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Linguistic composition and characteristics of Chinese given names

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to discuss various linguistic and cultural aspect of personal naming in China. In Chinese civilization, personal names, especially given names, were considered crucial for a person's fate and achievements. The more important the position of a person, the more various categories of names the person received. Chinese naming practices do not restrict the inventory of possible given names, i.e. given names are formed individually, mainly as a result of a process of onymisation, and given names are predominantly semantically transparent. Therefore, given names seem to be well suited for a study of stereotyped cultural expectations present in Chinese society.

The paper deals with numerous subdivisions within the superordinate category of personal name, as the subclasses of surname and given name. It presents various subcategories of names that have been used throughout Chinese history, their linguistic characteristics, their period of origin, and their cultural or social functions.

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The paper also deals with some semantic and structural features of standard given names in China's past and in contemporary times. In China, there have never been any strict linguistic rules concerning the gender-specific differentiation of names. Therefore, names are considered masculine or feminine mainly on the basis of the idea that some objects, actions, concepts, or qualities (reflected in names) are treated as characteristic of men or women in Chinese culture.

The paper is based on the approach of so-called cultural onomastics, which focuses on revealing the cultural content of personal names. Personal names are considered to be not only linguistic facts, but also cultural and social artefacts.

Keywords: Chinese names, subcategories of Chinese given names, semantic and structural features of Chinese given names, gender-specific differentiation of Chinese names.

La structure linguistique et les traits caractéristiques des prénoms chinois

Résumé : Nous étudions différents aspects linguistiques et culturels des anthroponymes en Chine. Dans la civilisation chinoise, les noms de personne, et en particulier les prénoms, ont été considérés comme très importants pour la vie et les succès de la personne qui les portait. Plus quelqu'un était haut placé dans la société, plus on lui donnait de prénoms. La pratique onomastique chinoise n'impose pas de restrictions quant au choix des prénoms possibles, c'est-à-dire qu'ils sont créés individuellement, le plus souvent par l'onymisation, et ils sont d'habitude sémantiquement transparents. Pour cette raison, les prénoms sont un matériau adéquat pour saisir des stéréotypes ou bien des attentes de la société chinoise.

De nombreuses classes figurent dans la catégorie englobante de l'anthroponyme constitué d'un nom et d'un prénom. Nous présentons les diverses sous-catégories des prénoms employés au cours de l'histoire de la Chine, leurs caractéristiques linguistiques, l'époque où ils ont été créés, ainsi que leurs fonctions culturelles et sociales.

Nous discutons aussi certains traits sémantiques et structuraux des prénoms usuels en Chine, dans le passé et à présent. En Chine il n'y a pas eu et il n'y a pas de règles linguistiques précises qui différencient les prénoms en fonction du sexe. Il en résulte que les prénoms sont considérés comme masculins ou féminins conformément à l'idée que certains objets, activités, conceptions ou caractéristiques (qui se reflètent dans les prénoms) sont typiques pour des hommes ou des femmes dans la culture chinoise.

Par une approche culturelle de l'onomastique, nous souhaitons expliciter la composante culturelle des prénoms. Ceux-ci ne sont pas considérés uniquement comme des faits de langue, mais aussi comme des artefacts culturels et sociaux.

Mots-clés : Noms chinois, sous-catégories des prénoms chinois, traits sémantiques et structuraux des prénoms chinois, choix des prénoms en fonction du sexe.

Sprachliche Struktur und Merkmale der chinesischen Vornamen

Zusammenfassung: Das Ziel dieses Beitrags ist es, verschiedene sprachliche und kulturelle Aspekte der Namensgebung in China zu diskutieren. In der chinesischen Zivilisation wurden Personennamen, insbesondere private Vornamen, als ausschlaggebend für das Schicksal und die Leistung einer Person angesehen. Je

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wichtiger die Position einer Person ist, desto mehr verschiedene Kategorien von Namen werden und wurden ihr verliehen. Chinesische Namenspraktiken schränken das Inventar denkbarer Vornamen nicht ein, d.h. Vornamen werden vorwiegend durch einen Prozess der Onymisierung individuell gebildet und Vornamen sind zumeist semantisch transparent. Daher sind Vornamen gut geeignet, um stereotype kulturelle Erwartungen in der chinesischen Gesellschaft zu studieren.

Diese Arbeit befasst sich mit den vielfältigen Facetten der Kategorie „Personenname“, die aus einem Nachnamen und einem Vornamen besteht. Hier werden verschiedene Unterkategorien von Namen, die in der chinesischen Geschichte verwendet wurden, ihre sprachlichen Eigenschaften, die Zeit ihrer Entstehung, ihre Entstehungsgeschichte und ihre kulturellen oder sozialen Funktionen vorgestellt.

Dieser Beitrag beschäftigt sich auch mit einigen semantischen und strukturellen Merkmalen von Standard-Vornamen in der Vergangenheit und in der Gegenwart Chinas. In China gab und gibt es keine strengen sprachlichen Regeln für die geschlechtsspezifische Differenzierung von Namen. Dementsprechend werden Namen als männlich oder weiblich hauptsächlich aufgrund der Vorstellung kategorisiert, dass einige Objekte, Prozesse, Konzepte oder Qualitäten (die sich in den Namen widerspiegeln) in der chinesischen Kultur als charakteristisch für Männer oder Frauen behandelt verden.

Diese Arbeit basiert auf der sogenannten kulturellen Onomastik, die sich auf die Analyse kultureller Inhalte von Personennamen konzentriert. Die Analyse der Personennamen umfasst dabei nicht nur sprachliche Elemente, sondern auch kulturelle und soziale Gegebenheiten.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Chinesischen Namen, Subdivision innerhalb der übergeordneten Kategorien eines chinesischen Vornamens, Sprachliche Struktur und Merkmale der chinesischen Vornamen, geschlechtsspezifische Differenzierung chinesischer Vornamen.

