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Professor Roman Sławiński
(1932–2014)

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Introduction

Dear Readers!

We are presenting you yet another, already the 28th, issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* devoted to the countries and culture of Asia. Over the years of its activity the journal started to be issued in English and it has hosted on its pages many eminent experts on Asia, yet still it remained faithful to its formula which was proposed thirty years ago by Professor Roman Sławiński, the founder of the journal and its permanent editor in chief. This formula stipulated that the Asian cultures should present themselves in the journal and talk directly with their own voice. The idea was both: to include in the group of authors and editors of the magazine scientists who grew up in Asian cultures, as well as to publish materials based on or referring to the texts – philosophical, linguistic, historical, sociological, religious studies or political studies – which were created by the Asian culture. These could be proper names as an object of linguistic research, religious texts, political documents, ideological declarations, but also biographical materials, historiographical elaborations, experience of meeting other cultures and mutual acculturation phenomenon resulting from the relations.

Professor Roman Sławiński left us in November 2014. The more time passes from his death, the more I feel his absence and the more I realize how unique a character he was in the world of research on China. Professor Marianne Bastid-Bruguière, a prominent French scholar from Institut de France in Paris, who met Roman Sławiński in the times of his studies in Beijing, writes about that fact. Most striking is the variety of interests and multidimensionality of research on China which he ran. He was trained as a linguist, and he knew perfectly well not only the classical language, but also many dialects. There was even a time it was appreciated by Mao Zedong himself. Roman Sławiński was interpreting a conversation of the Chinese leader with the Polish state authorities. During the conversation Mao Zedong changed as usual from the classical language to the dialect of Hunan province, which was his place of origin. When he realized he was using the dialect, he noticed that it was not a slightest problem for the interpreter to understand his statements. Then he asked: „Who is that young man who understands the Hunan dialect?” It was known that many Chinese from the surroundings of the Chairman did not understand him when he spoke in the native dialect. It so happened, that Roman Sławiński knew the dialect.

He was interested not only in the language. History, politics, culture as well as China's economy were the subject of his interest and research. His views, opinions and insights on these matters were the inspiration for many researchers of China, some of which are the authors of the materials contained in this issue. Of the many research interests of Professor Sławiński in recent years at least two may be mentioned. First one became Confucianism, especially its latest colours and shades. Professor persistently sought and discovered them in the texts of Chinese scientists, government documents, archives and everyday citizens of China. In this regard he was a dedicated explorer and a keen observer. Even the slightest detail was important to him. Minor personnel changes on the bureaucratic ladder were important for the formation

of general conclusions. From my conversations with him, I got the impression that he was rather skeptical about the possibility of a revival of Confucianism under the supervision of the communist authorities. So he concluded after examining many texts of the so-called new wave of Confucianism in China. His works on the latest Chinese historiography constitute an invaluable contribution to global research on contemporary China. His second passion was the research on the minorities of China Southern. The field research among the peoples of Miao and Tujia that he ran and in which I had the opportunity to participate assumed getting to know the nature of change in the cultural identity of these minorities in the era of globalization and accelerated socio-economic transformation in China. These studies had not been completed, and we can only hope that one of the students of Professor will continue them in the near future.

The arrangement of contents offered to you in the 28th issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* refers to the research passions of Professor Sławiński. The first article, written by Stanisław Tokarski – Indologist and long-time associate of Professor Sławiński, concerns dialogue between the East and the West and the possibility of mutual understanding and agreement. Understanding another culture is also the ability to read the symbols contained in the letters and that aspect of the intercultural dialogue interested Professor Sławiński in particular. The question of so-called Asian values – presented in the articles written by Adam Jelonek, Adam Raszewski, Artur Kościański and Larisa Zabrowskaia – was very close to Professor Sławiński and he dealt with it for many years as part of his research on the so-called new Confucianism. The issue of Chinese migration in the world was also in the interests of Professor – mainly in the context of global economic and social phenomena. This part of the research on China is presented in the article on the Chinese migration to France by Nicolas Levi. The issue of Chinese language was obviously important for Professor Sławiński as a linguist and he always welcomed in the columns of *Acta* the authors writing about language and linguistic issues. This area of research is presented in the current issue in the article on Chinese names written by Irena Kałużyńska. On the other hand, the artistic part of the culture is referred to in the articles by Izabella Łabędzka, Lidia Kasarełło, Ewa Chmielowska, Fu-sheng Shih and Diana Wolańska. The first three of these articles relate to Taiwan, where Professor conducted research for many years which resulted among others in a monograph *History of Taiwan*. The further three articles penned by Waldemar Dziak, Iwona Grabowska-Lipińska and Anna Mrozek-Dumanowska refer to the political sphere. Political sphere is inextricably linked with the ideology which was also the case of China. Confucianism and the new Confucianism emerged and developed in the shadow of the emperors, presidents and chairmen of the Chinese Communist Party. Researching them without the analysis of the political scene was not possible. The part of articles is closed by two texts unrelated with China, but with the Middle East. Their authors – Dorota Rudnicka-Kassem and Marcin Styszyński present materials based on the Middle Eastern sources and thus relate to the traditions of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*. The issue is closed by the report from field research in southern China by Professor Sławiński and me. For me it was a unique opportunity to get to know at least a little piece of China – a unique one, because my guide was Professor Sławiński – such a great scholar and such a seasoned expert on Asia.

I would like to thank the authors – students, colleagues and friends – for participation in the preparation of the issue, and the Directorate of the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences for the possibility to dedicate the anniversary issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* to Professor Sławiński.

