

When Dr. Sven Hedin was beginning to print the first volume of this work, *Scientific Results of a Journey in Central Asia 1899—1902*, he, acting upon the advice of Dr. E. Dahlgren of Stockholm, applied to me to know if I could furnish him with a consistent system of orthography to be used in the spelling of the place-names of Central Asia. Thereupon I drew up briefly certain suggestions to that end, which had the good fortune to meet with Dr. Hedin's approval. In drafting my proposals, I started from the following fundamental principles:

*A system of spelling that is intended to be used in a non-philological work ought to be*

- I. *Consistent;*
- II. *So clear that it cannot possibly be misunderstood;*
- III. *Represented exclusively by the ordinary letters of the Latin alphabet.*

A priori everybody would without hesitation agree to these fundamental principles; but when it comes to deducing conclusions from them, it may very readily happen that doubts arise. I feel it incumbent upon me therefore to set forth certain of these conclusions, and to discuss them more in detail in regard to the new points of view which the discussion itself may possibly bring to light.

#### I. THE SYSTEM OUGHT TO BE CONSISTENT.

If a word contains the sound which in English is written *sh* in *sheep*, then it ought not in the same book to be written sometimes in that way and at other times in another way; but *one* uniform spelling of that particular sound ought to be decided upon and adhered to throughout, no matter whether the form chosen be the English *sh*, the German *sch*, the French *ch*, the Swedish *sj*, the Italian *sci*, the Bohemian *š*, the Polish *sz*, the Hungarian *s*, or any other form. My claim to consistency in this respect will be perfectly obvious to everybody. But the next point is not so easy, namely the agreement as to the particular sign which shall be employed to represent this sound, a sign that ought to be invariably used by all scientific writers in their scientific works. Let me put the statement in a more general form:

*Scientific workers of different nations ought to endeavour to employ as far as possible in their scientific works the same uniform international method of writing place-names.*

When an Italian, an English, or a Swedish traveller writes an account of his travels that is intended to be read by the broad masses of the people, then he may (and indeed sometimes ought to) use the method of spelling which his readers will readily understand, just as he ought to employ the system of measurement, the thermometrical scale, and so forth, that are usually employed in his own country; but if the same traveller publishes a scientific work dealing with his journey, then in the interests of international science, he ought no longer to consider national predilections. Everybody who has studied the geographical literature of different countries knows how great are the difficulties which lie in the way of a comparison and understanding of the different systems of orthography that are employed in different languages. These difficulties need not exist, and must be gradually eliminated.