

The Use of Chinese Names in Late Chosŏn *sijo* as a Case of Transcoding

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This paper examines the usage of Chinese names in *sijo* poems of the Late Chosŏn period as a case of transcoding (or re-coding). Taking into account such factors as widening of the readers' audience, the resulting process of genre transformation, and the social situation in the country, the paper will trace the following tendencies: shifts in ideals represented by Chinese symbols, limitations on the depiction of ideal Chinese figures, and Chinese symbols as a means of reflecting on contemporary times. With the aim of capturing a wider readership, *sijo* authors introduced Chinese symbols into new contexts and used them to emphasize new ideas and make readers appreciate the past in order to reflect on the present. Famous figures were given modernized features and thus became an essential element for a new mode of expression under new circumstances. The recoding of Chinese names as a tradition demonstrates its potential to adapt (and to serve as a prerequisite for) new literary modes and to inspire new modes and stimulate creativity.

Introduction

Korean vernacular literature, a combination of an autochthonous textual layer and Chinese elements, presents abundant examples of borrowed elements being adapted and integrated into original text. Since ancient times, vernacular texts and those composed in Classical Chinese (*hanmun* 漢文) form two large groups of Korean literature and especially poetry: Poetry in *hanmun* (*hansi* 漢詩) is based on the Chinese tradition, whereas vernacular poetry had its own tradition, and both groups comprised different genres. Thus, *hansi* followed Chinese generic conventions (e.g., *yuefu* 樂府, Kor. *akpu*),¹ while the vernacular tradition was formed with indigenous genres (*hyangga* 鄉歌,² *sijo* 時調,³ etc.). Their metrics and other characteristics differed, as did the specifics of their historical development.

At the same time, vernacular poetry was influenced by the Chinese tradition in many ways, and this influence varied in different periods. A wide range of borrowed elements was integrated into vernacular texts, and this eventually resulted in the formation of a 'Chinese layer' in vernacular poetry. These Chinese elements constituted a system of set symbols, which may be perceived as a communicative code. Along

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¹ *Yuefu*, lit., "Music Bureau [songs]," as a genre date back to the Han 漢 dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) of ancient China.

² *Hyangga* ("rural village songs," i.e., "songs from Silla" [新羅]) are a vernacular genre of the Unified Silla period (667–918).

³ *Sijo* (popular tunes) are a genre composed in the vernacular and considered representative of the Chosŏn 朝鮮 period (1392–1897).

with the development of the Korean poetic tradition, the application of this code became more and more varied. The process of transcoding deserves a separate analysis and will be the subject of this paper.

The differences between the Chinese and the authentic Korean tradition have already been the subject of research by Marianna I. Nikitina (1982). One of the most illustrative examples are two poems from the Koryŏ 高麗 period (918–1392), titled *Toijang-ga* 悼二將歌 (Grieving for two generals). According to the legend, King Yejong 睿宗 (1079–1122) once conducted a ritual in commemoration of the two generals Kim Nak 金樂 and Sin Sunggyŏm 申崇謙, who helped the founder of Koryŏ, Wang Kŏn 王建 (Taejo 太祖, r. 918–943), to win his battle for rulership. During the ritual, straw figures of the generals appeared before the public. Impressed by the scene, the king composed two parallel texts: one in *hanmun* and one in the vernacular. This is an exceptional case of two parallel texts written by the same person, at the same time and on the same occasion, but in two different languages. Nikitina (1982) has shown, in a thorough comparative analysis, that the two texts approached the situation in completely different ways, making for a fundamental difference in structure and imagery. In short, the difference is as follows: the text in *hanmun* gives a detailed explanation of the circumstances, providing the background for the text, i.e., the generals' feats on the battlefield. It also refers to Chinese concepts of the relations between ruler and servant, such as *ch'ung* 忠 (loyalty). The vernacular text, on the other hand, has an abstract character, as it looks at the situation through the prism of concepts formed within Korean ritual culture and does not mention any details with regard to the situation (Nikitina 1982: 275–83). What is important for this paper is that in these texts, the linguistic medium prefigures a number of extra-linguistic specifics.

Meanwhile, since the tenth century, the importance of the Chinese poetical tradition in Korean culture grew continuously. Especially during the Koryŏ period, the flourishing of Chinese poetry could not but influence Korean vernacular versification and cause its steady transformation. As a result, in the new vernacular genres of Chosŏn, the usage of Chinese imagery in poetry increased substantially. In her comparison of *sijo* and *hyangga*, Nikitina (1985) has traced new tendencies characteristic of *sijo*, some of them already found in Koryŏ songs. New images appeared, e.g., “sky,” which did not appear in the vernacular poetry of Unified Silla, whereas some images attained a new meaning, e.g., the image of the coniferous tree: while in *hyangga* the cedar would stand for a senior, a pine represented a loyal servant in *sijo*, just as it did in the Chinese tradition, including Korean *hansi*.⁴

Conversely, the flourishing of vernacular poetry (*sijo* and *kasa* 歌辭) in the wake of the invention of *han'gŭl* in 1443 did not limit the usage of elements borrowed from the Chinese poetic tradition. Their use in vernacular texts continued to develop and was eventually enriched with specifically Korean representational aspects. In her research on *sijo*, Nikitina (1994) has identified the main images that constitute

⁴ For more examples and explanations, see Nikitina (1985).

the picture of the Universe in *sijo* and traced their functions and associated references. Her comparative textual analysis helped her reveal some principal differences in the semantics and functions of similar images expressed in vernacular Korean words versus those of Chinese origin. Her research and the facts mentioned above show that within the framework of literature, autochthonous Korean and Chinese elements functioned traditionally as different codes. Borrowed Chinese elements and their system of associations may be viewed as a code that was introduced into the Korean context and then adjusted and interpreted in accordance with the latter. This literary practice can be considered a case of transcoding and, together with other changes and transformations, can be traced concomitant with the development of other vernacular genres in a certain historical period.

We will examine in detail its application and meaning from a synchronic point of view, while focusing our attention on the Late Chosŏn period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which were marked by notable changes in literature such as genre transformations and the dissemination of vernacular genres among an ever-widening readership. Indeed, the literary development of this period, with its varied traits and specifics, was very much shaped by such influences. And as the process of transcoding Chinese elements became a formative part of the general literary process, it also assumed certain characteristics of the period.