Jerzy Zdanowski

IRENA KAŁUŻYŃSKA

Chinese Naming – Substitution by Homophones

Abstract

The paper deals with the method of the substitution by homophones, that is extensively used in Chinese onomastic fields, like toponymy or anthroponymy. The method of the substitution by homophones is mainly aimed at reshaping already existing names by replacing their previous form, for some reasons unwanted. However, it is also broadly applied to create new names by using words which are homophonic with the words denoting the idea they symbolize. The paper presents some various reasons and aims of the use of the method in the field of Chinese geographical names (place names, toponyms), and these are: personal name taboo, unwanted place names, simplification of the Chinese writing system, adaptation of foreign geographical names. The paper also analyses the use of the method in the field of Chinese personal names (anthroponyms), and these are: creation of so-called good Chinese names, dealing with some troublesome Chinese surnames, creating of Chinese female counter-commendatory names and Chinese given names as equivalents of foreign given names.

Key words: substitution by homophones, Chinese homophonic words, Chinese reshaping of names, Chinese toponyms and anthroponyms resulting from the method of the substitution by homophones

Introduction

There are many Chinese proper names (place names, personal names and others) making use of or resulting from the method of substitution by homophones, in Chinese generally termed *tóngyīnzì dàitī* 同音字代替¹, or *xiéyīn zhuǎnyì biànhuà* 谐音转义变化.² In the case of proper names some other terms for the substitution of homophones occur, and these are, for example, *yǐ yīn gēngmíngfǎ* 以音更名法 ‘the method of phonetic changing of names’,³ or *xiéyīn huàn míng*

¹ Wang Wenzhou 王文周, ‘Diming zhuanyongzi de xiangsi tongyinzhi daiti’ 地名专用字的相似同音字代替 [Substitution by Homophones of the Characters Words for the Special Toponymic Use], *Xinyang Shifan Xueyuan Xuebao* 信阳师范学院学报 [Scientific Bulletin of Xinyang Teachers’ College], No. 3, 1984, p.110.

² Liu Jianbin 刘建斌, ‘Beijing yixie jiexiang mingcheng de xieyin zhuanyi bianhua’ 北京一些街巷名称的谐音转义变化 [Change of Meaning by Substitution by Homophones in Street Names in Beijing], *Diming zhishi* 地名知识 [Toponymic Knowledge], No. 5, 1982, p. 25.

³ Qin Ying 秦樱, ‘Lüelun Mingdai diming de geng, ming ming’ 略论明代的更,命名 [Outline of names renamed or established during the Ming Dynasty], *Diming zhishi* 地名知识 [Toponymic Knowledge], No. 1, 1980, p. 3.

谐音换名 ‘a changing of names by homophones’.⁴ The method of substitution by homophones is mainly used in order to reshape already existing names by replacing their previous form, which for some reasons is unwanted. However, it is also broadly applied to create new names by using words which are homophonic with the words denoting the idea they symbolize.⁵

The homophonic nature of the Chinese language

Every language contains a certain amount of homophones, i.e. words pronounced alike but spelt/written differently and bearing different meanings. The Chinese language has long contained a considerable amount of homophones, termed *tóngyīnyìyìcí* 同音异义词, *tóngyīnyìxíngcí* 同音异形词,⁶ *tóngyīnyìzì* 同音异字,⁷ or *xiéyīn* 谐音.⁸ Nowadays, one can consider that homophony is pervasive in Chinese. This situation results from two main factors: the nature of the Chinese language and the historical sound changes of the Chinese spoken language, i.e. a strong tendency to sound simplification in the evolution of the language.

Certain major characteristics of the Chinese language are responsible for the existence of a limited amount of distinct syllables and thus the abundance of homophones. These main characteristics are the monosyllabic, isolating, non-inflectional nature of the Chinese language, its phonological system of a limited number of initials and endings of syllables, the limited number of its tonal categories, and thus the limited number of possible syllables.

In written Chinese, a character or grapheme, *zì* 字, is the linguistic equivalent of a monosyllabic morpheme/word. As a morpho-syllabic writing system, the Chinese graphemic structure maps onto meaningful morphemes in the spoken language. Thus, a character has a more direct association with its meaning, while its association with phonology is rather arbitrary and only defined over the character at the syllable level.

In ‘Middle’ Chinese (equating approximately to the 6th century) there were four tones, 36 initials and 293 endings, which provided 1,033 possible combinations of the initials and finals, which – multiplied by four tones – yielded 4,132 possible syllables. *Qieyun* 切韵, a pronunciation dictionary compiled in AD 601, contained about 12,000 characters, which means that on average each character/word had 3 homophones. In fact, cases are found where up to 47 characters/words share the same pronunciation.⁹

⁴ Zhang Shaoqi 张绍麒, ‘Diming yanbian zhong de xieyin huanming’ 地名演变中的谐音换名 [Homophonic changes in the development of place names], *Diming zhishi* 地名知识 [Toponymic Knowledge], No. 4, 1988, p. 3.

⁵ I. Kałużyńska, *Contemporary Chinese Place Names. Names of Administrative Divisions at County and City Level*, Bern, Berlin, Brussels, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Vienna: Peter Lang AG, *Schweizer Asiatische Studien*, Monographien, Vol. 33, 2002, pp. 222–225; I. Kałużyńska, *Chinese Female Namings. Past and Present*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo AGADE, 2008, pp. 37–38.

⁶ R.R.K. Hartman, F.C. Stork, *Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, London 1972, Chinese translation: *Yuyan yu yuyanxue cidian* 语言与语言学词典, Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 1981.

⁷ Qin Ying, ‘Lüelun Mingdai diming de geng, ming ming...’, p. 3.

