

Korean Names

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1. Introduction

A well-known Korean proverb states that “a tiger bequeaths its hide; a man, thus name.” This tells us symbolically the importance of a name in the Korean world. To a Korean, to honor one’s name is to honor not only one’s self but also one’s family, one’s ancestors, and one’s community. Disgracing it is redeemable only with life. There is no stronger guarantee than a promise: “I will change my name.” A name is not just an identifying mark of a person but is the motto of life itself.

A brief list of related terminology is in order. The native Korean word for ‘name’ is *irŭm*. It is derived from *ilh-* ‘to call, to name’ + *-ŭm* (Nominalizer). Cognates are found in *irŭ-* ‘tell, inform’, *ilhkŏt-* ‘call, designate’.

Like the Greco-Roman vocabulary in English, Korean abounds with words of Chinese origin, the so-called Sino-Korean vocabulary. Chinese characters are of ten used to write these words. The Sino-Korean word for name is *sŏng-myong* (姓名) in which *sŏng* is a morpheme meaning ‘surname’ and *myong* ‘a given name’. An affixal morpheme *-ssi* (氏 clan) is normally used to refer to a surname, especially when the surname is preceded by a place name designating

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the clan's origin, called *pon'gwan* (本貫), e.g., *Kyongju Kim-ssi* 'the Kims of Kyongju'. The morpheme *-ka* (家 family house) may also be used to designate surnames, but its usage is regarded as rude or even insulting, e.g., *Paek-ka* 'that man Paek or something'.

2. Personal Names

2.1. A Historical Background

The names of first rulers of early Korean states were born of legends. Kim Alchi (金闕智), for example, the founder of Shilla dynasty's house of Kims, was born of an egg in a golden chest. Kim, a transferred pronunciation of *kūm-* (金), in fact means 'gold'. *Chi* or *ji* is an honorific title and *al* or *ora* is a native word meaning 'king, ruler'. Paekche kings were in fact called *ōraha* (於羅瑕).

By all accounts, Koreans did not have surnames in the early days of the recorded history, i.e., before the Three-Kingdom Period (1st c. B.C.-7th c.). Chinese historical texts of the period refers to the contemporary Korean kings by first names only, e.g., *Chungung* (騶宮), *Susōng* (遂成), *Paekko* (佰固), etc. for *Koguryō* (37 B.C.-668) kings. It was only with King Changsu (413-491) that the royal surname *Ko* (高) began to be recorded. Likewise in Paekche (18 B.C. -660), early kings from the founder Onjo down did not have surnames until the 13th king Kūnch'ogo (r.346-374) when *Yō* (餘) began to be used, e.g., *Yōgu* (餘句), *Yōyong* (餘英), *Yōchang* (餘昌), etc. In Shilla (57 B.C.-935) as well, the royal surname *Kim* began to appear only with its 24th king Chinhūng (r. 540-576).

The names of contemporary officials found in the inscriptions of the extant stone monuments of the period also appear without surnames. For example, in Maunlyōng monument erected in 568, the following phrases appear:

T'akpu Kōdubu-ji Ikan
 (啄部 居杜夫智 伊干)
 Sat'akpu Yonglyok-ji Chapkan
 (沙啄部 另力智 述干)

Here the first words *T'akpu* and *Sat'akpu* we believed to be place names, and the last words *Ikan* and *Chapkan* are names of titles. The middle words are personal names with a kind of honorific title *-ji*. Again, there is no indication that surnames were used at all at the time.

With the increasing influx Of Chinese culture and customs, the Chinese way of naming (in personal, place, and title names) began to be used during the United Silla Period (668-918). The current practice of mono-syllabic surname followed by a disyllabic given name, e.g., *Kim Chin Woo*, *Lee Ki-Moon*, etc. dates from this period and is the same as Chinese names in its form, e.g., *Mao Tsetung*, *Lin Yutang*, etc. (In romanizing names, Koreans in general use either a hyphen or a space between the two syllable in given names, e.g., *Toh Soo-Hee*, *Choe Kui Soon*, while Chinese do not, e.g., *Chou Enlai*, *Deng Xiaoping*.) However, the old practice of using only given names still continued. Thus, we find historical personalities such as *Kim Yu-shin* (金庾信), *Kim In-mun* (金仁門), *Ch'oe Ch'i-won* (崔致遠), etc. along with *Kung'ye* (弓裔), *Shinkōm* (神劍), *Wonjong* (元宗), etc.

