A Study on Korean Etymology

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Kwon Tŏk-kyu (Aeryu, Hanbyŏl) has been known as the editor of Chosŏn Ŭmunn Kyŏngwi (1923). But the fact that he was the first scholar who got interested in Korean etymology has been neglected. No document is left to reveal what made him develop interest in etymology except his Chosŏn Yugi, which indirectly shows his keen interest in history.

The amount of Kwon's writing on Korean etymology is not impressive: his papers written in the 1930s are reiterations of those of the preceding decade in a sense. The scholastic acumen he demonstrated in them was, however, impressive enough to change the course of Korean etymology.

Etymology prior to Kwŏn Tŏk-kyu's research, represented by Tongŏn Koryak, was characterized by the theory of forced analogy (Puhoe-sŏl), based on Chinese-Korean pronunciation association. For instance, it argues that 'Abi' (father) and 'Mul' (water) is derived from 'Abu (阿副)' and 'Mol (沒)' respectively. The latter case in particular is drawn from 'Su wal Mol (水曰沒)' in 'Kyerim Yusa,' which shows how our ancestors understood 'Kyerim Yusa.' Hwang Yun-sŏk, albeit a far greater scholar than the author of Tongŏn Koryak, made the same mistakes in a fundamental sense when he adopted the theory of forced analogy in his Hwaŭmbang'onja Ŭlhae. Likewise, the traditional study of Korean etymology is closely linked to Chinese characters and pronunciation, whose bad influence

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1 I read the first (1924) of two volumes. After the Liberation, it was published in one volume under the title 'Chosŏn Yŏksa' (1945) with some modification
persisted up until the middle of this century.\(^2\)

What characterizes Kwon’s approach is his way of transcending the limitation of the traditional approach. It will suffice to give the following examples: his denial of linkage between ‘Chung (monk)’ and ‘Chung (業)’ (mass) (1928); his attempt to derive ‘Kashinae 가시내’ from the Middle Korean word ‘Kas갓’ (wife), instead of ‘Kasanae假사내’ ‘Kasana稼産兒’ ‘Kasına稼倉兒’ or ‘Hyŏngch’ŏ 萊妻.’ (Kwon regarded ‘내나e’ as a plural suffix) (1923, 1939). His writings show his profound knowledge and fresh insight into the etymology of the Korean language, particularly when he discusses ‘Ku니구의’ (public, official), ‘Mari마리’ (head), ‘Hang’got향것’ (master) in Middle Korean (1929, 1939) or when he links ‘Tisae디세’ in Middle Korean to ‘Kiwa기와’ (roofing tile) in Modern Korean (1939) or when he infers that ‘sh’il실’ (valley) already existed in Old Korean from ‘得島[残]一云谷’ and ‘絲浦 今蔚州谷浦也’ of Samguk yusa (1929, 1939). Despite the paucity of his data, his acumen in etymology has been recognized by subsequent researchers who started their analyses based on these words.

Particularly his analysis of ‘sh’il실’ (valley) stimulated Yi Hŭi-sŏng (1932) to stress the importance of studying native village names. I (1971) also pointed out that ‘shinae시내’ (stream) is associated not with ‘sh’il실’ (thread) but with ‘sh’il실’ (valley): it means not ‘a stream like a thread’ but ‘a stream flowing through a valley’.

2

In the 30s, historical approaches to the Korean language were invigorated with the researchers’ access to Chŏng’ŭm Munhŏn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as well as their awakening to the importance of the study of dialects. Their scholastic achievements were twofold: phonologically Yi Sung-nyŏng’s study of the sound ‘ㆍ’ were memorable; etymologically Pang Chong-hyŏn, Chŏn Mong-su, and Yang Chu-dong made a deep impression on subsequent research.

Pang Chong-hyŏn, who imitated a historical approach to Korean language study through an explicationary introduction to the literature of Middle and Modern Korean, conducted fieldwork on dialects himself. On the hypothesis that there should be native Korean words equivalent to Chinese directional terms, he conducted fieldwork in Kap’a-do (island) located in the southern tip of Cheju-do (island). Finally he identified ‘세’ (East), ‘하늬’ (West), ‘미’ (South), ‘바’ or ‘뒤’ (North)

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\(^2\) Refer to Yun Chŏng-ha (1937), which tries to justify the approach of Tongŏn Kyoryuk
(1931, 1939). In addition, his study of Korean data of the pre-fifteenth centuries revealed that ‘대왕흑금 (대曰黑根)’ and ‘노왕도근 (老曰刀斤)’ should be interpreted as ‘흑금하다’ and ‘디근하다’ in dialects respectively (1937, 1940). No less remarkable is his attempt to link ‘고왕가판 (椭曰柯半)’ (Yangsŏ Silla-jŏn) to ‘고이’ in currently spoken Korean while discussing the affinity between ‘가벽 (嘉鉢)’ and ‘가面白’.

