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Hypocoristic Given Names of Chinese Women

Abstract

The paper presents some classes of traditional and contemporary Chinese personal given names, i.e. hypocoristic given names. Hypocoristic given names, bestowed in order to express an affectionate or condescending attitude to the bearer, or simply because considered tender, intimate and beautiful, are predominantly associated with children and females. Chinese hypocoristic female names can be divided into two main categories, i.e. reduplicated names, in which reduplication serves as a formal marker of the “diminutiveness”, and hypocoristic names with various lexical markers of “diminutiveness”. The underlying significance of the hypocoristic names and the embedded cultural background are revealed, and their structural, semantic and phonetic features are analysed. The investigation is mainly based upon the research material consisting of names of 2378 Chinese famous women born up to 1970, recorded in biographical dictionaries (“Dictionary”; ZRD) and 896 female students from Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU) and Beijing Foreign Languages University (BFLU) in 2003.

1. Introduction

Chinese personal given names are regular lexical items, and there are no traditional, standard hypocoristic or short forms parallel to English Bob from Robert, or Liz from Elizabeth. However, the Chinese naming system allows some other alternative methods of denoting the nature of a pet name or a diminutive form of a name. Chinese hypocoristic names form two different types. Hypocoristic names of the first type are dependent formally and semantically on the official given names of persons, and are considered as informal appellations expressing feeling of intimacy towards the persons named, and as those they are used mainly by close relatives and friends of the bearers. The second

type consists of hypocoristic names that are official standard given names of the persons named, and as those they can be used by various people (known and unknown to the bearers of the names) in different situation (formal or informal), without expressing any particular attitude to the bearer. However, the motivation of the name givers (usually parents or close relatives, sometimes the bearers themselves) for the bestowing of such names was predominantly the willingness to express some affection. The methods of creation of the two types of hypocoristic names are basically the same. The subject of the more detailed analysis in this work is the names of the latter type, i.e. hypocoristic official given names of women.

Among given names of women in past and present China there were and there are many hypocoristic names. The reasons why girls and women in the Chinese society were called by such names are various. In past China women usually had a narrow access to the outside world, and official standard names were not felt to be especially important to them. Women of the lower classes of the society had to be content mainly with surnames (surnames of their fathers or husbands), childhood names (so called ‘milk names’) or nicknames. Among noble families a girl was usually known by her childhood name only by her own family until she was teenager, when it was dropped and a standard name occasionally used. Thus, if Chinese women were referred to by their given names, what was usually felt as the breach of etiquette, these were mainly their childhood names. It happens that almost the only women who in the long history of China were freely known and recorded by their adult given names were some famous concubines, singsong girls and prostitutes, however the great part of their names could rather be considered as a kind of artistic names, *yì míng* 藝名 (Liu 2000: 208; Yin 1998: 231). According to the ancient Chinese theory of the two contrasted and complementary principles operating in the universe, i.e. the feminine one, *yīn* 陰, and the masculine one, *yáng* 陽, women are endowed with soft and passive qualities, so it was considered proper that women’s names should reflect softness and tenderness, as well as some other feminine aesthetic and moral values. As the Chinese society was a man-centred one, women in their life had to conform to standards provided by men and men’s feelings were the most important. It means, that good women were those who made men feel relaxed, cheerful and happy. Men looked for feminine softness and beauty, and in order to induce men’s concern and warm feelings, female names having the quality of intimacy and tenderness were often chosen.

Chinese hypocoristic female names can be divided into two main categories, i.e. hypocoristic reduplicated names, in which reduplication serves as a formal marker of the “diminutiveness”, and hypocoristic names with various lexical markers of “diminutiveness”.

2. Reduplicated names: reduplication as a formal marker of “diminutiveness”

Among traditional Chinese methods of creating hypocoristic personal given names there is one that originated probably in the 5th century, and nowadays becomes more

and more fashionable and common. This method bases on the process of reduplication, i.e. an exact repetition of a linguistic element (a syllable/a morpheme/a word). Names created by this method are called *diémíng* 疊名 ‘reduplicated names’, *diéyīnmíng* 疊音名 ‘reduplicated syllable names’, *diézì míng* 疊字名 ‘reduplicated character names’, *diéyīnmíng* 迭音名 ‘repeated syllable names’, *shuāngmíng* 雙名 ‘double names’, *shuāngzì míng* 雙字名 ‘double character names’, *shuāngzì chóngmíng* 雙字重名 ‘double character repeated names’, *shuāngyīnmíng* 雙音名 ‘double syllable names’ (Chen 1985: 37; Deng 2002: 43; Hui 2002: 247; Ji 1993: 381; Jin 2002:170; Liu 1999: 83; Qian & Li 1999: 41; Xiao 1987: 169; Yuan 1994: 520; ZXQ: 339).

The method of reduplication seems to be the most typical morphological method of creating hypocoristic personal given names in the Chinese naming system, and the reduplicated personal given names are broadly used to convey an appealing diminutiveness and express an affectionate or condescending attitude. They are considered by Chinese people as those having maximum of softness and tenderness, and as those giving some sensual pleasure as being beautiful in sound and sight. The first and the most important reason for having assigned such qualities to the reduplicated names seems to be the effect impressed on the ear (and on the soul) by the simple repetition of sounds (syllables). Together with official hypocoristic given names, the majority of modern Chinese informal pet names, mainly for children but also for some adults, is created simply by the reduplication of the only syllable/morpheme/word of the monosyllabic standard given names or the final syllable/morpheme/word of the disyllabic standard given names, e.g.: a pet name of Lán 蘭 can be Lánlan 蘭蘭, and the pet name of Yùcuì 玉翠 can be Cuìcuì 翠翠.