During Koryō (918-1392) and Yi (1392-1910) dynasties, the Chinese practice of naming took deeper roots in the Korean society, so much so that now only a person with a surname came to be regarded as a somebody (a nobility, an official) and one without it as a nobody (a commoner, a slave). The fact that Munjong, the 9th Koryō king, issued an edict requiring the civil service examinees to have surnames indicates that many commoners, even some

intelligentsia, still did not have surnames.

A list of 47 given names compiled by Kim Su-ŏn in 1449, right after the proclamation of the native script *Hangul* that made such listing possible for the first time in history, shows native names that could not have been transcribed in Chinese characters. It is worth examine several of them here because of their semantic contents:

Maktong 'the last child'
Kōmdung 'a dark kid'
Ttongkudi 'hardened dung'
Ŏridung 'a young one'
Kangsoe 'hard iron'
Tolhi 'a stone boy'
Kaettong 'dog shit'

Some of these descriptive names reflect a folk concept of *Ch'ŏnmyon-changsu* (賤名長壽) 'humble names beget long lives' (because they do not invoke demons' jealousy). Compare this with a complementary expression in the West: "geniuses die young" (because gods become jealous of them). By and large, however, native names such as the above gave way to Sino-Korean names by the turn of the century. For example, the 1910 census reports that, of 16,000 people in Tanyang county of North Ch'ungchōng province, only 408 carried native names, of which 67 were men and 341 were women.

A millennium old tradition in Korean personal names was broken briefly during the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945), when the colonial administration, as a part of the total integration policy and in a desire to make imperial citizens out of Koreans, forced them to speak only Japanese and to change their names in the multisyllabic Japanese style, e.g., *Kanemura Shozaburo*, *Nakayama Tsuneko*. Many Koreans used ingenuity to preserve

Korean roots in their Japanized names as unsuspiciously as possible, either by keeping the monosyllabic Korean surname as a part of the multisyllabic surname, e.g., *Kanemoto* (金本), *Goyama* (吳山), etc., where the first characters are the original Korean surnames, or adopted their *pon'gwan* as their new surnames. Korean names were restored with the Liberation in 1945, but not without the Japanese way of naming leaving its mark or two. For example, in women's given names, e.g. *Ch'unja* (春子), *Hwaja* (花子), etc., *-ja* corresponds to *-ko* in Japanese female names as in *Haruko*, *Hanako*, etc., and *-o* (雄,男) in men's names.

2.2. Korean Surnames

The evolution and propagation of surnames in Korea are closely tied to the social and political structures of the states. As dynasties were gradually organized in terms of administrative units, the unit heads had to carry “i.d. cards”, so the kings “bestowed” surnames on them. *Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms* (1145) relates, for example, that Shilla's 3rd king Yuri bestowed six surnames. *Yi* (李), *Ch'oe* (崔), *Chōng* (鄭), *Son* (孫), *Sōl* (薛), and *Pae* (裴), to the chiefs of six major administrative provinces in the dynasty.

As the administrative organization became expanded, there came also the need to have more surnames. These names were in general borrowed from well-known Chinese surnames. Since there were only a limited number of them, homophonic surnames began to appear. In order to distinguish different clans with the same surnames, the name of the district that they ruled was then attached to the surnames, e.g., Kyongju Kim-ssi ‘the Kim clan of Kyongju’ vs. Antong Kim-ssi ‘the Kim clan of Antong’; Chonju Yi-ssi ‘the Yi clan of Chonju’ vs. Kyongju Yi clan of Kyongju’. This is the source of *pon'gwan* ‘the clan origin’, mentioned in introduction. Needless to say, these were people who

be- longed to the upper social classes.

It took changes in the social structure for the commoners and serfs in the lower social classes to acquire surnames. Only in recent times, with the abolition of social classes and the establishment of egalitarianism and the rise of the class of 'nouveaux riches', could they adopt surnames. In doing so, they adopted prestigious and respected surnames rather than obscure serf-class names, sometimes by bribing country clerks at the time of registration and sometimes by forging *pon'gwan* and fabricating genealogies. This of course limits the range of choice, and has given rise to a unique phenomenon of multitudes with a small number of surnames in Korea, with Kim and Yi (= Lee), two former royal surnames, clearly leading the pack.

