

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

^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.