National Unity, Social Class, and Family Values
Seen from the Use of Surname:
A Comparison Study of Korean and Javanese Society

Ummul Hasanah
Master of Arts in Korean Studies
Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University
Bangkok, Thailand
ummul.hanvisel@gmail.com

Advisor: Prof Pavika Sriratanaban
Assoc. Professor, Faculty of Political Science
Chulalongkorn University
Bangkok, Thailand
pavika.p@gmail.com

Abstract- This paper aims to compare the use of the surname in Javanese society (in Indonesia) and Korean society. In Korean society the naming system and the use of surname is fixed and there is not much changing from time to time, besides there is a unique pattern that one third of Koreans have Kim, Lee, and Park as their surnames. Meanwhile in Javanese society the surname usage pattern is random, most Javanese do not have or use surname which can be useful to identify from which family they come from and for those who have one the naming system is strongly influenced by Western, Arab, or other culture like Chinese. This paper is a qualitative research by using secondary data in the perspective of postcolonial and nationalism theory. The findings show that behind the surname usage changes there are issues of national unity, social class division, and the friction of family values.

Keywords— surname, Korea, Javanese, colonialism, social class division

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the dialogues in William Shakespeare’s play entitled Romeo and Juliet is "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." In that play, it means that Romeo and Juliet can be united despite their families are enemy to each other. Both Romeo and Juliet in that play use their family names that indicate their origin and that’s also the problem why their love cannot be united in peace.

Aside from Romeo and Juliet play, we can see that name is playing a crucial role in someone’s life. Just because Romeo and Juliet both inherit surname from their families they must die in despair because their love cannot be united. If we see the name from the micro level, we can simply say that it is a word that represents ourselves. However, when we see it from the macro level, we can actually learn and see many things from the words combined into someone’s name.

Usually, people have what is called as given name and surname or family name, and sometimes they also have the middle name put between the given name and surname. In some societies, they give long name for the offspring and for other societies they give only short form of name. By seeing someone’s name sometimes can check the cultural background of that person, where he/she come from, what his/her religion, from what kind of family he/she come from, and many others. Names play a vital role in determining identities, cultural affiliations, and histories; they can help fracture or unify groups of people. They represent an integral part of knowledge-power systems [1].

Surname is an added name derived from occupation or other circumstance or the name borne in common by members of a family.¹ Many people find it very confusing and unique how people from Indonesia, especially from Javanese society, many of them do not have surname. After experiencing this phenomenon, the writer decided to dig more about surnames in Javanese society and compare them to the surnames in Korean society.

Because surnames are correlated with ethnicity, within heterogeneous populations (to some extend all populations are heterogeneous in origin) genetic characteristics presumably occur in different frequency in persons of different surnames—Biological relationships between countries are also marked by surnames. (Gabriel: 1980)

According to James [1], in many cultures, an individual’s name will change from context to context and, within the same context, over time. Therefore, in a society, people’s name will not stay the same after some period of time. There will be some conflicts and changes happen in the society that makes people changing the way they give name to the children. However, there is a unique pattern about family surname in South Korea because 45% of Korean people bear the family name Kim, Lee, or Park.

¹ http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/surname
In South Korea, family is seen as a very important institution; the most fundamental features of the traditional Korean farm family lie not in any one custom or set of statistical norms, but rather in the basic assumptions about what a family is and how people are related to one another [2]. Koreans like to maintain their family name and the way Koreans give name to the children is set in the same form 

When we turn to the name in Javanese society, we can never find the fixed pattern. Although people are coming from the same ethnicity, it seems like some group of people will use different way in giving name to the children. Some will omit the surname, some will keep using surname, some will use Arabic name, some will use baptism catholic name, etc. The way they treat surname in Javanese society like that is not coming automatically, there are some reasons why these changes happen that will be elaborated more in the analysis chapter.

After we see some general point of view about naming system in Javanese and Korean society, we can conclude that the naming systems in both societies are very different. Therefore, the writes would like to make a comparison about this system to see the dominant family lineal system and the effects to the society.

Through a comparative analysis, we will argue that the use of inherited familial surnames represents a relatively recent phenomenon intricately linked to the aggrandizement of state control over individuals and the development of modern legal systems and property regimes [1].

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This research aims to see family surname in both micro and macro level. Micro level here means that name is seen as part of the family which is the smallest unit of the society. On the other hand, macro level here means that surname which is derived from a family can show how a bigger society is like in general. Many changes in a country for example, more or less affect the way people in that country perceive the family values and how they use the surnames. In this case, a surname usage changes are connected to national unity and social class division in a society.

By understanding the naming system in both Javanese and Korean society, we can see the pattern of the social life in both societies. Besides that, most importantly how a nation can be driven in a long run depends on the small unit in a society called family with its family values.