⁸ Liu Jianbin 刘建斌, ‘Beijing yixie jiexiang mingcheng de xieyin zhuanhua’ 北京一些街巷名称的谐音转义变化 [Change of Meaning by Substitution by Homophones in Street Names in Beijing], *Diming zhishi* 地名知识 [Toponymic Knowledge], No. 5, 1982, p. 25; Ren Chuanxing 任传兴, ‘Tantan diming de yanbian’ 谈谈地名的演变 [Talking About the Evolution of Place Names], *Diming zhishi* 地名知识 [Toponymic Knowledge], No. 1, 1984, p.12; Zhang Shaoqi, ‘Diming yanbianzhong de xieyin huanming...’, p. 3.

⁹ M.M.Y. Sung, ‘Chinese Language and Culture: A Study of Homonyms, Lucky Words and Taboos’, *Journal of Chinese Linguistics*, No. 7, 1979, p. 16.

As the Middle Chinese language already possessed an inconvenient number of homophones, the further simplification of sounds aggravated the difficulty level even further. In Modern Standard Chinese there are four tones, 21 initials and 35 endings. The initials and endings have 415 possible combinations that multiplied by four tones yield 1,660 possible syllables. According to *Xin Xiandai Hanyu Cidian* 新现代汉语词典 (The New Dictionary of the Modern Chinese Language), published in 1992,¹⁰ which includes about 13,000 characters, every character/morpheme/word can have about eight homophones. However, these characters/morphemes/words are not uniformly distributed among the syllables, therefore the number of homophones in a series is sometimes smaller, sometimes larger. One can find up to 70 characters/words sharing the same pronunciation. In comparison, the English language has many times more syllables, estimated to be around 158,000.¹¹

The great number of homophones is harmful to the intelligibility of the Chinese spoken language, and especially with proper names as mainly monosyllabic or bisyllabic forms occurring out of context. Therefore, Chinese names can fully reveal their intended meaning or meanings when they are written down. The spoken form of a name can be misunderstood or misconstrued, due to the abundance of homophones in the Chinese language and the variety of Chinese dialects and languages. However, the Chinese symbolic (and not strictly phonetic) writing distinguishes to the eye what is homophonous to the ear. The written form distinguishes the morpheme/word out of several homophonous ones, because almost every single morpheme/word has its own character indicating the meaning of the word without direct reference to the pronunciation or to the subsequent changes in the pronunciation. For example, there are 14 Chinese morphemes/words spelt *yī*, all having various meanings and written in different characters: 一, 衣, 伊, 医, 依, 咿, 铍, 猗, 揖, 壹, 漪, 噫, 繫, 黟.¹²

The pervasive homophony of the Chinese spoken language plays, however, an important role in the people's naming behaviour and daily activities. The Chinese commonly apply the semantic ambiguity of homophones in expressing their desires of happiness, wealth, proliferation of male children and so on by using words which are homophonic with the words denoting the idea they symbolize, and in expressing their fear of ill omens by avoiding saying words which happen to share the same pronunciation as words for ill omens, bad things or unfortunate situations.

Homophones and the substitution by homophones in the field of Chinese geographical names (place names, toponyms)

The homophones have played a very important role in the field of Chinese geographical names. The substitution by homophones has been treated as a very convenient means for changing already existing names. This kind of substitution preserved only the sound of the name, blurred its etymological and semantic clarity, and resulted in a different way of writing the name by using a different character or characters.¹³

¹⁰ *Xin Xiandai Hanyu Cidian* 新现代汉语词典 [A New Dictionary of Modern Chinese Language], Haikou: Hainan Chubanshe, 1992.

¹¹ Otto Jespersen, 'Monosyllabism in English: Biennial Lecture on English Philology', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, London: British Academy, Vol. 14, 1930, p. 347.

¹² *Han-Ying cidian* 汉英词典 [A Chinese-English Dictionary], Beijing: Waiyu Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu Chubanshe, 1995.

¹³ I. Kałużyńska, *Contemporary...*, pp. 220–237.

Chinese scholars usually treat all place names resulting from changes by substitution by homophones, as mainly alterations of the written form of the former toponyms. However, some divisions of Chinese place names have a separate group for such names, namely “place names originated as homophones”, *yuán yú xiéshēng de dì míng* 源于谐声的地名.¹⁴

In China changes of already existing place names were largely a matter of custom, and sometimes it is almost impossible to ascertain the real reasons for such changes. However, as the main reasons for changing toponyms are considered here: (1) taboos concerning personal names; (2) efforts to eliminate some reminiscences of previous times deemed unpleasant or undesirable from a political or social point of view; (3) efforts to simplify Chinese writing.¹⁵

Chinese geographical names as equivalents of foreign geographical names can also be treated as specific forms of the substitution by homophones. Foreign names, having their pronunciation and meaning, are usually divided into syllables, and each syllable is adapted as a Chinese morpheme/word of a homophonous or similar pronunciation. The meaning of Chinese equivalents of foreign geographical names usually have nothing in common with their originals.

(a) Personal name taboos and substitution by homophones

The phenomenon of the personal name taboo, *bìhuì* 避讳 or *bìjì* 避忌, i.e. an avoidance of using the private name, *míng* 名, of a ruler, an elder or one of higher rank in speech and writing, caused these words and characters used for writing down the sacred private names to be avoided, so that the private names could not be used in inauspicious circumstances. If these particular characters/words were used for other proper names or appellatives, they had to be substituted by other characters/words. It was a quite common practice that these new characters/words were homophones of the original ones.¹⁶

The method of the substitution of a taboo character by another one which was used for a homophonous or nearly homophonous word, preserved the original pronunciation of the toponym, but blurred its etymological clarity and resulted in its different written form. For example, during the reign of the emperor Taizong (976–997) of the Song Dynasty (960–1279), as the emperor’s private name was Guāngyì 光义, there were executed changes of the following names:¹⁷

- Yìxìng Xiàn 义兴县 ‘Justice and Prosperity County’ into Yíxìng Xiàn 宜兴县 ‘Adequacy and Prosperity County’, now in the Jiangsu Province;
- Yìzhāng Xiàn 义章县 ‘Justice and Order County’ into Yízhāng Xiàn 宜章县 ‘Adequacy and Order County’, now in the Hunan Province;
- Xìnyì Xiàn 信义县 ‘Confidence and Justice County’ into Xìnyí Xiàn 信宜县 ‘Confidence and Adequacy County’, now in the Guangdong Province.