From 1937 on, the journal Han’gŭl continued to publish Chŏn’s research on the meaning of Middle Korean terms contained in fifteenth and sixteenth century literature like Hunmongjahoe. His data were confined to the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, a trend which still hovers in our academic circles. His occasional attempt to go beyond these two centuries brought forth insightful results: among them, ‘어비시’ (parents) was identified as a compound of ‘아비’ and ‘어시’ (1937); the word ‘손’ from ‘丁손령’ in Hunmongjahoe (종 2) was correctly interpreted; ‘소나취’ was identified as a compound of ‘손’ and ‘아취’. His arguments, however, sometimes led to wrong conclusions, as shown in the cases of ‘가자비’, ‘아조미’, ‘오라비’ and ‘오늘’ (1938). He contended that ‘가자비’ and ‘아조미’ were derived from ‘앞자비’ and ‘앞조미’ respectively by the ‘책’ deletion. These original forms were again claimed to be derived by the ‘책’ (small) affixation onto ‘지아비’ and ‘지어미’. Here, he neglected the fact that ‘책’ is a verbal stem. He also erroneously assumed that ‘지아비’ and ‘지어미’ were Middle Korean terms, when they were actually Early Modern ones. Furthermore, the phonological changes he proposed to account for these data were not verifiable.\(^\text{3}\) This was mainly due to the lack of phonological and morphological studies in those days, which are essential to the development of etymology. His vital mistakes lie in his total negligence of tone of Middle Korean. He was right in assuming ‘오라비’ could be divided into ‘올’ and ‘아비’ but wrong in assuming it meant “perfectly identical to father” based on the association of ‘울’ with ‘울〈 오, 옥 (whole). This is a telling example of his ignorance of the tone difference marked in Middle Korean documents. This is not acceptable even in terms of semantics. By the same reason, his argument that ‘오늘’ was a compound of ‘온’ (upcoming) and ‘울’ (day) is not viable. However, despite these erroneous arguments, we should appreciate his scholastic achievements ranging from his discovery of ‘책’ to his attempt to divulge ‘오레미’ (〈 올어미) in the Pyŏng’an-do dialect in connection with ‘오라비.’ Instead of deprecating his research sui generis from our own perspective, we should appreciate his scholastic acumen in selecting crucial words and launching a frontier

\(^\text{3}\) Refer to Lee Ki-moon (1983) for a discussion on ‘가자비’ and ‘아조미’
exploration into pre-fifteenth-century etymology.

Yang Chu-dong's major interest was in deciphering personal names, geographical names, and official titles in the ancient period which would be conductive to interpreting Hyanggagga. He also mentioned the etymology of some general words, focusing on about 10 words like ‘살’ (year), ‘할’ (wife) and ‘남친.’ Among them, his analysis of ‘할’ deserves our attention. This word, of which Kwon Tŏk-gyu (1923) attempted to give a new interpretation, was a popular example. Yang Chu-dong broached a new theory that ‘가시내’ is a compound of ‘가시’ (wife) and ‘예’ (child) and that the affix ‘-ㄴ’ was inserted for the convenience of pronunciation. This idea of "the convenience of pronunciation" is a typical duplication of the bad practice of Japanese linguists.

What interests us is that Chŏn Mong-su (1939-1940) reiterated Kwon Tŏk-gyu's theory (1923). Chŏn's theory however fell short of explicating ‘내,’ While analyzing ‘갓나회’ into ‘갓’ and ‘나회’ in which process ‘-ㄴ’ is “دتلت نت” (added on—which was indeed no less erroneous than the concept of ‘the convenience of pronunciation’), Chŏn Mong-su did not realize that ‘갓나회’ and ‘가시내’ are just dialectal variations. ‘가시내, 가시나’ from the South-Eastern dialect can be traced back to ‘가시나회’ whose sole difference from ‘갓나회’ in Middle Korean is the existence of the vowel ‘ㅏ’ (i) in the middle, which characterizes this dialect. This is reaffirmed in the comparison between ‘가시개’ from the South-Eastern dialect and ‘가시개’ (‘가시개’ from Middle Korean (in the fifteenth century).

Yang Chu-dong's scholastic research (1942) was the high point of this period in its genuine sense. His achievement was simply beyond description. However, we should point out some of the serious flaws inherent in his methodology (see Lee Ki-moon 1985b). His major methodological problems are closely related to his dilemma between a rough understanding of Middle Korean and the ambition to deal with Old Korean data comprehensively.

