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Romanization of Chinese geographical names

Submitted by Hungary

The question of the romanization of Chinese geographical names was
discussed on the first and second U.N. Conference on the Standardization of
Geographical Names. The representative of Hungary suggested on both
conferences to adopt the Pinyin System, the official transcription system
of the People's Republic of China, as the international system for the
transcription of geographical names in China. The Pinyin System was
opposed mainly because no maps or gazetteers have been published using
this system.

As a result of efforts to make a further step in the romanization of
Chinese, the first romanized map was published in Peking: Zhonghua Renmin
Gongheguo Ditu, Scale 1 : 6,000,000, in 1974. On the basis of this map,
the following details became known about the Pinyin System, differing of
our foregoing knowledge:

1. As the diacritical marks showing the tones are now omitted, the
name of two provinces become homonyms /i.e. both Shanxi and Shanxi will be
Shanxi/. On this map we find the following solution: Shanxi for Shanxi,
and Shaanxi for Shanxi.

2. In names of physical features the generics /e.g. mount, river, sea,
bay, island, etc./ are always separated, and the first letter is spelled
in capital, e.g. Taibai Shan, Chang Jiang, Bo Hai, Beibu Wan, Hainan Dao,
etc. The generics xian and qi occurring frequently in place names, as
well as the names of autonomous nationality districts included in place
names, are spelled similarly: Kai Xian, Li Jiang Maxizi Zishixian, etc.

3. In the autonomous territories of nationalities, even if situated outside
of autonomous provinces, geographical names other than Chinese are transcribed
not from Chinese, but from the original scripts of the related nationalities
using a special transcription system different from the Pinyin System. A
mixed transcription form appears sometimes on the map, where usually the
generic is given in Chinese, while the specific element appears in the
nationality language. The transcription of the nationality language form
is frequently given in brackets, after the Chinese name. Some examples

.../
in Xinjiang: Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiqiu
Teklimakan Shamo
Junggar Pendi
Gurbantügul Shamo
Urümqi
Wushi /Usturpan/
Tarim He
Yiwu /Aratturk/
in Tibet:
Lhasa
Dagze
Ngamring
Nganglharang Co
Bogcang Zangbo
Bogcang Zangbo
Zhag‘yab

in Inner Mongolia:

Nei Mongol Zizhiqiu
Erenhot
Garban Obo
Aoba Qi
Qagqulut
Said Zuqi
Huhhot
Baotou /But/
in Jilin:
Arxan
Yirs
Naiman Qi
Hure Qi
Gongshan Drungzu Nasu Zizhiqiu
Xineng Vazu Zizhiqiu

in Hailongjiang:

Chen Barga Qi
Xuguit Qi

in Sichuan:

Wonda
Garze
Serxe

4. In other aspects the transcription on this map is the same as used on the World Map, Scale 1:2,500,000, as well as on other maps and in atlases published recently.

Out of the above-mentioned details, the transcription used on the territories of nationalities causes difficulties for maps with a scale larger than 1:6,000,000. This is partly because we have no data for the names in the original script /e.g. Tibetan, Uighur etc./, and partly because we have no information on the transcription systems used for these scripts. We shall make efforts in the near future to obtain materials for these areas as detailed as possible.

On the other hand, this name policy makes necessary an addition to the program of the Working Group on a Single Romanization System, namely, the question of Tibetan and Uighurian transcription must also be discussed. As to the Mongolian of Inner Mongolia it could be discussed together with the Romanization of geographical names in the Mongolian People's Republic.