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Chinese Combined Place Names

Classifications of Chinese place names made by Chinese scholars distinguish an important class of toponym terms 'combined names' (*binghe diming* [1]) or 'compound names' (*fuhe diming* [2]), or 'composed names' (*hecheng diming* [3]). Such names are, generally speaking, constructed out of specifics (qualifying parts) of two or more already existing geographical names or only of parts of such specifics (2:13. 3:234. 6:5. 9:14. 11:18. 12:4-5. 16:65. 18:17)¹.

The abundance of Chinese combined place names was also noticed by some non Chinese scholars. For example J. E. S p e n c e r wrote: "One last phenomenon almost peculiar to Chinese place names is worth noting. In giving a name to a new and larger political area, a new name has frequently been formed by taking one syllable each from two old units within the area. Thus many old names are repeated in new combinations" (13:83). Some other similar remarks can be found in articles by Russian authors V. T. Z a i t s i k o v (20:83) and K. N. Č e r n o ž u k o v (1:91).

Chinese combined place names have not been, however, sufficiently explored. Some articles and reference notes, mainly by Chinese authors, deal only with parts of the subject, without any synthesis or even an attempt at it. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to treat in some more detail this group of Chinese toponyms.

George R. S t e w a r t, the eminent American scholar, author of many books and articles dealing with place names, especially the place names of the United States of America, formulated in 1954 and further elucidated the very interesting and useful system of classification of place names, called 'The Classification of Place Names by Mechanism of Origin' (14, 15). His classification distinguishes and characterizes the group of names called 'Coined or Manufactured Names'. The

¹ Numbers in square brackets refer to the list of Chinese characters at the end of the article. Numbers in brackets denote respectively the number of the reference and the page. The selected bibliography follows this paper.

coined or manufactured names are termed toponyms which have been consciously constructed out of fragments of other words or names, from initials, by reversals of letters or syllables, or in other ways.

The above mentioned general characteristic of the coined or manufactured names, as termed by G. R. Stewart, reveals some similarity to Chinese combined/compound/ composed place names, as called by Chinese scholars.

The chief basic methods of the American (Canadian, Australian) name-manufacturing, formulated by G. R. Stewart, are as below:

1. Alteration of spelling, e.g.: Somerange (USA) — from 'summer range';
2. Blends, i.e. joining of names or words, e.g.: Saybrook (USA), the coinage was simply the joining of the titles of Lord Say and Sele and Lord Brook: Costerfield (Australia), the joining of names of two miners Coster and Field;
3. Manipulation of syllables or similar small groups of sounds (letters), e.g.: Kenora (Canada), from first two letters of place names Kewatin, Norman and Rat Portage; Birome (USA), from letters of names Bickham and Jerome; Gamenco (USA), of the Gallup American Coal Company; Texarcana (USA), from place names Texas and Arkansas, takes its -ana ending from near-by Louisiana;
4. Manipulation of individual letters, which can be joined with whole words or with syllables, e.g.: Itman (USA), from the personal name of I. T. Mann: or the reversal of the order of the letters, e.g.: Tesnus (USA) — sunset, Senoj (USA) — Jones, Rolyat (USA) — Taylor;
5. Shuffling of letters, e.g.: Tolono (USA), the name created by J. B. Calhoun in a conscious attempt to form a useful and beautiful name by placing the vowel "o" three times, o-o-o, and filing it with consonants t-l-n;

G. R. Stewart says that in practice there are really no strict rules and these 'standard' methods may appear in combinations of all kinds, and may even be linked with ordinary words or names.

G. R. Stewart declares, that although coined or manufactured names are probably of a relatively late origin, because no certain example seems to be known before 1600, the coinage of names is the most distinctive and creative feature of American, Canadian and Australian place names. Of these, the boundary names are so numerous as to become almost conventional. They are blends or manipulations of syllables from the names or abbreviations of two (occasionally, more than two) geographical areas such as states and countries. Texarcana has already been cited. There are more of them: Calor — from California and Oregon, Calexico — from California and Mexico.

