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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION: TOPONYMIC GUIDELINES

Toponymic guidelines for cartography - China

Paper presented by China

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The usual spellings of Chinese geographical names in different Roman foreign languages are in confusion and not standardized. In accordance with the proposal put forward by the Chinese delegation, the Third UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in 1977 passed a resolution that "the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (Pinyin) be adopted as the international system for the romanization of Chinese geographical names" with a view to realizing the standardization of romanized Chinese geographical names.

The Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (hereinafter referred to as Pinyin system) was officially approved at the fifth session of the First National People's Congress in 1958. The Pinyin system adopts the Roman alphabet, thus providing beneficial conditions for the standardization of romanized Chinese geographical names. After the promulgation of the Pinyin system, it was used successively to spell the names of post and telecommunications offices, railway stations, meteorological observatories, and streets and roads in some big cities and to record minority place names in the investigation conducted by surveying departments. In 1974, a 1:6,000,000 "Map of the People's Republic of China" in Pinyin and its place name index were published for the first time in our country. In 1977, the "Atlas of the People's Republic of China" in Pinyin and the "Gazetteer of Chinese Geographical Names" in Pinyin (with the usual spellings in English) were published. The names on the charts of China's coastal areas published by the Nautical Publishing House in recent years were also spelt according to the Pinyin system. In 1976, "Rules for Spelling Chinese Place Names with Pinyin" and "Rules for the Transcription of Minority Place Names with Pinyin" were revised jointly by the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language and the National Bureau of Surveying and Cartography. As from 1 January 1979, Pinyin was used to spell the names of Chinese persons and places in the translation of documents of the Chinese Government, books and other publications. From then on, the romanization of Chinese geographical names was on a way to standardization.

#### 1. Composition of nationalities and languages.

Ours is a unitary, multi-national socialist country. At present there are 56 identified nationalities in our country, of which the Han nationality comprises approximately 94 percent of the total population in China. The language it uses is called the Han language, belonging to the Han division of the Han-Tibetan language family. The Han characters are ideograms. With the exception of Hui and Man nationalities that use the Han language, all the minority nationalities have their own languages. Out of these, 29 nationalities whose languages belong to the Han-Tibetan language family are distributed mainly over southwest and south-central China. Seventeen whose languages fall within the Altai language family are distributed mainly over northwest and northeast China. Three whose languages fall within the south Asian language family are distributed mainly over the Yunnan province. Two whose languages belong to the Indo-European language family live in compact community in Uygur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang. One nationality who speaks a language belonging to the Austronesian language family lives in compact community in Taiwan province with some members scattered in the Fujian province and other areas. No final conclusion is reached on to which language family the Gin nationality belongs. Of the minority nationalities, Hui, Man and She nationalities use the

Han characters; some have their own prevalent scripts; others have their own scripts but few people make use of them. Still others, having no scripts of their own, make use of the scripts of other nationalities.

The State promotes the common speech (putonghua) throughout the country. The prevalent written forms of Chinese geographical names are in Han characters while in Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet and other national autonomous areas, the minority scripts are used to write their own place names.

## 2. Spelling of geographical names of the Han language.

In accordance with the Pinyin system, Han place names are spelt from their pronunciation in the common speech (putonghua) with Beijing as the standard pronunciation. The spelling of the geographical names in Taiwan is naturally no exception to this rule. But in view of the fact that the Wade system is still in use in Taiwan, in our maps, gazetteers and other publications in Pinyin, the usual spellings of these names can be placed in parenthesis after the Pinyin forms as a transitional alternative.