¹⁴ Rong Rong 容榕, ‘Qiantan Taiwan de diming’ 浅谈台湾的地名 [A Preliminary Discussion on Taiwan Place Names], *Diming zhishi* 地名知识 [Toponymic Knowledge], No. 3, 1984, p. 10.

¹⁵ I. Kałużyńska, ‘The Substitution by Homophones in Chinese Geographical Names’, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, Vol. 50, z. 1, 1995, p. 126.

¹⁶ I. Sulikowska, ‘Z zagadnień toponomastyki chińskiej: Zjawisko tabu a nazwy geograficzne. Nazwy er panowania cesarzy w nazewnictwie geograficznym’ [Chinese Toponymic Issues: Taboo and Geographical Names. Names of Imperial Eras in Geographical Names], *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, Vol. 142, No. 2, 1987, pp. 175–182; Kałużyńska, ‘The Substitution...’, p. 128–129; Idem, *Contemporary...*, pp. 145–147, 229–232.

¹⁷ Kałużyńska, ‘The Substitution...’, pp. 128–129.

Since the Jin Dynasty (265–420) it had been necessary to eliminate from Chinese geographical names not only characters/words that were identical with the banned ones, but also characters used for words homophonous or similar in sound to the taboo ones. For example, during the reign of the emperor Taizu (960–976) of the Song Dynasty, as the private name of his grandfather was Jing 镜, there was performed the following change of the name:¹⁸

Shíjìng Xiàn 石镜县 ‘Stone Mirror County’ into Shízhào Xiàn 石照县 ‘Stone Reflect County’, now Héchuān Xiàn 合川县 in the Sichuan Province.

In the cases such as the aforementioned one, the method of substitution by homophones was of course not applicable whilst eliminating characters for words homophonous to the forbidden ones. These characters were substituted by characters different in form, pronunciation and meaning or by characters used for synonymous words.

The personal name taboo, which appeared at the beginning of Chinese statehood and was done away with in the Revolution of 1911, affected many fields of Chinese linguistic activity. Its traces can be seen in names of persons, places and things, as well as in the vocabulary of poetry and proverbs.

(b) The changing of unwanted place names and the substitution by homophones

Numerous changes of already existing place names in China were caused by various efforts to eliminate some reminiscences of previous reigns deemed unpleasant or undesirable from a political, administrative or social point of view. Such changes accompanied the settlement of a new dynasty or a new ruler within a dynasty, or a very significant event occurring in the given area. The changes of names could be undertaken as some efforts to eliminate duplicate place names, and they could also be a result of social reasons or changes in the mentality of Chinese society. There are a few examples of changing the names by the use of substitution by homophones. For example, at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) the Manchu ruler ordered a change of name, previously settled under the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644):

Pínglǔ Xiàn 平虏县 ‘County, where Northern Slaves Were Pacified’ into Pínglǔ Xiàn 平鲁县 ‘Calm and Common County’, now in the Shanxi Province.¹⁹

Many examples of changes of street names by the method of substitution by homophones are to be found among names of streets in Beijing (*hùtóng* 胡同 ‘small street, lane, alley’, *jiē* 街 ‘street’). Old, original names were considered not elegant enough and improper for the capital of a new China, so after the establishment of the Peoples’ Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 they have been changed. Below there are some examples of these changes:²⁰

- Shíkèlàng Hùtóng 屎壳郎胡同 ‘Dung Beetle Hutong’ into Shíkè Liàng Hùtóng 时刻亮胡同 ‘Bright Time Hutong’;
- Gǒu Wěiba Hùtóng 狗尾巴胡同 ‘Dog’s Tail Hutong’ into Gāo Yì Bó Hùtóng 高义伯胡同 ‘High Justice Earl/Uncle Hutong’;
- Lúshì Jiē 驴市街 ‘Donkey Market Street’ into Lǐshì Hùtóng 礼士胡同 ‘Ceremony Master Hutong’;
- Niúxuè Hùtóng 牛血胡同 ‘Cow’s Blood Hutong’ into Liúxué Hùtóng 留学胡同 ‘Studying Abroad Hutong’.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 126.

²⁰ Weng Li 翁立, *Beijing de hutong* 北京的胡同 [Streets of Beijing], Beijing: Beijing Yanshan Chubanshe, 1997, p. 17.

Changes of already existing names were often caused by important events occurring at those places. A good illustration of such names, as resulting from the use of the method of substitution by homophones, is the change in 1385, under the Ming Dynasty, of:

Liánchéng Xiàn 莲城县 ‘Lotus Town County’ into Liánchéng Xiàn 连城县 ‘Incorporated Town County’, now in the Fujian Province.²¹

The change was caused by the occupation of the area by peasant rebels, called *cǎokòu* 草寇 ‘grass robbers; robbers in the greenwood’. Having pacified the rebellion, the name was changed by the means of substitution by homophones and by the elimination of the radical 艹 ‘grass’ from the previous character, used for the word *lián* 莲 ‘lotus’. This was intended to mean: ‘to get rid of *cǎo*, i.e. of *cǎokòu*, the rebels’.