To examine the issue of a Chinese “coding” system as it was applied in a vernacular Korean context can be useful for approaching the vast problem of transcoding in general. Texts from the Late Chosŏn period provide fruitful material and may serve to illustrate the tendencies mentioned above. *Sijo* poetry in particular, as one of the representative vernacular genres, will allow us to trace the transformation of classical models for the usage of Chinese elements in Korean vernacular poetry and relate such texts to the local literary and social processes of the time.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Korea were marked by a noteworthy cultural growth, which saw members of the middle and the low social strata beginning to participate in literary activities, so that vernacular poetry gained a wider audience. This resulted in a broader thematic scope, a new imagery, and in principally new tendencies, which are also found in *sijo*. Within the framework of classical *sijo*, there appeared such forms as *chang-sijo* 長時調 (long *sijo*), which were disseminated mostly in cities. Thematically, this was a new group of texts that tended to depict scenes of city life, marketplaces, and dialogues among ordinary people. This tendency resulted in a lowering of style, since such texts applied conversational forms that represented the speech of the lower classes and occasionally introduced vulgar images. At the same time, this new format did not exclude Chinese elements. Their insertion in *sijo* texts followed general conventions of transformation within generic frameworks and reflected social changes.

One of these conventions is the phenomenon named *sijohwa* 時調化, when Chinese poetical texts were literally “turned into *sijo*.” In this process, an original Chinese poem was supplemented with Korean grammatical markers to metrically fit the

sijo format.⁵ The fact that Chinese poems served as the base for creating *sijo* shows that the former were quite widely disseminated.

Before venturing into a detailed examination, it is important to give a general picture of the characteristics of Chinese elements and their use in vernacular poetry. In *sijo* and *chang-sijo*, they usually manifested themselves in the form of personal names and geographical places, citations and various types of allusions, as well as in a specific system of images.

Generally speaking, in Korean poetical texts all these elements may serve as symbols, while the context will trigger associations with some background story, and thus enable the reader (or listener, in the case of oral performances) to conceive of an interpretation. For the same reason, most of these elements focus on certain features and human traits, thus forming behavioral models and archetypes and shaping attitudes towards life and general values. This is found in other literary forms as well, e.g., popular prose (Trotsevich 1959).

As an example, let us consider the following *sijo* text by Lee Myŏngghan 李明漢 (1595–1645), which comprises most of these functions:⁶

楚江 漁夫들아 고기 낚가 삼지마라
 屈三閭 忠魂이 魚腹裏에 드럿나니
 아쁘리 鼎燠에 살믈들 變할줄이 이시라

“Hey, fishermen on the River in the Chu kingdom!

When you hook up a fish, do not cook it.

The faithful soul of Sanlǚ Qu Yuan 屈原

May be there in the fish’s belly.

No matter how much you cook it in a pot,

The fish will not get done” (*SMHSJ*, 492, #2105).

The poem alludes to the widely known story of Qu Yuan (ca. 340–278 BCE), a high-ranking official of the ancient Chinese kingdom of Chu who drowned himself in the river Miluo (Miluo Jiang 汨羅江), when he was not able to overcome his grief after the ruler exiled him. Qu Yuan became a classical embodiment of loyalty and symbol for the ideal servant to his ruler. At the same time, the *sijo* refers also to the text from the *Songs of Chu* (*Chuci* 楚辭), “The fisherman” (*Yufu* 漁父), traditionally attributed to Qu Yuan, in which he discusses his moral choice with the fishing recluse, who argues from a somewhat antagonistic position. This is one of the common associations in Korean literature—fishing is often understood as an allusion to the figure of Qu Yuan, linking his name to the activity of fishing in an archetypal way. In this *sijo* text, too, the river and the figure of Qu Yuan are symbols of loyal self-abandonment, as it manifests itself in a certain way of life, i.e., the decision to enter civil service and a strong devotion to one’s calling.

⁵ For more detail, see Kim (2003), for example.

⁶ The original text of the quoted *sijo* is reproduced—here and in the following—with modern *han’gŭl* characters only, due to technical reasons.

In the text examined above, we see a variety of Chinese elements. For the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on the use of Chinese names as one of the most common of these elements. The main reference frames for Chinese names during the Late Chosŏn period will be traced, illustrated with typical examples, and connected with their literary and social context.⁷ These frames, some of which will be further divided into analytical subsections, are:

- (1) Shifts in ideals represented by Chinese symbols
- (2) An ideal depicted as having limited meaning
- (3) Reflections on the specifics of the present

It is important to note that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the genre in its classical form was at its peak, *sijo* texts were composed by representatives of the educated elite and aimed at educated readers who were well familiar with the Chinese ‘code.’ As the *sijo* audience grew, new types of texts borrowed the same ‘set’ of Chinese names, along with their basic associations. At the same time, the general circumstances affected their meaning and resulted in peculiar cases of transcoding.

1 Shifts in ideals represented by Chinese symbols

Typically, this kind of referencing is applied in texts on human traits which are perceived as virtues and considered as exemplary behavior. A representative poem is one by Lee Tŏkhyŏn 李德馨 (1561–1613), in which the lyrical subject expresses his intention to follow the ideals of filial piety:

王祥의 鯉魚 잡고 孟宗의 竹筍 시격거
 검던 머리 희도록 老萊子の 오슬입고
 一生에 養志誠孝를 曾子갓치 하리이다

“I will hook up a carp as Wang Xiang did,
 And break bamboo shoots as it was done by Meng Zong,
 And till my dark hair grows grey
 I will wear the clothes of Lao Laizi,
 And for all my life I will cultivate filial piety
 Just as Zengzi did” (*SMHSJ*, 363, #1549).

The author has chosen historical figures who were considered paragons of this virtue and included them as metonymic references to their deeds: Wang Xiang (185–269), who melted the ice of a pond with his bare body in order catch some fish and feed his stepmother; Meng Zong (218–271) who obtained bamboo shoots in the depth of winter to give them to his mother; Lao Laizi, known for dressing up as a child in order to make his parents feel young; or Zengzi, a disciple of Confucius, who was

⁷ The classification of Chinese names usage in Korean vernacular poetry based on the relation with the narrator may be found in Guryeva (2010).

famous for his piety—all of them are recognizable to an educated reader as classical role models⁸.

Meanwhile, *sijo* and *chang-sijo* texts of the Late Chosŏn also used Chinese names associated with a certain type of behavior, but some of them exhibited a shift towards a new type of ideal. The following *sijo* by an unknown author illustrates this mode:

니태백의 주량은 기 엇더하야 일일수경 삼백배하고
 도목지의 풍채는 그 엇더하야 취과양주 굴만거런고
 아마도 이 둘의 풍류를 못내 부러

“[Li] Taibo’s 李太白 wine

Measured about three hundred cups a day,

Du Muzhi’s 杜牧之 beauty

Filled his palanquin with tangerines,

When he passed Yangzhou, drunk,

I cannot become like them, and it makes me feel jealous” (*Namhun* 208).