### 2.1 Spelling rules.

- a. In spelling Han place names, write proper names and generic names separately, e.g.: Henan Sheng, Taihang Shan.
- b. In spelling the names of towns and villages, write all the syllables consecutively, without making such separation, e.g.: Zhoukoudian.
- c. In spelling Han place names, treat modifying adjectives as part of the proper names or of the generic names, as the case may be, e.g.: Xiliao He, Chaobai Xinhe.
- d. The separation of words is used when a place name consists of two words or more, e.g.: Xiangxi Tujiazu Miaozu Zizhizhou.
- e. The surname and personal name are written consecutively when places are named after individuals, e.g.: Wangguangming Lu.
- f. The place names are written in one word when the places are named by set phrases or the place names are inseparable, e.g.: Santanyinyue.
- g. The names of transportation routes are written as follows:  

Jing-Han Tielu
- h. When a syllable preceded by a, o or e immediately follows another syllable, the dividing sign "'" is used, e.g.: Xi'an.
- i. There are tones in the pronunciation of the Han characters. Tone signs are not normally used on maps in Pinyin. But when exact pronunciation of a place name is called for, tones should be indicated.

j. When spelling those place names in numbers indicating seriation, Arabic numbers should be used. But the numbers are spelt when the places are named by numbers or dates that do not indicate seriation, e.g.: Bayi Nongchang (Bayi means 1 August).

## 2.2 Variant pronunciation of a Han character in a place name.

Some Han characters in place names have special pronunciations. They are not spelt according to general pronunciations, but according to their corresponding local pronunciations recognized in modern dictionaries of the Han language. For examples: 泌阳 in Henan province is not spelt Miyang, but Biyang. 番禺 in Guangdong province is not spelt Fanyu, but Panyu.

## 3. Spelling of place names of minority languages.

### 3.1 General rules.

The place names of minority languages, which constitute a fair number of China's place names, are in the main distributed in peripheral provinces and autonomous regions. Some minority nationalities have their place names written in their own scripts. Others have not scripts of their own even though they have their own spoken languages. They are accustomed to using the Han characters or the scripts of other nationalities to write their place names. The "Phonetic Transcription", an approach of transcribing directly from minority scripts or spoken languages with Pinyin, is adopted for the romanization of Mongolian, Uygur and Tibetan place names because of their comparative distribution and well-established written forms in their own scripts. The other minority place names are spelt from the standardized Han transcribed names.

a. Under the phonetic transcription, the Roman letters, diacritical marks and the syllable-dividing apostrophe prescribed in the Pinyin system are used. In spelling, syllabication should be free from the pattern of the Han common speech and the apostrophe can be used to separate syllables where its absence may cause confusion.

b. In the phonetic transcription, proper names and generic names are generally spelt from minority languages. In special cases, some generic names can be spelt from their Han translation.

### 3.2 Phonetic transcription of Uygur, Mongolian and Tibetan place names.

a. Transcription of Uygur place names is based on the forms spelt according to the "Scheme for a New Uygur Script". Those Uygur letters whose pronunciation and usage are identical with their counterparts in the Pinyin system are just retained. With regard to those letters different from their counterparts in the Pinyin system such as q, h, k, e, e are replaced by g, h, k, a ("e" is used where confusion of a word's meaning arises) and o. Z is replaced by y at the beginning of a syllable or by j at the end.

b. Transcription of Mongolian place names is made from their proper pronunciation based on the written form of the Mongolian language and Qahar vernacular

with Zhenglan as its representative pronunciation. The long and short vowels in the Mongolian language are not distinguished in the transcription, e.g.: the Han translation 山 (mountain) is usually transcribed Ul.

c. Transcription of Tibetan place names is made from their pronunciation in the Tibetan broadcasts by the Central People's Broadcasting Station. Those Tibetan letters whose Lhasa pronunciation is identical with or similar to that of the letters in the Pinyin system are transcribed by the Pinyin letters. Digraphs are used when difference in pronunciation is quite big, e.g.  $\text{ɲ}$ ,  $\text{c}$ ,  $\text{c}'$  and  $\text{ɕ}$  are respectively represented by ny, gy, ky and lh. The vowel  $\text{a}^2$  is represented by ag. See annex 3 for the detail of the phonetic transcription.

4. National authority dealing with geographical names and standardization of Geographical Names.

The romanization of Chinese geographical names is closely related with the progress of the standardization of geographical names in the country. In 1977, the China Geographical Names Committee was set up. Composed of the representatives of related ministries, commissions and scientific institutes, it takes charge of drawing up the principles of standardized geographical names at home and abroad, organizes the departments concerned to gather, edit and check place name materials, and to compile reference books on geographical names and gives guidance to the standardization of geographical names throughout the country. Subcommittees have been set up correspondingly in the provinces and autonomous regions. Under the leadership of the committee, the standardization of geographical names are being carried out swiftly and comprehensively. The work of using the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (Pinyin) as the international system for the romanization of Chinese geographical names will be done better and better. Along with the progress of our work on place names, a variety of materials on standardized Chinese geographical names will be compiled.