The essence of his methodology is twofold: “T'ongsim, Úmun hoțon, Úmjon” (sound transfer) in phonology, “Úajon” (meaning transfer) in semantics. For instance, he attempted to interpret many unrelated words such as the official title of Silla '아친(阿榛)', the personal names ‘알지 (閔知)’ and ‘아사달 (阿斯達)’ in Tan’gun shinhwa, the geographical names ‘아차 (阿次), 아차 (阿且), 아차 (峨嵯)’ in terms of ‘앗’ (104-107). This was a result of relating ‘앗’ to ‘앗, 악’ based on

4 This is an extension of Chŏn Mong-su (1938) Yang Chu-dong (1937) writes, "What is the meaning of 아차, 아치한, '아차' is it ‘공부’ (study), ‘박사’ (doctor)? If so, do they mean a head of a vocation?" Chŏn Mong-su (1938) argued against this
phonological similarity and to ‘small, younger, order’ based on meaning extension.\(^4\) In this way, he related many words: ‘시-새-새-새-시 (East-new-beginning)’, ‘곧-꼽-꼽-꼽-꼽-꼽-꼽-암-업 (god-mother-female-sprout-thumb).’, ‘붉-붉-붉-붉-붉 (brightness-land of a nation)’ and ‘شكر-شكر (stream-soil-field)’ Granted his position in the wilderness of ancient linguistic domain, it is obvious that his approach ran counter to the principles firmly held in the historical study of language. More harmful was his reckless application of a few “Wonö” (basic words) he proposed such as ‘빽 (big), 광 (brightness), 공 (god), 너 (soil), 식 (new)’ to many proper names in Old Korean.

These “Wonö” (basic words) which constituted the backbone of his interpretation were actually borrowed from earlier scholars. For example, ‘밝 (bright) and ‘뽀’ (god) came from the achievement of historians including Ch’oe Nam-sön in the field of Old Korean proper names; ‘شكر’ (East) was borrowed from Pang Chong-hyôn.\(^5\)

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After the Liberation, the main trend in the historical approach to Korean language moved to the study of late Middle and Modern Korean. This shift reflects the contemporary aspiration to conduct systematic research on Korean documents after the creation of Hunminjong’um. In a sense, this shift of focus was stimulated and accelerated by Yang Chu-dong (1942), which ironically served to reaffirm the Korean linguists’ view that they were not competent enough to deal with Old Korean data.

The achievement made in the field of late Middle Korean for the past 40 years is remarkable. As a result, our understanding of late Middle Korean is much deeper and wider than it was in the pre-Liberation era. In particular, the development of phonology has greatly helped that of etymology. Compared with this advance, however, it is a pity that research on morphology is still in its infancy.

Morphology should be distinct from etymology; the latter is supposed to begin where the former ends. However, we frequently observe both overlap in practice. However strict a synchronic approach to word-formation may be, it cannot remove the possibility of an etymological approach, since the latter, it seems to me, is inherent in the study of word formation. Synchronic approaches attempt to identify the rules inherent in a certain language, while the study of word-formation deals

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\(^5\) One piece of evidence comes from Yang Chu-dong (1942 388)’s citation of the Kap’a island dialect.
with the fossils formed through historical changes. It belongs to a historical study to
deal with idiosyncratic and individual facts. Moreover, in the case of word-
formation in Middle Korean, it seems to me that a synchronic approach to it is
nearly impossible in its rigorous sense.

Take ‘جمال’ (tiger, *Hummongjahoe* 上 18) and ‘جمال’ (猫, *Hummongjahoe* 上 23),
for example; since phonology shows ‘جمال’ and ‘جمال’ are linked to ‘جمال’ (tiger) and ‘جمال’
(cat) respectively, we should clarify the meaning of ‘جمال’. *Hộ Ung* (1975: 142-43)
claimed that ‘جمال’ denotes something with pattern; thus ‘جمال’ is characterized by
vertical stripes of dark brown, which places ‘جمال’ as a prefix. This is definitely
wrong, since ‘جمال’ is in fact borrowed from Mongolian (Lee Ki-moon 1964a).
*Hộ Ung*’s mistakes he in his attempt to isolate ‘جمال’ from ‘جمال’, which is not an
independent noun in Korean. Due to this misconception, he was forced to identify
the meaning of ‘جمال’ between ‘جمال’ and ‘جمال’.