Here one can detect a fundamental change in the choice of models of behavior and life-style. The names of famous Chinese poets occur in this *sijo* along with fixed associations: Li Bo 李白 (701–762) and his penchant for drinking; Du Mu 杜牧 (*style* Muzhi, 803–852) and his attractiveness, which made women throw tangerines into his palanquin to attract his attention.⁹ The text thus uses the references in order to connote enjoyment and pleasures of life, a behavioral attitude which the lyrical subject (or author) wishes to emulate.

The idea of enjoying life is not new and can be found in earlier periods, as in the following *sijo* by Sin Hŭm 申欽 (1566–1628):

술먹고 노는 일을 나도 원줄 알건마는
 信陵君 무덤 우회 밧 가는줄 못보신가
 百年이 亦草草하니 아니 놀고 엇지 하리

“I know that drinking and entertainment are not good,

But can you not see that

However much you grieve at Lord Xinling’s grave,¹⁰

It is of no use.

The human age is sorrows after sorrows,¹¹

⁸ For an analysis of these figures in the Korean context of the concept of filial piety, see Kurbanov (2007).

⁹ The phrase “when he passed through Yangzhou drunk, tangerines filled his palanquin” (醉過揚州橋滿車) is one of many borrowed expressions, commonly used in vernacular poetry as well as in prose, including the famous novel *Kuun mong* 九雲夢.

¹⁰ The text refers to the story of Lord Xingling’s death caused by overdrinking after his retirement—a result of intrigues. Many people grieved for him, but the King, who believed in the allegations, did not.

¹¹ The translation follows the interpretation by Chŏng Pyŏnguk 鄭炳昱, the compiler of the *Sijo munhak sajŏn*. However, in all likelihood the line actually means “A life even of a hundred years is over in a moment.”

Then why not enjoy yourself?” (*SMHSJ*, 295, #1241).

By the Late Chosŏn, the desire for a life free of care had become widespread. According to Pak Ijŏng (2000), it is characteristic of the mid-nineteenth-century texts, when hedonistic elements were included in *sijo* texts as a reaction to readers’ demands in a time of social instability.¹² In her comparative analysis of Late Chosŏn texts and their earlier variants, as they are included in anthologies of the previous century, Pak has found marked changes in grammar as well as lexical transformations. She has proven that such transformations often reveal an eagerness to live a carefree life and back away from serious problems.

The prevailing use of such elements also resulted in the steady replacement of conventional ideals in *sijo* texts. In Sin Hŭm’s text, the name of the Chinese state official, Lord Xinling, which originally would have been used as an antithesis to the idea of enjoying one’s life is now brought in as an element for advocating the latter. The name retains its original “ideal” character but it now serves as an “anti-model” for the lyrical subject. Such instances, illustrating the gradual transition to a new life-style ideal, can be found in many texts. It would be incorrect to say that this transition was an absolute, one-way process. Confucian-type ideals were not completely replaced, but they could be used either as a central element or as one among others.¹³

The usage of Chinese personal names followed the above pattern. As mentioned, the motif of a carefree life may have originated from a desire to escape from everyday problems in a period of social unrest. The continuous transition may be further illustrated by the following example which demonstrates a more obvious relation to the situation at the time. *Namhun t’aep’yŏng-ga* 南薰太平歌 (Songs of Great Peace at South Wind), an anthology published in 1863, contains a text by an unknown author in which the lyrical subject expresses his wish to enjoy drinking, music, dance, and poetic composition in the manner of famous men of the past:

태백이 자넨랑은 호아장출 환미쥬하고 엄자릉 자네는 동강 칠리탄에 은린
 옥척 낙과안쥬 담당하소
 도연명 자네는 오현금을 등지더라 등실 타고 장자방 자네는 계명산 쥬야
 월에 옥통소만 슬리 불소
 그남아 글 짓고 춤 쥬고 노래 부르길낭 내 다 담당협세

“You, Li Taibo, called your young friends to enjoy wonderful wine,
 You, Yan Ziling 嚴子陵, hooked silver fish the size of a jasper *chi* 尺
 And were in charge of refreshments.

You, Tao Yuanming 陶淵明, held a five-string instrument and played it lightly,
 You, Zhang Zifang 張子房, on Jiming 鷄鳴 Mountain under a bright autumn

¹² See the explanation in Pak (2000).

¹³ As an example, a *chang-sijo* lists names of the wine-loving eccentric Liu Ling 劉伶 (221?–300?) and the handsome poet Du Mu among other outstanding talents, i.e., the famous historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145/135–87/86 BCE), and the calligrapher Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303/321–361/379), though the main purpose of the text is to emphasize the Confucian virtues (*Namhun* 93).

moon

Only played a sad tune on your nephrite flute.

If I could only write, dance, and sing like this—I would have been in charge of it all”
(*Namhun* 193).

As Ch’oe Kyusu (2005: 34) has shown, in *Ch’ōnggu yōngōn* 青丘永言 (“Eternal words from Green Hills,” 1723), another anthology published over 150 years earlier, there is a text that follows a similar structure but does not cite famous Chinese personalities as being in charge of the party, but ordinary people. The *Namhun t’aep-yōng-ga* anthology was published with a commercial purpose. It therefore considered the tastes of a wide readership and included texts produced from within this readership. Presumably, for the sake of popularity, the text was studded with the names of Chinese “archetypical” characters, representing the idea of a carefree life. The names of the “drinker” Li Taibo and the “recluse” Tao Yuanming (365–427) are among the most common symbols, while Yan Guang 嚴光¹⁴ (*style* Ziling, d. after 41 CE) and Zhang Liang 張良¹⁵ (*style* Zifang, before 250–186 BCE) are perhaps mentioned here for having left state service after the rulers for whom they had acted as advisors had successfully gained the throne. Their decision to become recluses at the height of their career supports the main motif of the text, i.e., the choice of a carefree life.

The replacement of fictional names with symbolic Chinese ones illustrates how this kind of Chinese element took root in vernacular texts, and how it was perceived as a natural tool of expression and was able to engage a wider audience.¹⁶ At the same time, Chinese personal names were put into new contexts and used for altered purposes, while the ideals and life attitudes they had originally symbolized gradually changed. This complicated process can be viewed as a gradual adaptation of the Chinese “code” to the Korean background.

