IFLA Cataloguing Section

Names of Persons - Chinese Names

Language in English: Chinese

Language name in official language(s): 汉语 or 中文 or 漢語

Last updated: August 2020

Chinese Names in Mainland China

Modern Chinese names consist of a surname, which is usually monosyllabic, followed by a given name, which is nearly always mono- or disyllabic. Chinese surnames are patrilineal, passed from father to children. Women do not normally change their surnames upon marriage, except in places with more Western influences such as Hong Kong.

Although there are currently over 6,000 Chinese surnames in use in China, the colloquial expression for the Chinese people in the Bǎijiāxìng (百家姓) "Hundred Family Surnames" still makes up about 85% of Chinese citizen. Wang (王), Li (李), Zhang (张), Liu (刘) and Chen (陈) are the top five surnames. In China, full names are usually 2 - 4 words long. Among them, three character names account for 84.3%, two character names account for 14.0%, four character names account for 0.7%, and other number names account for 1.0%[1]. Most commonly occurring Chinese family names have only one character; however, about twenty double-character family names are used as well. These include Sima (司马), Zhuge (诸葛), Ouyang (欧阳), occasionally Romanized as O'Young, suggesting an Irish origin to English-speakers, and Situ (or Sito 司徒). There are family names with three or more characters, but those are not ethnically Han Chinese. For example, Aixinjueluo (爱新觉罗, also Romanized from the Manchu language as Aisin Gioro), was the family name of the Manchu royal family of the Qing dynasty.

In Mainland China, Chinese names have been Romanized using the Hanyu Pinyin system since 1958. Proper use of Pinyin Romanization means treating the surname and given name as precisely two separate words with no spaces between the letters of multiple characters. For example, "王秀英" is properly rendered either with its tone marks as

---

[1] https://www.mps.gov.cn/n2254314/n6409334/c6874817/content.html

"Wáng Xiùyīng" or without as "Wang Xiuying", but should not be written as "Wang Xiu Ying", "Wang XiuYing", "Wangxiuying", and so on. In the rare cases where a surname consists of more than one character, it too should be written as a unit: "Sima Qian", not "Si Ma Qian" or "Si Maqian".

NAME ELEMENTS

Elements normally forming part of a name

Element	Type	Examples	
1. Family name	Simple, usually one character	李 王 张	Li Wang Zhang
	Compound, usually two characters	司马 诸葛 欧阳	Sima, Zhuge, Ouyang
2. Given name	Usually one or two characters	梅 伟 强国 秀英	Mei Wei Qiangguo Xiuying
3. Pen name	Whole name	莫言 老舍	Mo Yan Lao She
Important Notes: a) In modern Mainland China, wholly Chinese names are written as family name followed by given name. The surname and given name are treated as precisely two separate words with no spaces between the letters of multiple characters.		王刚 张国梁	Wang Gang Zhang Guoliang
b) The names of some ethnic minorities, such as Tibetan, Mongolian, only the given name without family name.		斯琴格日乐 才旦卓玛	Siqingerile Caidanzhuoma
c) Sometimes the Romanized Chinese names are written in reverse order of the names in Chinese characters, i.e. given names followed by family names.		王红 张建国 李玲	Hong Wang Jianguo Zhang, Ling Li

Additional elements to names

Element	Use	Examples	
1. Royal title	Dynastic name followed by temple name	秦始皇 唐高宗 元世祖	Qin Shihuang Tang Gaozong Yuan Shizu
2. Religious title	"释" (Shi, or sometimes 法師"Fa shi, are the most common) as surname followed by a given name.	释虚云 释永信	Shi Xuyun Shi Yongxin

ORDER OF ELEMENTS IN CATALOGUE HEADINGS

General rule

Type of name	Entry elements	Examples	
1. Name consists of family name and given name	Family name and given name	张伟 王秀英 欧阳文彬	Zhang Wei Wang Xiuying Ouyang Wenbin
2. Pen name	Whole name	冰心 巴金	Bing Xin Ba Jin
3. Royal name	Dynastic name followed by temple name	明太祖 唐太宗	Ming Taizu Tang Taizong
4. Religious name	Religious title (for instance, "shi"(释)) followed by a given name	释昌恩 释大愿	Shi Chang'en Shi Dayuan

National cataloguing code

Chinese Bibliographical Cataloguing Rules, 2nd Edition

Transliteration schemes used

In general, people who are of Chinese Mainland descent will have both their surnames and given names in Hanyu Pinyin.

