

What's In A Name? Ethnic Place Names and Geographic Place Names

INTRODUCTION: In many parts of the United States, local place names are often a good indicator of the dominant ethnic groups that originally settled an area (e.g., Spanish in the Southwest, Germans in southeastern Pennsylvania, French in Louisiana, British in New England). For example, if a place name ends in -mann, -burg, -berg, -lich, -stein, or -t(h)al, it is a likely indication that the name is of German origin. Using the *IUPUI Max Kade German-American Center* Web site (<http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/kade/nameword/nameword.html>), identify the original geographic locations of the following German word endings (Go to the file with the title "Identifying German Names."):

1. -burg _____
2. -bruck _____
3. -furt _____
4. -berg _____
5. -rode _____

Using a U.S. map or road atlas, compare the place names in their own region of the country with those found in sections of the United States. Determine what the most common language of origin was for these regional place names.

Another option is to speculate on place name origins. Go to the List of Interesting Town Names Web site (www.coolquiz.com/trivia/usa/), and locate your state (or nearby state, if your state isn't listed). Choose one interesting town name and speculate on the origin of that name.

In China, Mandarin Chinese place names are often determined by their geographic location. For example, the city of Beijing's English translation is "north capital." China has had several capital cities throughout its long history, and Beijing truly is the "north capital," compared to Nanjing and Xian, former Chinese capitals. Given the following directory of comparable Chinese and English words, translate a selection of Chinese place names into their English equivalents. (The Chinese words are the pinyin spellings, not the former traditional spellings.)

	Chinese	English
Locations	bei	north
	nan	south
	dong	east
	xi	west
	Zhong	middle
	Shang	up
	Xia	down
Landforms	shan	mountain
	ling	range
	feng	peak
	guang	vast flat plain
Water Bodies	he	river
	jiang	river

	chuan	river
	hu	lake
	tai	bay
	kong	harbor
	hai	sea
	yang	ocean
	haitan	beach
Colors	hong	red
	huang	yellow
	lan	blue
	bai	white
	hei	black
	kafei se	brown
	lu	green
	juhong se	orange
	zise	purple
Numbers	yi	one
	er	two
	san	three
	si	four
	wu	five
	liu	six
	qi	seven
	ba	eight
	jiu	nine
	shi	ten
Other	da	large
	xaio	small
	chang	long
	tian	heaven
	di	earth
	jing	capital
	zhou	province (state)

Translate the following Chinese place names into English.

Cities	Shanghai	Sichuan
Provinces	Hunan	Shanxi
Rivers	Chang Jiang	Huang He
Mountains	Nan Ling	Changbai Shan

To look into how some of these places have had name changes, go to <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0002/name.html>. Find and translate ten additional Chinese place names.