III. RESEARCH LIMITATION

This paper is limited to only Korean and Javanese Society. Koreans here are Korean people as an ethnic originated from Korean Peninsula. They can be the ethnic Koreans residing in both South and North Korea, also the seven millions Koreans residing in countries outside Korean peninsula.

Javanese is an ethnic group native to the Indonesian island of Java. It is the most populous island on the world. Javanese form the largest ethnic group in Indonesia. There are also significant populations in most provinces of Indonesia, in Malaysia, Singapore, Netherlands, and in Suriname, South America.2

Java Island is located on the southern part of Indonesia; it is between Sumatra Island and Bali Island and under Kalimantan (Borneo) island. It is the home of 60% Indonesian population. The Indonesian capital city, Jakarta, is located on Western Java. Much of Indonesian histories took place in Java Island. It was the center of powerful Hindu-Buddhist empires, the Islamic Sultanates, and the core of the colonial Dutch East Indies. Java was also the center of the Indonesian struggle for independence during the 1930s and 1940s. Java dominates Indonesia politically, economically and culturally.3

Sources: DPRK Studies (http://www.dprkstudies.org), 2005

1 http://wn.com/native_indonesians?orderby=relevance&upload_time=this_week
IV. DATA ANALYSIS

This paper is using Post-colonial Theory and Nationalism Theory by Eric Hobsbawm.

Post colonial theory addresses the matters of post-colonial identity like cultural, national, ethnic, gender, race, racism, and their interactions in the development of a post-colonial society. It also addresses a post-colonial national identity of how a colonized people’s cultural knowledge was used against them, in service of the colonizer’s interests; and of how knowledge about the world is generated under specific socio-economic relations, between the powerful and the powerless. Basically, postcolonial theory lays on conflict perspective in theories of sociology of family.¹

In his book Nations and Nationalism ², Hobsbawm explains what Nationalism theory is. Nationalism is created by following three phases. The first phase or phase A is the emergence of cultural, literary and folkloric identity for a particular social group or region. He cites three criteria for making claims of nationality, they are (1) its historic association with a current state or one with a fairly lengthy and recent past, (2) the existence of a long-established cultural elite, possessing a written national literary and administrative vernacular, and (3) a proven capacity for conquest. The second phase or phase B is the Popular Proto-Nationalism which means a body emerges, which consists of pioneers and militants of “the national idea.” They begin to campaign for this idea of “nationality”. He gives four main criteria for the development of “popular proto-nationalism,” they are language, ethnicity, religion, and the consciousness of belonging or having belonged to a lasting political entity—the most decisive criterion of proto-nationalism. The third phase or Phase C is the Nationalist programs acquire mass support, or at least some of the mass support that nationalists always claim they represent.

Hobsbawm also demonstrates the historical relevancy of this stage by dividing the nationalist movement into three periods, (1) the transformation of nationalism (1870-1918), (2) the apogee of nationalism (1918-1950), and (3) nationalism in the late twentieth century: the rise of “internationalism.”

---

¹http://www.liceogrigoletti.it/docenti/doc16/files/Definition%20of%20postmodernism%20and%20postcolonialism.pdf


V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

Surnames in Javanese Society
- Ivanovich Agusta, Journal of Asia Pacific Studies (2009) Vol 1, No 1, 49-68, Empowering Kinship to Counter Control on Family Discourse in Indonesia, Bogor Agricultural University [3].

The form of family lineal system in rural area in Javanese society which is analyzed using postcolonial theory since the role of father and mother are widely changing due to western colonization.

Surnames in Korean Society

The Journal mainly talks about the social status and lineage organization in Korean society which can be differentiated from the place of origin and surname.

Investigating the kinship paternalism in a rural area in Jeolla province in South Korea and how the local people try to maintain its traditional family system.

Youtube Video:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IzHv0HuKCrk&feature=channel&list=UL

Korean Names: Why are There So Many Kims, Lees and Parks? [6]

From the video, we can learn that Family surnames in Korea do not have to be related by blood. In the past, people could not get married to people with the same surname. However, the law nowadays is permitting them, although some people still see it as something weird. During Jeoson's dynasty, Min was a royal family’s surname. Kim is also royal family’s surname. During Jeoson dynasty, when the condition was not good, they sold the family surname to the commoners like farmer. They (high social status families) sold loads of name and got a lot of money. Therefore, 90% of Korean people’s names nowadays are fake. In Korea, there is a family tree book but only the first son of the family is listed in the book (because the girl is basically will be sent to her husband's family after she gets married).

Cause and Effects of Surname Changing

The journal is about the history of surname changing in Europe and its implication to the world, also the explanations of many kinds of people’s name which can show different identities.