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Linguistic composition and characteristics of Chinese given names

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1. Introduction

Chinese (Han nationality) personal names form a rather complex part of the Chinese language lexicon (Kałużyńska 2008: 33–39). Most personal names retain the lexical meaning of their constituents (morphemes, words). Therefore, personal names are mostly semantically transparent, and this semantic transparency sometimes causes problems with their identification as proper names in some contexts. Furthermore, personal names are recorded with the use of characters, the product of the Chinese ideographic-phonetic system. In the Chinese writing system, characters are strung together one after another without any indication of word boundaries. This system was developed on the basis of the monosyllabic nature of the Archaic Chinese (AC) language, where words were predominantly monosyllabic, and in that system, generally speaking, each individual word was represented by means of a single symbol, i.e. the Chinese character, *zì* 字. However, in later phases of language development, and especially in Modern Standard Chinese (MSC), each character is predominantly used to write down a monosyllable. Words consisting of more than one syllable are written with as many characters as there are syllables. Normally, each syllable can be considered to be a morpheme or word, having a lexical, grammatical or onomastic meaning, but occasionally some polysyllabic words of obscure etymology or of foreign origin cannot be divided into meaningful elements. In some cases, the characters are employed purely for their phonetic value, i.e. they are used in the notation of syllables of identical or similar pronunciation as phonetic (and consequently graphical) representations of the syllables transcribed.

2. Composition of Chinese personal names

The most common Chinese personal naming convention is that a personal name consists of a surname and a given name, and the basic pattern is considered "family name + given name", i.e. the family name precedes the given name. This sequence of the elements of personal names appeared during the Zhou Dynasty (1122–256 BC), and afterwards it began to be used as the standard pattern of Chinese personal names. The reversal of the order of parts of

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personal names, which occurs in contemporary China, causes some confusion unless the surname and given name are distinctive enough to be easily identified.

In Mainland China, in the People's Republic of China (PRC), Han nationality personal names are transcribed into the Roman alphabet in *pinyin*, the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet adopted in 1958, usually without tone marks. In Taiwan and some other countries, Chinese names are usually romanized according to the Wade-Giles system. Surnames and given names are written as separate words. The first letters of the surname and given name are in *pinyin* written in capital letters, e.g. *Jiang Dagao*, and in the Wade-Giles system the first letter of every element of a personal name is sometimes written in capital letters, e.g. *Chiang Ta Kao*, or only the first letter of the surname and given name is written in capital letters, and the elements of the given name are separated with a dash, e.g. *Chiang Ta-kao*.

The overarching form class (part of speech) of surnames and given names is that of nouns. However, the form classes of their constituents may be different. Sometimes, due to the overlapping of form classes in the Chinese language or for other reasons, the classes of name constituents are not determined, and consequently the relations between the constituents of polysyllabic (mainly disyllabic) names are unclear or ambiguous. Disyllabic surnames and given names are in most cases compound words. A compound is not only a combination of two or more free words bound together to form a new word, but the constituents of a compound are also bound morphemes other than affixes. The term is usually restricted to all those cases, where the constituents are roots or root words, as it is not always possible and practicable to exhibit the status of the constituents.

Chinese compound words, like syntactic constructions, are classified according to the kind of syntactic relation existing between their constituents, i.e. the type of syntactic relation binding the monosyllabic components into a whole. The main syntactic relationships and compound constructions are: coordination (coordinative constructions), subordination or determination (subordinative or determinative constructions), the Verb-Object relation (verb-object constructions), the Subject-Predicate relation (subject-predicate constructions), introduction or the Verb-Complement relation (verb-complement constructions) (cf. Chao 1968: 368–495; Chmielewski 1964: 115–121; Gorelov 1974: 7–8; Kałużyńska 2002: 60–61; Kałużyńska 2008: 34–36; Künstler 2000: 59–61; Li & Cheng 1990: 153–231; Norman 2005: 156; Zhang 1987: 97–198; Zhao 1992: 12–13).

Some disyllabic names are not compounds but derivational constructions consisting of one root morpheme/word and an affix, as some bound morphemes within 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. The status of some terms

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occurring in names, as the first or the end morphemes in a compound form, is not sufficiently clear; therefore, for many older names it seems better to treat an affix-like form as a root morpheme or a word, and the cases as examples of compounding rather than affixation.

Chinese names are usually constructed of one or more (in most cases of two) lexical items (morphemes or words). Since most lexical items retain their own lexical meaning in a name, Chinese names are sometimes considered lexical forms, rather than onomastic ones, i.e. as forms having lexical and/or associative meaning. Most Chinese personal names are not random combinations; they have a certain underlying significance, reflecting the associative level of meaning, i.e. the reason or reasons why the particular lexical or onomastic items are used in the naming process. The "true" significance of some names is sometimes very difficult to discover, and the conclusion is often based upon guesswork.

3. Semantic aspects of names

In Chinese culture, the relationship between a name and reality was not predominantly regarded as formal, nor as ideal, but as real and very important. A person's name was considered intimately connected with the person's fate. De Groot (1910: 1126), the eminent researcher of the religious system of China, stated: "The fact then is that the Chinese of ancient times were dominated by the notion that beings are intimately associated with their names".

As given names, especially standard given names, have always been considered very important in a person's life, the Chinese have usually paid great attention to their form and meaning. Traditionally, given names were and are predominantly selected bearing in mind not only their semantic content, but also the phonoaesthetic value of syllables and the numerological characteristics of strokes or other elements of Chinese characters used to write them down. In China, fortune-tellers and name-masters have often helped people to select an appropriate name. The advice given is often based upon astrological or esoteric principles, on the number of strokes of the Chinese characters used in writing down names or the perceived elemental value of the characters or words in relation to the person's date of birth and personal elemental value. The Chinese believed that a person's constitution and fate were predestined by the person's *bāzì* 八字 'eight characters', i.e. eight characters in four pairs indicating the year, month, day, and hour of a person's birth, each pair consisting of two appropriate cyclical signs of two sets: *tiāngān* 天干 'Heavenly Stems' and *dìzhī* 地支 'Earthly Branches'. The eight characters are also connected with the symbolic animals of the 12 year-cycle, *shǔxiang* 屬相, and the Five Elements of the universe, *wǔxíng*

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五行, i.e. Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth. The Five Elements can form parts or the whole of the Chinese character and are also represented in the number of strokes in a given character or the phonetic value of syllables. The Chinese believed that, by means of the appropriate name of a person, his or her constitution could be improved and his or her fate changed. Therefore, the words and characters for given names were, and still are, often chosen according to the above-mentioned concepts in order to bring good fortune to their bearers (Kałużyńska 2008: 36–37).