In China, from the Sui (581-618) dynasty onwards, especially during the Tang (618-907), Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1260-1368) dynasties, it became quite common among singsong girls, prostitutes and maidservants, but also among some daughters and concubines of noblemen, to have a reduplicated name as their given names or artistic names. Jin Ming stated: “*Women had reduplicated names firstly because these names were simple, secondarily because they gave the impression of intimacy, and as those they just suited men’s mental needs*” (Jin 2002:170). Thus, reduplicated names occurred firstly among concubines, singsong girls and prostitutes, and afterwards they turned to be traditional and popular names for all girls, as those expressing the maximum of femininity. However, such names were often considered as having some emotional colouring of inappropriate familiarity or sexual intimacy, or even as having the quality of “a commercial label” of women, especially those being professional actresses or prostitutes. (Yin 1998: 231; ZXQ: 340).

The earliest female reduplicated given name is considered by the author the name of [Su] Xiǎoxiǎo [蘇]小小 (ZRD: 1775.4), the famous prostitute from Qiantang (present Hangzhou) of the Southern Qi Dynasty (479-502). The second one seems to be the name Luóluo 羅羅 (Ji 1993: 373) of a maid in the palace of the Yang Emperor of the Sui dynasty. In Tang times there were quite many women named by double names. There were recorded (ZRD; ZXQ) 17 female reduplicated names (11 names of prostitutes, 5

of concubines and 1 of an actress). Under the Song dynasty 15 double feminine names were recorded (ZRD; ZXQ), all of them of the most famous singsong girls and prostitutes of the time, and for the Yuan dynasty 10 names (9 of prostitutes and 1 of a concubine). During Ming (1368–1662) and Qing (1664–1912) dynasties, under the influence of the strict moral code of the orthodox philosophers this kind of names started to decline. There are 4 female double names registered for the period of Ming dynasty and 3 such names for the Qing dynasty (ZRD; ZXQ). However, from the beginning of the 20th century onwards, double names for women have enjoyed a revival, and nowadays the convention of creating double names is still very fashionable. In “Dictionary” there are registered 3056 women born in the years 1900–1970, and 18 of them had reduplicated given names (0,6%). Among them there are 9 artists, 4 scientists and educators, 2 work leaders, 2 sportswomen, 1 revolutionist (“Dictionary”).

In past China some men were called by reduplicated names, but only few. By comparison, in ZRD, including names of 40000 persons (only 900 women) from the ancient times to the end of the Qing dynasty, there were altogether 30 reduplicated names: 27 names for 31 females, 3 names for 4 males (ZRD). In present China male double names are quite common. Deng Zhihai wrote: *“In contemporary society, following the development of the women liberation movement and the growth of the level of people’s material life, families having the only child are more and more numerous, and the only child is the treasure of the whole family. Wherever we go, we do hear such names like Baobao, Yingying... These names are not only semantically clear and seductive, but also phonetically soft and sweet. When they are used as girls’ names, they are full of feminine beauty, when used as boys’ names, they give impression of purity and lovingness (D e n g 2002: 39–46).*

According to the author’s analysis of the given names of students of the first year in 2003 of BLCU (students born in the years 1982–1986 after the introduction of the policy of “one child in a family”), there were 27 girls having reduplicated names (5% of female students), and 2 boys (1.1% of male students), while among students (born in the same period) of five departments of BFLU there were 32 girls with the reduplicated names (8.2%) and 4 boys (2.6%). The rising amount of hypocoristic reduplicated names for girls and for boys is quite evident, not only in the People’s Republic of China, but also in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and among Chinese living abroad (Q i a n & L i 1999: 40).

Reduplication as the morphological method of creating words and of expressing some linguistic functions plays a rather minor role in the Chinese language. The reduplicated part is commonly treated as an affix, except that, instead of being an affix of a given form, it assumes the form of whatever form it is affixed to (C h a o 1968: 198). Thus, structures constructed of reduplicated lexical items have only one main morpheme/word (a root), and the reduplicated part has a quality of a suffix. The root form is free (a word) or bound (a morpheme). When a single syllable is reduplicated, it either takes the iambic-form XX (an unstressed syllable followed by the stressed syllable), that is, two syllables have tones, or the trochaic form X.X (a stressed syllable followed by the unstressed syllable), that is, with a neutral tone on the second syllable.

Reduplicated personal given names constructed of reduplicated lexical items are considered by Chinese scholars as having only one main morpheme/word, the reduplicated part being pronounced in the neutral tone and having a quality of a suffix (Xu & Xin 1999: 453). Thus, the reduplicated given names take the trochaic form X.X. However, Chinese reduplicated names are coined of morphemes/words belonging to the different parts of speech, and some tonal and semantic features of reduplicated appellatives in the Chinese language differ according to the form class they belong to. In the Chinese language some nouns, measure-words, adjectives, verbs, adverbs and onomatopoeic words are reduplicated, while pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions cannot. It seems interesting to compare some structural and semantic features of reduplicated appellatives with the analysed reduplicated given names. The material for the study consists of 136 female double names gathered from various sources.