The following table from the 2000 census shows the rank and population of five most populous surnames out of the total of 286 in South Korea.

<i>Rank Surname</i>	<i>Population</i>
1. Kim (金)	9,926,000 (21.6%)
2. Yi (李)	6,795,000 (14.8%)
3. Pak (朴)	3,895,000 (8.5%)
4. Ch'oe (崔)	2,170,000 (4.7%)
5. Chong (鄭)	2,010,000 (4.4%)

Note that these top five constitute more than one-half of the entire population and that one-fifths of the population are *Kim*'s! No wonder there are sayings like: "A stone thrown from Nam-san will surely hit a Kim", "There is no gathering around a well without a Kim".

286 surnames in a nation of forty million (sixty-five million including North Korea) is not many China is said to have 2,568 surnames and Japan as many as ten thousand surnames. The explanation for this phenomenon can be found in the historical context mentioned above.

This phenomenon of a small number of homophonous surnames has necessitated further differentiation by means of different *pon'gwan*'s, as previously mentioned. The number of *pon'gwan*'s for the most populous five surnames is as follows:

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Surname</i>	<i>Number of pon'gwan</i>
1	Kim (金)	285
2	Yi (李)	241
3	Pak (朴)	128
4	Ch'oe (崔)	127
5	Chong (鄭)	122

The total number of *pon'gwan*'s in the 2000 census was 4,179. Marrying a person from the same *pon'gwan* of the same surname is regarded as a strong social taboo, if not quite as strong as incest in the narrow sense, and Korean civil laws prohibit it.

Before closing the section on surnames, it should be mentioned that, of 286 surnames recorded in the 2000 census, twelve consist of two syllables, e.g., Namgung (南宮), Sonu(鮮于), Tokko (獨孤), Sagong (司空), etc. The population is small: Namgung ranked 91st with 16,227 people, Sonu ranked 131st with 3,032, and Tokko ranked 169th with only 695. Perhaps in order to conform with the trisyllabic norm, these surnames normally carry monosyllabic given names, e.g., Namgung Hyon, Sagong Il, Tokko Yun, etc. since Nam and Sa are also surnames in their own right, a space is given after disyllabic surnames in order to differentiate, for example, Namyang Hyon from Nam Gunghyon.

Although not common, some people have monosyllabic given names to go with monosyllabic surnames. Like a unicorn among two-horned animals, a monosyllabic given name is quite distinctive and is preferred by some for its

very uniqueness. These monosyllabic given names, however, cannot participate in the naming practice described in the following section.

2.3. Naming Practices

The family system in Korea is based on blood lineage, and, therefore, song (姓 surname) is never changed except in the case of adoption. Thus, women keep their surnames even after marriage.

One unique feature of Korean names is that given names contain a generation marker. Of disyllabic given names represented with two Sino-Korean characters, one is used to mark the generation according to the rules of *hangnyol* (行列), to be described immediately below. Thus, only one character is left free for naming by parents. Often, the parents request the child's grandparents to name the child, especially if it is the first-born. Korea being a traditionally male-dominant society, women's names are not in general composed according to *hangnyol*. Their given names are not even recorded in many family registers.

Hangnyol-cha (行列字), a generation index character, is chosen according to the cycle of Five Elements (*ohaeng* 五行) in Chinese cosmology. The order is as follows: *kum* (金 mineral), *su* (水 water), *mok* (木 tree), *hwa* (火 fire), and *t'o* (土 soil). This order is established because minerals produce water; water nourishes trees; trees give fire; fire enriches soil; and soil produces minerals. Thus, all male in grandfather's generation will have the same Sino-Korean character having a *kum* (金) radical, e.g., (鎭, 鈞, 鉉), in their names; all males in father's generation will have the same Sino-Korean character having a *su* (水) radical, e.g., (洙, 浩, 泰) is a variant of (水); all males in the ego generation will have the same Sino-Korean character having *mok* (木) radical, e.g., (杓, 杭, 根); all males in the son's generation will have the same Sino-Korean character having a *hwa* (火) radical, e.g., (榮, 炯, 煥); and all males in the grandson's

generation will have the same Sino-Korean character having a *t'o* (土) radical, e.g., (基.圭.均). With such practice, generational seniority can be easily determined even among distant relatives. By alternating the position of the *hangnyol* character, i.e., the first syllable vs. the second syllable, up to ten generations can be formally distinguished. This is important in a “vertical” society where one major source of power is seniority.

