

Chinese

1.

Origin of the system

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

2.

Implementation

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

3.

Brief characterization

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 reverted to its written form.

4.

Romanization

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

5.

Other systems of romanization

The **Modified Wade-Giles transcription** (1912) was previously one of the most well-known systems of rendering Chinese syllables, especially in the English-language texts. The syllables of the Wade-Giles (WG) system may be transformed into Pinyin syllables as given in the table below¹ 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:	j	= r	p'	= p	t'	= t	
ch	= zh, j ¹	k	= g	ss	= s	ts	= z
ch'	= ch, q ¹	k'	= k	sz	= s	ts'	= c
hs	= x	p	= b	t	= d	tz	= z

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

tz'	= c	êng	= eng	iung	= iong	üeh	= ue, üe ⁶
Syllable endings:		êrh	= er	o	= o ³ , uo ⁴ , e ⁵	uei	= ui
ê	= e	i	= i, yi ²	u	= u, ou ⁶	ün	= un
eh	= e	ieh	= ie	ǔ	= i	ung	= ong
en	= an	ien	= ian	ü	= u, ü ⁶		
ên	= en	ih	= i	üan	= uan		

¹ before *i* (except the ending *-ih*) and *ü*

² word-initially

³ after *p, p', m, f, w, y*

⁴ after *t, t', n, l, ch, ch', j, ts, ts', s*

⁵ after *k, k', h* and syllable-initially

⁶ after *n, l*

A modification of the Wade-Giles system which excludes all diacritical marks, including the apostrophe, is being used in **Taiwan**, province of China (officially approved in 1972).

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