VI. NAMING SYSTEM IN JAVANESE AND KOREAN SOCIETY

Javanese people have various systems for naming. Javanese do not usually have family names or surnames. Many have just a single name such as Sukarno (the first President of Indonesia) or Suharto (the second president of Indonesia). Names with the prefix Su-, which means good, are very popular. Javanese names may come from traditional Javanese languages, many of which are derived from Sanskrit language. After the advent of Islam, many Javanese began to use Arabic names, especially coast populations, where Islamic influences are stronger.

Commoners usually only have one word name, while nobilities or royal family use two or more word names, but rarely a surname. Due to the influence of other cultures, many people started using names from other languages, mainly European languages. Christian Javanese usually use Latin baptism names followed by a traditional Javanese name.

Culturally, Javanese people use a patrilineal system that traces the hierarchical lineage of the father. This system is particularly used to determine descendants’ rights to use royal titles before their names. However, it is not customary for Javanese to pass on a family name, except in Suriname, Latin America, which has a large Javanese population. Surnames in Suriname Javanese are usually derived from the names of their ancestors who emigrated from Java from 1890-1939. Suriname Javanese people usually use Western (mostly Dutch) given names, and Javanese surnames. The example of Suriname Javanese surnames are Atmodikoro, Bandjar, Dasai, Hardjoprajitno, Irodikromo, Kromowidjojo, Moestadja, Pawironadi, Redjosentono, Somohardjo, etc.

As for Korea, Park [11] said that a full Korean name consists of both a family name and a given name. Family names are usually one syllable and given names are usually two syllables. In English, the given name precedes the family name, but in Korean, the order is the opposite. This probably has something to do with traditional Korean culture, which emphasizes family and society over the individual. Originally, a Korean’s family name represented a close tie to a specific group, so if a Korean met somebody with the same family name, he or she would feel very close to that person.

However, these days this aspect of Korean culture is disappearing, mostly because they will meet people with the same family name all the time. There are millions of Koreans, but not even 300 family names. Among the list of Korean family names, the most frequent that we can encounter is 김 (Kim), around one in five people.

VII. NATIONAL UNITY, SOCIAL CLASS, AND FAMILY VALUES

In building the national unity, Korea and Indonesia (in this case is Javanese) did totally different ways. Korean society chose to maintain the family surname while Javanese chose to omit the surname for national unity. That is why we can see until today that Korean people still use the surname inherited from their ancestors since decades ago and use the same naming system from time to time. Located in the Korean peninsula among the powerful countries like Japan, China, and Russia makes Koreans always in a critical situation. Koreans experienced foreign invasions many times in history and many of Koreans’ treasures had been taken by foreigners. Learning from those experiences, Korea decided to maintain something that cannot be taken by foreigners which is the family name. Koreans think that everything can be taken but not their identity as Koreans. They are very proud of their ethnicity and it has become their nature to like something authentic without much changes.

Rhie [7] said the fact that Koreans value authenticity and legitimacy is also exemplified by their attitude towards genealogy. In most cases, except for nobility, most people are not concerned about their family lines or genealogies. It is a completely different case in Korea, where families treasure their books of genealogies like family heirlooms. The older members of the families periodically update the missing
members of the family tree. People without genealogical lines are considered ‘rootless families’ (we are financially poor but we cannot accept a son in law with no recorded family line). This exemplifies how important the Koreans consider orthodoxy and legitimacy. It is difficult to find another people more attached to the issue of legitimacy than the Koreans.

Even during the Japanese colonialism, Korea was forced to use Japanese style name. In February 1940, a policy of “identity creation” (Changssi Gaemyeong) was enforced, under which the Koreans were compelled even to adopt Japanese Style Family and personal names [8]. However, after Japan left Korea, Koreans were back to their nature, using their Korean family names again.

The Koreans like to insist on being legit and to stick to the original plan of things. They do not like things that stray from the original. This is a product of the exclusionary behavior of people trying to hold on to their special privileges. Original is traditional plus legitimacy [7]).

When we turn to Javanese society, in the past some Javanese people have surnames that can indicate where they come from, especially after being exposed by western ideology, Javanese learnt on how to use surname. That surname somehow created the distinction between high class people and low class ones. In the struggle for Indonesian independence, that stratification is one of the factors that hinder the way for national unity. That is why I argue that the surname omission at that time is one of the ways to unite people by not seeing their social statuses. Besides, as many Javanese are Muslim at that time, they believe that all people are equal before God; there is no low or high class in a society based on Islam belief.

Deeply affected by Confucianism originated from China, Koreans were dividing people by their social status. The Korean society values the social status determined by others higher that the real economic circumstances. In Yin Dynasty, scholars were a symbol of status in Korea because most government and military elite positions were recruited from this group [9].