National authority file of names

Chinese Name Authority Joint Database Search System
http://cccna.org/databases.htm

Authority for information provided

National Library of China (NLC)
Online Library Cataloging Center

= = =

Checked and approved by:

Wang Yanqiao & Wang Yang, NLC

20 August 2020.

Chinese Names in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

This entry covers Chinese usage in Hong Kong where **Cantonese** dialect is spoken. The Romanization of this dialect differs from Putonghua (普通話), also known as Guoyu (國語) which is spoken in Mainland China. Whilst Romanized names are given in this entry, there is a general practice to include, in one position or another, the name in the original script as is done in the catalogues of many libraries in Hong Kong for authors of books written in Chinese. It is recommended that the names of personal authors should be Romanized in the form preferred by the author as is usually indicated by the usage on the title page of his or her works in a Western language. In cases of several Romanized forms appearing in different works, reference sources should be consulted to determine the best known form. When a Cantonese Romanization is used, reference is always made from the standard Pinyin Romanization, as well as any other variants, which may be sought. In case the Romanized form of an author's name is not available in the resources, Romanize the name in Pinyin.

NAME ELEMENTS

Elements normally forming part of a name

Element	Type	Names in Chinese	Romanized examples
1. Family name	Simple, usually one Chinese character	陳 黎 林 黃	Chan Lai Lam Wong
	Compound, usually two Chinese characters which may or may not be hyphenated or written as one word	歐陽 司馬 司徒	Au-Yeung Sze Ma Szeto
2. Personal name	Usually two Chinese characters which may be hyphenated, but sometimes one	國勇 兆倫 天	Kwok-Yung Shiu Lun Tin

3. Additional forename	Usually one or more of Western origin or equivalent		William Leusana
Important notes:		*Names in Chinese*	*Romanized examples*
In Hong Kong, Chinese names are written as family name followed by personal name.		李漢齡 任詠華	Lee Hon-ling Yam Wing Wah
However, Hong Kong Chinese writing in Western languages, and Chinese living in other countries, frequently reverse this order.		李漢齡 任詠華	Hon-ling Lee Wing Wah Yam
When a Western additional name is used within a name, its position depends on the person's preference,		李漢齡	Henry Hon-ling Lee Henry Lee Hon-ling Hon-ling Henry Lee Lee Henry Hon-ling Lee Hon-ling Henry
Comma may even be used as in Western countries and publications.		李漢齡	Lee Hon-ling, Henry

Additional elements to names

Element	Use	Names in Chinese	Romanized examples
1. Religious title	Normally after the personal name	常霖法師	Changlin **fa shi**
	Some consider "Sik" or "Shi" (釋) as surname	釋衍德 釋本有	Sik Hin Tak Shi Benyou

ORDER OF ELEMENTS IN CATALOGUE HEADINGS

General rule

Type of name	*Entry elements*	*Headings in Chinese*	*Romanized headings*
1. Simple and compound family name	Family name first, Chinese personal name and Western additional name should be given in the order found in the source of information	歐陽健正 陳志霖 梁朝偉 黃慧貞 吳雅珊	Au-Yeung, Kin-ching Chan, Chi Lam Leung, Tony Chiu Wai (Name appears in source of information as: Tony Leung Chiu Wai) Wong, Wai-Ching Angela (Name appears in source of information: Wai-Ching Angela Wong) Ng, Eva N.S.
2. Name of married woman	Husband's family name followed by maiden name and personal name	陳曾建樂 王馬熙純	Chan Tsang, Kin-lok Wang Ma, Xichun
	Or use husband's family name only	李曾超群	Lee, Maria
3. Religious name	Religious personal name, followed by religious title (for instance, "Fa shi" (法師)) Religious title ("Sik" or "Shi" (釋)) as surname followed by a given name	常霖 (Variant Access Point: 常霖，法師) 釋本有	Changlin (Variant Access Point: Changlin, Fa shi) Shi, Benyou

National cataloguing code

RDA: resource description and access

Romanization schemes in use

Modern standard Chinese (Putonghua or Guoyu):

中国社会科学院. 语言研究所. 词典编辑室. *现代汉语词典* (第 7 版). 北京 : 商務印书馆, 2016.