It is evident that Chinese names can fully reveal their intended meaning or meanings when they are written. It is possible to misunderstand or misconstrue the spoken form of a name due to the abundance of homophones in Chinese and the variety of Chinese dialects and languages. A large number of homophones is evidently harmful to the intelligibility of the spoken language, and especially in the case of given names, as mainly monosyllabic or disyllabic forms. Therefore, Chinese symbolic, not strictly phonetic writing distinguishes to the eye what is homophonous to the ear. The written form distinguishes the morpheme/word within a group of several homophonous ones, as almost every single morpheme/word has its own character. However, homophones play a very important role in people's daily activities and naming behaviour, as the Chinese commonly apply the semantic ambiguity of homophones in expressing their desires by using words which are homophonic with the words denoting the idea. The method is generally known as *substitution by homophones*, called *tóngyīnzì dàitǐ* 同音字代替 or *xiéyīn zhuǎnyì biànhuà* 諧音轉義變化 in Chinese (Kałużyńska 2002: 222–225; Kałużyńska 2008: 38; Kałużyńska 2015). The peculiar nature of Chinese script also makes it possible for Chinese people, regardless of the differences in their spoken languages or dialects, to understand a written text or name. Furthermore, upon seeing a person's name written down, one can notice and appreciate the variety of its semantic and formal characteristics, and when a name is spoken, it is in a sense just a label identifying the person.

The Chinese approach to names, which are not considered mere labels helpful in the identification of people, but almost real facts, has determined their culture-oriented desires to be expressed through the deliberate formatting of their personal names and through the establishment of various rules regarding their use and protection.

4. Chinese given names and rules of name-giving

In China, there has never been a fixed and limited set or list of given names. It means that in the Chinese lexicon there is no category of words

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reserved specifically for personal names. The idea has always been to form Chinese given names individually by means of onymisation, i.e. the transfer of words or lexical units from the Chinese appellative lexicon, or transonymisation, i.e. the transfer of already existing proper names, or both.

At the beginning of Chinese civilization, a person had probably only one name given in infancy and used throughout one's life. With the differentiation of people's living standards, personal names began to be distinguished as to their form, meaning, importance, and domain of usage. Therefore, in the past a Chinese could have a number of names used in different situations (Alleton 1993: 155–169; Arlington 1923: 316; Bauer 1959: 8–15; Bernhardi 1913: 50; Cai 1988: 12–23; Kałużyńska 2008: 44–52; Li 1997: 64–103; Sung 1981: 67–87; Wang & Zhang 1991: 162–169; Xu & Zhang 1987: 48–53; Yuan, T. 1994: 44–93; 214–282). Different given names marked different stages in a person's private and social life. Therefore, the more important a person was, the more given names the person had.

In ancient China, the relationship between an individual and his/her given name, his/her private standard name in particular, was considered extremely important for his/her existence. The name expressed the essence of the individual and determined his/her destiny. Therefore, the Chinese regarded their names as an essential part of their identity and treated them with due respect. The special attention paid by the Chinese to their given names led to the appearance of the phenomenon of personal name taboo (Adamek 2015; Kałużyńska 1990).

The personal name taboo appeared in China around the 10th century BC and was abolished by the Revolution of 1911. At the beginning, it was restricted to the names of the dead, but it later began to include the names of the living. It became impossible to utter or write down the given names of a ruling sovereign, a notable individual or a person of high rank, as well as of one's parents or other ancestors. The Chinese resorted to different methods to avoid taboo violation. The private given names of notable persons were usually not used, only their surnames, public names and titles. Proper names or appellatives identical with sacred personal names were substituted by others. Anyone who failed to observe the taboo was acting against the law of the state and the rules of social behaviour.

In early Chinese texts, one can find many personal given names and certain rules concerning the creation of given names and name-giving. These rules defined what words or categories of words could be used or should be disused in name-giving, which was evidently connected with the taboo restrictions and the purpose of name-giving (Kałużyńska 2004).

The first rules concerning given names are to be found in *Zuozhuan* (5th century BC). The narrative enumerates five patterns of personal name-giving and six categories of given names to be avoided (Legge 1960: 46–50).

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The five patterns of personal name-giving are as follows:

(1) names inspired by some celestial events, which accompanied the birth;
(2) names referring to some auspicious omens or circumstances, which accompanied the birth;
(3) names referring to some physical features (appearance) of the bearer after his/her birth;
(4) names referring to some objects related to the bearer;
(5) names after characteristic features shared by a bearer with his/her father.

The six categories of forbidden given names are the following:

(1) given names based on state names;
(2) given names based on names of offices in a state;
(3) given names based on names of mountains and rivers of a state;
(4) given names based on names of diseases;
(5) given names based on names of domestic animals;
(6) given names based on names of ritual vessels or products.

The prohibitions in the domain of name-giving were mainly caused by the requirements of the naming taboo. If the above-mentioned terms and names were given as personal names, the previous ones would have to be abandoned or changed, and such changes resulted in many inconvenient side effects, such as the instability of names and difficulties in communication.

The regulations concerning name-giving evidently originated in the belief in the magical influence of language, the belief that words controlled objects, people, and spirits. It was believed that a good and correct name would bring good effects and fortune, while a bad name could lead to trouble and misfortune for individuals as well as for all the country.

Although most Chinese researchers into personal names consider the meaning of given names to be the most important factor determining their functions, they have not elaborated any precise definition of the concept, and the criteria of onomastic classifications are not sufficiently clear. The divisions of given names are mainly based upon the so-called methods or motivations, or sources of naming. A typical example of such a classification may be considered that provided by Wanyan Shaoyuan; the author categorises names according to 26 *qǔmíng fāngfǎ* 取名方法 'methods of naming' (Wanyan 1994: 61–65). The terms for these methods are translated or explained below on the basis of the information and examples given by the author. The main methods of naming are as follows:

(1) *jì shí fǎ* 紀時法 'method based on recording the time of someone's birth';
(2) *jì dì fǎ* 紀地法 'method based on recording the place of someone's birth, origin or living';
(3) *jì shì fǎ* 紀事法 'method based on recording the events occurring around the time of one's birth';