This practice, however, is now gradually giving way to the modernization and liberalization trend, and more and more families either include female member? of the family in naming with *hangnyol* on the one hand, or do away with *hangnyol* altogether on the other. More and more people also adopt native words unwritable in Sino-Korean characters as their given names, e.g., *Saebiyol* ‘the morning atar’, *Sol* ‘a pine’, *Hansaem* ‘a spring’ *Kurim* ‘a picture’, etc.

2.4. Pseudonyms

The Korean’s great interest in names is evidenced by the fact that there are many different kinds of names in Korea. The following is a partial list with brief definitions and explanations, some with examples.

Kwan-myong (冠名) - one’s adult name, i.e., the name taken on coming of age, as opposed to *a-myong*, one’s childhood name, below. This is one’s legal and official name that is recorded in birth certificates and in Family Registry, and is most commonly used, for example, in schools, documents, passports, etc.

Cha (子) - a pseudonym no longer in use; one used to acquire a *cha* with the coming-of-age ceremony. It was used among close friends.

Ho (號) - a pen name, sometimes self-made, but normally given to established artists, scholars, and men of social positions by their mentors or colleagues. Self-made *ho*’s are more humble in meaning, while granted *ho*’s are more sumptuous-sounding. *Ho* is used by students and friends.

Pyol-ho (別號) - a nickname

Shi-ho (諡號) - a posthumous title granted by a king; it normally ends in -*kong* (公), the Korean equivalent of knighthood or sir.

T'aek-ho (宅號) - a married woman's name; a woman acquires a *t'aek-ho* upon marriage; normally, the name of a village from which the bride comes is used, e.g., *chamsiltaek* 'bride from Chamsil', The use is often extended to the bridegroom, so that he is called *chamsil-yangban* 'the chamsil-taek's gentleman'.

Pop-myong (法名) - one's Buddhist name

Serye-myong (洗禮名) - a baptismal name

P'il-myong (筆名) - a pen name

Ye-myong (藝名) - a stage name, a nom de guerre

Dang-ho (堂號) - the lady's equivalent of ho, given to established women writers and scholars; it ends in -dang, e.g., *Shin-saim-dang* (a noted artist in Yi dynasty).

A-myong (兒名) - a childhood name used among family members; native Korean words are the norm e. g., *mat-han* 'the eldest' *sun-i* 'a gentle lass' *turumi* 'a crane', etc.

3. Place Names

3.1. A Historical Background

Korean place names suffered the same fate as many other aspects of Korean culture which have been obscured by the overwhelming Chinese influence. The original place names which undoubtedly must have been in native Korean words are now largely gone and have been replaced by Chinese equivalents, mostly in two Sino-Korean characters, some in three, e.g., *Kyong-ju* (慶州), *Su-won* (水原), *Tae-jon* (大田), *P'yong-yang* (平壤); *Cho-ch'i-won* (鳥致院)

Pu-san-jin (釜山鎭), etc.

A systematic, wholesale change of Korean place names was made in 757 when King Kyongdok of Unified Shilla renamed every city and village in the Chinese style. This renaming took one of the following three forms: (a) translate the meaning of Korean words into the equivalent Chinese morphemes, and pronounce them as Sino-Korean characters: (b) transcribe Korean using Chinese characters as phonetic symbols (without regard to the character's meanings); and (c) use a Chinese character whose Korean name resembles the Korean word in sound. Take the Korean word *pol* 'field', for example.

Method (a) would translate it as (原), a Sino-Korean character meaning 'field' and pronounce it as [wən]; method (b) would transcribe it as (伐) [pəl] or (弗) [pul]; and method (c) would transliterate it as (火), and pronounce it as [hwal, because this character's Korean name is *pul hwa*. In general, the first method was most often used. For example a place called *Han-pat* in native Korean meaning 'big field' was changed to Taejon (大田) where *tae* (大) means 'big' and *jon* (田) means 'field' in Chinese.