In the Chinese language some terms of address, especially kinship terms, e.g.: *māma* 媽媽 ‘mummy’, *bàba* 爸爸 ‘papa’, often take the reduplicated trochaic form X.X (the second syllable in neutral tone). Other nouns are of somewhat miscellaneous nature. Some of them have the XX form, e.g.: *bǎobǎo* 寶寶 ‘baby, darling’, and some X.X form, e.g.: *wáwa* ‘a doll, baby’. Some of the reduplications occur with the retroflex suffix *-er*, e.g.: *qūqur* 蛐蛐兒 ‘cricket’. A few nouns are formed of the reduplicates and other elements, as *máomaochóng* 毛毛蟲 ‘hairy-hairy bug – caterpillar’. The reduplicated nouns are, according to Yuen Ren Chao, “*rather limited in number, except in children language, or rather what grown-ups regard as children language and teach the child to say, for example chi fanfan ‘eat rice-rice’, chuan xiexie ‘put on shoe-shoe’, which is quite productive in this type of artificial language. Usually a growing child discards this language as soon as he notices that grown-ups don’t talk that way to each other. A rather productive reduplication does exist in the dialect of Kunming, Yunnan, and some Sichuan dialects, where reduplication has the class meaning of ‘small object of obvious shape’, for example qiuqiu ‘small ball, bead’*” (Chao 1968: 202 with some technical changes). Few nouns can be reduplicated as a distributive form (referring to each individual of a class, not to the class collectively), e.g.: *rénrén* 人人 ‘everyone’ (Li & Cheng 1990: 17). Among the analysed reduplicated female given names there are 61 names (45% of all female double names) constructed of a noun root morpheme/word and a suffix, e.g.: *Bèibei* 貝貝 (*bèi* 貝 ‘shellfish’), *Chénchen* 晨晨 (*chén* 晨 ‘morning’). Nominal lexical items of female names are mainly terms of personal adornments, some “feminine” or *yīn* natural phenomena, like seasons of the year, the moon, clouds, snow, rainbow, frost, waves, flowers and trees, birds, and some Chinese terms for females. The reduplicated names consisting of a noun root morpheme/word seem to serve the same function as most of reduplicated noun appellatives (common nouns), i.e. they express a kind of an affectionate attitude and convey the meaning of “smallness/littleness”.

Measure words of the Chinese language may often be reduplicated to mean plurality, profusion, or exclusiveness (Yip & Rimington 2006: 43). When a measure word is reduplicated with no neutral tone, it has the meaning of ‘every’ (Li & Cheng 1990: 76), e.g.: *gègè* 個個 ‘each and every one, all’. Among the analysed double names

there are only two female names, which could serve as examples of reduplicated names having a group measure-word as a root morpheme/word, e.g.: Shíshí 十十 (*shí* 十 ‘ten’), Shuāngshuāng 雙雙 (*shuāng* 雙 ‘double, pair’; *shuāngshuāng* 雙雙 ‘in pairs’). It is difficult to find appropriate English words for the above-mentioned names. The first name can be translated as ‘(Small/Little) Ten’, and the second one ‘(Small/Little) Double’. However, these reduplicated names have no meaning of ‘every’, as reduplicated measure words have.

The reduplicative formula for monosyllabic verbs in the Chinese language is X.X (the final syllable in a neutral tone), e.g.: *xǐ* 洗 ‘to wash’ – *xǐxǐ* 洗洗 ‘wash a little’, ‘just wash’. The reduplication of a verb implies a short and quick action, it could also express an attempt or a trial (Li & Cheng 1990: 38), also called a ‘tentative’ aspect of an action (Norman 2005: 156), or express a degree of eagerness on the part of a speaker (Yip & Rimmington 2006: 118). Sometimes it expresses a sense of being light and relaxed (Li & Cheng 1990: 38). Not all the verbs can be reduplicated. Verbs of actions and behaviour, verbs of positive thinking can be reduplicated, and verbs expressing mental activities, change or development, existence, judgement, possession and directions cannot (Li & Cheng 1990: 37–38). Among the analysed reduplicated female names there are 20 names (14.7% of all double names) constructed of a verb root morpheme/word and a suffix, e.g.: Pànpan 盼盼 (*pàn* 盼 ‘to hope for’, ‘to expect’), Piānpian 翩翩 (*piān* 翩 ‘to fly swiftly’; *piānpian* 翩翩 ‘lightly’, ‘elegant’). Verbs in female double names are mainly verbs of thinking and those connected with feelings of women: ‘to cherish’, ‘to love’, ‘to favour’, ‘to pity’; ‘to think of’, ‘to miss’, but also some active verbs, like ‘to train’, ‘to protect’, etc. Reduplicated names constructed of a verb root morpheme/word can be treated as participles (verbal forms sharing the functions of a noun), and translated as, e.g.: Pànpan 盼盼 ‘(Small/Little) Hoping’. It seems difficult to convey any additional meaning of the name as implied by the semantic features of reduplicated verbal appellatives. However, some reduplicated (at the level of appellatives) verbs belong to other form classes and have a different meaning, e.g.: *piānpian* 翩翩 ‘lightly (dance, flutter)’, ‘elegant’. Adjectival meaning of these already made reduplications fits better a proper name than the meaning of the reduplicated names considered as the forms resulting of the vivid process (at the onomastic level) of reduplication of verbs.