Amongst Chinese toponyms one can find many duplicates. This situation has resulted from the lack, in the past, of effective administration controls over place names in this great country. For example, after the foundation of the Republic of China in 1911, there were 92 duplicate names of administrative divisions at county level. Therefore, the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1914 decided to rename these duplicate toponyms. One of the methods used was the substitution by homophones. For example, the change in 1928 of the name:

Qīngyuán Xiàn 清源县 ‘Clear Stream County’, Liaoning Province, into Qīngyuán Xiàn 清原县 ‘Clear Origin County’, because there was already a Qīngyuán Xiàn 清源县 in the Shanxi Province.²²

In contemporary China there are no duplicate names of larger administrative units, however duplicates can still be found among the names of smaller administrative divisions or geographical features.

(c) Simplifying the Chinese writing system and the substitution by homophones

In China, especially after the foundation of the Peoples’ Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 there was a strong tendency to simplify Chinese writing. In the PRC, the State Council in 1956 issued “The Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters”. One of the main directions of the reform of the Chinese script was the reduction of rarely used characters/words, *shēngpìzì* 生僻字 or *piānpìzì* 偏僻字, by use of the method of substitution by homophones.

‘The List of Simplified Chinese Characters’ (*Jianhuazi zongbiao* 简化字总表), published in 1964,²³ contains an Appendix which comprised 34 names of administrative divisions of China, changed by the method of the substitution by homophones. The reformers eliminated from these names rarely used characters/words and characters/words used only in the field of geographical names, *dímìng zhuānyòngzì* 地名专用字. One can distinguish two main types of substitution.

The first type was the substitution of the eliminated character/word by another one, homophonous or nearly homophonous in sound, easy to write, but different in form and meaning. For example, the change in 1964 of the name of:

Qiányáng Xiàn 汧阳县 ‘County Situated South of the Qian Mountain’ into Qiányáng Xiàn 千阳县 ‘One Thousand Positives County’, Shanxi Province.²⁴

²¹ Kalużyńska, ‘The Substitution...’, p. 127.

²² Ibid., p. 129.

²³ *Jianhuazi zongbiao* 简化字总表 [The List of the Simplified Chinese Characters], Beijing, 1964.

²⁴ Kalużyńska, ‘The Substitution...’, p. 130.

The second type deals with the simplification of unwanted, complicated in form characters, which belonged to the category of the ‘phonetic-radical compounds’ (consisting of a phonetic part, indicating the pronunciation of the word and a significant part, the ‘radical’, referring to the meaning of the word). The simplification was performed by eliminating the radical. The radical was the only element allowed to distinguish the character from the others having the same phonetic, or consisting only of the phonetic, and used for homophonous or nearly homophonous words of various meanings. For example, the change in 1964 of the name:

Xúnyì Xiàn 柸邑县 ‘County of the Cross-beam City’ into Xúnyì Xiàn 旬邑县 ‘County of Ten-days City’, in the Shanxi Province.²⁵

The changes caused by the efforts to reform the Chinese writing system, simplified the form of some characters used to write down several place names, preserved the original pronunciation of toponyms, but also influenced their etymological meaning.

(d) The adaptation of foreign geographical names and the substitution by homophones

Foreign geographical names, as adapted to the Chinese language system, can also be treated as specific forms of the substitution by homophones. Foreign names, having their pronunciation and a kind of meaning, are usually divided into syllables, and each syllable is adapted as a Chinese morpheme/word of a homophonous or similar pronunciation. The meanings of these new names, i.e. Chinese equivalents of foreign geographical names, evidently differ from the originals. Below there are some adapted Chinese toponyms as the forms resulting from the substitution by homophones:²⁶

- Davenport – Dáwénbōtè 达文波特 (*dá* ‘to reach’, *wén* ‘civilization; culture; writing’, *bō* ‘wave’, *tè* ‘specific’);
- Fitchburg – Fēiqíbǎo 菲奇堡 (*fēi* ‘luxuriant’, *qí* ‘strange’, *bǎo* ‘fort’);
- Glasgow – Gélásīgē 格拉斯哥 (*gē* ‘standard; division’, *lā* ‘to pull’, *sī* ‘this’, *gē* ‘elder brother’);
- Gliwice – Gélìjìcǎi 格利继采 (*gē* ‘standard; division’, *lì* ‘profit’, *jì* ‘to continue’, *cǎi* ‘to pick, pluck or gather’);
- Michigan – Mìxiēgēn 密歇根 (*mì* ‘close; dense’, *xiē* ‘have a rest’, *gēn* ‘root’);
- Oranienburg – Àoláníngbǎo 奥拉宁堡 (*ào* ‘profound’, *lā* ‘to pull’, *níng* ‘calm; peaceful’, *bǎo* ‘fort’);
- Paris – Bālí 巴黎 (*bā* ‘to hope; be close to’, *lí* ‘multitude; host’);
- Seattle – Xīyǎtú 西雅图 (*xī* ‘west’, *yǎ* ‘proper; elegant’, *tú* ‘picture; map; scheme’).

Evidently the aforementioned Chinese adapted geographic names have some meaning, because all Chinese syllables/morphemes are meaningful. However, the possible meaning of adapted toponyms is practically ignored by the native speakers, and the forms are treated as simple phonetic adaptations of foreign names.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 131.

²⁶ Jin Pingtuo 靳平妥 (ed.), *Ying Han zhuanming cidian* 英汉专名词典 [English-Chinese Dictionary of Proper Names], Beijing: Waiyu Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu Chubanshe, 1990.

Homophones and the substitution by homophones in the field of Chinese personal names (anthroponyms)

The substitution by homophones in the field of Chinese personal names functions mainly as a conscious method for creating new names and sometimes, as a good means of changing already existing names.