The metamorphosis under King Kyongdok of Shilla underwent further smaller-scale changes during the succeeding dynasties, i.e., Koryo and Yi-Choson. These changes were primarily due to political reasons, e.g., reorganization of administrative units, promotion or demotion of townships, etc. For example, as the number of gun (郡 county) units was decreased from 317 to 220 in 1896, Yanggun-gun and Chip'yong-gun were "blended" into one Yangp'yong-gun; and *Ch'ungju* (清州) of N. *Ch'ungch'ong* Province underwent as many as 23 changes during the Koryo period as it alternated promotion and demotion. It should be noted that throughout the changes, the "root" of the name was kept. For example, a town called *Maihol* (買忽, waterfort) in native Korean in earlier days was renamed as Susong (水城 water castle) by Kiyongdok, became Suju (水洲 water delta) during Koryo, and finally the current Suwon (水

原 water field) during the Yi period.

3.2. A Classification

Place names may be classified according to different criteria, e.g., origin, function, linguistic forms, dialectal geography, etc. Here I will classify Korean place names in terms of the type of the process of their mating.

a. “Natural” place names - The shape of the place itself or distinctive topographical features give its name. In the following examples, literal meanings are given in parentheses. Samgak-san (三角山 triangular mountain), Wau-san (臥牛 Iying-cow mountain), Hadong (河東 east of river), Kugok (九曲 nine bends), *Chukto* (竹島 bamboo island), *Ch'ongho* (clear lake), *Koryong* (high pass), etc.

b. “Administrative” place names - Various administrative acts and their products, e.g., land reforms, taxation, dams, military bases, castles, ports, etc. may give their names to locales. Thus, place names with *-jin* (鎭 camp), e.g., *Hyesan-jin*, *Manp'o-jin*, refer to the fact that there were military camps there; those with *-song* (城 castle), e.g., *Wolsong*, *Changsong*, indicate that they sport(ed) castles; those with *-p'o* (浦 port), e.g., *Mokp'o*, *Manli-p'o* indicate that they are/were ports, etc.

c. “Commercial” place names - Agriculture, cattle raising, fishery, trade/market travel, etc. may be responsible for some place names, e.g., *P'yongch'on* (平村 farm village), Mayangdo (馬養島 horse-raising-island), Kulbido (굴비島 corvina island), Kumch'onjang (金村場 golden village market), Tangjin (唐津 trading place with Tang), *Waegwan* (倭館 Japanese inn), etc.

d. “Cultural” place names - Historical events and personalities, etc. may be memorialized or honored by naming places after them, e.g., Sejong-no (世宗路

after King Sejong), T'oegye-ro (退溪路 after a famed scholar Yi Hwang whose ho is T'oegye), *Kongdok-tong* (孔德洞 to honor Cofucius). etc.

e. “Legendary” place names - Many place names in Korea are associated with legends and folklores. Whangsim-ni (往十里 go ten ri's) in a Seoul suburb is said to be so named because a grand priest named Muhak overshot his destination by ten ri's. Tanbal-tyong (shave-hair-pass) in Mt. Kumgang is so called because the crown prince Maui of the last king of Shilla shaved his head there and became a monk. Some things are folksy. For example, In Nonsan-gun, S. Ch'ungch'ong Province, there is a cave called Sukhyang-kul (kul cave). A legend has it that a young girl named Sukhyang during Paekche fled to the cave to hide when chosen to be a king's mistress. Undoubtedly, many such stories are post hoc. However, in one notable case, a legend became a fact. Jutting out of the sea in the southeastern coast of Korea near Kyongju, there is a rock that the locals called Wang-bawi 'King's rock' for the longest time. People assumed that it just meant 'a big rock'. An astute historian, recalling a historical record that said that a Shilla king named Shinmu (神武王) willed that he be buried in the sea (in order to protect his country from the Japanese marauders), discovered a long-lost royal tomb near the King's rock!

3.3 Linguistic Significance

The Book of Geography in Kim Pu-shik's *Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms* (『三國史記』, 1145) lists 524 place names that underwent renaming in the year 757 under King Kyoudok. By listing both old and new names, they have become invaluable data in reconstructing the language of the period. The listing takes the following formula:

Place A was renamed as B by King Kyoudok.