Some Chinese adjectives can be reduplicated for intensification (Li & Cheng 1990: 50). Monosyllabic adjectives indicating physical traits and appealing to the senses can be reduplicated for descriptive purposes often with an affectionate tone. On the other hand, monosyllabic adjectives indicating absolute values, derogatory qualities or psychological traits cannot normally be reduplicated (Yip & Rimmington 2006: 71). Thus, some Chinese monosyllabic adjectives can form vivid reduplicates in order to express a kind of an intensification of a good value or quality. Adjectival reduplicates are considered as having the general meaning of liveliness and having favourable connotations (Chao 1968: 209), and as expressive or vividly descriptive ones (Norman 2005: 87). The reduplicative formula for monosyllabic adjectives is XX, e.g.: *hóng* 紅 ‘red’ – *hónghóng*

紅紅 ‘intensively red; red as red can be’. Among the analysed reduplicated female names there are 53 names (39% of all female double names) constructed of an adjective root morpheme/word and a suffix, e.g.: Fāngfang 芳芳 (*fāng* 芳 ‘sweet-smelling; fragrant’), Hǎohao 好好 (*hǎo* 好 ‘good, fine, kind’). Adjectives in female names mainly indicate female appearances and manners, like ‘brilliant’, ‘beautiful’, ‘graceful’, ‘pretty’, ‘fresh’, ‘delicate’, ‘admirable’, ‘charming’, ‘good’, ‘elegant’, ‘ladylike’, ‘fascinating’, ‘peaceful’, etc. Reduplicated names constructed of an adjectival root morpheme/word are sometimes considered as expressing (by their structural form) the superlativeness. L.C. Arlington stated: “Many characters in names are doubled to express the superlative, as for example Yuanyuan “Peerless Beauty” [yuàn 媛 ‘beautiful (woman)’]” (Arlington 1923: 319 with some changes). One can express the highest or a very high degree of a quality by translation of a name, e.g.: a name Fāngfang 芳芳 can be translated as ‘(Extremely) Fragrant’. It is also possible to treat the name as if it has a noun for its root morpheme, e.g.: ‘(Peerless/Unequalled) Fragrance’. The question is whether the quality of “superlativeness” takes place of the quality of “smallness”, or they both operate simultaneously, i.e. whether the above-mentioned name ought to be considered as ‘(Small) (Extremely) Fragrant’.

Some Chinese adverbs occur as reduplicated XX forms, but the situation is somewhat different from that of reduplicated verbs or adjectives. Several adverbs have simple forms and reduplicated XX forms (usually used for intensification), like gāng 剛 ‘just, exactly’ – gānggāng 剛剛 ‘just, only, exactly’, and others have only the reduplicated form, the simple form of the word is not an adverb, but a different part of speech, e.g.: cǎocǎo 草草 ‘carelessly, hastily’ – cǎo 草 ‘grass, cursive script’. Among the reduplicated given names there are some having the identical form as that of adverbs, e.g.: Gānggang 剛剛 (*gāng* 剛 ‘firm, solid, strong’, also *gāng* 剛, *gānggāng* 剛剛 ‘just, only, exactly’). However, it seems that these reduplicated names should be treated not as adverbs, but rather as other parts of speech.

Onomatopoeic words, as those which imitate the sound of a person, an animal, a thing, or an action, in the Chinese language often have the XX reduplicate form, e.g.: sounds of laughter and cry: chīchī 哧哧, hāhā 哈哈 (Li & Cheng 1990: 149–151). The form class and the lexical meaning of morphemes the onomatopoeic reduplicates are constructed of are not at all important as they are used only as phonetic equivalents of sounds. The monosyllabic morpheme is not a free form and only the reduplicated form is. Reduplicated forms (XX) similar to onomatopoeic words are also so-called “impressive words”, broadly used in poetry, but their aim is not to imitate sounds but to express feelings or experiences of people being impressed by size or quality of some magnificent objects or sceneries. The lexical meaning of a root morpheme is quite important, especially that of an adjective form class, e.g.: yángyáng 洋洋 ‘spectacular, imposing, vast, numerous’ (*yáng* 洋 ‘vast, multitudinous; ocean’).

The comparison of some structural and semantic features of Chinese reduplicated words with the reduplicated personal names suggests that the latter as nominal forms (coined of morphemes/words belonging to the different parts of speech) serve the similar

function as most of reduplicated noun appellatives and nominalized adjectives. They express a kind of an affectionate attitude and convey an appealing diminutiveness. The function of many reduplicated names is similar to that of “impressive words”, because they seek to capture a feeling or experience rather than to achieve an accurate depiction or description. They invite the appreciation by the senses (sight, hearing) or understanding of motives and qualities.

