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**Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity  
(including indigenous, minority and regional language names)**

**Protection for Cultural Heritage of Geographical Names in China**

Submitted by China\*\*

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\*\* Prepared by : Liu Baoquan (China), Chairman of the China Division, and Liu Lianan (China), Researcher of China Institute of Toponymy

## Protection for Historical-Cultural Heritage of Geographical Names in China

Prepared by: Liu Baoquan (China), Chairman of the China Division, and Liu Lianan (China),  
Researcher of China Institute of Toponymy

As a country with a long history, there are a myriad of Chinese geographical names which are rich in cultural meanings. According to the resolutions on protecting the cultural heritage of geographical names which were made by the United Nation's Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, China started to research and protect the culture of geographical names from 2004, and got good results. The main practices are as follows:

- 1. Research first, scientific planning.** According to the national statistics and current situation, some relevant experts began to research and sample geographical names of social geography entities and natural geography entities. Also, the using history, the cultural meaning and the cultural value of geographical names were researched and the theory of the culture of the geographical names was explored as well. On the basis of the theory, *The Master Protection Planning for Cultural Heritage of Geographical Names of China* was completed. A theoretical book called *Outline to Cultural Heritage of Geographical Names* was compiled and was designed as a direction book.
- 2. Highlighting key points, making standards.** According to the principles on protecting the World Heritage Sites, such as, "outstanding universal value" and "being in an endangered status", we focus on the protection of geographical names of the ancient cities (capital cities), the ancient counties, the ancient towns, the ancient villages of thousand years' history, the geographical names of the inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty and ancient bronze objects, the geographical names in minority-languages, the geographical names of famous natural geography entities and the modern geographical names of the cultural heritage on the basis of fully strengthening the protection for the culture of the geographical names. For the purpose of strict selection, the standard, *Appraisal for Historic-Cultural Heritage of Geographical Names*, was formulated. It was special made for the eight kinds of geographical names we mentioned above.
- 3. The government leads, the community participates.** Ministry of Civil Affairs is the authority of the geographical names of China. With the support of other relevant departments and the community, Ministry of Civil Affairs is responsible for leading in organizing the national protection of the cultural heritage of geographical names. In order to make the community fully participates, Ministry of Civil Affairs has established a non-government organization— China Association for the Promotion of Cultural Heritage Protection of Geographical Names .
- 4. Awarding tablets, setting up monuments, highlighting connotations.** In order to maintain the seriousness of the selection of important cultural heritage of geographical names and attract the attention of the community, any local government, whose name is selected as cultural heritage of China's geographical name, will get certificates. And a monument will be set up at that place. The inscriptions of the monuments include the origin, the cultural meanings and other information of the names.
- 5. Drawing up name list, enhancing publicity.** According to practices of the *World Cultural Heritage List*, the names which are selected as the cultural heritage of China's geographical names will be contained in the *List of Key Protection for Cultural Heritage of Geographical Names*. We will publish related books and make thematic documentary TV play for publicity. By now, we have produced 52 episodes of the docudrama — □□□□□*Qian Nian Gu Xian*□*An Ancient County of Thousands Years' History*). This docudrama plays 40 minutes every episode. It was played by CCTV ( the national TV station of China) to audiences of the whole country and it has received abundant praise from the audience.
- 6. Establishing rules and regulations, ensuring long-term development.** In order to make a long-term and effective protection for cultural heritage of the geographical names, governments at all levels are required to

establish long-term mechanism, print and hand out normative documents about the protection and inheriting of cultural heritage of geographical names. Every province is asked to establish the information management system to track and monitor cultural heritage which was listed in the name list. The names are needed to change for special reasons, consequently, the strict verification and approval procedures should be implemented, and the names in cultural heritage should be retained in other suitable places.

At present, the protection for cultural heritage of geographical names of China has started nationwide and it is progressing well. When conditions are ripe, in accordance with the requirement of *The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, we will conduct the program of declaring the intangible cultural heritage for Chinese geographical names, and contribute to the enrichment of the world's culture and the development of human creativity.