2 An ideal depicted as having limited meaning

The following group of texts demonstrates a tendency in (*chang-*)*sijo* to use symbolic Chinese elements in a specific way, i.e., imbed them in an unusual context (which in turn is important for the main subject of the poem), while the ideal they

¹⁴ Yan Guang was a famous recluse. After Guangwu 光武 (r. 25–57) of Han, whom he supported, ascended to the throne, he refused to serve as his advisor and became a hermit.

¹⁵ The poem refers to the legend that before the decisive battle, Zhang Zifang played a song of the enemy’s homeland on his flute, which made many of the soldiers homesick, weakened their spirit and resulted in the enemy’s defeat.

¹⁶ There are many texts from the Late Chosŏn period that put Chinese heroes in an everyday context. Considering such texts in conjunction with the phenomenon of a wider readership suggests some further interpretations, which will be discussed below.

represent is shown as having only limited value. Below I will identify several motifs in Late Chosŏn texts and show how these motifs are reinforced by Chinese elements.

2.1 Life's futility

The shift in ideals discussed above is just one of several aspects of a general change in attitude towards life. A sense of the futility of all efforts and ambitions, a feeling of the meaninglessness of social involvement and self-sacrifice for traditional ideals paved the path for a preference for a life free of obligations.

Some texts from the Late Chosŏn end with the expression “Why not enjoy oneself?” (아니 놀고) or discuss the choice of a certain lifestyle. Reasons for enjoying oneself and for neglecting social responsibilities are mostly based on precedents found in Chinese history and literature and linked to the idea that life was short and full of sorrows, as in the following poem:

인생이 죽어갈 제 갑쓸 주고 살 냥이면
안연이도 도사할 제 공재 어이 못 살녓노
갑 주고 못 살 인생이 아니 놀고

“If, when one dies, life could be bought for money,
Then why did Confucius not save Yan Yuan 顏淵 when he was dying young?
If life cannot be bought for money, then why not enjoy oneself?” (*Namhun* 79).

Or another *sijo* poem containing the same line:

장생술 거진말이 불사약을 뒤라 보고
진황총 한무릉도 모연추초 구분이로다
인생이 일장춘몽이니 아니 놀고

“The methods for obtaining longevity—are they all lies?
Who ever saw a medicine for immortality?
The graves of Qin Shihuang 秦始皇 and Emperor Wu 武 of Han 漢
Are covered with fog and autumn grass—and that is all.
Life is a fleeting spring dream,
Then why not enjoy oneself?” (*Namhun* 82).

The references here are to Confucius' favorite disciple Yan Yuan (i.e., Yan Hui 顏回, ca. 521–491/481 BCE), to the First Emperor of China, Qin Shihuang, and to the seventh Han emperor, Wudi 武帝 (157–87 BCE), or—in other poems—to the legendary king, the “Heavenly Sovereign” (Tianhuang 天皇), who lived for 18,000 years. Some of the names were traditionally related to the idea of a short or long life, but others attained this connotation only in literature. For instance, the commonly used pairing of Qin Shihuang and the expression that his “grave was covered with autumn grass” is not a poetical image per se, but rather a semantic block referring to the idea that even the luxurious life of a powerful emperor will come to an end. This combination is found first in Korean *hansi* poetry, e.g., in the works of Kim Sisŭp 金時習 (1435–1493), and was later borrowed for vernacular texts as well.

Chinese elements that are employed to express a preference for leading a free and leisurely life in the face of life's brevity are not limited to symbolic names, and can take the shape of citations, allusions, and other devices. In some cases, the names of famous Chinese poets need not even be mentioned, since phrases borrowed from their texts have now replaced them: such intertextual references, when read by educated readers, could be easily attributed to these particular poets and imply certain ideas and ideas of life style. Li Bo's "Preface [to Poems] for a Banquet with Cousins on a Spring Night in the Peach and Plum Blossom Garden" (*Chunye yan congdi Taoliyuan xu* 春夜宴從弟桃李園序) or "Former Ode on the Red Cliffs" (*Qian Chibi fu* 前赤壁賦) by Su Dongpo 蘇東坡 (1037–1101), for instance, were frequently mined for quotations emphasizing the idea of life's futility:

天地는 萬物之逆旅요 ……

"Heaven and earth are a traveler's inn for the myriad things [...]" (*SMHSJ*, 471, #2012; cf. Li Bo, 夫天地者，萬物之逆旅也).

The following *sijo* is an example for a combination of several kinds of Chinese elements with names:

글하면 등용문하며 활쏜다고 만인적하랴
왕발도 도사하고 엽과라도 늙어느니
우리랑 글도 활도 말고 밭갈기를

"When writing texts—could you ascend the Dragon Gate?¹⁷

When shooting arrows—could one alone win against the myriad things?

Even Wang Bo 王勃 died early,¹⁸

Even Lian Po 廉頗 grew old.¹⁹

So we neither write texts

Nor shoot arrows,

We cultivate the land" (*Namhun* 29).

In terms of structure and content, the text is based on traditional East Asian perceptions of life's possible activities. The poem starts with the opposition of literary (*wen* 文) and martial (*wu* 武) endeavors, but the unknown poet develops it in a peculiar way by drawing the juxtaposed activities together in a pair and suggesting a preferable alternative—i.e., land cultivation. Fixed expressions and names, pointing to the limitations of life as a government official or in the military, are added to support this suggestion.

¹⁷ "To ascend the Dragon Gate" (登龍門) is a metaphor for passing the civil examinations or for a successful career. Its roots can be traced to the legend that carps, which are able to swim upstream and ascend to the waterfall of the Yellow River, will turn into dragons.

¹⁸ Wang Bo (650?–676?) was a famous Tang poet who drowned at the age of 26.

¹⁹ Lian Po (3 c. BCE) was one of the four great generals of the Warring States period who lived a long life and witnessed the decline of their state (5 c.–221 BCE).