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(4) *jì dé fǎ* 紀德法 'method based on recording the merit', i.e. of recording mainly the surname of the benefactor of a newborn;
(5) *jì rén fǎ* 紀人法 'method based on recording the person', i.e. of recording the surname of the first person who entered the house of the newborn;
(6) *yìng mèng fǎ* 應夢法 'method based on responding to a dream';
(7) *yìng shì fǎ* 應筮法 'method based on performing divination';
(8) *yìng zhào fǎ* 應兆法 'method based on complying with omens';
(9) *yìng niàn fǎ* 應念法 'method based on complying with the feelings and concepts of parents and grandparents before the birth of a child;
(10) *yìng xiàng fǎ* 應象法 'method based on describing the appearance of the newborn';
(11) *biǎo dé fǎ* 表德法 'method based on expressing virtue', i.e. expressing the wishes for the future moral conduct of the newborn;
(12) *yàng xián fǎ* 仰賢法 'method based on expressing admiration for past sages or saints';
(13) *yán zhì fǎ* 言志法 'method based on expressing lofty aspirations connected with the newborn';
(14) *tuò jì fǎ* 拖寄法 'method based on expressing expectations concerning the future professional activity of the newborn';
(15) *yòng diǎn fǎ* 用典法 'method based on using famous sayings, citations, poems';
(16) *lián xìng fǎ* 連姓法 'method based on forming a phrase consisting of the surname and the given name standing together as a conceptual unit';
(17) *mìng lǐ fǎ* 命理法 'method based on the theory of Five Elements composing the universe';
(18) *shùn xù fǎ* 順序法 'method based on the order of birth of the children in a family';
(19) *tǐ zhòng fǎ* 體重法 'method based on the weight of the newborn';
(20) *wù míng fǎ* 物名法 'method based on taking the name of any object';
(21) *jiā jiǎn fǎ* 加減法 'method based on adding or reducing', i.e. choosing words written in Chinese characters similar in graphical form, differentiated by one stroke;
(22) *dié zì fǎ* 疊字法 'method based on the reduplication of the syllable/word/character';
(23) *xiāng biān fǎ* 鑲邊法 'method based on choosing the words written in Chinese characters having the same radical or graphical element';
(24) *shēngxiào fǎ* 生肖法 'method based on using one of the names of the 12 symbolic animals associated with a 12-year cycle, used to

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denote the time of a person's birth';

(25) *yì yīn fǎ* 譯音法 'method based on transcribing foreign personal names', i.e. foreign names are divided into syllables and written in Chinese characters, selected mainly for their phonetic value as those recording monosyllabic Chinese morphemes/words of needed pronunciation, but usually also having a "good meaning";

(26) *hé xìng fǎ* 合姓法 'method based on the surnames of the father or mother', i.e. a given name of a child consists of one of the parent's surname, mainly the mother's, or a morpheme/word homophonous with this surname, sometimes with an additional morpheme/word.

The classification above reveals the complicated nature of Chinese given names and name-giving methods or sources for names. It sometimes deals with the meaning of names (meaning of lexical items of which the names consist) or with their formal aspects, like pronunciation or graphical form. Somewhat similar classifications of Chinese given names are to be found in some works listed in the References (see Deng 2002; Hui 2002; Ji 1993; Li 2004; Luo 2000; Xu & Xin 1999). Such classifications mostly require extra information on the circumstances of the origin of the names analysed. In a number of cases, on the basis of the lexical meaning of a name or its formal characteristics it is possible to deduce the name-giving method.

4.1. Chinese standard given names

The most important Chinese given names were called *míng* 名 'name', *dàmíng* 大名 'great name', *běnmíng* 本名 'original name', *zhèngmíng* 正名 'proper name; correct name', as well as *xuémíng* 學名 'learning name', *shūmíng* 書名 'book name', *xiàomíng* 校名 'school name', or *xùnmíng* 訓名 'standard name', *guānmíng* 官名 'official name', *pǔmìng* 譜名 'registered name' (Cai 1988: 12; Grafflin 1983: 385; Sung 1981: 70–71; Wang & Zhang 1991: 162–169; Xiao 1987: 92; Yuan, T. 1994: 44; Yuan, Y. 1994: 535). The German terms are *Namen*, *Wirkliche Namen*, *Grosser Namen*, *Schulnamen*, *Buchnamen*, *Heftnamen*, *Beamtennamen* (Bauer 1959: 13; Bernhardi 1913: 50), whereas the French term is *prénom* (Alleton 1993: 57).

According to ancient rules, the name was given three months after the birth of a child. Later, however, this name was often given one month after childbirth during a ceremony called *mǎnyuè* 滿月 'full month'.

As it was given mainly by one's parents or grandparents, this name was considered particularly valuable by the Chinese. It was treated as private and sacred, and as having great importance in a person's life. People felt and manifested a kind of aversion to use it, especially in relation to people whom they were bound to respect. Therefore, this name was used mainly by the person himself/herself or by the person's seniors. The special attention paid

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by the Chinese to this name led to the phenomenon of the personal name taboo, mentioned above.

Many Chinese could have several other names, also called *míng*, but with certain additional specific terms, e.g.: a name registered in the family's genealogical book was called *pǔmíng* 譜名 'registered name'. Upon starting the learning process, the child could have another name given to him/her, called *xuémíng* 學名 'learning name', *shūmíng* 書名 'book name', or *xiàomíng* 校名 'school name', sometimes also *xùnmíng* 訓名 'standard name'. On having official distinctions or rank conferred on him, a man often took another name, known as *guānmíng* 官名 'official name' (Ball 1926: 415; Wang & Zhang 1991: 161–162). Sometimes these other names were treated as the standard given name of a person. Therefore, in some cases it is difficult to ascertain which kind of *míng* is recorded in historical documents.

4.2. Chinese childhood names

The first name of a person, in the order of bestowing, could be an unofficial childhood name, in German called *Kindheitsname* (Bernhardi 1913: 50) or *Kindername* (Bauer 1959: 12), and in French – *petit nom* (Alleton 1993: 171). The name in Chinese is called *xiǎomíng* 小名 or *xiǎozì* 小字 'small name; pet name', also *rǔmíng* 乳名 or *nǎimíng* 奶名 'milk name', *háimíng* 咳名 'infant name', or *yòumíng* 幼名 'childhood name' (Alleton 1993: 171–175; Ball 1926: 414; Bauer 1959: 12; Cai 1988: 12; Sung 1981: 69; Wanyan 1994: 75; Xiao 1987: 90; Yuan, T. 1994: 85; Yuan, Y. 1994: 531; Xu & Xin 1999: 451; Zhang 1992: 60; Zhu & Millward 1987: 19).