3. Quasi-reduplicated names: repetition of sounds as phonetic marker of “diminutiveness”

Quasi-reduplicated names are considered those in which there is some phonetic identity between elements constituting the name. This phonetic identity can be referred to as homophony, thus the names are compounds of homophones, as the same spoken words with unrelated senses (Kuiper 1999: 55). The method of creation also bases on the process of reduplication, considered here as an exact or partial repetition of a linguistic element, in this case – a syllable. This group of names has not yet been specifically termed by Chinese scholars, but some terms used for the reduplicated names, cf. 2, seem to fit it well: *diéyīnmíng* 疊音名 ‘reduplicated syllable names’ (Li u 1999: 83; D e n g 2002: 43), *diéyīnmíng* 迭音名 ‘repeated syllable names’ (J i 1993: 381), *shuāngyīnmíng* 雙音名 ‘double syllable names’ (L i u 1999: 83).

The quasi-reduplicated names seem to serve the similar function as standard reduplicated names, i.e. they make use of the effect impressed by the repetition of sounds to express a kind of an affectionate attitude and convey an appealing diminutiveness. The process of reduplication stops at the level of syllables, because the same or similar syllables are different morphemes/words. Such names originated comparatively later than the standard reduplicated names. Some of them occurred in the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, and presently are more and more common.

As the Chinese is a tonal language, every syllable (divided into an initial and a final) has an essential suprasegmental component, a tone. The syllables having the same initials and finals can have different tones. Among the disyllabic quasi-reduplicated names one can distinguish two main tonal patterns, i.e. all syllables of the disyllabic names are of the same tone (the exact repetition of syllables) or the tones of succeeding syllables differ (a partial repetition of syllables). The quasi-reduplicated names can be also described as compound structures composed of two homophonous root forms. The root form is sometimes free (a word) or sometimes bound (a morpheme). The quasi-reduplicated names can be divided into the disyllabic given names and the disyllabic personal names (consisted of the monosyllabic surname and the monosyllabic given name).

Among the names of the research material there are 10 quasi-reduplicated disyllabic female given names. The earliest of them is the given name of the famous artist [Zhu] Zhēnzhēn [朱]琰珍, born in 1913 (“Dictionary”: 225). 7 names (70%) are given

names of students, so it seems that this method of creation becomes presently more popular.

The exact repetition of syllables (all syllables of the disyllabic given names are of the same tone) occurs in 8 names (80%), e.g.: [Mu] Línlín [穆]林霖 (*lín* 林 ‘forest, grove; group of persons or things; surname’ + *lín* 霖 ‘continuous heavy rain’), BLCU student. The partial repetition of syllables (various tones of succeeding syllables) occurs in 2 given names (20%), e.g.: [Chen] Xiǎoxiāo [陳]曉瀟 (*xiǎo* 曉 ‘dawn; to know, to understand’ + *xiāo* 瀟 ‘deep and clear water’), BLCU student. The form class and the meaning of the lexical items being the homophonous syllables are not of the first importance. However, in most of cases these are nouns belonging to the semantic categories of traditional female given names, like terms of personal adornments, some “feminine” or *yīn* natural phenomena, flowers and trees, birds. The choice of the lexical items is evidently caused by their phonetic form.

Among the names of the research material there are 8 personal names (of 12 persons) consisting of the monosyllabic surname and the monosyllabic given name that are homophones, thus the phonetic form of the whole personal name is the same as that of quasi-reduplicated disyllabic given names. Chinese personal names have various degrees of freedom according to their syllabicity, and sometimes to the situational context. Monosyllables, except for some special cases, are always bound, so a monosyllabic given name or a monosyllabic surname cannot be used separately, even though as appellatives they are free words. The force of compounding between a monosyllabic surname and a monosyllabic given name is so strong, that even close relatives or friends use only the full form of the person’s name while addressing to. Dissyllabic given names are frequently called without surnames, but no monosyllabic surnames or given names. Thus, homophonous monosyllabic surname-monosyllabic given name compounds items have the phonetic value of the reduplicated names.

The earliest example of quasi-reduplicated personal names among the analysed female names is considered that of Zhào Zhāo 趙昭, the famous painter of the Qing dynasty (ZRD: 1404.4). Most of the names (6 names for 10 persons) are those of contemporary people, students of BLCU or BFLU.

The exact repetition of syllables (all syllables of the disyllabic personal names are of the same tone) occurs in 3 names (37.5%), e.g.: Chén Chén 陳晨 (*chén* 陳 ‘surname; name of state and dynasty; old’ + *chén* 晨 ‘morning’), BLCU student. The partial repetition of syllables (various tones of succeeding syllables) occurs in 5 personal names (62.5%), e.g.: Lǐ Lǐ 李黎 (*lǐ* 李 ‘surname; plum’ + *lí* 黎 ‘black, black head, many, multitude, host, surname’), BLCU student. The most popular personal name of the type is Lǐ Lǐ 李莉 (*lǐ* 李 ‘surname; plum’ + *lì* 莉 ‘jasmine’), as it is the name of 5 females (2 sportswomen born in 1946 and 1960, and 3 students).

The meaning and the form class of the lexical items constituting the name seem not to be especially important. The choice of the lexical items for given names bases mainly on their phonetic characteristics, however, the lexemes belonging to the semantic categories of traditional female given names are preferred.

4. Given names with lexical markers of “diminutiveness”

Among past and contemporary Chinese female given names there are many hypocoristic names formed by the use of some lexical markers of “diminutiveness”. The methods of denoting the nature of a pet name or a diminutive form of a name by the use of lexical markers of “diminutiveness” are morphological methods of compounding or of affixation. The so-called diminutive terms, also named terms of endearment, have various status in the name as either root morphemes/words having the lexical meaning of “diminutiveness” (‘small’, ‘young’, ‘child’, etc.), or affixes, serving to mark the function of “diminutiveness”.