Since A is likely to be an old native name and B its rendition in Chinese character (using the methods described in Section 3.1., A can be deductively recovered, i.e., econstructed, from B. Examine, for instance, the following entries for two Koguryo towns.

(買忽) (mai-hol) was renamed as (水城) (su-sang)

(內米忽) (naimi-hol) was renamed as (池城) (chi-song)

From this the following correspondence relations can be established:

(忽) (hol) : (城) (song) 'fort'

(買) (mai) (水) (su) 'water'

(內米) (naimi) (池) (chi) 'lake'

One can surmise from this correspondence relation that native Koguryo words for 'fort', 'water', and 'lake' were *hol*, *mai*, *naimi*, respectively (or however those Chinese characters were pronounced at the time).

Further support for such reconstruction would be obtained if one could find cognate forms in related languages. This is in fact what K. Lee (1768, 1772), Pak (1768), and Toh (1986, 1989) have done in reconstructing the languages of the Three Kingdoms. With respect to the above words, one finds Mid. Kor. *kol* 'valley, village', Jap. *hora* 'village', Manchu *holo* 'valley' for *hol/xol*; Mid. Kor. *mur*, Old Jap. *midu*, Eventi *muu*, Manchu *muke*, for *mai*; Jap. *nami* 'wave', Man. & Goldi *nanu*, Evenki *lamu* 'sea' for *nami*, etc.

One surprising result was Lee's finding that the Koguryo language appears to be closer to Old Japanese than it is to their southern neighbors, Shilla and Paekche. On this basis, he called for a serious reexamination of relative affinity

among these languages.

4. State Names

Before closing, we will examine possible etymologies of the state names used at various times in the history of Korea. The following is taken mostly from P. Lee (1988).

Han (韓): the name of the current republic (1945-), also the name of tribal states in the first century, B.C., e.g., Ma-han, Pyon-han, Chin-han. It was variously written as (漢), (翰) or (馬干 汗), all pronounced as *han*, which means ‘big’, e.g., *Han-pat* (大田 big field). *Han-gang* (漢江 big river), etc.

Choson (朝鮮): The state name of North Korea and Yi dynasty (1392-1910). The same name was applied to the earliest states during the first and second millenium, B.C., e.g., Ko-Choson, Kija-Choson, Wiman-Cho son. The first character cho (朝) means ‘morning’ and the second character son (鮮), ‘light, bright’, so the phrase means ‘the morning light’. It is said to be a Chinese transliteration of 阿斯達 (asadal), the first capital of Ancient Korea, *asa*-meaning ‘morning’ in native Korean. Cognates are found in modern Korean *ach'im*, Jap. *asa*, Mong. *aca*, Turk. *ac*, etc.

Koryo (高麗), Koguryo (高句麗): Koryo aspired to recover northern territories of old Koguryo that was lost to China when Shilla unified the Korean Peninsula, and purposely adopted the state name derived from Koguryo. Koguryo derives from *ko* (高 high) + *kuru* ‘valley, village’. The latter word was also transcribed alternately as 溝淩 (*kuru*) or 骨 (*kol*), and it is the same word as 忽 (*kol/xol*) mentioned in the preceding section. The terrain of northern Korea and Manchuria is rugged and mountainous, hence the name, probably. It also contrasts with the characters 伐 (*pol*) or 夫里 (*puri*) meaning ‘field’ in place names in more plainous southern states. The Western name *Korea* derives from

Koryo which had the first contact with the West.

Paekche (百濟): the name of one of the Three Kingdoms. The literal meaning is ‘100 crossings’. Since the founder came from the north, a popular belief is that he had to ‘cross 100 rivers’. But P. Lee (1998) sees a connection between the name Paekche, the name of its founder *Onjo* (溫祖), where *on* in Middle Korean means ‘100’ (in modern Korean *on* means ‘all, every’ Also, cf. Turk. *on* ‘ten’), and its first capital called 慰禮城 (uryesong), possibly a transcription of *yoro-sai* which in turn derives from *orosai* ‘king’s castle’.