The use of childhood names, considered as informal and hypocoristic, appeared during the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD). The custom continues until contemporary times, as presently many Chinese children have informal hypocoristic childhood names (Ji 1993: 102; Wanyan 1994: 75; Yuan, T. 1994: 85; Yin 1998: 68).

Childhood names were usually bestowed just after the birth of a child or during the first month of a child's life and considered informal, used mainly by one's parents, grandparents, or other senior relatives, and sometimes neighbours or close friends. A pet name was rarely used after one had grown up. However, the childhood name could sometimes be used in official matters as a standard name, if the person had no other names or considered it good enough. Childhood names of certain emperors and notable persons were considered as sacred as their standard names and were tabooed (Yuan, T. 1994: 88).

The most common types of Chinese pet names can be considered the following (cf. Kałużyńska 2008: 57–61; Liang 2003: 223–224, 236; Sung 1981: 69–70; Wanyan 1994: 75; Xu & Xin 1999: 451; Yin 1998: 69–70; Yuan, Y. 1994: 531):

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(1) names based on *shēngxiào* 生肖 'the year of one's birth' in relation to one of the 12 symbolic animals (commonly *niú* 牛 'cattle', *hǔ* 虎 'tiger', *lóng* 龍 'dragon', *gǒu* 狗 'dog');
(2) names formed by adding the term *xiǎo* 小 'small, little' to a given standard name or another word, e.g.: someone named *Ming* 明 'Bright' can be called *Xiaoming* 小明 'Small Ming'/'Small Bright';
(3) names formed by prefixing endearing terms/adding prefixes to a given name or other term; the typical prefix is *ā* 阿 frequently used with a given standard name, e.g.: *Mei* 美 'Beautiful' can become *Amei* 阿美;
(4) names constructed by adding a diminutive suffix or a suffix-like form to the last syllable of a child's standard name or another word: *ér* 兒 'son; child', *zi* 子 or 仔 'son, child', or *nú* 奴 'young woman; bondservant';
(5) names obtained by prefixing ordinal numbers or lexemes indicating the birth order in a family (*dà* 大 'big', 'the eldest', *èr* 二 'the second', etc.), and by using a word the names of all the siblings: e.g., *fú* 福 'luck', and the eldest child would have the name *Dafu* 大福 'The Eldest Luck', the second one would be called *Erfu* 二福 'The Second Luck', etc.;
(6) names formed by reduplicating the only syllable/morpheme/word of monosyllabic names or the final syllable/morpheme/word of disyllabic standard given names, e.g.: the pet name of the person named *Lan* 蘭 'Orchid' can be *Lanlan* 蘭蘭, and the pet name based on the name *Yucui* 玉翠 'Jade Green' can be *Cuicui* 翠翠; this category also includes names formed by means of the reduplication of any morpheme/word;
(7) so-called "depreciating names", i.e. apotropaic names having unpleasant meanings or associations, but considered to avert bad luck and provide protection to a child, e.g.: *Chougui* 丑鬼 'Ugly Monster';
(8) endearing names, i.e. names having pleasant meanings or associations, as revealing intimacy and love to children treated as precious, e.g.: *Bao* 寶 'Treasure'.

4.3. Chinese styles or social names

There is a category of Chinese given names called *zì* 字 'style', 'social name' or 'courtesy name' (Grafflin 1983: 385; Sung 1981: 85; Wang & Zhang 1991: 163; Zhu & Millward 1987: 18), or 'marriage name' (Watson 1986: 624). The German terms for this type of name are *Mannesnamen*, *Namen der Erwachsen*, *Aussen-Namen*, *Grossjährigkeitsnamen* (Bauer 1959: 14; Bernhardi 1913: 50), and the French term is *nom social* (Alleton 1993: 59).

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After the Sui and Tang dynasties (618–906), this kind of names was also called *biǎozì* 表字 'secondary personal name' (Wang 1992: 103) or 'style revealing merits' (Yan 2001: 58; Yuan, T. 1994: 57). Such a name was traditionally bestowed during a special ceremony to girls (~ 15 years old) and boys (~ 20 years old) for use in the public sphere (Ball 1926: 415; Sung 1981: 86). The ceremony for boys was called *guànlǐ* 冠禮 'capping ceremony; rite of capping', and for girls *jīlǐ* 笄禮 'hair-pinning ceremony; rite of hair-pinning'.

The custom of bestowing styles, marking the beginning of adulthood, began sometime during the Shang Dynasty (1766–1122 BC) and slowly developed into a system. When boys were capped and girls hair-pinned, they were assigned an additional name, *zì*, as a sign of respect for their newly achieved adulthood and in order to maintain the honour of their standard given names, *míng*. A person could have more than one style (Yuan, T. 1994: 56, 444). As a rule, styles consisted of two words/characters. They could be used separately or together with surnames.

The tradition of using style names has been fading since about 1911. The system of a separate *míng* 名 'standard name' and *zì* 字 'style' finally became obsolete, and in contemporary China the term *míngzì* 名字, the composition of these two terms, means 'given name'.

5. Chinese appellations

In the past in China, prior to the year 1949, certain people, especially rulers, nobles, and literati, had a kind of supplementary appellation generally called *hào* 號 in addition to their surnames and given names. The first broader explanations of the term can be found in commentaries to classical texts by the Han Dynasty scholars. In *Zhouli* [Rites of Zhou] one can find an explanation given by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200): "號謂尊其名,更爲美稱焉" [Hao is (an appellation used) to honour one's name (*míng*), and what's more, it is a laudatory appellation] (*Zhouli* 1957: 913).

Some appellations are called by means of different terms consisting of the morpheme *míng* 名 (instead of *hào*) and other descriptive elements, cf. below. The appellations were used during their bearers' life or after their death instead of their standard names.