#### Annexes

1. Pronunciation reference (IPA in brackets)
2. Glossary of generic terms, adjectives and other words necessary for the understanding of maps in Pinyin
3. Specific schemes for transcribing Uygur, Mongolian and Tibetan geographical names

Annex I

PRONUNCIATION REFERENCE

(IPA in brackets)

a [a]	k [kʰ]	u [u]
b [p]	l [l]	o [y]
c [tsʰ]	m [m]	-ue [ye]
ch [tʃʰ]	n [n]	v [v]
chi [tʃʰi]	ng [ŋ]	w [w]
ci [tsʰi]	o [o]	x [ɕ]
d [t]	p [pʰ]	xu [ɕy]
e [ə]	q [tʃʰ]	xue [ɕye]
er [ər]	qu [tʃʰy]	y [j]
f [f]	que [tʃʰye]	ye [je]
g [k]	r [ʁ] [r]	yu [y]
h [x]	ri [ʁi]	yue [ye]
i [i]	s [s]	z [ts]
-ie [ie]	sh [ʃ]	zh [tʃ]
j [tʃ]	shi [ʃi]	zhi [tʃi]
ju [tʃy]	si [si]	zi [tsi]
jue [tʃye]	t [tʰ]	

Annex II

GLOSSARY OF GENERIC TERMS, ADJECTIVES AND OTHER WORDS  
 NECESSARY FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE MAPS IN PINYIN

汉字	HANYU PINYIN	ENGLISH OR USUAL SPELLING IN ENGLISH
首都	Shoudu	Capital
省	Sheng	Province
自治区	Zizhiqu	Autonomous re- gion
直辖市	Zhixiashi	City directly under the central autho- rity
市	Shi	City
县	Xian	County
自治县、旗	Zizhixian, Qi	Autonomous coun- ty, Banner
村镇	Cunzhen	Town or village
江、河、水、曲、 木伦、藏布	Jiang, He, Shui, Qu, Murun, Zangbo	River
湖、泊、池、 诺尔、错	Hu, Po, Chi, Nur, Co	Lake
海	Hai	Sea, Lake
湾	Wan	Gulf, Bay
海峡	Haixia	Strait, Channel
洋	Yang	Ocean
水库	Shuiku (sk.)	Reservoir
运河、渠	Yunhe, Qu	Canal
井、布拉克、 布拉克	Jing, Bulag, Bulak	Well
泉、库那克	Quan, Kuduk	Spring
群岛、列岛	Qundao, Liedao	Archipelago, Islands
岛、屿	Dao, Yu	Island
礁	Jiao	Reef
角	Jiao	Cape
港	Gang	Harbour, Port
山、岭、乌拉	Shan, Ling, Ul	Mountain, Range, Ridge
山、峰	Shan, Feng	Mount, Peak
山口、关	Shankou, Guan	Pass
盆地	Pondi	Basin
沙漠	Shamo	Desert
东	Dong	East
南	Nan	South
西	Xi	West
北	Bei	North
中	Zhong	Central
大	Da	Great, Greater, Grand
小	Xiao	Little, Lesser
左	Zuo	Left
右	You	Right

Annex III

SPECIFIC SCHEMES FOR TRANSCRIBING UYGUR,  
 MONGOLIAN AND TIBETAN GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

a. Uygur Language

New Uygur Letter	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j		
Old Uygur Letter	ئا	ب	س	د	ئې	و	گ	خ	ئى	ج		
I P A	a	b	ts'	d	e	f	g	x	i	dʒ		
Pinyin	a	b	c	d	e,ê	f	g	h	i	j		
k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w
ك	ل	م	ن	ئو	پ	چ	ر	س	ت	ئۇ	ۋ	ۈ
k'	l	m	n	o	p'	tʃ'	r	s	t'	u	v	w
k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w
x	y	z	q	h	k	ə	o	ü	z		ng	
خ	ي	ز	ق	ھ	ك	ە	و	ۈ	ز		نگ	
ʃ	z	z	ɣ	h	q'	ɛ	ø	y	ʒ		ŋ	
x	y	z	g,ǰ	h,h	k,k̂	a,ä	o,ö	ü	y			
										j		ng