This is not a rare case; sometimes our data are confined to a single word. In the
case of ‘جمال’ (fire-field farming), ‘جمال’ is obviously an allomorph of ‘جمال’; ‘جمال’
remains to be solved. *Hộ Ung* (1975) suggests that the root of ‘جمال’ yet not clear,
might be a conjugational form of the verb ‘جمال’ (to plough) (149). Ploughing, not
confined to fire-field farming, is applied to all kinds of farming. The characteristics
of fire-field farming are ‘جمال’ through burning’or ‘جمال’ wilderness farming’; thus,
‘جمال’ is likely to represent these semantic characteristics. So far, the job of clarifying
its obscure root is beyond our power.

I assume that ‘جمال’ is probably associated with ‘جمال’ of ‘جمال’ and ‘جمال’.
Considering that a noun ending with ‘جمال’ tends to lose it when a genitive ‘جمال’
is added, this appears to be true of ‘جمال’. If this is true, the original meaning of ‘جمال’ is
something associated with wild fields as is shown in ‘جمال’

*Hộ Ung*’s ‘word-formation theory’ is abundant with this sort of wrong
speculation. No wonder his lack of overall view leads to mere conjecture in his
analysis. This kind of approach, far from being scholastic, is no more than folk
etymology. ‘جمال’ is an example par excellence. People in the fifteenth and the
sixteenth centuries, in the dark about the fact that ‘جمال’ originated from the
Mongolian language, might have associated ‘جمال’ of ‘جمال’ with ‘جمال’ of ‘جمال’ or
‘جمال’.

In a synchronic approach, we cannot emphasize too much the importance of the
linguistic consciousness of native speakers of a language. For example, it seems
unexceptionable to describe ‘جمال’ (sun and moon), ‘جمال’ (horse and cow), ‘جمال’
(star and moon) as a compound of ‘جمال’ and ‘جمال’, ‘جمال’ and ‘جمال’, ‘جمال’ and ‘جمال’,
respectively. This sort of ‘جمال’ deletion was so pervasive that it must have been
generally accepted by medieval minds. If so, what happened to ‘디새’? Should this word, obviously originated from ‘*딜새’, which will be discussed fully later, be also dealt with in a synchronic approach? The common practice among scholars is to resort to their own modern prejudice. Hŏ Ung (1975) with the example of ‘怒조’ does not mention ‘디새’. One of the thorniest issues that a linguist must tackle is the division of labor between the synchronic and the historical approaches.

As mentioned above, the facts concerning word-formation are characterized by their individuality and specificity. The major goal of the synchronic approach is, however, to establish sound morphology by collating these discrete facts. In this light, Hŏ Ung’s assumption (1975) that there were two independent morphemes ‘-게/계’ and ‘-예/예’ denoting “instrument” should be reconsidered.

These morphemes may be viewed as phonologically-conditioned allomorphs in the light of a synchronic as well as a diachronic approach. Hŏ Ung (1975) shows that the words whose final sound are ‘-예/예’ have stems ending with ‘ा, ए, ऐ’ with the exception of ‘부체’ (paper fan). But we should note the following. First, in the case of ‘-예/예’, a distinction should be made according to whether this vowel is preceded by a consonant or not (e.g., ‘부체’ vs. ‘울예’). It is not convincing for him to contend that ‘ewriter’ ‘authorize’ is “deleted” (I think that it is in fact changed into ‘०’) in the case of ‘눌예’ (wing) and ‘눌예’ (song) (234), while saying that this deletion is not applicable to ‘울예’ (235). Without solid evidence, we cannot draw two interpretations from one linguistic form. This ‘०’ should be viewed as a voiced fricative allophone of ‘’ [g] weakened in a certain environment (Lee Ki-moon 1972), based on which we can naturally argue that ‘-예/예’ is an allomorph of ‘-게/계’.

Second, Hŏ Ung (1975) gives only one example of ‘اظ 새’ (235); ‘ョ예’ observable in the fifteenth century document is a good example of ‘-예’. Third, ‘두예’ can only be interpreted as ‘ - 요’ from a synchronic viewpoint. Historically it may well be traced back to ‘두-게’[tuβ- γ ə y] (Lee Ki-moon 1972). In this regard, this morpheme has three phonologically-conditioned allomorphs: ‘게/계’, ‘예/예’, ‘ / / .’