5.1. Chinese assumed names

Assumed names were quite popular in China of the past, especially among men of letters and some female professionals. They were called *hào* 號 or *biéhào* 別號 'appellation', 'style name', 'another style', 'assumed name', 'alias' (Ball 1926: 415; Cai 1988: 17; Li 1997: 80–85; Sung 1981: 86;

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Wang & Zhang 1991: 162–169; Xiao 1987: 95–96; Wang 1992: 625; Zhu & Millward 1987: 18). The German terms for these names are *Art Lebensmotto*, *Unterschiedener Name* (Bauer 1959: 14; Bernhardi 1913: 50), and the French term is *surnom* (Alleton 1993: 59). The first proper *hào* appellations occurred during the Zhou Dynasty.

A person could have many various *hào* appellations, which was quite common among famous men of letters. Usually, a *hào* appellation was used instead of the standard given name of a person, i.e. it followed the person's surname. However, it could be used instead of the whole personal name of the person, as a separate appellation, constructed out of one to even 28 words. Typical *hào* appellations were coined of 2–4 words (Yuan, T. 1994: 447). The appellations were often associated with the place where the person lived, or they sometimes reflected the person's aspirations, character, or other features. Nowadays, bearing a *hào* is no longer common practice, although many artists still employ artistic or stage names, and writers use pen names or pseudonyms, which have some characteristics similar to those of the old *hào*.

5.2. Chinese nicknames

A kind of name used quite extensively both in the past and in the present in China is called *wàihào* 外號 'outside name', *hùnhào* 諢號 or *hùnmíng* 諢名, *hùnhào* 渾號 or *hùnmíng* 渾名, *hùnhào* 混號 or *hùnmíng* 混名 'casual name', and also *chuòhào* 綽號 'extra name', *súhào* 俗號 'vulgar name', *huámíng* 華名 'flowery name', i.e. 'epithet name', 'sobriquet' or 'nickname' (Ball 1926: 415; Kehl 1971: 149; Moore 1993: 69–70, Sung 1981: 87; Wang 1992: 710–711; Wang & Zhang 1991: 162–169; Xiao 1987: 201–203; Yuan, T. 1994: 463–464; Yin 1998: 174–180; Zhu & Millward 1987: 19). The German terms are *Übername*, *Spitzname*, *Ungeordneter Name*, *Freizügiger Name*, *Spassname* (Bauer 1959: 14), and the French term is *sobriquet* (Alleton 1993: 175). These informal, unofficial names are bestowed on individuals in addition to their given names. Terms for names belonging to this type appeared during the Song Dynasty (960–1279).

Nickname appellations usually consist of a surname and a descriptive term based on such characteristics as one's physical and psychological features, intellectual abilities, habits, hobbies, and the like. Therefore, the descriptive nickname element is attached to a surname to form an affectionate, derogatory, humorous or ironic appellation of a person. Another type of nickname comprises those appellations functioning independently, i.e. without surnames. They are meaningful, usually descriptive and affectionate.

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5.3. Chinese clerical names

After the ceremony of ordination, Chinese monks and nuns assumed clerical names or religious names, called in Chinese *fǎmíng* 法名 or *fǎhào* 法號 'Buddhist name', *jièmíng* 戒名 'monkhood or nunhood name', *dàomíng* 道名 or *dàohào* 道號 'Taoist name' (Li 1997: 85–87; Wang & Zhang 1991: 166; Yin 1998: 199). The German terms are *Klostername*, *Priestername*, *Dharma-Name*, and *Tao-Name* (Bauer 1959: 15).

In the case of Buddhist monks and nuns, clerical names were used without surnames, due to the fact that monks and nuns left their families and had to abandon surnames as devices indicating their familial relations. The first word/character of names of Buddhist monks was usually the same for all the disciples of one master. After the Jin Dynasty (265–420), the first word/character of names often was *Shì* 釋, being the abbreviation of the Chinese name of *Sakyamuni*, *Shijiamuni* 釋迦穆尼. It was considered to be the dummy surname for all Buddhist monks (Li 1997: 86; Wang 1992: 1497). Buddhist names usually consisted of two syllables/words, closely associated with Buddhist religion and culture.

Taoist names were commonly used as a kind of assumed name, *hào*, following the surnames or used as separate appellations. Some names were self-assumed and some were given by pupils to their master, e.g.: Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (?–156) was called by his pupils *Zhang Tianshi* 張天師 'Heavenly Teacher Zhang'/'Zhang The Preceptor of Heaven', or *Zhengyi Tianshi* 正一天師 'Pure Heavenly Teacher' (Li 1997: 86).

5.4. Chinese posthumous memorial names

Chinese rulers and notables were granted certain names posthumously in addition to the given names bestowed during their lifetime. After death their standard names had to be tabooed, and the deceased were recorded and known by posterity by their posthumous names. Names of this kind were called *shì* 諡, *shìmíng* 諡名 or *shìhào* 諡號 'posthumous names', 'posthumous memorial names', 'posthumous memorial titles', i.e. *Postume Name* in German (Bauer 1959: 14; Dubs 1945: 28; Sung 1981: 87; Wang & Zhang 1991: 166–168). The system started during the Zhou Dynasty, but it was discontinued by the Qin Dynasty (221–206), as the emperor proclaimed that it was disrespectful for descendants to judge their elders. It was re-established during the Han Dynasty, and preserved until the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912). Since the founding of the Republic of China, the bestowal of posthumous names has been abolished (Luo 2002: 94).

Posthumous memorial names were conferred to rulers, high officials, and certain eminent scholars or politicians during the sacrifice of departure. They

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were chosen by special masters of ceremony at the court, on the basis of an evaluation of the bearer's conduct and moral qualities during his/her lifetime.

From the Zhou Dynasty onwards, certain high officials and scholars were granted posthumous names by relatives or friends. These names were called *sìshì* 私諡 'private posthumous memorial titles', e.g.: Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (?–427), the famous writer and poet, was given the posthumous name *Jingjie* 靖節 'Peaceful and Moral' by his friends, and posterity often called him *Jingjie Xiansheng* 靖節先生 'Peaceful and Moral Master' or '*Tao* 陶 [surname] *Jingjie* 靖節 [memorial title]' (Wang & Zhang 1991: 166).

The composition of posthumous memorial names was based on strict regulations. Memorial names could be commendatory, critical or compassionate. Strict regulations resulted in a fixed list of terms used as memorial names. Some scholars claim that there were altogether 102 terms used for the composition of memorial names (He & Hu & Zhang 2002: 168), others mention 168, 194 or even 200 such terms (He 2001: 50).