ALA-LC Romanization. Chinese, 2011
(https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/chinese.pdf)

Authority for information provided

Hong Kong Library Association in collaboration with Bibliographic Services Committee of the Joint University Librarians Advisory Committee (JULAC)

= = =

Checked and approved by:

Cheng, Po Ying Sidney, Bibliographic Services Committee of the Joint University Librarians Advisory Committee (JULAC)

Tam, Man Lik Owen, Hong Kong Library Association

21 July 2020

Chinese Names in the Macao Special Administrative Region

This entry covers Chinese usage in Macao, where the **Cantonese** dialect is spoken. The Romanization of this dialect in Macao for names differs from the Mandarin (Romanized and pronounced by following Hanyu Pinyin) or the Cantonese in Hong Kong. In accordance with Macao local law Article 2 of DL No. 88/85/M dated 26 September 1985, the use of Romanization in official documents in Macao shall follow the *The Syllabary for Coding and Cantonese Romanization*. Please refer to https://bo.io.gov.mo/bo/i/85/40/declei88_cn.asp#88 for details and the Syllabary. Some exceptions could be found, such as the Romanization "Wong" for the family name 黃 or 王 in the Syllabary is actually used as "Vong" instead in most of the cases for people born in Macao.

Meanwhile, it is also recommended that the name of a person should be Romanized in the form preferred by the relevant person, as indicated in his/her predominant works published in the Western language. In some cases, Chinese names in Macao are Romanized by following the Wade-Giles Romanization or Hanyu Pinyin. Other variants may also be found in Macao.

Native-born Portuguese people (so called "Macanese") or people mixed Chinese and Portuguese in Macao usually has official names in both Chinese and Portuguese. For example: *Henrique de Senna Fernandes* (also named as 飛歷奇 in Chinese), *Raimundo Arrais do Rosário* (named also as 羅立文).

NAME ELEMENTS

Elements normally forming part of a name

Element	Type	Examples	
1. Family name	Simple, usually one character	姚 李 梁 潘 王	Iu Lei Leong Pun Vong
	Compound, usually two characters in two words	歐陽 司徒	Ao Ieong Si Tou

2. Given name	Usually two characters but sometimes one	嘉欣 曉晴 國強 明	Ka Ian Hio Cheng Kuok Keong Meng
3. Additional forename	Usually one word of Western origin	Jacky Paulo Diona Suki	
Important notes: a) In Macao, entire Chinese names are written as family names followed by given names.		王曉晴 歐陽國強 李明	Vong Hio Cheng Ao Ieong Kuok Keong Lei Meng
b) Sometimes the Romanized Chinese names are written in reverse order of the names in Chinese characters, i.e. given names followed by family names.		Hio Cheng Vong Kuok Keong Ao Ieong Meng Lei	
c) When a Western forename is used with a name, its position varies. Sometimes it is used with a comma.		Paulo Ao Ieong Kuok Keong Paulo Kuok Keong Ao Ieong Kuok Keong Paulo Ao Ieong Ao Ieong Kuok Keong, Paulo	

Additional elements to names

Element	*Use*	*Examples*	
1. Royal title	Dynastic name followed by temple name	宋高宗	Song Gaozong
2. Religious title	Religious given name	釋滿蓮	Shi Manlian

ORDER OF ELEMENTS IN CATALOGUE HEADINGS

General rule

Type of name	*Entry element*	*Examples*
1. Name consisting of family name and given name	Family name	Lei, Meng Ao Ieong, Kuok Keong Paulo Vong, Hio Cheng Venus Vong, Venus Hio Cheng

2. Royal name	Dynastic name followed by temple name	Song Gaozong, Emperor of China *Note*: It is necessary to make reference from the personal name (Zhao, Gou).
3. Religious name	Religious personal name, followed by religious title (for instance, "Fa shi" (法師))	Daozheng, Fa Shi
	Religious title ("Sik" or "Shi" (釋)) as surname followed by a given name	Shi, Manlian

National cataloguing code

RDA toolkit : resource description and access. Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 2010-

Transliteration schemes used

The Syllabary for Coding and Cantonese Romanization. Macau: Imprensa Oficial de Macau, 1985. https://images.io.gov.mo/bo/i/85/40/dl-88-1985-an.pdf

中文羅馬拼音與字彙. 台北市：梁津南, 1982.

A Chinese-English dictionary by Herbert A. Giles. 2nd ed. rev. and enl. Shanghai, Kelly & Walsh, 1912.

Authority for information provided

Macau Library and Information Management Association (MLIMA)
The University of Macau Library

= = =

Checked and approved by:

Raymond Wong & Priscilla Pun, MLIMA

20 August 2020