A typical Chinese (Han nationality) personal name consists of a surname followed by a given name, so the basic pattern is ‘family name + given name’. The original standard given name, bestowed by parents in infancy, was considered private and sacred, and thus needed to be ‘tabooed’, cf. p. 82. Therefore, in the past a Chinese citizen (especially a noble Chinese male) could have a number of other names for use in different situations. Additionally, rulers and notables were granted certain names posthumously as their memorial or temple titles. In contemporary China, Chinese person usually has only one official given name, but he/she may also use other informal names, nicknames or pseudonyms.

Name formation or name giving is a process of assigning a particular word or phrase to a particular object. The most important elements of the naming process in the case of personal names in each society are: the name-givers, the person named (the bearer), the time and circumstances of the name giving, and the meaning and associations of the name. A newly born child possesses minimal individuality, so the first given name is inevitably bestowed on him/her by others (by parents or family members). As the name givers were people who usually wished the new-born well, the name of the new-born in any society was rather a culture oriented “good” one, whether chosen because of religious feelings, family pride, cultural or social conventions, fashion, or simple practicality. Other names or appellations differ in their nature and the manner in which they are given. They may be bestowed by the person himself or by his/her well-wishers, or by the community conceived as ‘non-neutral’ in its feelings towards the individual.

It is evident that given names are not treated by Chinese society as purely onymic units, solely identifying people, but rather as semantically motivated lexical units, and as those more typical for the appellative sphere of the language. For the Chinese society the semantic-functional relation between a given name and an appellative practically exists, and names still preserve their appellative content. It happens that some appellatives occurring in personal names have lost their inherent lexical meaning and presently they function as “special lexemes/characters used in proper names”. It also happens that some given names arose by the process of transonymization and for their creation, the name of a town or a province, or of a family benefactor or the surname of the bearer’s mother was chosen. However, given Chinese names are predominantly, semantically transparent and motivated, and they have lexical and associative meanings resulting from the usage of the appellatives and proper names they consist of in various linguistic functions and contexts.²⁷

The Chinese approach to names as being not only labels helpful in the identification of people, but almost tangible as ‘real facts’, has resulted in their culture-oriented desires being expressed through the deliberate formatting of their personal names. They believed that by means of the appropriate naming of a person, his constitution and fate could be improved. This belief is still alive. The specific feature of the Chinese language, i.e. a large number of homophones, makes name formation much more complicated in some respects.

²⁷ Kałużyńska, *Chinese...*, pp. 44–52.

An appropriate name, as a final product of the conscious and proper name formation process, can make use of the homophony of the language in order to have many good connotations. However, an inappropriate name, the product of the unconscious or careless name formation process, regardless its good lexical meaning, can cause unpleasant associations, which can be unfortunate for its bearer. For example, the following personal names:²⁸

Bì Yúntāo 毕云涛 (*Bì* – a surname, *Yúntāo* – the given name meaning ‘Wave of Clouds’) can unfortunately, due to the homophony of Chinese words, be associated with the homophonous word, *bìyùntào* 避孕套 ‘a condom, a contraceptive sheath’;

Zēng Táoyàn 曾桃燕 (*Zēng* – a surname, *Táoyàn* – the given name meaning ‘Peach Swallow’) is almost the same in pronunciation as the phrase *zhēn tāoyàn* 真讨厌 ‘really disgusting’;

Chén Jiǔpíng 陈久平 (*Chén* – a surname, *Jiǔpíng* – the given name meaning ‘Long peace’) is similar in pronunciation as the phrase *chéngjiǔpíng* 盛酒瓶 ‘a wine bottle’.

Thus, while creating a Chinese name it is very important to analyse all its component words and the whole name according to the possible homophonous relations with other appellatives and their collocations. Inappropriate names may be used by others to make fun of their bearers. The conscious use of the substitution by homophones as a method of creating new personal names, especially given names, can be seen in various groupings of Chinese given names. The main groups are considered here as, (1) good, meaningful personal names with the meaning expressed implicitly, (2) names improving the negative influence of one’s surname (3) counter-commendatory female given names with “male” terms, (4) Chinese equivalents of foreign names.

(a) The creation of good names and the substitution by homophones

Using homophones is considered an effective method of naming “that produces good, meaningful names”.²⁹ Naming children according to one’s values, outlook on life, aspirations and character is a commendable method in China. However, care must be taken to avoid poor taste. A good name should be refined and subtle, and the meaning should be expressed implicitly. For example the names:³⁰

Péng Yǒu 彭酉 (*Péng* – the surname, *Yǒu* – the given name, meaning ‘The Tenth of the Twelve Earthly Branches’) is the same in pronunciation as the word *péngyou* 朋友 ‘friend’;

Tián Shànglái 田尚来 (*Tián* – the surname, *Shànglái* – the given name, meaning ‘still to come’) is similar in pronunciation to the phrase *tiān shànglái* 天上来, meaning ‘from the heavens’;

Qián Wànlǐ 钱万里 (*Qián* – the surname and an appellative meaning ‘money’, *Wànlǐ* – the given name, meaning ‘ten thousand miles’); the name is drawn from the phrase *qián chéng wàn lǐ* 前程万里, which means ‘having splendid prospects’.

When making use of homophones one can choose words that have a pronunciation similar to, or likely to be associated with, notions or phrases of good moral or social value, and thus the name expresses them implicitly.

²⁸ Liu Xiaoyan, *Best Chinese Names*, Singapore: An Asiapac Publication, 1997, pp. 6, 13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

(b) Troublesome Chinese surnames and the substitution by homophones

Chinese surnames are hereditary, and usually they cannot be changed. It happens that some surnames are homophonous with words having a derogatory meaning and thus it is not easy to find good names for those whose family name is, for example, Wú 吴 (*Wú* – the surname, which is homophonous with the appellative *wú* 无, meaning ‘nothing’; ‘not have’; ‘without’; ‘not’).