Finally ‘부체’ remains to be solved. Hŏ Ung (1975) viewed this word as coined by suffixation of ‘예’ onto the verbal stem ‘붓-’. This does not sound very convincing. Based on ‘垄采’ from Kyerim-yusa, ‘博册’ from Chosŏngwanyŏgŏ and ‘부체’ in a fifteenth century document (Tushi ḏhae 25, 24), we might surmise that the old form of this word is ‘부체’: with its verbal stem ‘붓-’ plus ‘체’ (whip). Considering ‘붓옷’ (a mat used in thrashing) observable in currently spoken Korean, which was again found in the form of ‘붓옷’ in Modern Korean (붓옷터다, Yŏg ⼝-ryuhae 8; 붓옷질하다, Yŏg ő-ryuhaebŏ 42), the word formation of ‘붓-체’
is more than natural. In this light, "ᆮtoList" from Kyerim-yusa is obviously less "볼toList" than "toList" or "toList". "toList" simply shows the change of the second vowel of "toList" for vowel harmony.

From the above discussions, we may learn that research on word formation of a language in a certain period cannot be made without etymological investigation. This lesson can be applied to a study of the most common words. Let's take "toList" of the fifteenth century (Wolinsŏkpo 1, 36) for example. Many studies have simply assumed that "toList" signifies powder. Hŏ Ung (1975: 96) also pigeonholes it into an example of "modifying compound noun". This powder image may be applicable to snow, however, the image of "powder rain" is odd. We can observe "toList" (light rain, Nammyŏngyup-ŏnhae 16, Tushi-ŏnhae 7.7) in Middle Korean and "toList" (drizzle) in currently spoken Korean; however, we cannot observe "toList" (powder rain). Here, an interesting example is observed in Kŭnganggyŏng samgahae (2.62) in which "toList" (thin haze) is translated into "toList". So far we cannot locate the meaning of "toList" exactly, since its usage is not available to us except some instances shown in "toList" and "toList" in Kŭnganggyŏng samgahae, which provides only a clue to its meaning. However, this example clarifies "toList" of "toList" to some extent. This "toList" does not refer to powder but haze; "toList" is similar to "toList" (drizzle) of the day. This is a good example reminding us of one of the characteristics of compounds, i.e., an old word is frequently embedded in it. No wonder compounds are compared to fossils.

To summarize, morphology and etymology are inextricable in the study of Middle Korean. Etymology not founded on the rock of morphological theory is a castle built on the sand. Up to now I have attempted to show how many problems we still have in morphological studies of Middle Korean. In order to promote our etymological research on Korean, a comprehensive study of Korean word formation in general as well as Middle Korean is urgently needed.

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There are two camps in the study of the history of Korean: one camp has confined their research to the post-fifteenth century data; the other has tried to transcend the temporal limitation of the fifteenth century by collecting and collating the pre-fifteenth century data. In view of our ultimate goal of studying the Korean

6 I have only discussed some examples in Middle Korean morphology which are closely related to etymology. I will fully discuss Middle Korean morphology in another paper.
language, the latter camp’s goal is much more desirable than the former. This reflects back on the scholastic trends of the 60s and 70s which highlighted the study of Old Korean. It was natural that the deeper the study of Middle Korean got, the more attention was paid to the study of Old Korean. However, the study of pre-fifteenth century Korean, especially that of languages in the age of the Three Kingdoms is in its embryonic stage. Of course, this is not to say that there has been little scholastic achievement but merely to point out the flimsy foundation of research in this field.

The major cause of this weakness lies in the lack of interdisciplinary approaches to bridge the gaps identifiable between the fifteenth century and the pre-fifteenth century. So far we are uncertain about the prospect of the field of Old Korean. In this situation, we should acknowledge etymology as a crucial discipline for bridging the gaps; however less attention etymology attracted than it deserved in the 60s and 70s.

‘기와’ (a roofing tile) is a crucial word that has contributed to the development of Korean etymology. As discussed earlier, Kwon Tŏk-gyu (1939) traced this word back to ‘디세’ in Middle Korean. Its historical changes were so radical that it also drew the attention of Chŏn Mong-su (1939-40) and Yu Ch’ang-sun (1971: 71-72). Their focus was, however, on the changes ‘디세’ underwent after the fifteenth century, thereby ignoring its prior forms. Of course they deserve credit for the research which constitutes a vital portion of Korean etymology. Their job is all the more significant because modern etymology aims to illuminate the overall history of a word as well as to elucidate its original meaning or form. Chŏn Mong-su (1939-1940) made a rare and valuable attempt to trace a pre-fifteenth century form of this word (Han’gul 7.8: 10-12), which however was not supported by follow-up research. He made a diagram to show the changes this word went through:

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--지애--기애
--디애--디아--지아--기아

--밀--디--디세
--디애--디와--지와--기와
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He claimed that ‘밀애’ is the old form of 기와, based on the assumption that ‘디세’ originated from ‘밀’ and a word, with ‘세’ or ‘애’ added on, frequently becomes a noun as observable in ‘마애’, ‘그림애’, ‘놀애’ and ‘울애’ in ancient times.” He was brilliant in linking this word to ‘밀’ (pottery); however, his attempt to trace ‘세’ of ‘디세’ in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries back to ‘세’ is obviously wrong, which reflects the immaturity of the fields of historical phonology and morphology.
I cannot locate the exact time when ‘기와’ was introduced in the history of Korean architecture. Doubtless it must have been a product of a highly civilized society. How was a new invention named? Was there a principle underlying the naming process? There were a few principles working: for example, a foreign term was adopted for an imported item; or, a native term was borrowed when a new invention looked similar to the existing item; or a new word was coined by means of compounding and derivation. ‘쇠물’ (an iron drum) in Middle Korean is a good example. When the bell was first introduced, they had only a drum made of leather; a bell was thus called a ‘물’ (a drum) in the beginning, and a compound word, ‘쇠 물’ (an iron drum) was coined later. By the same token, we may infer that ‘디새’ is a compound of ‘딜’ (pottery) and ‘새’ (grass).

We can observe the usage of ‘딜’ (mid tone) and ‘새’ (high tone) in fifteenth century documents. ‘딜’ was used independently as shown in ‘도 딜부’ (Humnongjahoe 中 18), ‘토 딜구율도’ (Humnongjahoe 中 9); or used in compound words as in ‘딜 앿_angles’ (Kugüppang 上 52), ‘딜시르’ (Kugüpp kanibiah 1. 84), ‘딜바 리’ (Pakt'ongsa 上 37), ‘딜동희’ (Humnongjahoe 中 12). In general, pottery was called ‘딜점’ (딜 + 점) (Wolinsókpo 2.9, Kugüppang 上 75). ‘딜점’ is observable in the sixteenth century documents. Sókpong Ch'ónjamun 5). ‘새’ referred to material for roofing from time immemorial; its fifteenth century example is ‘새집’ (채, 草堂, 茅屋) (Hwaómkyông-Ônhae 2. 244, Tushi-Ônhae 7. 2, 8. 66) meaning ‘straw thatching’: 점 새 점 집 (Humnongjahoe 上 18).9

What deserves our special attention is the tone of ‘디새’, namely the mid-mid tone; ‘새’, originally of the high tone, seems to be changed into the mid tone following that of ‘디’. The shift of tone in a compound is more than noteworthy, which requires in-depth study. Most remarkable is the change the high-tone words underwent. Here I only want to note that ‘새’ (bird) of the high tone changed into the mid tone in ‘한새’ (stork, Humnongjahoe 上 15).

This example strongly points to the great significance of the research in the pre-fifteenth century data. Although the historical study of ‘가위’ went back to the pre-

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7 We can observe several instances of ‘물’ in the fifteenth and sixteenth century documents. It is also noteworthy that ‘tungken’, whose original meaning is a drum, came to refer to a bell by meaning extension in Yŏmu language (Lee Ki-moon 1958)

8 Hŏ Ung (1975 102) claims that ‘딜’ in ‘딜점’ is a conjugational form of the verb ‘디-’. This is incorrect. ‘딜’ is not a cast and is a noun

9 The fact that ‘채’ (grass) is glossed as ‘새’ in geographical names of Yongsŏlch’ônga seems to show that it is the correct interpretation in Old Korean: 草舊 세왕이(5 17), 草閣 세왕(7 25)
fifteenth century data, this word with its frequent occurrence in documents and dialects has unfortunately remained an exception.

Besides its various dialectical variants, we can trace this word back to ‘전도할할자객’ (剪刀曰割子蓋) in Kyerimyusa. In particular, ‘가시객’ in South-Eastern dialect may be associated with 할자객 (割子蓋) (Haya Yukrang 1945). In the course of tracing the origin of this word, two crucial facts were revealed. First, the verbal stem ‘رأ’ was confirmed in a fifteenth century document (香木_slope 마사오라, Wolinsŏkpo 10. 13). Second, this word was found to be spelled ‘رأ예’ (Tushi-ŏnhae 10. 33), although this is the only extant example. In the past ‘مارس’ in sixteenth century documents was the only example available to linguists. Based on the hypothesis that this peculiar fifteenth century spelling ‘رأوس’ can be traced back to [*zg], I suggested ‘رأ객’[*kAgai] for the old form of this word, from which we could identify the derivational suffix ‘-객’ as a crucial element to signify an instrument (Lee Ki-moon 1972a). However, a couple of things still remain to be solved: what ‘割子蓋’ precisely refers to; how to explicate ‘가시객’ in South-Eastern dialect. I once suggested that ‘割子蓋’ denoted ‘رأ객’[kAgai]. In this case, the logical flaw may be that ‘子’ does not correspond to a syllable but to a syllable-final consonant; but this is acceptable in the light of the fact that ‘رأ’ was used as an independent syllable in Kyerim-yusa; 面曰攜𢙑, 皮曰渴𢙑, etc.10 We still have to take into consideration that ‘가시객’ consists of three syllables. There was a hypothesis that an old form of a monosyllabic stem ending with a consonant was actually a disyllabic stem ending with a vowel. Especially, as the old form of a verbal stem ending with ‘رأ’ has a high probability of ending with a vowel, we may surmise that the old form of this word is ‘رأمارس’ at a certain stage; ‘가시객’ can be said to have maintained the vowel of the second syllable. By the same token, ‘割子蓋’ in Kyerim-yusa may be associated with ‘رأمارس’ Here, we have to explicate the deletion of this vowel in the early Middle Korean.