In classical Chinese most morphemes are also words, in modern Chinese words have become largely polymorphemic and many formerly free morphemes/words occur only as bound morphemes in compounds. Furthermore, some of bound morphemes in compounds have lost their meaning as root morphemes and acquired the status of affixes, which serve to mark the function of the words of which they form a part, thus resulting in derived words of various types (Chao 1968: 194). The status of some diminutive terms occurring in names, as the first or the end morphemes in a compound form, is not sufficiently clear, so for many older names it seems better to treat the diminutive term as a root morpheme or a word, and the cases as examples of compounding rather than affixation. Some lexemes considered as the diminutive terms are polysemic, so they also have other lexical meanings, which cannot be neglected while analysing the names. Such lexemes are treated as playing the double role in a given name, as a root morpheme/word and as a marker of diminutiveness.

Numerous Chinese hypocoristic given names are created by the use of diminutive terms having the primary lexical meaning ‘little, small’ or only the associative meaning of “smallness”, because of their phonetic value. In the case of female names there are four such terms.

(1) The lexeme *xiǎo* 小 has the dictionary meanings ‘small, little, petty, minor; young; the last in order of seniority; little ones, children; humble: my, our’. It seems that the lexeme has not attained the status of a prefix insofar as the loss of its original meaning is concerned, so it is treated as a root morpheme/word. However, because of its common occurrence as the first morpheme in compounds, it is sometimes treated as the diminutive prefix (Sung 1981: 69). Among the names of the research material the lexeme *xiǎo* 小 occurs in 37 official standard female given names (32 famous women + 5 students). The earliest example of the name with the lexeme is from the time of the Northern Qi Dynasty (550–577), cf. below. As to the form class of the second element of the compounds with the term *xiǎo* 小, in 28 given names (76% of the names with the term) this is a noun, e.g.: [Huo] Xiǎoyu [霍]小玉 (*yù* 玉 ‘jade’), singsong girl and poet of the Tang dynasty (ZRD: 1626.1; “Dictionary”: 1108). The class of adjectives is represented in 7 names (19%), e.g.: [Lu] Xiǎomàn [陆]小曼 (*màn* 曼 ‘graceful’), writer born in 1903 (“Dictionary”: 579). In 2 names the second element of the compound functions as a verb, e.g.: [Feng] Xiǎolian [冯]小憐 (*lián* 憐 to pity,

to love; to sympathize with), palace lady and empress of the Northern Qi Dynasty (ZRD: 1217.4).

(2) The lexeme *xiǎo* 筱 is explained in dictionaries as ‘little slender bamboo; a substitution for *xiǎo* 小, used in a person’s name’ (HYC: 1119) or ‘thin bamboo; small’ (XXH: 1808). Thus, the lexeme has a semantic feature of “smallness” and is homophonous with *xiǎo* 小 ‘small; little’, cf. above, and it can freely function as the diminutive term in names. Among the names of the research material the lexeme occurs in 4 official standard given names (3 famous women + 1 student). The form class of the second element of the compound is a noun (2 names), e.g.: [Zhong] Xiǎojūn [鍾]筱君 (*jūn* 君 ‘gentleman; ruler’), BFLU student, or an adjective (2 names), e.g.: [Zhou] Xiǎopèi 周筱沛 (*pèi* 沛 ‘abundant, copious’), politician born 1901 (“Dictionary”: 711).

(3) The lexeme *xiǎo* 曉 has the dictionary meaning ‘dawn, to know, to understand’ (HYC: 1119); also ‘daybreak; morning’ (XXH: 1808). Although the lexical meaning of the term has no semantic feature of “smallness”, still the term and the term *xiǎo* 小 ‘small, little’, cf. above, are homophonous, so it acquires the diminutive quality by association. It is considered that the term started to be broadly used in the end of 1970. for the persons having their informal childhood names with the term *xiǎo* 小: “*After reaching the adulthood [by the bearers], the term ‘xiǎo 小’ of their childhood names was replaced by the term ‘xiǎo 曉’*” (Chang 1995: 183). As the research material reveals, the lexeme probably started to be used in female names in the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, so its occurrence coincides with the women’s education and liberation movements. The first name with the lexeme is that of the politician [Zhang] Xiǎoméi [張]曉梅, born in 1901, cf. below. The lexeme has occurred in 65 past and present given names (18 famous women + 47 students). Its popularity seems to be caused partially because of its preferable lexical meaning, especially ‘to know, to understand’, as indicating the brain potential of women, or ‘dawn; daybreak, morning’ as referring to feminine natural phenomena. However, its associative meaning of “smallness” is of the great importance. The form class of the second element of the compound is a noun, e.g.: [Zhang] Xiǎoméi [張]曉梅 (*méi* 梅 ‘plum’) ‘Knowing Plum’/ ‘Morning Plum’/ ‘Small Plum’ (“Dictionary”: 560) or [Song] Xiǎobō [宋]曉波 (*bō* 波 ‘wave’) ‘Knowing Wave’/ ‘Morning Wave’/ ‘Small Wave’, the sportswoman born in 1958 (“Dictionary”: 518). The diminutive function of the lexeme *xiǎo* 曉 can be confirmed by its occurrence in names in the same position as *xiǎo* 小 ‘small’, e.g.: the pair of similar names of female students of BLCU: [Liu] Xiǎolín [劉]小琳 and [Li] Xiǎolín [李]曉琳 (*lín* 琳 ‘beautiful jade’).