There is a story³¹ about an ambitious young man called Wu Shiping 吴事平 (*Wú* – the surname, *Shipíng* – the given name, which can mean ‘all things/endeavours in peace; all things/endeavours are mediocre’; *shì* ‘thing; matter; affair; endeavour’; *píng* ‘calm; peaceful; quiet; flat; level; mediocre; smooth; equal’). Every time he tried to achieve something, his efforts ended in failure. He wanted to find the reason for this, and he considered that it was all caused by his given name, which he interpreted as “all his endeavours result in mediocrity”. He decided to change his given name to Dèshèng 得胜 (*Dèshèng* means ‘win success’). But success still did not come. The young man went to ask a fortune-teller what was wrong with him. The fortune-teller asked him what his personal name was. After the answer the fortune-teller started laughing, and then he said that with this surname the young man had no chance of success. As his surname was homophonous with *wú* 无 ‘no; without; not’, his new name could be interpreted as “no chance of winning success”.

The story shows that when *wú* 吴/无 is combined with other words, it gives them a negative meaning. To prevent this, it is advisable to apply the principle of “double negatives” (negative plus negative becomes positive). For example, having the surname Wu 吴, it is advisable to have names, e.g.:

Tiānxiǎn 天险 (*tiān xiǎn* means ‘natural barrier’, which has an inauspicious meaning, but when coupled with *wú* 无 ‘no; without; not’, it would mean “there is no barrier”);

Kěnnán 可难 (*kě nán* means ‘can be difficult’, but when coupled with *wú* 无 ‘no; without; not’, it would mean “cannot be difficult”).

The above story and the examples of personal names are very instructive. As it has been said, the Chinese believe that by means of the appropriate naming of a person, his constitution and fate could be improved.

(c) Chinese female counter-commendatory names and the substitution by homophones

Some Chinese female counter-commendatory names can be formed by the use of general terms denoting ‘man’ or other terms of male kinship and rank (or words homophonous with these terms). Female names with such terms are simply known by Chinese scholars as *nǚren nánmíng* 女人男名 ‘male names of females’.³²

The most typical names of this type are those revealing that not a girl, but rather a male heir is desired. When a couple after having one or more daughters still does not have a son, the couple in the hope that their next child would be a son may give the latest daughter a name such as the term *dì* 弟 ‘younger brother; brother’, e.g.:

Láidi 来弟 ‘Make a Younger Brother Come’ (*lái* ‘to come; to arrive’);

Zhāodi 招弟 ‘Attract a Younger Brother’ (*zhāo* ‘to attract; to beckon’).

³¹ Ibid., p. 22.

³² Ji Xiuqin 籍秀琴, *Zhongguo renming tanxi* 中国人名探析 [Research on Chinese Personal Names], Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi Chubanshe, 1993, p. 221; Wanyan Shaoyuan 完颜绍元, Zhao Qian Sun Li, *Zhongguo xingming wenhua* 赵钱孙李, 中国姓名文化 [Zhao, Qian, Sun, Li, Culture of Chinese Personal Names], Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1994, p. 78.

Examples of such female names are to be found in some works on Chinese personal names.³³ However, the name of a daughter can also be formed by terms that are only homophonous with the aforementioned names or their parts. In some female names instead of the term *dì* 弟 ‘younger brother; brother’, the typical “female” term *dì* 娣 ‘sister-in-law; girl’ can occur, e.g.:

Zhāodi 昭娣, literally ‘Attract a Sister-in-law/ a Girl’, ‘suspected’ as ‘Attract a Younger Brother’ (*zhāo* ‘to attract; to beckon’);

Zhāodi 昭娣, literally ‘Bright Sister-in-law/Girl’, ‘suspected’ as ‘Attract a Younger Brother’ (*zhāo* ‘bright; clear’).

Another similar term that can be used in such female names is *dì* 棣 ‘*Kerria japonica*; Japanese kerria; younger brother’, e.g.:

Hòudi 厚棣, literally ‘Strong Kerria’, suspected as ‘Strong Younger Brother’ (*hòu* ‘great; strong’).

Some names given to girls reveal that they are considered somewhat worse than boys or almost as good as boys, and sporadically, better than boys. The typical names of this type are those formed with the use of the term *nán* 男 ‘man; male’. Several examples of such female names are to be found in some works on Chinese personal names,³⁴ e.g.:

Cínán 次男 ‘Secondary/Inferior Man’ (*cì* ‘second; secondary’);

Shèngnán 胜男 ‘Defeating/Superior to Man’ (*shèng* ‘to win; to defeat; to be superior’);

Yànnán 亚男 ‘Second/ Inferior Man’ (*yà* ‘second; inferior’).

The name of a daughter can also contain the term *nán* 楠 ‘nanmu tree; cedar wood’, homophonous with the term *nán* 男 ‘man; male’, and presumably used with the same intention, e.g.:

[Xǔ] Nányīng [许] 楠英, literally ‘Cedar Flower’, suspected as ‘Male Flower/ Hero’ (*yīng* ‘flower; hero’; surname *Xǔ* can also be treated as an appellative *xǔ* ‘to allow; to hope for’, and the whole personal name is suspected to mean ‘Hope for Male Hero’);

Yǎnán 雅楠, literally ‘Refined Cedar’, suspected as ‘Refined Man’ (*yǎ* ‘refined; elegant’).