The characteristic features of Chinese language make impossible some of the chief basic methods of the American (Canadian, Australian) name-manufacturing, or widely speaking, such methods of the alphabetic language system. In written Chinese a character (grapheme), *zi* [4], which is a linguistic equivalent of a morpheme/semanteme is composed of one syllable. The type of Chinese language makes possible only the method of manipulation and joining the whole words or

morphemes/semantemes/syllables of already existing place names. All kinds of alteration of spelling, manipulations of letters are simply not possible. So, the methods of the Chinese name-manufacture, because of the features of the language, are rather limited in comparison with those of the alphabetic language system. It also should be noted that the Chinese type of combined place names, as distinguished by Chinese scholars, includes only the toponyms derived from other geographical names and excludes the toponyms constructed out of personal names or ordinary words.

The paper will discuss 97 combined names, selected on the basis of possessed data from the research material of 1991 names of all types of the administrative divisions of the People's Republic of China in 1986, i.e. names of 20 provinces, 1733 counties and 238 municipalities and cities. This research material takes into account names belonging mainly to the toponomastic region of the Chinese language, discarding the names belonging to the toponomastic regions of other languages (Mongolian, Tibetan, Zhuang, Hui, Uygur and Manchurian). Therefore, the combined names discussed in this paper make about 5% of all the Chinese names explored. Every example of the Chinese combined place names presented in this paper is followed by its approximate localisation and an approximate date of origin or rather the origin of its specific (because of frequent changes of the Chinese administrative division).

An examination of the structure of Chinese combined names reveals certain patterns. The names consist of two parts: a qualifying part, also called a specific, S. and an identifying part or generic, G.

The generic is constituted by a name of a unit of the administrative division of China, i.e. a province, *sheng* [5], a county, *xian* [6], a municipality or city, *shi* [7]. The generic consists of one word/morpheme/syllable and is placed as the last element of the whole name. Sometimes, as it happens in everyday use of place names, the generic is omitted, e.g., one may say "*Hebei*" [8], instead of "*Hebei Province*" or "*Hebei Sheng*" [9], etc.

The specific consists of two or three elements, all of them are monosyllabic units (A, B, C). There are possible three different relations between these units of the qualifying part and the name they are derived from:

1. the unit is identical with the specific of the toponym it comes from (if this specific is a single word/morpheme/semanteme/syllable): $A=S(A)$, $B=S(B)$, $C=S(C)$;
2. the unit is identical only with a part of the specific of the toponym it comes from (if the specific consists of two or more words/morphemes/semantemes/syllables): $A<S(A)$, $B<S(B)$, $C<S(C)$.
3. the unit is identical with the generic of the toponym it derives from: $A=G(A)$, $B=G(B)$, $C=G(C)$.

The units A, B, C are coordinated: $A+B+C$.

The analysis of the structure of specifics of the combined toponyms reveals the following patterns:

- I. The specific is constructed out of two toponyms, the semanteme structure is $A+B$:
- a) $A < S(A)$, $B < S(B)$, altogether 66 examples, e.g.:
Dongzhi Xian [10], *Anhui* Province, 1959, the name derived from the names of counties *Dongliu Xian* [11] and *Zhide Xian* [12];
 - b) $A = S(A)$, $B < S(B)$, 8 examples, e.g.:
Minhou Xian [13], *Fujian* Province, 1912, the name derived from names of counties *Min Xian* [14] and *Houguan Xian* [15];
 - c) $A < S(A)$, $B = S(B)$, 7 examples, e.g.:
Xintai Shi [16], *Shandong* Province, the *Jin* Dynasty (265–420), the name constructed out of names of mountains *Xinfu Shan* [17] and *Tai Shan* [18];
 - d) $A = S(A)$, $B = S(A)$, 4 examples, e.g.:
Junlian Xian [19], *Sichuan* Province, the *Yuan* Dynasty (1271–1368), the name derived from names of districts *Jun Zhou* [20] and *Lian Zhou* [21];
 - e) $A = S(A)$, $B = G(B)$, 4 examples, e.g.:
Zhuhai Shi [22], *Guangdong* Province, 1953, the name constructed out of names of the river *Zhu Jiang* [23] and the sea *Nan Hai* [24];
 - f) $A < S(A)$, $B = G(B)$, 5 examples, e.g.:
Changhai Xian [25], *Liaoning* Province, 1953, the name derived from names of the island *Changshan Dao* [26] and the sea *Huang Hai* [27].
- II. The specific is constructed out of three toponymes, the semanteme structure is $A+B+C$:
- a) $A < S(A)$, $B < S(B)$ and $B = C$, 2 examples, e.g.:
Wuhan Shi [28], *Hubei* Province, 1949, the name constructed out of names of cities *Wuchang Shi* [29], *Hankou Shi* [30] and *Hanyang Shi* [31];
 - b) $A < S(A)$, $B = S(B)$, $C < S(C)$, one example, e.g.:
Lupanshui Shi [32], *Guizhou* Province, 1978, the name derived of names of counties *Luzhi Xian* [33], *Pan Xian* [34], *Shuicheng Xian* [35];

The analysis of the research material from the point of view of which element (the first, the second or eventually the third one) of the specific of the source-name was transferred to construct the new, i.e., the combined name, reveals that in 60% of cases the transferred element was just the first one.