Shilla (新羅): the state name of the longest dynasty in the Korean history: it was variously written as 新盧 (sinro), 斯盧 (saro), 斯羅 (sara), 徐羅 (səra), etc. *sara* or *sərə* is a native word meaning ‘head’. Its capital, current Kyongju was called 徐伐 (səbəl ‘the head town’). The name *Seoul* derives from [səbəl] > [səβul] > [səul].

5. Concluding Remarks

In the past, the naming practice has been concerned only with *hangnyol* and the semantic contents of the characters in the name. Now we live in the age in which every man is not just a member of his/her clan or state but also of the international community, and I would like to bring the following into people’s consciousness as they compose names, be they their own *ho*’s or their children’s *irum*’s:

1. Euphony of names - We should be conscious of the phonetic form of the name. Strident sibilants and aspirates should be adopted and sonorous sounds should be adopted instead. A succession of closed syllables should also be avoided, e.g., *Pak Sok-Tuk* (朴 錫得). Also, the vowels of the two syllables in the given name, all three vowels in the name if possible, should conform with vowel harmony rules in Korean, i.e., come from the same harmonic class,

“light” or “dark”.

2. Ambiguity - We should avoid names which phonological rules of Korean may render ambiguous. For example, since obstruents become nasals before nasals in Korean, *Pak* (朴) *Noyong* becomes homophonous with *Pang* (方) *Noyong*. Place assimilation may also make *Shin* (申) *Munho* and *Shim* (沈) *Munho* homophonous.

3. Adverse meaning and pronounceability in Romanization - Modern names must be romanizable with easy pronunciation and without deriving words with bad meanings in a major language, especially English. *Hyundai* (現代) meaning ‘modern age’ is not particularly easy to pronounce. A bicycle manufacturer in Korea called *Daiyong* (大榮) meaning ‘great prosperity’ discovered belatedly why they failed in export ventures. People simply wouldn’t buy a bicycle whose name sounded like ‘Die young’! Similarly with personal names. One should avoid characters which are romanized as *bag*, *bug*, *pang*, *suck*, *dung*, *kwak* (= *quack*), *dog-rib*, etc.

4. Names in Hangul - As the nation is moving toward the increased, if not exclusive, use of Hangul, one should consider in advance whether the names transcribed in Hangul may carry comic or unpleasant connotations that are not at all suspect when written in Sino-Korean characters, e.g., *An Kyong-t’ae* (安慶泰, 眼鏡테 glass frames), *Chon Shin-ju* (全神周, 電信柱 a telephone pole), *Im Shin-jung* (林信重, 妊娠中 currently pregnant)!

5. Standardization in Romanization – In place names, and if possible, in personal names as well, there should be a standard and uniform system of Romanization. A few years ago, an American colleague of mine lamented that he saw five different transcriptions of 慶州. i.e., *Kyongju*, *Kyungjoo*, *Gyonju*, *Gyungjoo*, and *Kyongjoo*. I have seen the surname 李 variously transcribed by Koreans as *Lee*, *Yi*, *Yee*, *Rhee*, *Ree*, *Li*, and *Leigh*!

(Note: This is a slightly revised and updated version of the article that appeared in Kim (1995). I would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance I received from Professor Soo-Hee Toh, Department of Korean, Chungnam National University, Taejon, Korea, and Professor Choong-Yon Park, Department of English, Kyongwon University, Seoul, Korea, in assembling and acquiring the reference material listed below. Romanization of Korean in this paper is in the McCune-Reischauer system according to Austerlitz et al. 1980. Korean words and names are cited in italics.)

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[Abstract]

Korean Names

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Historical origins of both personal names and place names in Korea are reviewed. It is shown that names of native origin have been largely replaced by those of Sino-Korean names. Some statistics are given on the basis of the 2000 census data in South Korea. A unique method of naming personal names which contain a generation marker called *hangnyol* is reviewed. This enables the person to figure out one's position and others in the family tree up to as many as ten generations without going consulting the book of genealogy. While this practice had a role to play in a vertically structured society where seniority is important, it is less practiced as the society is becoming more egalitarian, so that native names, not

writable in Chinese characters, are on the rise. In this global age, a person is not just a member of his family or clan, s/he is also a member of the international community. The author proposes several things that should be considered in naming to fit the modern global age: euphony of names, ambiguity, possible bad connotations when Romanized, unintended homophones with comic meanings, etc.

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