Note on Transliterations and Place-Names

Chinese terms and names are given in standard pinyin and are preceded by “Ch.” if both Tibetan and Chinese terms are being used and there is a possibility of confusion within a chapter. For Tibetan, the dramatic differences in regional pronunciation, on the one hand, and the indecipherability of the Wylie transliteration system for those who do not read Tibetan, on the other, create difficulties. Upon first usage of a term, we generally give a simplified rendering of the Central Tibetan dialect pronunciation (preceded by “Tib.”) followed by the Wylie transliteration (preceded by “Wyl.”). Thus, for example, the term for “territorial deity generally abiding within mountains” is given as “Tib. zhidak” (the Central Tibetan pronunciation), even though the pronunciation is closer to reda in northwest Yunnan. In Wylie, it is written gzhi bdag.

For towns, counties, and prefectures, we use Chinese or Tibetan names depending on what is in more common use, for example, Zhongdian (the Chinese name) rather than Gyalthang (Tibetan), but Rebgong (Tibetan) rather than Tongren (Chinese).