The term *nán* 南 ‘south’, being homophonous with the term *nán* 男 ‘man; male’ can also perform the similar semantic function of denoting ‘man’, e.g.:

Yàonán 耀南, literally ‘Shining South’, suspected as ‘Shining Man’ (*yào* ‘to shine; to illuminate’), or even ‘Man Wanted’ (*yào* 耀 is homophonous with *yào* 要 ‘to want; to desire’).

The occurring cases of the inverse use of the terms reveal the additional significance of such formed names, as designated commendatory or counter-commendatory names for the purpose of covering up what really exists, being goal-oriented, and thus making

³³ Viviane Alleton, *Les Chinois et la passion des noms*, Paris: Aubier, 1993, p. 174; Ji Xiuqin, *Zhongguo renming tanxi...*, pp. 221–223; Wanyan Shaoyuan, *Zhao Qian Sun Li, Zhongguo xingming wenhua...*, pp. 78–79; R.S. Watson, ‘The Named and the Nameless: Gender and Person in Chinese Society’, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1986, p. 621.

³⁴ Feng Shu 冯舒; Ding Fei 丁菲; Yin Li 殷丽, *Mingzheng yanshun – Zhongguo mingzide wenhua aomiao yu jiedu* 名正言顺 – 中国名字的文化奥妙与解读 [Secrets and Abilities of Chinese Naming Culture], Urumqi: Xinjiang Qingshaonian Chubanshe, 1997, p. 6; Ji Xiuqin, *Zhongguo renming tanxi*, pp. 221–223; Wanyan Shaoyuan, *Zhao Qian Sun Li, Zhongguo xingming wenhua*, pp. 78–79; I. Kałużyńska, ‘Male Names of Women and Female Names of Men in the Chinese Society’, in *Els noms en la vida quotidiana /Names in daily life. Proceedings of the XXIV ICOS International Congress of Onomastic Sciences*, Biblioteca Tecnica de Politica. Linguistica. Onomastica, J. Tort, I. Donada, M. Montagut i Montagut, Generalitat de Catalunya (eds), 2014, pp. 791–797.

improvements on reality, preventing troubles or influencing the future for the better. They are based on the belief that names can create the reality, and bring fortune or misfortune. As a result, such motivated female names to a certain extent reflect the inferior status of women in Chinese society.

(d) Chinese given names as equivalents of foreign given names and the substitution by homophones

Chinese given names as equivalents of foreign given names can also be treated as specific forms of the substitution by homophones. Foreign given names, having their pronunciation and kinds of meaning, are usually divided into syllables, and each syllable is adapted as a Chinese morpheme/word of a homophonous or similar pronunciation. The meaning of Chinese equivalents of foreign names usually has nothing in common with their originals. Chinese scholars often categorize these adapted names, according to their new meaning, into several groupings.³⁵ Below there are some adapted Chinese male names indicating good values of their bearers:

a) bringing honour to one's ancestors and perpetuating the family business, e.g.:

Jim, Jimmy, James – Jímíng 继明 'carry forward the light';
 Samuel, Samson – Shàoshèng 绍盛 'successor to a flourishing family';
 Ward, Walter – Wàngtíng 旺庭 'achieving prosperity for the family';

b) having lofty aspirations, e.g.:

Ivan – Yìwàng 意旺 'having high spirits';
 Karl – Kāilái 开来 'creating the future';
 Stephen, Stanford – Sīfèn 思奋 'a diligent thinker';

c) having good moral qualities, e.g.:

Oliver, Howard – Háolì 豪立 'heroic and upright';
 Leonard – Lǐ'ān 理安 'serene and reasonable';
 Randy – Rénhuī 仁迪 'enlightened by benevolence';

d) being dedicated to serving one's country and people, e.g.:

Abe, Abel – Ānbāng 安邦 'strive to bring peace to the country';
 George – Guózhì 国治 'managing the country';
 Percy – Píngshì 平世 'strive for peace and security in the country';

e) having strong willpower, e.g.:

Charley – Chílì 持立 'man of perseverance and self-reliance';
 Harley, Henry – Hénglì 恒励 'man with constancy of purpose';
 Ziegler – Zìkè 自克 'capable of overcoming difficulties by self-reliance';

f) having ability to assume responsibility, e.g.:

Doyle, Dudley – Dòngliáng 栋梁 'pillar of the state';
 Justin, Justus – Zhǔtíng 主廷 'a person of great importance';
 William, Willie, Wiley – Wěirèn 伟任 'shouldering great task';

g) having good health, high spirits and being broad-minded, e.g.:

Clark, Claude – Kāilǎng 开朗 'open and optimistic';
 Johnny – Jiànyīng 健英 'vigorous and handsome';
 Werner – Wēiruò 威若 'dignified and forceful';

³⁵ Liu Xiaoyan..., pp. 107–117.

h) having unusual wisdom and ability, e.g.:
Bill, Billy – Bǐnglǐ 秉理 ‘having a good grasp of reason’;
Colin – Kēlíng 科灵 ‘inspired by science’;
David – Dáwù 达悟 ‘being enlightened’.

Chinese given names as equivalents of foreign given names are specific forms resulting from the substitution by homophones, preserving to some extent the original pronunciation of foreign names, but having completely different meanings.

Conclusion

The method of the substitution by homophones is extensively used in Chinese onomastic fields, like toponymy or anthroponymy. It is mainly used to reshape already existing names by replacing their previous form, for some reasons deemed inconvenient or unwanted. However, it is also broadly applied to create new names by using words which are homophonous with the words denoting the idea they symbolize

While forming Chinese names it is very important to analyse all their component words and all the names according to the possible homophonous relations with other appellatives and their collocations. The unconscious use of the substitution by homophones can result in inappropriate names that may be used by others to make fun of their bearers.

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