Virtuous wives of rulers or noblemen were sometimes called by posthumous names, usually not by their own memorial names, but by the memorial titles of their husbands. However, famous Chinese women, mainly empresses and imperial concubines, were also granted their own posthumous names. The famous empress of the Tang Dynasty, Wu Zetian 武則天 (624–705), is generally recorded under her surname *Wu* 武, followed by the posthumous memorial title, *Zetian* 則天 'Modelled on Heaven', sometimes translated as 'She Who Modelled Herself on Heaven' (*Huaxia funü mingren cidian* 1988: 642; Idema & Grant 2004: 65; Zang 1921: 593.2).

5.5. Chinese posthumous temple names

In China in the past there was a variety of posthumous names called *miàohào* 廟號 'posthumous temple names' or 'temple names' (Dubs 1945: 30; He 2001: 50; He & Hu & Zhang 2002: 169; Luo 2002: 96). They were given to rulers after their death; a ruler's posthumous temple name was written on ancestral tablets in the grand temple. The custom of bestowing temple names began during the Shang Dynasty. Temple names were usually constructed with a eulogizing term, chosen to reflect the circumstances of the ruler's reign, and such terms as *zǔ* 祖 'forefather, founder' or *zōng* 宗 'ancestor'. In the Han Dynasty and later, upon dying the first emperor was habitually called *Taizu* 太祖 'Grand Forefather', *Gaozu* 高祖 'High Forefather', or *Shizu* 世祖 'Generation Forefather'. Other emperors were called *Taizong* 太宗 'Grand Ancestor', *Gaozong* 高宗 'High Ancestor', or *Shizong* 世宗 'Generation Ancestor'.

Beginning with the Tang Dynasty, due to the fact that there were many emperors from the same dynasty, eulogizing terms added to the two generic terms, *zǔ* or *zōng*, were more numerous and varied. Until the end of the Yuan

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Dynasty (1260–1368), emperors were recorded in historical texts mainly by their posthumous temple names following the name of the dynasty.

5.6. Chinese reign titles

Titles of different periods of reign of Chinese rulers were called *niánhào* 年號 'reign titles, year titles'. The practice of dividing an emperor's reign into smaller units, called *periods* or *eras* (counting subsequent years in relation to these periods), was initiated during the Han Dynasty as an element of a new chronological system (He & Hu & Zhang 2002: 166–167; Moule 1957: 5; Niu 1993: 121; Wen 1983: 30; Shi 1986: 51; Xu & Zheng & Wang 1987: 124).

Titles of reign were usually composed of two morphemes/words; however, they occasionally consisted of three or four elements. Sometimes their meaning was simply descriptive, e.g. 'Beginning Period', but more often they had a commendatory meaning, e.g. 'Great Peace', or a commemorative meaning in honour of certain important events, such as 'First Tribute'. In the history of China there were altogether 706 reign titles containing 251 different morphemes/words/characters (He & Hu & Zhang 2002: 167).

At the end of the 16th century, the whole reign of a ruler started to be counted as one period; as a result, reign titles began to be used as appellations for emperors. Therefore, the emperors of the Ming (1368–1662) and Qing dynasties were usually referred to by means of the title of their reign periods instead of their posthumous temple names.

5.7. Chinese honorific titles

Chinese rulers and some notables were granted certain titles of respect, called *zūnhào* 尊號 or *huīhào* 徽號 'honorific titles, eulogizing titles, titles of honour'. The latter term, with the lexical meaning 'beautiful title', is considered to have been in use since the Tang Dynasty (Yuan, T. 1994: 374) or the period of the Five Dynasties (Wang & Zhang 1991: 167). The first *hào* appellations (*dì* 帝 'Emperor', *wáng* 王 'King', *huáng* 皇 'the August One') are considered to have been the first honorific titles. However, some scholars claim that the first name of this kind was actually the title *huángdì* 皇帝 'August Emperor, Heavenly Emperor', later usually translated as 'emperor', granted to the king of the Qin state after his conquest of other states. Therefore, he is known in history as *Qin Huangdi* 秦皇帝 'Qin August Emperor' or *Qin Shi Huangdi* 秦始皇帝 'The First August Emperor of Qin', 246–210 BC (Wang & Zhang 1991: 167; ZLMC 1984: 43).

The custom of elaborate honorific titles self-assigned by the emperors or granted to them by their grateful subjects is considered to have flourished especially in the times of the Tang Dynasty and later (Yuan, T. 1994: 374).

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Many such titles were quite long, consisting of several words, e.g. the honorific title of Xuanzong 玄宗 (712–756), the emperor of the Tang Dynasty, was *Kaiyuan Sheng Wen Shen Wu Huangdi* 開元聖文神武皇帝 'Founder of the New Era, Sacred, Refined, Saint, Militant Emperor' (Wang & Zhang 1991: 167).

5.8. Chinese nobility titles

Appellations based on ranks of nobility conferred by rulers on their eminent subjects are called *fēnghào* 封號 'nobility titles' (Wang & Zhang 1991: 169). In feudal times rulers conferred *juéwèi* 爵位 or *juéhào* 爵號 'rank or title of nobility, peerage' on members of their families, friends or outstanding persons. The typical titles of nobility were *wáng* 王 'king, prince', *gōng* 公 'duke', *hóu* 侯 'marquis', *bó* 伯 'earl, count', *zì* 子 'viscount', and *nán* 男 'baron'. Together with the title of nobility, the noble was conferred an estate of land, of the size typically accorded to the rank. In the time of the Zhou Dynasty, the owners of the land were the rulers of the territory of their fiefs. After the Qin and Han dynasties, due to political and administrative changes, the nobles retained only the right to collect taxes in their estates of land. Names of the fiefs (place names) and terms for ranks of nobility were joined together and formed nobility titles, *fēnghào*, frequently used as names of nobles instead of their personal names (Wang & Zhang 1991: 169).

5.9. Chinese official title appellations

Chinese officials were divided according to official ranking and titular honours, identified by means of the terms *guānjué* 官爵 'official rank' or *guānxián* 官銜 'official title' (Wang 1992: 577–578, 1777). The typical names of officials were thus their surnames followed by the term of official rank (usually not in its full form but abbreviated to two syllables/words). Such names are considered to be *guānchēng* 官稱 or *xiánmíng* 銜名 'official appellations, official title names' (Wang 1992: 1777; Yuan, T. 1994: 270–275).

