

Indexing Asian names

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In Western countries, a person's name will start with the given name and end with the surname. The components of Asian names may be chosen and put together in very different ways that vary widely from one region to another. What principles should an indexer follow? No fixed rules can be laid down, but names from different Asian cultures are analysed and general guidance is offered.

The nature and components of personal names vary from culture to culture and from language to language. Religions have a considerable influence on the names given to people in many parts of the world, especially in Asia. Names are chosen that have good meanings. They may indicate the person's religion, the family occupation and the place of birth, along with other elements needed to make a complete name.

In the Western world, for example in Britain, the surname appears as the last element of one's full name; the given name is its first element, with the middle names, if any, coming in between. In Eastern countries, names are not as simple as this. Dr Ranganathan says in his article 'Tow for author heading' that it is impossible to frame rules for non-European languages that will enable a cataloguer or indexer who is not familiar with the language in question to determine the proper form of entry for a personal name.¹

The practice of addressing people by their surnames is due to Western influence. In Asia, names are constructed on a different basis. The father's personal name is commonly combined with the son's so that in two-worded names the second word is the father's, not the family name. Anyone who is indexing foreign writers' names should have a full knowledge of the structure of names in that particular culture.

Names of persons: national usage for entry in catalogues, compiled by the International Federation of Library Associations, suggests a formula to determine the entry-word for personal names in an alphabetical catalogue. It says:

When the name of a personal author consists of several words, the choice of entry-word is determined as far as possible by agreed usage in the country of which the author is citizen, or if this is not possible, by agreed usage in the language which he generally uses.²

However, this formula does not apply to an author who employs a different name for his foreign language publications. For example, the Bengali writer known in English as Rabindranath Tagore used his name of Ravindrath Thakur for his Bengali books.

Transliteration into English is another problem with foreign names. Different spellings of the same name can be a real headache for the indexer. The same author's name may be spelt differently on the title pages of two different works, or in transliterating a name the cataloguer or indexer may use alternative spellings, for example:

Gore, Gorey
Moolay, Mulay, Mule.

The indexing of all foreign names would be too vast a subject to cover in a single article. I am not an expert on foreign languages. I can cope with five or six. European names are more or less familiar to most readers of this journal, so I shall not deal with them. As an Asian, it is easy for me to analyse Asian names. Anglo-American cataloguing rules, compiled by the Library Association, does not cover most of these, but only gives general guidance.³ Since the principles involved are not fully understood by the majority of Western indexers, I shall give below an analysis of names from different Asian cultural and religious backgrounds.

Muslim or Arabic names

Most Muslim names are of Arabic origin. Islam originated in Arabia and in only half a century spread over a large part of the world. Wherever it went it influenced the culture, customs and civilization of each country, including even the names of its people. We find that the names of Muslims living in one country are different in form and style from those of Muslims in other countries. For instance, Iranian, Turkish and Indian Muslim names differ from each other.

Old Arabic names are complex, consisting of different elements combined in a varying order. These elements are:

Ism. This is the personal name and has a religious significance.

Simple: Hussain, Ali.
Compound: Abd-ul-Rehman (slave of the merciful)
Rahmat-Ullah (mercy of God).

Compound names consist of Abd, Ullah, Din, etc.

Kunya or Kunnyat. These are compound names which indicate relationships: sometimes not a real relationship but a title used for courtesy and honour.

Abu, Umm: father, mother.
Abu Muslim
Abu Hanifa Noman bin Sabat
Umm-e-Umara (mother of Umara).

Laqab and Khitab. These are honorific names, usually compound, consisting of a word followed by Din, Islam, Dowla, etc.

Nur-ul-Din (light of faith)
Saif-ul-Islam (sword of Islam).

Nasab and Nisba. The Nasab is a patronymic indicating family and sect.

Hussain ibn Ali (Hussain, son of Ali).

The Nisba or Nisbat denotes place, trade or profession.

Al Hashmi (name of tribe)
Burni (person belonging to a place called Burn).

Takhallus. This is a pen name used as a surname. The custom took root in Persia and came to India from there. Examples are Firdausi, Saadi, Hafiz, Ghalib. The fame of these immortal poets rests today on their pen names rather than on their real names.