The combined names analysed in this paper can be classified into two main types:

— “territorial” combined names, i.e. the names derived from names of places (objects) located nearby within the area (92 examples);

— “chronological” combined names, i.e. the names constructed out of the previous, different names of the same place (administrative division) (5 examples).

Among the “territorial” coined names the following groups of toponyms can be distinguished:

1. the names constructed out of specifics (or their parts) of habitation names, i.e. names of administrative divisions, towns and villages):

a) of names of some administrative divisions joined into a larger unit (50 examples), e.g.:

Xinshao Xian [36], *Hunan* Province, 1952, the name derived from the names of counties *Xinhua Xian* [37] and *Shaoyang Xian* [38];

b) of names of towns and villages located within the area of the newly founded administrative division [12 examples], e.g.:

Dehui Xian [39], *Jilin* Province, the *Qing* Dynasty (1644–1911), the name derived from the names of villages *Shude* [40] and *Huaihui* [41];

c) of names of administrative divisions and towns or villages located within their areas (6 examples), e.g.:

Ninggang Xian [42], *Jiangxi* Province, 1914, the name derived from the name of the county *Yongning Xian* [43] and the name of the village located in this county *Wagang* [44].

2. the names constructed of specifics (or their parts) of names for natural features, i.e. mountains, rivers, lakes, etc.:

a) of names of topographical objects of the same kind (8 examples), e.g.:

Laifeng Xian [45], *Hubei* Province, the *Qing* Dynasty, the name derived from the names of mountains *Huailai Shan* [46] and *Baifeng Shan* [47];

b) of names of different topographical objects (13 examples), e.g.:

Danfeng Xian [48], *Shaanxi* Province, 1949, the name derived from the name of the river *Dan Jiang* [49] and the mountain *Fenghuang Shan* [50];

3. the names constructed out of specifics (or their parts) of both habitation names and names for natural features (3 examples), e.g.:

Sihong Xian [51], *Jiangsu* Province, 1955, the name derived from the name of the town *Sizhoucheng* [52] and the name of the lake *Hongze Hu* [53].

The type of Chinese “chronological” combined names can be characterized with the following example:

Xiuning Xian [54], *Anhui* Province, the *Sui* Dynasty (581–618), the name derived from the several previous names of the same area, i.e.: *Xiuyang Xian* [55] (the Eastern *Han* Dynasty 25–220), *Haiyang Xian* [56] (The *Wu* Dynasty 222–280), *Haining Xian* [57] (the *Jin* Dynasty 265–420).

It is to be seen that the “territorial” combined names constitute the dominant (95%) and the most typical group of Chinese combined names.

Chinese combined place names are of rather early origin in comparison with American, Canadian, Australian coined ones. The first toponym traditionally considered as a combined one is the county name *Panyu Xian* [58], *Guangdong* Province, originated under the *Qin* Dynasty 221–206 B.C. (4:203, 10:677). This name is to be constructed out of the names of mountains *Pan Shan* [59] and *Yu*

Shan [60]. However, it should be noted that some Chinese scholars recognize this toponym as called in Yue nationality language and having its meaning as “the village inhabited by *Yue* people” (8, 19). Verification of the mechanism of origin of some early names is difficult and sometimes impossible because of the lack of reliable data.

The exploration of combined names from the point of view of their origin shows that:

39% originated in the period of the imperial China: from the *Qin* Dynasty to the *Qing* Dynasty (221 B.C. — 1911);

37% originated under the Republic of China (1912–1949);

24% originated under the Peoples' Republic of China.

It is to be noticed that the name-manufacturing method by joining some already existing names or their parts to create a new one appeared at the beginning of the Chinese naming system, the tradition of this kind of naming is still alive, the method became even more and more popular during the last several decades.