The activity championed by the lyrical subject, i.e., cultivation of the land, belongs to a common set of archetypical activities, but its interpretations may differ. One of them has deep mythological roots that are culturally universal and can be traced to the concept of ploughing as a sacred act. This reference is found in much of pre-modern Korean literature. The second one is the understanding of land cultivation within the Chinese tradition which associates this activity with a certain influence on the king's surroundings. This interpretation is found in Chinese literature as early as in Qu Yuan's "Li sao" 離騷 (Encountering sorrow) in which the poet compares the few moral people at the king's court to the fragrant flowers he had been planting in order to counter the weeds that are spreading more and more (Kroll 2007). This metaphor is also found, for instance, in the lines by Yang Yun 楊惲 (fl. 65–55 BCE), a grandson of Sima Qian 司馬遷:

田彼南山，蕪穢不治，
種一頃豆，落而為萁。
人生行樂耳，須富貴何時。

“[I] cultivated a field in those Southern Mountains,
[But] the rank weeds remained unkempt.
[I] planted beans on [a patch of land measuring] one *ch'ing*,
[But they] fell [to the ground] and [only bare] stalks . . . were left.
[So long as] a man is alive, [he should] just enjoy himself,
Till when [has one] to wait for wealth and high standing?”²⁰

Korean literature has adopted the image of flowers in their allegorical meaning of royal attendants, especially in parables (for instance, in *Hwawanggye* 花王戒, “Admonition to the Flower King,” by Sŏl Ch'ŏng 薛聰, 650–730; or in *Hwasa* 花史, “History of flowers,” by Im Che 林悌, 1549–1587). Although there is no explicit mention of the land-cultivating concept in the above-cited *sijo*, the text seems to suggest a special meaning, viz., the ideal attitude of someone who is estranged from the secular world but still influential in state-related matters.

In most of the above *sijo* one can detect a specific tendency, namely that the name of a Chinese person who originally represented a certain ideal is depicted in a situation where this ideal has touched a limit, and therefore the name is recoded in accordance with the main idea of the text. For instance, in order to underscore the idea that life itself is short and potentially full of sorrows, the texts may mention famous figures of the past and set them in relation to their achievements and their life and fate.

The idea that life happens at a fast pace and, therefore, calls for an individual response may also be expressed by discussing the fast fading of beauty:

²⁰ *Hanshu* 漢書 66; translation quoted from Jurij L. Kroll (2010: 326). I would like to thank Dr. Kroll for pointing my attention to this reference.

옥갓튼 한궁녀도 호지에 진토 되고
 헤어화 양귀비도 역노에 바려스니
 각시네 일시화용을 앗겨 무삼

“Even women from the jaden Han palace
 Turned to ashes in barbarian lands.
 Even the ‘talking flower’ Yang Guifei 楊貴妃,
 Is buried by a road in Wei 魏.
 Girls, do not preserve in vain
 Your temporary beauty” (*Namhun* 162).

This poem names famous beauties, whose lives ended tragically: Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, a concubine of the Han emperor Yuandi 元帝 (r. 48–6 BCE), who died in the land of the Xiongnu 匈奴 to where the emperor, unaware of her beauty, had sent her as a bride for the ruler; or the favorite concubine of emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 713–756), Imperial Consort Yang (719–756), who was executed in order to appease the mutinous soldiers of the imperial guard. Their beauty is important in the text only in relation to the stories demonstrating life’s fragile nature.

Using symbolically loaded names in order to refer to fateful lives is not new in principle, especially in this case, as they are basically inseparable. In the same vein, Korean poetry also referred to famous places traditionally associated with beautiful landscapes. Such traditional symbols, e.g., Peach Blossom Spring (Taohua Yuan 桃花源) or Dongting Lake (Dongting Hu 洞庭湖), were now inserted in the texts while simultaneously underlining their transience. Here is an example for the rather unconventional use of such geographical names:

무릉도원 홍도화도 삼월이면 모춘이오
 동정호 발근 달도 그믐이면 무광이라
 엇지타 설부화용를 압겨 무삼

“Even in Peach Blossom Spring near Wuling 武陵
 In the third month springtime is ending,
 Even at Lake Dongting the bright moon
 On the last day of the month does not shine,
 Do not preserve
 Your snow-like skin and beautiful face” (*Namhun* 50).

This text may be one of the most representative examples where the ideal character of a common symbol is depicted as limited. The ideal status of such spaces is said to have no eternal intrinsic value, just as life itself is short and futile. This is the main idea of the above texts, and the symbols are used to emphasize it.

2.2 Love and separation

The same mode is widely applied in poems concerning feelings of love and separation. This is a relatively new subject in Korean vernacular poetry, appearing first

in works by female entertainers, *kisaeng* 妓生, around the sixteenth century. Interestingly, in the Late Chosŏn, texts speaking of love are often male-voiced. In order to illustrate the scale of suffering, the texts refer to people in Chinese history who had themselves experienced separation:

항우 작한 천하장사라마는 우미인 니별에 한숨 석스거 눈물 지고
명황이 작한 제세영주라마는 양귀비 나별에 마의역에 울엇거든
허물며 녀남문 장부야 일너 무삼

“Xiang Yu 項羽 was an outstanding general of the Heavenly Empire,
But after parting from the beauty Yu 虞 he sighed and cried.
Minghuang 明皇 was a talented ruler,
After parting from Yang Guifei at Mawei 馬尾, he shed tears.
Then what to say about other men!” (*Namhun* 184).

The text mentions not only the famous story of Xuanzong’s separation from his consort Yang, but also the name of the hegemon-king of Chu, Xiang Yu (232–202 BCE), a famous warrior whose parting from the woman he loved also became known in history.

Some texts do not refer to the stories and only mention the names:

뉘라셔 장새라던고 니별에도 장사 잇노
명황도 눈물 지고 초패왕도 울엇거든
허물며 여나문 장부야 일너 무삼

“Who in this world may be called a strong man?
Is there anyone to stay strong while suffering in separation?
Even Minghuang shed tears,
Even the hegemon-king of Chu cried.
Then what can I do, being an ordinary man?” (*Namhun* 170).

Poems like these show that the names steadily acquired a new symbolic meaning when they were related to personal situations. It may be suggested that readers of the newly wider audience were initially not aware of the stories, but eventually the widespread distribution of such texts allowed for a more laconic reference.

Texts in this subject group often refer to legendary people who were not originally associated with love stories but who became part of Chinese history or literature owing to their outstanding military abilities and power. In these texts, their famous ability is deemed insufficient in view of the intensity of their love and separation:

창밧게 가사 솟막이 장사야 니별 나는 궁도 네 잘 막일소나
그 장새 대답허되 초한 스적 항우라도 녀발산하고 기개세로되 심으로 능
이 못 막엇고 삼국스적 제갈량도 상통천문에 하달지리로되 재주로 능히
못 막여스거든
허물며 날거튼 소장부야 일너 무삼

“Hey, tinsmith patching pots in front of my window!
 Could you patch the hole through which separation is soaking in?”
 The tinsmith answered,
 ‘If even Xiang Yu of Chu who had the strength to fold up mountains
 And a spirit to turn over the world could not patch it,
 And Zhuge Liang of the Three Kingdoms who perfectly knew astronomy and
 geomancy
 Was not able to patch it,
 What can I say about such a small person as me?’” (*Namhun* 84).