5.10. Chinese appellations denoting position and influence

Some officials and men of letters in pre-modern China were called by a type of appellations, *dìwàng chēng* 地望稱 'position and influence appellations' (Yuan, T. 1994: 276). Such names were formed by means of the shift of a place name to designate a person and were quite common from the Tang Dynasty onwards, especially during the Song and Ming dynasties. These appellations normally consisted of a surname followed by a place name. The shifted place name could be the name of the place of origin of the

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person or the name of a place where the most distinguished families sharing the same surname lived, as well as the name of the place where the official held his post (ZLMC 1984: 127; Yuan, T. 1994: 282).

5.11. Chinese studio appellations

Chinese literati could also bear *shìmíng* 室名 or *zhāishìmíng* 斋室名, i.e. 'studio appellations' (Wang & Zhang 1991: 165; Yin 1998: 158; Yuan, T. 1994: 458–459). A studio appellation was usually made up of two parts. One part obligatorily consisted of a term denoting a kind of dwelling, e.g.: *gé* 閣 'pavilion; cabinet', *táng* 堂 'hall', *zhāi* 斋 'studio'. The custom of studio names began around the period of the Three Kingdoms (220–280), was quite common in the time of the Tang Dynasty, and flourished during the Ming and Qing dynasties (Yuan, T. 1994: 459–460). It was quite common among the literati to call each other by the name of their studio instead of their standard personal names.

5.12. Chinese adopted names – pseudonyms

Chinese people could and still can adopt fictitious names to hide their identity. Such names are generally called *jiǎmíng* 假名 'cover names' (Wang 1992: 760) or *huàmíng* 化名 'assumed names, aliases, pseudonyms' (Sung 1981: 86; Wang 1992: 674; Yin 1998: 185–186). Many such names have appeared due to political reasons, when political figures were forced to hide their true names. The first examples of assuming false names are found in texts from the Zhou Dynasty (Yin 1998: 186).

Most modern adopted names or pseudonyms consist of names used by certain writers instead of their real names. Such names are called *bǐmíng* 筆名 'pen names, pseudonyms' (He 2001: 293–302; Luo 2002: 123–127; Sung 1981: 87; Wang 1992: 80; Yin 1998: 211). The term and the custom of assuming pen names appeared at the end of the 19th century under the influence of Western culture.

Another specific group of false names are those used by artisans and artists, especially actors and actresses, and called *yìmíng* 藝名 'artistic names, stage names' (He 2001: 302–307; Luo 2002: 109–113; Wang 1992: 1958; Yin 1998: 229). The term began to be used during the Qing Dynasty, as the term *hào* had been used earlier (HD 1994: 9.601).

Chinese pseudonyms could retain forms similar to typical Chinese personal names; in such a case they consisted of an original or false surname of a person, followed by a false name. They can also be forms without surnames, i.e.: appellations consisting of two or more (usually three) syllables/morphemes/words.

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6. Chinese female and male naming

In theory, a Chinese woman could bear names from all the categories of given names specific to Chinese civilization. There are no statements in any historical texts indicating that women were excluded from the privilege of having given names. In practice, however, most women were neglected in the domain of name-giving. The ultimate purpose in the lives of decent girls in patrilineal and patrilocal Chinese society was to get married and have children. They were not usually considered members of any clan lineage, neither that of their fathers, nor that of their husbands. The fact of their birth was scarcely recorded in genealogies or other documents. Female personal names, mainly surnames, could normally be noted in genealogical records in the case of marriage or death. While women stayed at their paternal house, they were simply called *daughters* or *sisters*, and once at the husband's household, they were just *wives* or *mothers*. Since they had narrow access to the outside world, they were mostly known only by their own family, relatives, and intimates. Therefore, given names for girls and women were usually considered not very important or even simply useless. However, it is evident that many women in China's past, especially women of the higher classes of the society, had individual given names, even if these names were not used often (Kałużyńska 2008).

Gender is an important social factor evoking certain naming differentiation. In China, there were and still are no strict linguistic rules concerning gender-specific differentiation of names. Gender marking is less obvious in Chinese than in many other languages, as the Chinese language does not have grammatical gender, and gender is in most cases a covert category.

In Chinese civilization, manhood and womanhood are related to the aspects of two primal, opposing, yet complementary forces or principles found in all things, i.e. *yáng* 陽 and *yīn* 陰, with men being linked with attributes of the *yáng*, and women with the *yīn*. The *yáng* force is bright, active, strong and firm, and corresponds to the sun, heaven, day, south, summer, and creation, while the *yīn* force is dark, passive, weak and tender, and corresponds to the moon, earth, night, north, winter, material forms, etc. Therefore, names are considered masculine or feminine mainly on the basis of the idea that some objects, actions, concepts or qualities (reflected in names) are considered to be characteristic of men or women in Chinese culture, either as *yīn-yáng* qualities or simply as gender-specific attributes.

Many traditional male names have references to such qualities as being strong, healthy, brave, active, auspicious, loyal, intelligent, educated. Men are expected to prolong the family, to bring honour to ancestors, the nation and the country, to create, to build, and to defend. They are usually associated with the sea, big waves, mountain peaks, pine trees, and powerful animals.

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Traditional Chinese female names are mainly supposed to refer to such qualities as being moral, pure, chaste, beautiful, sweet, quiet, laborious. Women are usually associated with the moon and some natural *yīn* phenomena, precious things, cosmetics, birds, and flowers.

It is generally considered that "good" names for men and women need to be different, in accordance with their different physiological features and gender roles or simply due to the need for the proper identification of the person named. Almost all the differences in male and female Chinese names are connected with the meaning of these names, i.e. the meaning of the lexical items of which the names are constructed.

Nowadays, many Chinese girls are given names that can be considered either unisex or generally treated as typically masculine, and an increase in the use of such names for females has been noted. However, gender stereotyping still exists in China and this can be well observed in the field of personal naming.

7. Conclusion

The paper has presented various linguistic and cultural aspects of personal naming in China. It has discussed various subcategories of given names and appellations that have been used throughout Chinese history, their linguistic characteristics, the period of their origin, and their cultural or social functions.

The paper has also dealt with some semantic and structural features of given names in China's past and in contemporary times, as well as some basic rules concerning the gender-specific differentiation of names.

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