The last problem to be discussed in this paper is the meaning of Chinese combined names. Polish scholars usually consider toponyms derived from names of other geographical objects as topographical-locational place names. The semantic function of such toponyms is to denote the place concerned by indicating its localization in reference to other topographic objects. Such toponyms are sometimes also considered as commemorative place names, conserving a memory of the former names of places (7, 17).

Chinese scholars pay no attention to the meaning or to the semantic function of combined toponyms, eventually they mention them as ‘names registering facts’ — *jishixing diming* [58] (5:47). Chinese scholars simply treat such names as a separate group of toponyms, i.e. combined/compound/composed ones.

G. R. Stewart also considers coined/manufactured names as a separate group of toponyms. The semantic function of such names sometimes is to denote the localization of the named place, but sometimes can be different. He refuses them to have any other meaning. He warns: “These are manufactured names, constructed of sub-semantic elements. Any suggestions of meaning are incidental and even deceptive” (14:140).

Chinese combined names are formed not of sub-semantic elements, but of words or semantic morphemes (semantemes). Every element of combined names has its meaning, which in majority of cases is to be checked in dictionaries.

Knowing the mechanism of creating the combined names one should treat them as a kind of singular description which can be formulated as “a province (a county, a city) which name is derived from such and such names”. However, Chinese combined names have, in addition, their literal meaning, successfully standing for their lexical (ethymological) meaning. Therefore, from the point of view of the literal meaning, among combined names can be found all kinds of toponyms: topographic, commemorative, incident, possessive, commendatory, etc.

The situation can be illustrated with the following example:

Wanrong Xian [59], *Shanxi* Province, 1954, its literal commendatory meaning is 'the county glorious for the ten thousand times'. The singular description for this name is 'the name derived from the names of counties *Wanquan Xian* [60] ("the county where are ten thousand of streams") and *Ronghe Xian* [61] ("the county where the *Rong* River flows")'.

It seems that the possibility of creation a 'good name' was the decisive factor for Chinese in choosing elements of source-names to form a new one.

The problem still exists: are the Chinese combined names to be considered as the new ones, having their new literal meanings, or, having the knowledge of the mechanism of their origin, one should treat them as specific kinds of singular descriptions only indicating the derivation from the source-names, lacking any literal meanings.

This problem could be solved only on the basis of what is to be considered 'the real meaning' of place names and this is a very controversial topic, far beyond the purpose of this article.

List of Chinese Characters

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|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| [1] 并; 合; 地; 名; | [22] 珠; 海; 市; | [42] 宁; 冈; 县; |
| [2] 复; 合; 地; 名; | [23] 珠; 江; | [43] 永; 宁; 县; |
| [3] 合; 成; 地; 名; | [24] 南; 海; | [44] 瓦; 冈; |
| [4] 字; | [25] 长; 海; 县; | [45] 来; 凤; 县; |
| [5] 省; | [26] 长; 山; 岛; | [46] 怀; 来; 县; |
| [6] 县; | [27] 黄; 海; | [47] 白; 凤; 山; |
| [7] 市; | [28] 武; 汉; 市; | [48] 丹; 凤; 县; |
| [8] 河; 北; | [29] 武; 昌; 市; | [49] 丹; 江; |
| [9] 河; 北; 省; | [30] 汉; 口; 市; | [50] 凤; 凰; 山; |
| [10] 东; 至; 县; | [31] 汉; 阳; 市; | [51] 泗; 洪; 县; |
| [11] 东; 流; 县; | [32] 六; 盘; 水; 市; | [52] 泗; 州; 城; |
| [12] 至; 德; 县; | [33] 六; 枝; 县; | [53] 洪; 泽; 湖; |
| [13] 闽; 侯; 县; | [34] 盘; 县; | [54] 休; 宁; 县; |
| [14] 闽; 县; | [35] 水; 城; 县; | [55] 休; 阳; 县; |
| [15] 侯; 官; 县; | [36] 新; 邵; 县; | [56] 海; 阳; 县; |
| [16] 新; 泰; 市; | [37] 新; 化; 县; | [57] 海; 宁; 县; |
| [17] 新; 甫; 县; | [38] 邵; 阳; 县; | [58] 记; 事; 性; 地; 名; |
| [18] 泰; 山; | [39] 德; 惠; 县; | [59] 万; 荣; 县; |
| [19] 筠; 连; 县; | [40] 沐; 德; | [60] 万; 泉; 县; |
| [20] 筠; 州; | [41] 怀; 惠; | [61] 荣; 河; 县; |
| [21] 连; 州; | | |

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