

TRANSCRIPTION OF CHINESE  
BGN (Modified Wade-Giles) System

The BGN (Modified Wade-Giles) System for the transcription of Chinese was adopted by the Board in 1943 and immediately thereafter applied in the romanization of thousands of Chinese geographic names required for military maps and gazetteers. Most of the names so transcribed had never before been written in the roman alphabet. The system is also used by names authorities of other governments, including the PCGN, although it has not been specifically labeled a BGN/PCGN System. The BGN applies the system to the Chinese geographic names of both Taiwan and mainland China, but not to those of Hong Kong or Macao. (Special rules provide for the treatment of non-Chinese names in Sinkiang and Tibet.)

The system was originally devised by Sir Thomas F. Wade and subsequently applied in the Giles Dictionary and elsewhere. The modifications adopted by the Board in 1943 consist of changes in six Giles romanizations and the omission of the circumflex accent. Also the Board provided romanizations for numerous Chinese characters which do not appear in the Giles Dictionary and provided for the use of authenticated variant readings of numerous characters.

For reasons of space, the tables of characters and readings required for the transcription of Chinese cannot be stated in this volume. The essential materials appear in the following publications:

1. Herbert A. Giles, Chinese-English Dictionary, London, second edition, 1912. This is the basic dictionary source.
2. Guide to Geographical Names in China, Special Publication No. 24, Board on Geographical Names, Department of the Interior, Washington, June 1944 (out of print). Pages 2-5 state the Board's modifications of the Wade-Giles System

and give general procedures for the treatment of geographic names; pp. 73-132 list characters and romanizations not found in the Giles Dictionary; and pp. 140-198 contain a useful glossary of words occurring in Chinese geographic names and in the margins of Chinese maps, arranged both alphabetically by romanization and in Chinese-dictionary order.

3. Key to Wade-Giles Romanization of Chinese Characters, Army Map Service, Washington, November 1944 (out of print). This publication lists (1) romanizations with corresponding Chinese characters and (2) Chinese characters arranged in Chinese-dictionary order. It is based on the Giles Dictionary but contains additional variant readings for many characters.