As shown above, it is more than obvious that etymological investigation into the pre-fifteenth century data should be put in the limelight. This approach is one of a few disciplines available enabling us to illuminate the history of the Korean language in the pre-fifteenth centuries.

10. It has been traditionally assumed that these forms are nominative, but I cannot accept the view that only nouns ending with ‘رأ’ are nominative.
I am afraid the examples presented above might mislead the reader into thinking that Korean etymology deals only with compounding or derivation. To be frank, I must confess that it is our present practice in scholarship and regretfully it is our limitation.

The major task of English etymology is to reveal the history of a simple word such as ‘day’, ‘night’, ‘good’, which is, however, beyond our ability in Korean etymology. English linguists trace back these words to Old English and further attempt to identify their original forms in Germanic, through comparison with other Germanic languages; eventually, they reach Indo-European through comparative study among other Indo-European languages. Devoid of many languages in the same family, Korean is not a promising language for etymological study. Although a comparative study among Altaic languages will gather some fruit, they will fall far short of those produced in English etymology.

A study of simple words in Korean, if ever done, should be pursued as follows:

(1) Let’s take ‘꽃’ in Middle Korean. This meant a flower (refer to ‘꽃’ of today) and ‘나뭇’ in Middle Korean meant complexion. ‘나뭇’ was contemporary with it, which suggests that ‘꽃’ of ‘나뭇’ and ‘빛’ share something in common at least in the semantic dimension. ‘꽃’, (concubine) in Kwangju Ch‘ŏnjamun and ‘빛’ of ‘꽃겨침’ (a concubine’s housethrough a study of its usage constitutes the heart of etymology.

(2) Let’s look at the relationship between ‘붉-’ (red) and ‘밝-’ (bright). Probably we may include in our study the relationship between ‘포를-’, ‘포르-’ (blue or green) and ‘포 둥-’ (greenish blue). For the relevant data, see my article (Lee Kimoon 1954). These examples may be associated with ‘불’ (fire) or ‘풀’ (grass) in their origin. We may call a cluster of these words linked in their origin a “word family” the concept of which is convenient for etymological study. This proved to be valid, since research on word families have continued from my own study (1954) to Sŏ Chae-gii (1980).

Now I want to stress that a word family should be composed of such words as have distinct and clear interrelationships among themselves. In the above, I

11 Some previous studies compared ‘꽃’ with ‘kusa’ (grass) in Japanese, which seems invalid considering its meaning
introduced Yang Chu-dong’s study (1942) on the same root of ‘싹’ (small), ‘싹’ (아지) and ‘싹’ (아손). Sŏ Chae-gŭk (1980) added ‘알’ (yet, 아블미, Paekryŏnch’oahae) and ‘아들’ (son) to them. But it is in fact difficult to see their interrelationships: in addition to subtle meaning differences, all the consonants following the common first vowel are different. Still awkward is the attempt to link ‘글’ (writing) to ‘그리-’ (portray), thereby associating with ‘곳’ (painting) and eventually with ‘그게’ (scar), ‘그술’ (limit), ‘그지’ (extreme) and ‘끝’ (end). Naturally you can link ‘ getContentPane(’ (scrape) to ‘끝’; however, you cannot but be reserved in including ‘마람-’ (itchy) into this word family. As for me ‘글’ (writing) and ‘جل-’ (scrape) seems more closely related in their origin. I have not yet confirmed that ‘그 리-’ is derived from ‘글’.

In short, this sort of word-family approach has a lot of holes, lacking a rigorous discipline. This approach is, however, so attractive that no scholar of Middle Korean could have been free from the temptation to adopt it for his arguments. I (1954) was also a victim to this temptation. But we should give up any approach that is not verifiable in scientific terms. A hypothesis should be accompanied by verification. In other words, the concept of word family is double-edged: it is both a useful tool and a treacherous trap in the historical study of Korean.

