusters.

Both systems now in use came later. **McCune–Reischauer** was published in 1939 and the South Korean **Revised Romanization** in 2000, which is why a game Culin calls *nyout* appears in twentieth-century writing as *yut* and in current writing as *yut* or *yunnori*. Culin was not using an old version of either. He was using something else, forty-four years before the first of them existed.

The table below gives the modern forms beside his for the games in this volume. It is an aid to looking things up, not a correction: **where the two disagree, the book keeps Culin’s**, because his spelling is evidence of how these words sounded to a French-trained ear reporting a Korean speaker in Chicago in 1893, and a silent modernisation would throw that away to save the reader a footnote.

One consequence is worth flagging. The romanisations are also why the usual machinery for cleaning a scanned text had to be switched off for this book: a detector that looks for non-words and proposes the nearest real word will propose to turn *Kan* into *Ran*, *sai* into *sat* and *Kung* into *Rung*, and each of those is a correct transcription being corrupted into an English word. The Note on the Text says what was done instead.

Four features of his system account for most of the strangeness, and once they are known the spellings stop being an obstacle. **ou** is the vowel English writes *u* and French writes *ou*, so *nyout* is not two syllables. **tj** is the affricate modern systems write *j* or *ch*, so *tjyang-keui* begins like *jang*. **eu** stands for a vowel English has no letter for at all — the unrounded back vowel now written *eu* in the Revised system and *ũ* in McCune–Reischauer, which is a coincidence of notation rather than a borrowing. And **h written after the consonant** marks aspiration, so *hp* and *ht* are single sounds: *hpan* is one syllable, *pan*, aspirated.

The table below sets Culin’s forms beside both modern systems for the games in this volume. A reader who wants to look one of these games up now will find it under the Revised form; a reader consulting twentieth-century scholarship will find it under McCune–Reischauer; and Culin’s own spelling is what to search for in the literature of his own period, which is where the rest of his sources are.

Two cautions about the table. It covers only the games in this volume, not the ninety-seven in the whole book. And it is an aid, not an authority: a few of Culin's forms do not map cleanly onto anything modern, either because the word has gone out of use with the thing — nobody plays *htou-tjyen* now — or because what he heard in Chicago in 1893 was one speaker's pronunciation and not a dictionary form. Where the mapping is uncertain the modern column gives the nearest current spelling and nothing more is claimed for it.