

## 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 below<sup>1</sup> 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>							
	sz	= s	en	= an	u	= u, ou <sup>F</sup>	
ch	= zh, j <sup>A</sup>	t	= d	ên	= en	ũ	= i
ch'	= ch, q <sup>A</sup>	t'	= t	êng	= eng	ü	= u, ü <sup>F</sup>
hs	= x	ts	= z	êrh	= er	üan	= uan
j	= r	ts'	= c	i	= i, yi <sup>B</sup>	üeh	= ue, üe <sup>F</sup>
k	= g	tz	= z	ieh	= ie	uei	= ui
k'	= k	tz'	= c	ien	= ian	ün	= un
p	= b	<i>Syllable endings:</i>		ih	= i	ung	= ong
p'	= p	ê	= e	iung	= iong		
ss	= s	eh	= e	o	= o <sup>C</sup> , uo <sup>D</sup> , e <sup>E</sup>		

<sup>A</sup> Before *i* (except the ending *-ih*) and *ü*.

<sup>B</sup> Word-initially.

<sup>C</sup> After *p, p', m, f, w, y*.

<sup>D</sup> After *t, t', n, l, ch, ch', j, ts, ts', s*.

<sup>E</sup> After *k, k', h* and syllable-initially.

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

<sup>F</sup> 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**.