In the reign of King Mokjong, the Stipend Land Law (Jeonsigwa) was instituted. It was a comprehensive land allocation system, and it would sustain the new political structure. Those who become subjects of the king were given special privileges socially and economically, and of course politically as well. Some clans come to enjoy privileges for decades or longer, producing men who passed the state civil examination generation after generation. Such clans formed the hereditary aristocratic order. They distinguish themselves from other families by maintaining a genealogy register (jokbo) and family register (hojeok). The four most representative clans that formed the new aristocratic order were the families of Yu, Choe, Kim, and Yi. They were mostly Confucian scholars who moved to Gaeseong en masse during the closing years of the Silla Dynasty. These clans had gradually become a class of privileged status in Goryeo. Thus, we call them the hereditary aristocratic order. Institution such as the state civil examination and the stipend land law changed over time in order to protect and preserve the privileges of these aristocrats. What is more, these hereditary aristocrats created an institutional system under which their privileged status could be inherited by their descendants. Good examples are the protected appointments (bumso) and privileged merit land grants (gong-eumjeon) [8]

The social class in Korea had been clearly defined since centuries ago. During the Jeoson Dynasty the highest social class is for the King and family, followed by the government officials and military officials. The ones who can become the government officials and live a comfortable life were those from Yangban class or aristocrats. To be a Yangban, the citizen must take national exam to test their understanding about Confucianism and Chinese Classics. The test was very difficult and practically only the descendants of high class family could join the test because they are the only capable people to get the proper education prepared for the exam. It resulted that people coming from lower social status will remain at their social status. Farmers’ children will be farmers and merchants’ children will be merchants as well. The high class people will inherit the specific surnames like Kim or Min so the commoners can recognize that people having those surnames must come from high social status family and must be treated well. This is also the reason why people exchanged their surnames to the royal or aristocrats surname when Jeoson Dynasty collapsed in 1910 and Japan started to colonize Korea.

On the other hand, in Javanese society, the social class is not really strong because many of Javanese had embraced Islam as their religion whose teaching is not to differentiate people based on their classes. However, social class still existed in some aspect because Javanese are also influenced by Hindu belief about caste and social division. The class is mainly divided for the commoner and royal family. Royal family is the King or Sultan family and the commoners are those outside the relation of the royal family. The businessmen who frequently were having contact with royal family could also be considered as important figures or people with high social status. Even, people who were working to the Dutch government during colonization can be considered as people with important values because usually they had more money compared to the commoners. One of the reasons why the surnames were abolished at that time was also to stay away from colonizer’s suspicion. The rich families at that time were able to pursue high education so it threatened the existence of colonizer in Indonesia, so people who had suspicious surnames were suspected as rebels for Dutch government.

Speaking about the features of the Korean family, it should be noted that at the present time, there is a transition from a traditional patriarchal extended family to the modern nuclear. Korean society is considered to be hierarchically differentiated. This applies to the Korean family as well. In accordance with Confucian ideas, there is a clear division between senior and junior, men and women. A clear contrast between “external” and “internal” (home) spheres in such families has led to unexpected consequences [10].

In Javanese society too there is a rule like in Korea above but not as strict as in Korea. Javanese society is generally still
a patriarchal society where the man is the leader of the family and the woman is considered as a helper of the husband although in some cases woman takes care more things in a family than the man. Roughly, the emancipation in Javanese society is still better than the one in Korea although both societies are being egalitarian nowadays due to the globalization.

Seeing how easy Javanese omit the surname leads to an argument that keeping the family name is not so important. As long as the family is still exist and each of the family knows one another, then having the same surname or not is not a big deal anymore. For Korean society, the pride of having and maintaining the family surname is challenged by the fact that they can exchange the surname to upgrade the social status. It shows that having the real family surname inherited by ancestors is not as valuable as before when they face the challenges to survive in life. Although they treat family names in two different ways but we can also see that in both societies they still consider family as an important unit for their life.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Korean and Javanese societies are using the surnames in a different way. Korea decided to maintain the family surname no matter what because they did not want to lose their national identity and ethnicity as Korean. However, the social class at that time forced Koreans to exchange name to get a better life by upgrading the social status through obtaining high status’ surname. It shows that they way they see family values is changing. Family is no longer seen as an important matter where you must maintain family surname until you die.

As for Javanese, to create such a national unity, the decision to omit the surnames was made. The attempt is make everyone equal so the independence from colonizer could be achieved sooner. It was reasonable since the social class created by surname at that time hinder people to unite and fight for the country’s independence. Javanese see surname as something that does not need to be maintained from time to time although they still see that family is very important for them.

Family surnames that were seen as important determinants of the family were treated differently by both societies. However, both societies are basically still in a patriarchal family system and both see family as an important social unit that need to be respected.

REFERENCES