(4) The lexeme *yòu* 幼 has the dictionary meaning ‘young, under age; children, the young’ (HYC: 1246), ‘young; child’ (XXH: 2017). The lexeme occurred in 2 names of famous women, as that preceding a noun, e.g.: [Ma] Yòuméi [馬]幼梅 (*méi* 梅 ‘plum’), i.e. ‘Young Plum’, born 1918, educator (“Dictionary”: 28).

Hypocoristic given names can be also created by the use of diminutive terms as prefixes or prefix-like forms. Chinese prefixes form a rather small class, and in most of cases they are not completely semantically empty, because they are also full morphemes

in other functions and are not in neutral tone. Prefixed words take iambic-form XX (an unstressed syllable followed by the stressed syllable), that is, two syllables have tones. There are two such prefixes used in hypocoristic female given names of the research material.

(1) The lexeme *a* 阿 is defined as ‘a prefix used before pet names, monosyllabic surnames, or numbers denoting order of seniority in a family, to form terms of endearment; a prefix used before kinship terms’ (HYC: 1; XXH: 1). It is considered the only Chinese prefix which does not occur as a full morpheme, as a word or a part of compound word (Chao 1968: 216), and the earliest vernacular prefix for which there is an ample textual documentation (Norman 2005: 113). Although this prefix is no longer used in the Peking dialect, it is still widely employed in many southern dialects as a prefix to kinship terms and personal names, especially in Wu dialects (Shanghai) and Yue dialects (Canton). As a familiar prefix for nicknames and childhood names, it may go back to the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.). The character with which the prefix is written, 阿, pronounced *ē*, originally meant ‘big mound; hillside’, also ‘fine silks; bend to, partial to’ (XXH: 401; HYC: 251, HD 11.922-923). In the use to write the prefix *a*, it is apparently used for its sound-value alone.

Among the research material there are 2 female standard given names with the prefix, and the form class of the second element of the name is an adjective, e.g.: Ājiāo 阿嬌 (*jiāo* 嬌 ‘beautiful, graceful’), the name of Chen Empress of the Han dynasty (ZRD: 1069.1; 619.1), or Āmíng 阿明 (*míng* 明 ‘bright, brilliant; clear’), the alternative name of Lei Derong 雷德容 (1913–1948), social worker (“Dictionary”: 1057–1058).

(2) The lexeme *yà* 亞 has the dictionary meanings ‘inferior, second, Asia’ (HYC: 1886), but in southern China it plays the same role as the prefix *a* 阿. It is also used to “*make the name more euphonic*” (Yin 1998: 69–70). The lexical meaning of *yà* cannot be neglected, especially that of ‘Asia’, and the lexeme can be treated as playing the double role in a given name, as a root morpheme and as a prefix of diminutiveness.

Among the research material there are 12 given names with the prefix (7 famous women + 5 students), all of the women born after 1900. The form class of the second element of the names is a noun (10 names), e.g.: [Chen] Yàqióng [陳]亞瓊 (*qióng* 瓊 ‘fine jade’), sportswoman born in 1956 (“Dictionary”: 600), or an adjective (2 names), e.g.: [Ping] Yàlì [平]亞麗 (*lì* 麗 ‘beautiful, delicate’), sportswoman, born in 1962 (“Dictionary”: 148).

Hypocoristic given names can be also created by the use of the diminutive terms as the end morphemes, treated predominantly as suffixes, and thus created by the morphological method of suffixation. However, in some cases, because of the status of the end morpheme, the method of creation seems to be rather that of compounding. A suffix in Chinese language is considered a semantically empty morpheme, mostly in the neutral tone, which occurs at the end of a word and characterizes its grammatical function (Chao 1968: 221). “Suffixes” or suffix-like forms are also considered some intermediate types of end morphemes in words that are not completely semantically empty. The diminutive terms treated as diminutive suffixes in hypocoristic given names started as the words

having their original meaning ‘child’ or similar. The difficulty of determining, whether a particular occurrence of the diminutive term carried its full tone or not, means that it is sometimes hard to distinguish cases where the term is used in its etymological sense of ‘child’ and those cases where it is used as a sort of familiar diminutive suffix. There are four diminutive suffixes or suffix-like forms used in female given names of the research material.

(1) The lexeme *ér* 兒 has the dictionary meanings ‘child, youth, son; suffix (added to nouns to express smallness)’ (HYC: 254). The suffix *-er/r* is regarded as a diminutive suffix because its original meaning is ‘child’ or similar, from which the semantic feature of “smallness”. The use of the morpheme meaning ‘child’ as a marker of the diminutiveness is still common in some Chinese dialects. However, as actually used, it serves mainly to mark a form as a noun. By the Tang dynasty *ér* as suffix was already widespread, and its use was mainly limited to animate nouns. In the Song dynasty texts it is found with nouns of all categories (Norman 2005: 113–114). It is stated: “*Semantically, the diminutive suffix starts from the idea of smallness, and shades off through the speaker’s attitude of regarding the thing as small and thence to almost nothing but a change of grammatical function with or without change of meaning from that of the root morpheme*” (Chao 1968: 230).

