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STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Athens, Greece

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Item 15 of the provisional agenda

RULES FOR THE TRANSLITERATION OF MINORITY NATIONALITY
PLACE NAMES WITH THE CHINESE PHONETIC ALPHABET

Revised in June 1976 by the State Bureau of
Surveying and Cartography and the Committee
for Reforming the Chinese Written Language

Paper presented by the People's Republic of China

Specific Schemes for Transliteration

Specific schemes for transliterating the place names in the following three minority nationality languages have been worked out:

Notes on the Uighur language:

(1) Transliteration of Uighur place names is based on their spelling according to the "Scheme for a New Uighur Script".

(2) Where two forms of the same letter, with and without a diacritical mark, are listed together for transliterating with the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, the form with the diacritical mark is used for recording the pronunciation of place names, while the form without the diacritical mark is for general use.

Notes on the Mongolian language:

(1) Transliteration of Mongolian place names is made from their proper pronunciation based on their written form and the common colloquial name.

(2) The long and short Mongolian vowels are not distinguished in the spellings for general use, but in recording the pronunciation of place names the long vowel is represented by duplication.

(3) Where two forms of the same letter, with and without a diacritical mark, are listed together for transliterating with the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, the form with the diacritical mark is used for recording the pronunciation of place names, while the form without the diacritical mark is for general use.

Notes on the Tibetan language:

A letter marked * is read as aspirated when it is not accompanied by a prefixed letter or a superadded consonant; otherwise it is read as non-aspirated.

(1) Transliteration of Tibetan place names is made from their pronunciation in the Tibetan broadcasts by the Central People's Broadcasting Station.

(2) A number of homonyms exist in the Tibetan language and they are not all listed here.

(3) The letters ࠠ and ࠡ are treated as without initials when transliterated with the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet.

(4) When the prefixed letters ࠢ and ࠣ or the superadded consonant ࠤ give the preceding syllable an additional nasal final or make the vowel in it nasalized, it is spelt in accordance with the actual pronunciation. The nasalized vowels (a), (o), (u) are represented by the finals an, on, un in the "Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet.

(5) Where two forms of the same letter, with and without a diacritical mark, are listed together for transliterating with the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, the form with the diacritical mark is used for recording the pronunciation of place names, while the form without the diacritical mark is for general use.

General Principles

Rule 1

The main purposes of these Rules are:

- (1) to serve as a guide in spelling minority nationality place names with the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet;
- (2) to help recording the pronunciation of minority nationality place names in making investigations for surveying and map-making;
- (3) to provide the chief basis for determining the pronunciation and choosing the right Han characters in transliterating minority nationality place names into Han characters;
- (4) to facilitate the compiling and indexing of Chinese place names in an alphabetical order.

Rule 2

Under these Rules, the 26 letters of the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, two of which have variants with diacritical marks, and the syllables-dividing apostrophe are used. To ensure accurate transliteration and sound-recording, syllabication should be free from the pattern of the Han Common Speech, the apostrophe can be used to separate syllables where its absence may cause confusion, and diacritical marks can be used on certain letters for recording special sounds.

If a minority nationality language has adopted the Roman script, its own written form should be the basis for transliteration. Those of its letters whose pronunciation and usage are identical or similar to their counterparts in the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, just copy them. For the other letters, a scheme of transliteration should be worked out. If a minority nationality language uses a non-Roman script, use the corresponding letters of the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet to convey its pronunciation. If a minority nationality has no written language, spell its place names according to the prevalent oral pronunciation.

Rule 3

Special place names are dealt with in the following ways:

- (1) Where a traditional Han name consists partly of sound transliteration and partly of meaning translation, the first part should be spelt from the original pronunciation, and the second part should be spelt from the Han characters.
- (2) Where a traditional Han name is an abbreviated translation, a new transliteration of the original place name in full may be made, or just spell the pronunciation of the traditional Han name, depending on the specific circumstances.
- (3) If a Han name derived from a minority nationality language later took on a Han form and has been in common use, it may just be spelt from the Han characters, and where necessary a transliteration of the original may be put in brackets after it.
- (4) Other special cases are to be dealt with on the merit of each case.