

*File Transliteration
of Foreign Names*

CONFIDENTIAL

22 December 1948

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. S. MacCarthy, IGAFS
Mr. W. A. Tidwell, OGE

[Redacted] IR, OGD
[Redacted] GE, OGD
[Redacted] ER, OGD
[Redacted] ER, OGD
[Redacted] OO ✓
[Redacted] FBIS, OO

50X1

50X1

SUBJECT: Transliteration and Standardization of Spelling
of Foreign Names

1. Having been designated temporary Chairman for the first meeting to discuss the above subject, I hereby propose that the first meeting, limited to CIA personnel, take place on Wednesday, 29 December 1948, at 10:00 in Room 1276 "C" Building.

2. It is further proposed that at the first meeting a permanent Chairman be decided upon and that the following points related to the above subject be discussed:

- a. Transliteration of Russian and Ukrainian-Board of Geographic Names System-Other systems.
- b. Transliteration of Chinese-Wade-Giles System-Other systems.
- c. Transliteration of Korean-McCune-Reischauer System-The Old System.

Not attended (by 4A)

J. J. BACHALL
Acting Chief,
Foreign Documents Branch

CONFIDENTIAL

Acting Chief, FDB

5 December 1948

Assistant Director for Operations

Transliteration and Standardization of Spelling of Foreign Names

1. The attached memoranda from AD/ORE, AD/OCD, Chief, ICAPS, and DAD/OSO indicate the desirability of a meeting to discuss the above subject as soon as convenient to those concerned.

2. It is recommended that:

a. Acting Chief, FDB be the Chairman of the first meeting and prepare the agenda for same.

b. The committee for the first meeting be limited to CIA personnel to include:

- (1) Mr. MacCarthy of ICAPS
- (2) Mr. Tidwell of ORE
- (3) [redacted] of IR, OCD
- (4) [redacted] of GR, OCD
- (5) [redacted] of BR, OCD
- (6) [redacted] of BR, OCD
- (7) [redacted] of OO
- (8) [redacted] of FBIB, OO
- (9) Mr. Bagnall of FDB, OO

50X1

c. A permanent Chairman of the committee be decided on, at the first meeting, to monitor the project until such time as it is ready to be turned over to ICAPS for discussion with IAC members as recommended by the Chief, ICAPS.

GEORGE G. CAREY

Encl: 4

- Memo 28 Oct 48 fr ORE
- Memo 26 Nov 48 fr OCD
- Memo 27 Oct 48 fr ICAPS
- Memo 26 Oct 48 fr SO

GGC/acg

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Assistant Director, OO

26 November 1948

Assistant Director, OCD

Transliteration and Standardization of Spelling of Foreign Names

Memo, Ass't Dir. OO, dated 25 Oct 48, subj. as above.

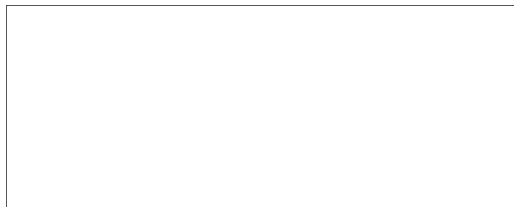
1. The problem of the transliteration and standardization of spelling of foreign names as discussed in the above referenced memorandum has been studied in the Office of Collection and Dissemination.

2. The recommendation that a committee be formed at the working level with CIA for preliminary discussion of the problems concerned with the transliteration and standardization of foreign names is excellent and represents a much needed step toward unification of methods within our own organization. Systems for transliteration of personal and geographic names have been established by the Library of Congress, the Board on Geographical Names, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Harvard-Yenching Institute and other specialized or university libraries requiring accredited language departments and research. Members of a committee for the study of the problem within CIA should be acquainted with all such systems in use to date. It is well to bear in mind that the scholars and specialists working with the problems of transliteration have in many cases evolved systems of their own which are at variance with standardized systems. To convince such scholars that a system other than that employed by them is technically more feasible, practical and accurate will be difficult. It has been this attitude on the part of scholars that has in large part prevented standardization in the past.