The figures above who are common symbols of power are regarded here in a situation when that power was limited and proved insufficient to cope with the circumstances. It is important to mention that the implied situation differs from the traditional background story and perception since both lose in private situations: the mighty general Xiang Yu or the great advisor Zhuge Liang are depicted as succumbing to their love and submitting to their emotions. In poems of this category, heroic names are invoked as symbols for the limits of human power in private situations.

Nonetheless, in the same period these names would still be used in classical fashion to denote able and mighty figures, for instance:

오호대장 날넌 장사 전무후무 제갈낭과
 그 장사 그 모사면 통일 천하 허련마는

“Five great generals were always at war
 Together with Zhuge Liang
 With their strategic abilities
 They could have united the Heavenly Empire. [...]” (*Namhun* 53).

These ancient role models appear limited when they are seen outside their usual “surroundings,” and it is the circumstances of private life that reveal their weaknesses. Such representations are more realistic than the commonly used exalted clichés which accompany these figures in contexts relating to their public involvement. Below I will offer a possible explanation for this specific development as a result of a widening readership.

The *chang-sijo* above, on the tinsmith, requires closer attention as a representative example of some other features characteristic of the Late Chosŏn period. First, vernacular poetry of the period tends to depict the world of ordinary people, scenes at markets and life in the streets, and *chang-sijo* texts widely introduce such figures as vendors, tailors, and other tradespeople. The second feature to observe is the extent of learning demonstrated by the tinsmith. In the text, he replies by using phrases in *hanmun*, which attests to his knowledge not only of the mentioned figures and stories related to them, but also to his erudition. The phenomenon of depicting ordinary people as being familiar with Chinese symbols and knowledge traditionally not available to the lower social strata, can be found in several *chang-sijo* texts of the period dealing with a variety of subjects (Guriyeba 2009).

In the group of poems examined so far, the juxtaposition of an ordinary lyrical subject and an outstanding ancient role model emphasizes the pain of separation and the intensity of love. This change in traditional usage of symbolically loaded names may be interpreted in the context of a widening readership. The legendary heroes are now considered as human beings with weaknesses and problems, and who are therefore closer to ordinary people. The same explanation may be given for the text discussed in Chapter 1 where famous Chinese figures have replaced ordinary people as party hosts in earlier variants of the same *sijo*.

2.3 Humorous subjects

Humor is a new element in *sijo* poetry of the period and was usually associated with “style lowering.” Again, Chinese elements played a part in these transformations and continued the change in the idealistic perception of symbolic figures. One historical luminary depicted in an unserious manner is the famous poet Li Bo:

한 잔을 부어라 가득이 부어 편포전 왜반에 담아 뉴리잔에 가득 부어
아모도 몰내 뒤 초당 문갑 우회 언저더니 어늬 곁을레 유령이 내려와 반
이나 다 스달아 먹고 간나보다 반 잔이로고나 벽공에 둥두렛한 달이 반
이나 여즐어지고 반이 나마쓰니 태백이 갱생하야 내려와셔 집헛스든 쥬
령 막대로 에화즉스근 스두다려셔 반이나 여즐어지고 반이나 남앗나보
다 반달이로고나 ……

“Fill the cup! Fill it up.

Put wine in the bottle gourd and pour it into the glass cup.’

‘It must be that in the paper hat box behind

Some spirit secretly landed, then drank half of the cup, and flew away,
So only half of it is left.

And in the azure sky, too, [only] half of the round moon is left.

It must be that Taibo has come back to life and hit it with a stick – bang! bang!

So there is only half left—it is a crescent.’ [….]” (*Namhun* 152).

In this text, the untypical usage of the name Taibo, i.e., Li Bo, is a main device for creating a humorous effect. The servant boy, responding to his master’s order, is trying to hide the fact that he has drunk much of the wine. He therefore builds his speech on the common association of the figure Li Bo with the moon, suggesting a causal connection with the poet’s drinking habits and trying to avert suspicion from his own pilfering. This example cannot be classified as re-coding in the strict sense, but the new fanciful treatment adds to the interpretation of the symbol and thus makes it part of the code-related discourse.

Similarly in the next case, the meaning implied by the Chinese poet’s name is the same as above, but here it is used in another fashion, as a benchmark for drinking. This is another playful text based on the common association of Li Bo with wine, also known from other texts. At the same time, in this humorous setting, Li Bo’s ability to hold his drink is said to be limited as he would be unable to finish even one cup of the strong wine in question:

자네가 술을 잘 먹는다 하니 슈슈 쇠주 세 대와 쇠서 세 접시를 먹을
 스가본가
 슈슈 쇠주 세 대와 쇠서 세 접시를 먹으랴면 내 물니리 갑슬량은
 옛날에 니태백도 일일슈경 삼백배라 해도 이 술 한 잔 못 다 먹었습네

“You say that you are an able drinker.

Then let us see whether you can have three *twe*²¹ of wheat alcohol

And two plates of ox tongue.

If three *twe* and two plates is really what you can eat,

I will pay for it.

They say in ancient times Taibo used to drink

Three hundred cups of wine

But could he finish even a cup of this strong one?” (*Namhun* 181).

As we can see, Chinese figures were originally endowed with symbolic meaning associating them with certain idealized character traits or an idealistic story. In time, with the dissemination of vernacular poetry among ordinary people and given the new social situation, the ideals changed, and the figures lost their unlimited character, entered new contexts, and were imbedded in new scenes. Besides Chinese names, this development can be traced through images of birds, through such phenomena as the desacralization of Buddhist images, and other textual features.²²

3 Reflections on the specifics of the present

Besides the above phenomena, there are many cases in which Chinese names were used in traditional fashion but linked with current circumstances. For the Late Chosŏn period, allegorical criticism of the social and political realities became a popular subject for which Chinese elements were brought to bear.

3.1 Allegorical criticism of the ruler

A case in point is the allegorical criticism of the ruler, itself one of the most traditional subjects both in vernacular genres and in *hansi* poetry. By introducing widely recognized symbols, the authors revealed their critical position. Since in the countries of the Chinese cultural oecumene history was generally conceived as cyclical, Korean literature abounded with references and allusions to Chinese history which provided models for comparison and emulation or, on the contrary, negative foils.

Such criticism, for obvious reasons, does not usually “lie on the surface,” and the allegory needs to be recognized and interpreted as such. A text by Cho Kwangjo 趙光祖 (1482–1519) illustrates the principle:

²¹ *Twe* is a volume measure of about 1.8 liters.