Among the research material there are 12 standard given names with the suffix/suffix-like form, and all of them of the women born before 1970. As the earliest name is considered Yù’ér 玉兒 (yù 玉 ‘jade’), the name of Pan Concubine of the Southern Qi Dynasty (ZRD: 1514.4), and as the latest the name [Zhu] Jú’ér [朱]菊兒 (jú 菊 ‘the China aster, the chrysanthemum’) of the scientist born in 1940 (ZRD: 226). The form class of the first element of the names is a noun (8 names), cf. the above examples, or an adjective (2 names), e.g.: [Wang] Cōng’ér [王]聰兒 (cōng 聰 ‘clever; bright’), politician born in 1777 (“Dictionary”: 104), or a verb (2 names), e.g.: [Zhang] Bēn’ér [張]奔兒 (bēn 奔 ‘to run, to flee, to hasten’), singsong girl of the Yuan dynasty (ZRD: 937.2).

(2) The lexeme *nú* 奴 has the dictionary meanings ‘bondservant; slave; I; me (self-reference of girls); term of endearment for girls’ (XXH: 1184; HD 4.266). Many male childhood names with *nú* term have occurred from the Jin dynasty (265–420) onward (Ji 1993: 103), and it is considered that *nú* is probably a term of foreign origin, borrowed from a tribe living north to China (Xu & Xin 1999: 452). Among the research material there is only one name with the term, e.g.: [Wang] Bǎonú [王]寶奴 (bǎo 寶 ‘treasure; precious, treasured’), singsong girl of the Ming dynasty (ZRD: 159.4).

(3) The lexeme *zǐ* 子 has the dictionary meanings ‘son, child; person; master; a category of books; you; seed; egg; young, tender, small; copper coin; cyclical sign; viscount; noun suffix’ (HYC: 1362), also ‘daughter in old times’ (XXH: 2210). As a full morpheme *zǐ* can be a noun or form compounds. As a suffix, *-zi/z* is cognate with a full morpheme meaning ‘child’. From the earliest time one can find examples of compounds in which *zǐ* is the second element, and it can almost always be interpreted either as ‘child’ or some semantic extension of ‘child’, e.g.: *hǔzǐ* 虎子 ‘baby tiger’. It is better to treat such cases as examples of compounding rather than suffixation, but the use of *zi* as a diminutive

marker begins quite early. By the Tang dynasty *zi* seems to lose its diminutive effect, and it is found as suffix to virtually any class of nouns, its chief function being to nominalize (Chao 2005: 113–114; Norman 1968: 237).

Among the names of the research material *zi/zǐ* as the suffix or suffix-like form occurs in 7 female standard given names (4 famous women + 3 students). As the first name with the term is considered that of [Lu] Qīngzi [陸]卿子 (*qīng* 卿 ‘a minister or a high official in ancient times; a term of endearment’), a poet of the Ming dynasty (ZRD: 1120.2, D: 582). The form class of the first element of the name is a noun (5 names), cf. the above example, or an adjective (2 cases), e.g.: [Wang] Huizi [汪]慧子 (*huì* 慧 ‘intelligent; bright’), BLCU student.

(4) The lexeme *zǐ* 仔 has the dictionary meanings ‘young; son, young animal, whelp’. The use of the morpheme as a marker of the diminutive (the diminutive suffix) is commonly used in some Chinese southern dialects, especially in the Guangdong province (Norman 2005: 113; Xu & Xin 1999: 452). Among the research material there is only one name with the term, e.g.: [Liu] Jinzi [劉]晉仔 (*jìn* 晉 ‘to enter, advance; a name of the state and the dynasty, short for Shanxi [province]’), revolutionist, born 1913 (“Dictionary”: 272).

The morphological methods of compounding or of affixation by the use of some diminutive terms are also the methods of creating past and contemporary Chinese pet names, based on standard given names of persons. Thus if somebody’s name is Hǔ 虎 ‘Tiger’, he can be addressed to as Āhǔ 阿虎, Xiǎohǔ 小虎, Hǔ’ěr 虎兒, etc. (Yin 1998: 69–70). However, in contemporary China these methods seem to be less productive than the method of reduplication.

5. Conclusions

Chinese hypocoristic given names, as those expressing an affectionate or condescending attitude to the bearer, or simply because of being considered tender, intimate and beautiful, are associated mainly with children and females. The analysed hypocoristic female standard given names constitute names of 283 women of the research material and stand for about 9% of the names explored. They have been divided into two main categories, i.e. reduplicated names, in which reduplication serves as a formal marker of the “diminutiveness” (130 names; 4%), and hypocoristic names with various lexical markers of “diminutiveness” (153 names, 5%). Some of the diminutive lexical markers are presently rather sporadically used in name formation, and the reduplication seems to be the most typical method of creating contemporary Chinese hypocoristic names. Many Chinese hypocoristic standard given names have arisen as childhood names, and they have a kind of endearing but also childlike quality; others have been created in order to express and/or induce some closeness and intimacy. In contemporary society they still seem to be more proper for informal names than official ones, which are to be used in any time and any area of women’s activity.

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