3. It will be constructive indeed if CIA can arrive at definite conclusions as to systems to be employed, but it would be unfortunate if any final decisions were reached before other agencies and departments facing the same problems had been consulted. To quote Mr. Carl Nelson, Department of State, Division of Biographic Information: "If standardization is to be attempted it can only succeed if the problem is studied by a group of qualified experts representing all interested agencies, among which the Army Map Service should be included, and backed by adequate authority to order compliance by all agencies when a standard has been agreed upon. An ill conceived standard might do more harm than good."

-2-

4. It is requested that the following persons from this
Office be appointed to serve on the proposed committee:



STAT

JAMES M. ANDREWS

Assistant Director, Operations

October 28 1948

Assistant Director, Reports and Estimates

Transliteration and Standardization of spelling of
Foreign Personal Names

1. The Office of Reports and Estimates has a definite interest in the problems of transliteration and standardization of spelling of foreign geographic names, has been the subject of considerable study over the last two years. Close collaboration has been maintained with the Board, be invited to participate in the meetings of the CIA working level committee.

2. Mr. William A. Tidwell, Jr. is nominated as the ORE representative to the committee.

/s/

THEODORE BABBITT

COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

Assistant Director for Operations

27 October 1948

Chief, ICAPS

Transliteration and Standardization
of Spelling of Foreign Personal Names

Reference : Answering your memo of October 25
on the above subject

1. Mr. MacCarthy of ICAPS, who is currently handling a proposal about a translation project, would like to attend early meetings about the standardization of foreign personal names while firming up CIA's position on this subject.

2. When the CIA position is established, it is thought that ICAPS should then take up this matter with the IAC members in an endeavor to arrive at a more all-inclusive agreement on this subject, than just State's Biographic Information Division and FBIB.

3. Another thought has occurred about list. Has it been furnished to SCAP for its use and the use of the XXIV Corps?

50X1

/s/

PRESCOTT CHILDS

CONFIDENTIAL

26 October 1948


MEMORANDUM FOR: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Transliteration and Standardization of Spelling
of Foreign Personal Names

RE: Your Confidential Memo dated October 25, 1948

1. This office recognizes the usefulness of some standardization of transliteration of foreign names into English. However it is not considered necessary that we be represented on a committee for the determination of procedures, usages, etc.

2. If the Director will designate one office to supply the accepted spelling for use throughout the Agency, we will be glad to conform.


Deputy Assistant Director
Special Operations

STAT

Assistant Director, OO

26 November 1948

Assistant Director, OCD

Transliteration and Standardization of Spelling of Foreign Names

Memo, Ass't Dir. OO, dated 25 Oct 48, subj. as above.

1. The problem of the transliteration and standardization of spelling of foreign names as discussed in the above referenced memorandum has been studied in the Office of Collection and Dissemination.

2. The recommendation that a committee be formed at the working level with CIA for preliminary discussion of the problems concerned with the transliteration and standardization of foreign names is excellent and represents a much needed step toward unification of methods within our own organization. Systems for transliteration of personal and geographic names have been established by the Library of Congress, the Board on Geographical Names, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Harvard-Yenching Institute and other specialized or university libraries requiring accredited language departments and research. Members of a committee for the study of the problem within CIA should be acquainted with all such systems in use to date. It is well to bear in mind that the scholars and specialists working with the problems of transliteration have in many cases evolved systems of their own which are at variance with standardized systems. To convince such scholars that a system other than that employed by them is technically more feasible, practical and accurate will be difficult. It has been this attitude on the part of scholars that has in large part prevented standardization in the past.

3. It will be constructive indeed if CIA can arrive at definite conclusions as to systems to be employed, but it would be unfortunate if any final decisions were reached before other agencies and departments facing the same problems had been consulted. To quote Mr. Carl Nelson, Department of State, Division of Biographic Information: "If standardization is to be attempted it can only succeed if the problem is studied by a group of qualified experts representing all interested agencies, among which the Army Map Service should be included, and backed by adequate authority to order compliance by all agencies when a standard has been agreed upon. An ill conceived standard might do more harm than good."