²² For more details, see Guryeva (2012).

저건너 一片石이 姜太公의 釣臺로다
 文王은 어디 가고 빈 臺만 남았는고
 夕陽에 물 차는 제비만 오락가락 하더라

“Over there that boulder of rock
 Is the terrace where Grand Duke Jiang used to fish.
 King Wen went somewhere,
 And the terrace is left empty.
 At sunset the swallows over cold water
 Are flitting back and forth” (*SMHSJ*, 432, #1851).

In this poem the lyrical subject imagines his surroundings as the background of historical events, with the spatial elements serving as links between time periods. The elements that take the reader back to ancient Chinese history form a contrast, whereas an acute sense of the present is expressed through the image of the swallows flitting back-and-forth. The main idea is concentrated in the names of Jiang Ziya 姜子牙 (Jiang taigong 姜太公, fl. 11 c. BCE), a wise man who had retreated from court to become a fisherman, waiting several decades for the advent of a decent ruler; and King Wen (Wen wang 文王), founder-to-be of the Zhou 周 dynasty (11 c.–256 BCE), who recognized Jiang’s potential and called on him to become his advisor. The image of the empty terrace hints at the absence of a worthy ruler whom the lyrical subject would willingly serve. Cho Kwangjo’s biography corroborates this interpretation, since he, too, criticized the ruler and was sentenced.²³

The figure of Jiang Ziya is often used in texts of the later period, when it became part of the lifestyle-related rhetoric, as in the following *sijo* by an unknown author:

태공의 낙대 빌고 엄자룽의 줄을 다라
 먼녀의 배를 타고 장한의 강동 차자가니
 백구야 날 본 체 마라 속인 일나

²³ The search for a worthy ruler can also be expressed without mentioning names, as, for instance, in a *sijo* by Pak T’aebo 朴泰輔 (1654–1689):

靑山 自負松아 네 어이 누엇난다
 狂風을 못이긔여 불희져져 누엇노라
 가다가 良工를 만나거든 옛드라 하고려

“Hey, you, old crooked pine in the green mountains,
 What made you crouch?
 ‘The reason is that I could not overcome wind and snow,
 They made me break and crouch.
 So, if you meet a skilled carpenter,
 Tell him that I am here” (*SMHSJ*, 484, #2070).

The text can be understood as a message from someone who is old and buffeted by adversity but is still willing to serve a worthy ruler, allegorically defined as a “skilled carpenter.” This interpretation correlates with the life of the author, Pak T’aebo, who started a successful career but was later sent into exile after protesting some decisions of King Sukchong 肅宗 (1675–1720) and died while awaiting restoration of his civil status (*SMHSJ*, 694).

“I use the Grand Duke’s fishing rod,
 And the fishing line of Yan Ziling.
 I take the boat of Fan Li 范蠡
 To go to the riverside of Zhang Han 張翰.
 Hey, white gull, do not show that you saw me,
 I am afraid that other people will know about this place” (*Namhun* 72).

Many of the Late Chosŏn *sijo* texts focus on famous recluses of the ancient past, often pairing them with their associated images (e.g., the five willows planted by Tao Yuanming), who had once demonstrated their talents for state service but left it to live the carefree life of a recluse in the bosom of nature (e.g., Jiang Ziya, Fan Li [536–448 BCE], Yan Ziling, Zhang Han [ca. 258–319]). In the above *sijo*, the author associates himself with such figures, naming them alongside the frequent symbol of the white gull, which also represents an unfettered way of life.

By referencing the background of these figures, the lyrical subject in such poems implies that participation in state affairs and official service should be reserved for a worthy ruler, while simultaneously expressing his misgivings about the present sovereign. This kind of interpretation illustrates the specific usage of archetypal figures as a device for allegorical criticism.

3.2 Indirect criticism through the motif of longing for an ideal past

Another group of *sijo* and *chang-sijo* evaluates the present through a comparison with the ideal past. The following *sijo*, which is based on a *hansi* by Ch’oe Ch’ung 崔冲 (984–1068), is a good example:

일생에 한하기를 회향시절 못 난 주를
 초의를 무릅쓰고 식물실 하올망정
 인심이 순후하던 주를 못내 부러

“What I have regretted all my life is that
 I was not born in the times of Fu Xi 伏羲.
 Although people then used to wear hempen clothes
 And feed themselves with fruits,
 Human hearts were pure and not artificial.
 It is different now—and this is what makes me sad” (*Namhun* 135).

The poem is based on the juxtaposition of a remote past associated with simplicity and naturalness and the present, which lacks these virtues. It is best understood as a reaction to the current situation in the country, which caused widespread discontent among the literati.

An ideal may also be expressed by referring to a certain figure as a role model. The Duke of Zhou (Zhou gong 周公, r. trad. 1042–1035 BCE) is praised for his humbleness by the lyrical subject in a *sijo* by an unknown author:

周公도 聖인이샷다 世上 사름 드리스라
 文王의 아들이오 武王의 아이로되

平生에 一毫驕氣를 내야 비미 업나니

“The Duke of Zhou was a sage,
 People of the present world—listen!
 Being a son of King Wen
 And a younger brother of King Wu, [...]
 He never showed the slightest arrogance
 For all his life” (*SMHSJ*, 440, #1886).

The Duke of Zhou is considered in orthodox literature as having laid the foundation for Confucian doctrine, therefore the text also recalls original values.

Another group of poetic texts evoking the past includes references to the Chinese *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo [zhi] [tongsu] yanyi* 三國志通俗演義, 14 c.) and other stories from ancient China. This novel was also popular in Korea, and, as shown above, some of the names had entered the vernacular tradition even before the Late Chosŏn. The reason for classifying such poems separately here is that they include plot details from such narrative texts,²⁴ thereby transposing the core idea of “ideal people with ideal deeds” embodied in these narratives.

Many of these poems are included in three popular anthologies from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, i.e., *Namhun t'aep'yŏng-ga* (1863), *Kagok wŏllyu* 歌曲源流 (“The source and current of songs,” 1876), and *Pyŏngwa kagok chip* 瓶窩歌曲集 (“Songs of Pyŏngwa,” 1713). Some of them are found only in the former. One typical example is the following poem by an unknown author, which appeared in this anthology for the first time:

오췌마 우는 곳데 칠척장검 빛나거다
 자방은 결승천리하고 한신은 전필승공필취라

항우는 일범증부릉용하니 애긋는 듯

“There where Xiang Yu’s black piebald horse roared,
 A seven-*chi*-long sword was flashing.
 When Zhang Liang 張良 and Han Xin 韓信 went to war, they necessarily won. [...]
 Xiang Yu was not able to use Fan Zeng 范增,
 This makes my heart tear apart” (*Namhun* 10).

