Hanyu Pinyin

‘Chinese spelling’, the official romanized transcription of Chinese ideograms, was approved by the first Chinese People’s National Congress in 1958, and it has been used as a phonetic teaching alphabet and for presenting Chinese names and scientific terms in documents to be used outside China. It has not replaced the ideographic characters in general use within the country, and its official use has not been persistant, neither has it been widely adopted elsewhere. (The British Museum’s Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts adopted it for cataloguing all books acquired after 1965, while the Library of Congress continues to use its own modified Wade-Giles system. BUCOP has used it for reporting new periodical titles since 1964, and so have a number of technological and scientific libraries because the Pinyin transcription has been printed on the title pages of Chinese publications received.)

Now, from January 1st 1979, the use of Pinyin on all official documents and other publications which may be used overseas has been made compulsory. Some foreign news agencies and newspapers have already decided to follow the new transcription.

Because the form Deng Xiaoping, for example, may not readily occur to a reader looking for Teng Hsiao-p’ing, indexers will need to use conversion tables to check the form of necessary references. Conversion tables are to be found in the British Standards Institution’s Guide to the romanization of Chinese (PD 6483: 1978, £3.80), which prints, side by side, Wade-Giles and Pinyin romanization schemes for the 400 syllables of Modern Standard Chinese. (Pinyin will obviously increase in use; Wade-Giles has an accumulation of use behind it.) More tables are in László Lega’s Guide to transliterated Chinese in the modern Peking dialect (Leiden: Brill, 1968—2v.), which, the author says, so that ‘both specialists and non-specialists can easily convert a transliterated form of a syllable from a modern system into another modern system, from an archaic into another archaic, and from an archaic into a modern without the use of the Chinese character itself’. Vol. 1 covers chiefly currently used romanized systems; vol. 2 outdated European systems. Pinyin is also set out for comparison with an earlier official Chinese scheme (Gwoyeu Romazhy), Wade-Giles, the Yale scheme, and a Russian transcription in C. Dougherty and others’ Chinese character indexes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

Burmesse names


Specialized Vocabularies

The following publications may be of use to indexers checking terminology, synonyms and related terms in the fields covered.


INSPEC Holland

The Information Division of the Institution of Electrical Engineers has established a new branch office in Amsterdam to facilitate its work in the Netherlands. It is situated in the Library of the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences, with which it has already collaborated in supplying input to INIS (International Nuclear Information System). The address is: INSPEC Holland, c/o K.N.A.W., Kloveniersburgwal 29, 1011 JV Amsterdam.

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