6

In the present phase of our study, we may well pursue our on-going research within our limitations. First, we currently have more than we can deal with. Second, without the accumulation of our present research, we cannot lay a foundation for further research for comparative study in its true sense. Nevertheless, we should always be open to comparative research.

So far comparative study between the Korean and Altaic languages has been initiated by western scholars. Their weakness lies in the lack of an historical understanding of Korean. Despite our efforts to compensate for it, we cannot overcome our own superficial knowledge of the Altaic languages.

A poignant example for the superficial understanding of the Altaic languages is well evinced in Ramstedt’s attempt to associate ‘어엌브-’ (lovable) with ‘eye’ (peace, peacefully) in Mongolian (Ramstedt 1949); or Poppe’s with ‘aya’ (Angemessenheit, Anstand) in Mogolian, ‘aya’ (das Wohl, Gutes) in Evenkian or ‘ay’ (gut, das Wohl) in Lamuttan (Poppe 1960); their attempts were abortive due to their ignorance of ‘어엿브-’ (pity, sympathy) in Middle Korean (Lee Ki-moon 1964b). As a matter of fact, my argument still holds problems, ‘어엿브-’ and ‘밀브-
'may be derived stems as ‘GITH’. Although the original form of ‘어.Prot’ is not observable in Middle Korean, I think it is more desirable to compare it with the words in other languages. What is interesting is that ‘aya-’ (to respect, to honor) is observable in old Turkish, which went through numerous semantic changes over the ages finally settling down to the meaning of ‘to have compassion on someone’ (Clauson 1972). This appears to be directly related to the meaning of ‘어.Prot’ in Middle Korean. As a matter of fact, Poppe’s study concentrates on ‘aya-’ in comparison with ‘aya’ in Mogolian and ‘aya’ or ‘ay’ in Tungusic (Poppe 1965: 201). This study should be reconsidered in a positive light, which teaches us that we cannot overemphasize the importance of careful examination of data in comparative studies.

It goes without saying that the ultimate goal of comparative studies are to reconstruct the prehistory of the Korean language. To be frank, our on-going research has fallen short of illuminating even the basic kinship relation between words, which means we have yet a long path to tread in order to make a solid contribution to the etymological study of Korean.

(Translated by Hong Ki-sun, Professor of English, Seoul National University)

GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Korean</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aeryu (崖溜)</td>
<td>Kap’a island (加波島)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ch’oe Nam-son (崔南善)</td>
<td>Kugüp kanibang (救急簡易方)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chön Mong-su (田蒙秀)</td>
<td>Kugüppang (救急方)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosön gwanyögo (朝鮮館譯語)</td>
<td>Kümangyöng Samghaehae (金剛經三家解)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chosön Ómun Kyöngwi (朝鮮語文經緯)</td>
<td>Kwangju Ch’ónjamun (光州 千字文)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosön Yugi (朝鮮留記)</td>
<td>Kwon Tök-kyu (權恆奎)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haya Yukrang (河野六郎)</td>
<td>Kyerim Yusa (鶴林類事)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hö Ung (許雄)</td>
<td>Nammyöngjiip ónhae (南明集詮解)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Huminjöngum (訓民正音)</td>
<td>Paekryönh’ohae (百聯抄解)</td>
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<td>Hunmongjaho (訓蒙字會)</td>
<td>Pakt’ongsa (朴通事)</td>
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<td>Hwang Yun-sok (黃胤錫)</td>
<td>Pang Chong-hyön (方鍾鉉)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hwaёмbang’ónja úihae (華音方言字義解)</td>
<td>Puhoe-sol (附會說)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hyangga (鄕歌)</td>
<td>Samganghaengsildo (三綱行實圖)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tan’gun shinhwae (檀君神話)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Tongŏn Koryak  東言考略
T'ongŭm  通音
Tushi ŏnhae  杜詩詮解
Ŭijŏn  義轉
Ŭmjŏn  音轉
Ŭmun hojŏn  音韻互轉
Wolinsŏkpo  月印釋譜
Wonŏ  原語

Yang Chu-dong  梁柱東
Yangsŏ  梁書
Yi Hŭi-sŭng  李熙昇
Yi Sung-nyŏng  李崇寧
Yŏgŏ-ryuhae  譯語類解
Yŏgŏ-ryuhaebo  譯語類解補
Yongbiŏch'ŏn'ga  龍飛御天歌
Yun Chŏng-ha  尹定夏