The central figures in this poem were prominent commanders of the Chu-Han contention. They are presented here with their characteristics expressed in Classical Chinese (line two) or with their usual attributes (black piebald horse, seven-*chi*-long

²⁴ The form of (*chang*)-*sijo* referencing plot details is not limited to narrative texts from the Chinese tradition. There are texts that are based, for instance, on local Korean stories, such as the “Tale of Suk’hyang” (*Suk’hyang chŏn* 淑香傳).

sword). Most of the events referred to in this group of poems are actions by the legendary heroes that led to important turns in Chinese history.

Because of the personal character of the ancient events, as the lyrical subject perceives them, this group is typologically close to the other group that draws on figures from an ideal past. The perception in both cases is basically the same—past events are presented as being important for the present or for evaluating the present. The following text by an unknown author demonstrates this:

한무제의 북척서격과 제갈량의 칠종칠금
진나라 사도독의 팔공산 위엄으로 남만북적을 다 쓰러 바린 후에
진실너 그러할 시작시면 주시 네악과 한대 의관을 다시 본 듯

“Wudi of Han appeased the Xiongnu in the north and barbarians in the west,
Zhuge Liang left Meng Huo 孟獲 seven times, and captured him seven times,
Commander-in-chief Xie of Jin²⁵ in the Bagong 八公 Mountains
Chased away all *man*-tribes (蠻) to the south and all *di*-tribes (狄) to the north
with his dignity.

If this is true, then it is the same as witnessing the rituals and music of Zhou,
As seeing clothing and headdresses from Han” (*Namhun* 209).

The text focuses on military actions which led to the defeat of outward enemies, i.e., towards stability and harmony. Emphasis is also put on the ritual foundations of the state, expressed through the pairing of “rituals and music of Zhou” and “clothing and headdresses of Han.”

Above we considered poetic texts with a central figure, serving as a symbol, or several figures, representing a type of behavior, or lists of names accompanied by references to important events. Regardless of the structure of these poems, all of them share a common objective in their use of Chinese names, viz., to reinforce a central idea.

Conclusion

In this paper I have examined the main tendencies in the use of Chinese names in *sijo* and *chang-sijo* texts of the Late Chosŏn, and most of them are seen to be closely related with their respective social and historical background. The names maintain their customary connotations, but the received symbolic meaning of a name is not always the reason for its use, since the names are often embedded in order to ascertain a perspective running counter to the ways in which they had originally been encoded. A model figure may be substituted with a figure that does not ‘fit’ the role of that model, or a former ideal may lose its ideal appeal. Role models are still cited, but their connotations have often changed, sometimes turning positive into negative statements.

²⁵ Commander-in-chief (*dudu*) Xie of Jin (晉謝都督), i.e., Xie An 謝安 (*zi* Anshi 安石, 320–385), was a warrior.

Some of the newer texts refer to peripheral elements of a figure's background story, i.e., they detach themselves from the character traits with which these figures are customarily associated or from the background story's key event. Reference may now be made to any element of a story or to secondary facts concerning a figure. Such variety also demonstrates a more creative and original approach to handling the poetic material. It could be suggested that this is an important difference between *hansi*, which ordinarily retained commonly used associations, and vernacular verse, which showed more freedom in the application of names and a greater independence in their allegorical references.

One of the modes commonly applied in Late Chosŏn poetry is the use of a Chinese name to support an idea, e.g., as an argument for entertainment and indulgence or to illustrate the principle of *carpe diem*, which meant to exchange the social obligations of a literatus in official service for a carefree, unfettered lifestyle. Both ideas may be related to the social background of the time, when people were gradually feeling disillusioned by reality and looking for optional ways of life.²⁶ Widespread disappointment also manifested itself in contemporary poetry, which contributed to the traditional mode of allegorical criticism attaining new vigor. The new style of referencing Chinese names was among the new features of *sijo* from this period. Its two most important functions are follows:

- (1) A historical or legendary figure, with strong symbolic connotations, is presented lacking his typical traits and historical role. The Chinese name enters a poem that features a personal story or strong emotions, including love or separation. Famous warriors lose their original might, while other aspects of their personality are introduced in order to emphasize the scale of their longing, thus offering comfort.
- (2) Ordinary people are depicted in a new way. They are shown as knowledgeable or having easy access to the world of immortals. In such texts, familiarity with Chinese history or a good command of *hanmun* are no longer a privilege of the educated elite, but members of the lower classes are now also shown voicing Chinese names, entering mythological spaces, and surrounding themselves with legendary figures. While facts from Chinese history may have been known through popular novels disseminated in Korea, the literary language continued to be the preserve of the educated elite—it was this discrepancy to actual practices that contributed to the new effect. The texts paid attention to wider groups of people than was the case with classical *sijo*, but depicted them in a somewhat wishful manner.

Both modes were part of a general tendency to present Chinese people as being closer to ordinary Korean people—the new, wider audience of the *sijo* genre. Ancient Chinese figures were considered more relatable and more “humanlike,” to the point of

²⁶ These factors have been brought into the discussion by Korean scholars, e.g., Pak (2000).

putting them in an unserious and even humorous context.

To summarize, the new ways of using Chinese names in *sijo* texts generally follow the original pattern as it was handed down from classical poetry where they were introduced for their allegorical value. What changed was the context or reference frame, i.e., the meaning of the symbol, as it unfolds in the surrounding text and context, and the objective of its usage.

Thus, at the initial stage of the transcoding process, Chinese names entered Korean vernacular poetry as a coding system along with the familiar associations and background stories, giving rise to a certain symbolic meaning and allegorical reading. In time, these associations were applied in new textual settings, which altered their meaning in accordance with the underlying general idea of the text.

For Koreans, Chinese names remained symbolic and archetypical, but they were used in *sijo* texts in order to address local problems—ranging from general social issues to highly personal matters, such as relations with the opposite sex—and served to express the author’s opinions on an allegorical level. Under the circumstances of their time, people needed a private space and increasingly put value on their own personal life, pondering over the shortcomings of the present and comparing their experiences with an idealized past. The past, as it was represented by the names of famous figures, was cast in a modernized mold and became a reference point for expressing new sensitivities. The Korean phenomenon of re/coding Chinese names demonstrates that it had creative potential and was flexible enough to serve new poetic modes.

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