It is not necessary that one person should have in his name all these elements, which are those of old Arabic or Muslim names. In indexing a name one should look for the best-known element. Arabic reference sources and *Index Islamicus* should be consulted to determine the entry elements.⁴

Today the traditional structure of Arabic/Muslim names has broken down. Personal names with a religious significance, including compound names, continue to be widely used. The *Kunya* and the *Khitale* have disappeared. The *Laqah* and the *Nisba* are the elements most consistently employed in Arabic-speaking countries. In other Muslim countries such as Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, although names are in the Arabic language the structure is different, possibly because of environmental factors and the interaction of various cultures, languages and traditions. As in Pakistan and India, some Muslims incorporate in their names the name of the Prophet Mohammad, for example:

Mohammad Iqbal
Mohammad Ali

Mohammad is the first part of these names but is not the personal name, so the full name should be used without alteration as the entry element. If it is a three-worded name like

Mohammad Bashir Ahmad

the entry will be under Bashir Ahmad. It is not considered appropriate to call somebody Mohammad even though it is the first or last part of his name, just as a Christian would not think it right to call an ordinary person Christ.

In indexing Pakistani and Indian Muslim names one should ignore honorific titles like Agha, Alhaji, Ameer, Aqa, Haji, Hakeem, Hazrat, Janab, Khalifa, Molvi and Nawab. If words like Choudhary, Khan, Malik, Mirza, Sayyed, Sheikh and Shah are used after the personal name, then these can be regarded as surnames. In different Muslim

countries the usage may differ, so it is hard to lay down any rules. One can get help from authority files of names and national bibliographies to determine which part of the name should be the entry element.⁵

Indian names

In India, surnames are based mainly on:

Religion
Family occupation
The caste system
The geographical region.

The caste system has contributed a great deal to the generation of Indian surnames. The four main castes are:

Brahmin (priests, teachers)
Khatra (warriors)
Vaishia (people in commerce and business)
Shudra (people who carry out low-grade work).

Brahmins are divided into 12 groups, from the names of which members of each group derive their surname, for example:

Bharadwaj
Agnihotri

Khatras, members of the warrior clan, took their surnames from the actions they performed, for example:

Singh (lion)
Rajput (brave prince)

Vaishias took surnames indicating the business they followed. In fact this does not apply only to Hindus; members of other very successful Indian communities have names denoting their occupation, for example:

Tobacowalla (person who grows or sells tobacco)

In the case of *Shudras*, the names represent the work done or the service provided, such as:

Manji (boatman)

People can also be named after their place of residence, for example:

Madraswalla
Rangoonwalla

Many Indian names were generated by designations given to people such as:

Patel (village head man)
Shah (royal)

Communities in the south of India do not follow the pattern

described above. Southern Indian names can create confusion as they do not indicate any detail of any caste. They consist of three words:

The name of the family's ancestral village
The father's name
The personal name.

For example:

K.	G.	Ramesh
Kolar	Gopal	Ramesh
(town)	(father's name)	(personal name)

Similarly, if Thomas, whose father was George, lived in the village of Lydney, his name would be L. G. Thomas.

In Hindi names one should ignore titles like Pandit, Shri or Lala unless they are an important part of the name.

Sikh names

Singh and Kaur are very common elements of names for Sikh men and women respectively, indicating their religion. However, they are not used as surnames, even though they may be the second name as in:

Ajit Kaur
Teja Singh

The full name will be used without alteration as the entry element. If it is a three-worded name such as:

Kala Singh Bedi

the last element will be used as the surname.

Names of Indian Christians

Christians in India use 'Massih' (which means Jesus Christ) at the end of their personal names simply as a mark of reverence for Christ, for example:

Bashir Massih

One cannot call Bashir 'Mr Massih', so the full name will be used as the surname. Reference books such as *Who's who of Indian writers* and *Dictionary catalogue code* by Ranganathan can help in determining the entry element of an author's name.^{6,7}

Chinese names

Chinese surnames may consist of one or two syllables. Compound surnames are written together unhyphenated as one word, for example:

Han (one-syllable)
Namgung (unhyphenated two-syllable).

Full names commonly consist of three parts, written in three

Chinese characters. For example, the name

Kim Yong-il

consists of:

Kim (surname)
Yong (generation indicator)
II (personal name).

In China, Japan and Korea the surname is written first and the personal name last, but when writing in European languages, people reverse the order to conform with Western usage. Chinese women generally keep their own surnames after marriage, but in Western countries some of them adopt their husbands' surnames.

There are many names written in different Chinese characters but pronounced alike, so that transliteration into English can cause problems.

The world is inhabited by people of diverse cultural and linguistic groups, each following its own traditional practice in the formation of personal names. It is very difficult to formulate strict rules for determining the entry element, since in many Eastern countries a system of surnames such as that found in Western countries is not known. Dr Ranganathan suggests:

There should be international standards under which the publisher would indicate by means of typographical distinctions on the title page which is the entry word and also the part of the name to be ignored.

Such standards are an urgent necessity in view of the growing need for truly international bibliographic services.

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