-2-

4. It is requested that the following persons from this Office be appointed to serve on the proposed committee:



STAT

JAMES M. ANDREWS

26 October 1948


MEMORANDUM FOR: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Transliteration and Standardization of Spelling
of Foreign Personal Names

RE: Your Confidential Memo dated October 25, 1948

1. This office recognizes the usefulness of some standardization of transliteration of foreign names into English. However it is not considered necessary that we be represented on a committee for the determination of procedures, usages, etc.

2. If the Director will designate one office to supply the accepted spelling for use throughout the Agency, we will be glad to conform.


Deputy Assistant Director
Special Operations

STAT

Assistant Director, Operations

October 28 1948

Assistant Director, Reports and Estimates

Transliteration and Standardization of spelling of
Foreign Personal Names

1. The Office of Reports and Estimates has a definite interest in the problems of transliteration and standardization of spelling of foreign geographic names, has been the subject of considerable study over the last two years. Close collaboration has been maintained with the Board, be invited to participate in the meetings of the CIA working level committee.

2. Mr. William A. Tidwell, Jr. is nominated as the ORE representative to the committee.

/s/

THEODORE BABBITT

Assistant Director for Operations

27 October 1948

Chief, ICAPS

Transliteration and Standardization
of Spelling of Foreign Personal Names

Reference : Answering your memo of October 25
on the above subject

1. Mr. MacCarthy of ICAPS, who is currently handling a proposal about a translation project, would like to attend early meetings about the standardization of foreign personal names while firming up CIA's position on this subject.

2. When the CIA position is established, it is thought that ICAPS should then take up this matter with the IAC members in an endeavor to arrive at a more all-inclusive agreement on this subject, than just State's Biographic Information Division and FBIB.

3. Another thought has occurred about list. Has it been furnished to SCAP for its use and the use of the XXIV Corps?

STAT

/s/

PRESCOTT CHILDS

CONFIDENTIAL

25 Oct 48

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, ICAPB
Asst. Director for Collection and Discrimination
Asst. Director for Reports and Estimates
Asst. Director for Special Operations

SUBJECT: Transliteration and Standardization of Spelling of Foreign Personal Names

1. The current lack of uniformity in the transliteration of the names of individuals from certain foreign languages into English leads to serious inaccuracies in the collection and evaluation of intelligence information. The problem is particularly acute in regard to the rendition into English of personal names from the Slavic, Far Eastern, Near Eastern, and other languages, which have different systems of characters, scripts, alphabets etc. Standardization of transliteration and spelling of such foreign place names is being established by the U. S. Board of Geographic Names, but no comparable governmental unit exists for personal names.

2. It is obvious that accurate biographic intelligence depends upon the identification of individuals with their correct names, the filing of all information on one individual under one name, and the standardization of names for the use of reporting and collecting agencies. The attached memorandum from the Chief, Biographic Information Division, Department of State to the Chief, Foreign Broadcast Information Branch, CIA, is a representative example of the difficulties which arise almost daily in this connection.

3. The primary concern of biographic intelligence units with the standardization of personal names is recognized. It is, however, of vital interest to translating agencies, such as Foreign Documents Branch, where it constitutes a major operating problem for both linguists and editors. The dominant interest of Foreign Broadcast Information Branch, which is not only one of the chief sources of biographic information, but also has the additional problem of rendering foreign names from their phonetic equivalents (as heard over the air) is indicated by the attached. Each of the above branches has organized reference systems for intra-branch use, which work closely with other biographic information units, but they are inadequate to deal with the situation.

4. In view of this lack of uniformity which occurs even within CIA, in the publications and reports of various offices and branches, it is suggested that a committee be formed to consider the problem from the

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

points of view of this agency. The interest of other IAC members in the general subject and in eventual proposals for the establishment of an inter-agency board or some other method of improving the situation is clearly apparent. The problem is nevertheless so complex and has so many technical and specialized aspects that it is thought preferable to confine the preliminary discussion to the working level within CIA.

5. Request your consent and, if this proposal is considered favorably, the nomination of representatives from the appropriate branches of your office to serve on such a committee.

GEORGE O. CARLY
Assistant Director for Operations

Encl:
None

LAD/ear

cc: OO - 2 ✓
ICAPS - 1
OCD - 1
CIE - 1
OSO - 1
FDB - 1
FBIB - 1

CONFIDENTIAL