Chinese

The United Nations conference approved the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (Pinyin) in 1977 (III/8) for the romanization of Chinese geographical names.

The system is used in China and in international cartographic products almost universally.

Chinese uses a logographic script whereby each character represents a word or syllable. The relationship between the characters and their pronunciation is complex and therefore the phonetic notation of a Chinese syllable cannot be unambiguously converted to its written form.

Romanization

The approved readings of Chinese characters can be obtained from modern authoritative dictionaries, such as *Xinhua Zidian*.

Other systems of romanization

The **Modified Wade-Giles transcription** (1892) was previously one of the most well-known systems of rendering Chinese syllables, especially in English-language texts. The syllables of the Wade-Giles (WG) system may be transformed into Pinyin syllables as given in the table below[1] but bearing in mind that often it is not correct to change Wade-Giles into Pinyin without reference to current Chinese character sources.

WG	UN				
Syllable beginnings:		ts	= z	ih	= i
ch	= zh, j[A]	ts'	= c	iung	= iong
ch'	= ch, q[A]	tz	= z	o	= o[C], uo[D], e[E]
hs	= x	tz'	= c	u	= u, ou[F]
j	= r	*Syllable endings:*		ŭ	= i
k	= g	ê	= e	ü	= u, ü[F]
k'	= k	eh	= e	üan	= uan
p	= b	en	= an	üeh	= ue, üe[F]
p'	= p	ên	= en	uei	= ui
ss	= s	êng	= eng	ün	= un
sz	= s	êrh	= er	ung	= ong
t	= d	i	= i, yi[B]		
t'	= t	ieh	= ie		
		ien	= ian		

[A] Before *i* (except the ending *-ih*) and *ü*.
[B] Word-initially.
[C] After *p, p', m, f, w, y*.
[D] After *t, t', n, l, ch, ch', j, ts, ts', s*.

[E] After *k, k', h* and syllable-initially.
[F] After *n, l.*

The Pinyin alphabet has also been adapted to the romanization of names from three minority languages in China: **Mongolian**, **Tibetan** and **Uighur**.

Reference

1. Adapted from Klaus Kaden, *Die wichtigsten Transkriptionssysteme für die chinesische Sprache*. VEB Verlag Enzyklopädie, Leipzig 1975, S. 145.