Note: Where two forms of the same letter, with and without a diacritical mark, are listed together for transcribing with Pinyin, 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.



b. Mongolian Language

Mongolian letter	ᠠ	ᠡ	ᠢ	ᠣ	ᠤ	ᠥ	ᠦ	ᠨ	ᠬ	ᠭ
I P A	a	p	ts'	t	ɔ	f	k			
Pinyin	a	b	c	d	e	f	g			
	ᠬ	ᠢ	ᠪ	ᠮ	ᠨ	ᠯ	ᠰ	ᠱ	ᠳ	ᠴ
	x	i	tj	k'	l	m	n	o	p'	tj'
	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q
	ᠷ	ᠰ	ᠳ	ᠴ	ᠵ	ᠶ	ᠷ	ᠸ	ᠹ	ᠺ
	r	s	t'	u	w	j	j	ts	ɔ	u
	r	s	t	u	w	x	y	z	o,ô	u,û

- Notes: 1. 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.
2. Where two forms of the same letter, with and without a diacritical mark, are listed together for transcribing with Pinyin, 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.

c. Tibetan Language

Tibetan Letter	声	ཀ་ ཀྱ་ ཀ་ ཅ་ ཅ་ ཅ་ ཉ་ ཉ་ ཉ་ ཏ་ ཏ་ ཏ་ ཏ་ ཏ་ ཏ་
I P A		k k' ŋ tɛ tɛ' ɲ t t' n p
Pinyin	母	g k ng j q ny d t n b
མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་ མ་		p' m ts ts' w ɔ s j r l h c c'
		p m z c w x s y r l h gy ky
འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་ འ་	韵	ཀ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་ ཀྱ་
ts' ts' s t		a au a' aŋ ap
zh ch sh lh	母	a au ag ang ab
མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་ མམ་		am ar e e' ɛ i iu
		am ar ai,ä ai,ä ain,än i iu
འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་ འིག་		i' i' iŋ ip im ir ʄ
		ig i ing ib im ir in

Note: 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.

ལ་	ལག་ལགས་	ལང་ལངས་	ལབ་ལབས་	ལམ་ལམས་	ལར་	ལལ་ལལ་
u	u <sup>r</sup>	un	up	um	ur	y
u	ug	ung	ub	um	ur	ü
-----						
ལུང་ལུས་	ལུན་	ལེ་ལེལ་ལེའི་	ལེག་ལེགས་	ལེད་ལེས་	ལེང་ལེངས་	
y <sup>r</sup>	y	e	e <sup>r</sup>	e <sup>r</sup>	en	
ü	ün	é	ég	é	éng	
-----						
ལེབ་ལེབས་	ལེམ་ལེམས་	ལེར་	ལེན་	ལེ་	ལེག་ལེགས་	ལེང་ལེངས་
ep	em	er	é	o	o <sup>r</sup>	on
éb	ém	ér	én	o	og	ong
-----						
ལོབ་ལོབས་	ལོམ་ལོམས་	ལོར་	ལོལ་ལོའི་	ལོད་ལོས་	ལོན	
op	om	or	ø	ø <sup>r</sup>	ø	
ob	om	or	oi,ö	oi,ö	oin,ön	

- Notes: 1. A number of homonyms exist in the Tibetan language and they are not all listed here.
2. The letter  $\text{Q}$  and  $\text{V}$  are treated as without initials when transcribed with Pinyin.
3. When the prefixed letters  $\text{X}$  and  $\text{Q}$  or the superadded consonant  $\text{N}$  give the preceding syllable an additional nasal or make the vowel in it nasalized, it is spelt according to the actual pronunciation. The nasalized vowels (a), (o), (u) are represented by the finals an, on, un in the Pinyin system.
4. Where two forms of the same letter, with and without a diacritical mark, are listed together for transcribing with Pinyin, 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.

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