

UNITED NATIONS

Group of Experts on
Geographical Names

Fourteenth Session
Geneva, 17-26 May 1989

WORKING PAPER

No. 71
18 May 1989

Agenda item 5

REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE CHINA DIVISION

5

The Fourteenth Session of the United Nations
Group of Experts on Geographical Names

Paper Submitted by China Division

Since the Fifth UN Conference on the standardization of Geographical Names in 1987, further progress has been made in this field in China.

The following are several major aspects:

1. Two turning points of place-name work

With the reform of political system in our country, the secretarial office of the China Committee on Geographical Names was incorporated in the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and the Department of Administrative Divisions and Geographical Names Management was established, so it turns to be the functional department of government. Every provincial, regional and prefectural organization responsible for the place-name work, is being incorporated with the corresponding departments of government at all levels. At the same time, the place-name work is also shifted from the basis of creative work to the new stage of legal systematic management.

2. Starting out the supplementary investigation and material renewal work of place names

In order to obtain place names and information further that have not been investigated in the general investigation of place names all over the country, and place names that have been replaced or added in recent years, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and China Committee on Geographical Names decided to carry out the supplementary investigation and material renewal work of place names all over the Country. This task has been arranged in 1988. It is required that this task should be basically completed by the end of 1990. At present the experimental work is being made and part of the work has been carried out in some provinces.

Under the leadership of the People's Government of Tibet Autonomous region, the general investigation of place names in Tibet is going on smoothly. The place names' experts from Liaoning and Jilin province have been sent respectively and assist to complete this task. It is supposed that the field survey work should be completed by this year, and the office treatment work will be completed next year. On the basis of the work having been done, the gazetteer and dictionary of place names will be compiled.

3. Working out the standardization of the information system of chinese place names

In order to satisfy the needs of modernization construction with the place names information as soon as possible, it is very necessary to establish the place-name information storage and index system by computer. China Committee on Geographical Names requires that this system should be seeked a unity of standardization, so that the place-name information can be shared by departments concerned. The experts concerned have been organized to study the subject, and through making experiments in a county, to work out the information system standardization of place names used throughout the country. At present the rough draft of standardization is under revision.

4. The development of the place-name work and the training of talents on toponymy

China Society of Toponymy was formally established in July, 1988. So far the society has more than 400 members and two group members. It is divided into five special committees:

theoretical toponymy, applied toponymy, place-name textual research, place-name management and foreign place names. The five committees will engage in academic researching from different views. The first volume of academic theses will be published this year.

With the development of the research work of toponymy, more and more

talents of toponymy are badly needed. The Ministry of Civil Affairs have decided to train the talent of toponymy in Nanjing University since the second half of this year. The program will offer more than twenty courses which include geography, history, linguistics, cartology, ethnology, archival science, place names data-base, toponymy, place-name textual research, geographical names management administrative divisions and so on. Moreover, the volume relating to Zhejiang province, part of the dictionary of geographical names in the People's Republic of China, and the gazetteer on translation of place names of the Federal Republic of German have already been published.

In short, chinese government has attached great importance to the geographical name work and great achievements have been obtained. However, China is a country with 56 nations, having a population of 1.1 billion and a history of 5,000 years, and thereafter it is very difficult to realize the place-name standardization in our country. Though the task still remains very arduous, chinese experts and working staff on geographical names will continue to work hard and make greater achievements.