Towards a Standardization Of Personal Names: The Case of the Ethnic Chinese in Singapore

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The evolution of personal names in western Europe can be said to be characterized by the phenomenon of standardization (Wilson 1998). This article seeks to examine whether this general rubric is of use in the context of hybridized names, specifically the names of the ethnic Chinese in Singapore. I examine names obtained from a school year book in Singapore against the backdrop of the traditional pattern as documented by Jones (1997). Notable changes include the increased use of English-based given names and the way Chinese given names are represented: the tendency is towards having them based on Mandarin Chinese as opposed to other varieties of Chinese, and of having them spelt in a standard way of sorts. This is in line with the government's preferences and supports the standardization thesis. There is, however, strong resistance to the standardization of Chinese surnames.

Introduction

In Wilson's (1998) book on personal naming in western Europe (and others inheriting that tradition including the USA and the Americas in general), he concludes that 'Modernity is marked by standardization with the semblance of individualism' (p. 338), with given names becoming standardized before surnames in the 'modern period' (ie 1500 onwards). For example, regional variants and orthographies of given names and surnames were gradually eliminated. In the UK, Gaelic and Welsh names were Englishized (I will explain my use of the term below), so that 'Mac a' Bhriuthain (son of the judge) could become Brown' (p. 260). In addition to that, the standard format of given name and surname would not have been in use in earlier periods. As noted by Heaney

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(1967), 'In England there were no hereditary surnames before the [Norman] Conquest [of 1066]' (p. 300); these became universal in England only after 1300.

Apart from Wilson, name scholars have been reluctant to employ the term 'standardization' partly because they prefer to focus on what I see as specific aspects of standardization such as the influence of the state or group identity. My own perspective is drawn from linguistics where there is keen discussion of the notion of standardization and of standard languages. Names are an aspect of language, and the notion of standardization should potentially be a productive way of looking at names.

The standardization of the English language has been discussed extensively elsewhere. The East Midland dialect was an 'embryonic written standard' at the end of the 14th century (Leith 1997, 39). The standardization of names parallels the standardization of English in terms of apparent lack of agency. There has been no central authority for the standardization of English unlike the case of French which was overseen by the Académie Française (Cooper 1989; Ross 2004). Not coincidentally, until fairly recently the State and the Church had a might tighter control of names in France. (See below.) The standardization of Chinese, Swahili and Malay/Indonesian also involved the active involvement of the State. (On the standardization of Chinese, see Chen (1999).) The agent of standardization in personal names could be the community itself or some authority such as the Church or the State (or some of their agencies).

Yet we are also aware of tendencies that seem to work against standardization, such as the use of invented names (eg *Lloydine, California*) and rococo spellings (eg *Cylvia*). (The examples are from Wilson (1998, 298) in his discussion of American names.) Evans (1996) notes that this is getting prevalent amongst the white population in the US, whereas African-Americans have had a tradition of employing non-standard names (Black 1996). The question is how this tension

between the centripetal force of standardization, on the one hand, and the centrifugal force towards individual identity, on the other, can be resolved. Wilson suggests that individualism works within the general framework of standardized names in western Europe. There are generally agreed 'rules' about given names and surnames: at the very least, everyone is assumed to have them. This contrasts to the general flux in the earlier periods of the history of Western Europe involving praenomen, gentilicium, cognomen, bynames, patronymics and so on. (For naming practices in the period of the Roman Empire, see Wilson (1998, Chapters 1–4).)

The situation is rather less clear cut when there is contact between different naming traditions resulting in a hybridized naming tradition. Hybridization is a key term in cultural studies, and involves 'emergent forms of world interdependence and planetary consciousness' (Giddens 1990, 175). Such is the case in Singapore. The western European convention meets head-on with other conventions that developed in the region including the Arab-Malay, Indian and Chinese conventions. In this paper I focus on the collision between the western European and Chinese conventions. It is also not surprising that the Singapore government has also attempted to standardize this hybridized convention, and I will examine this in the light of other attempts at the standardization of names. If, as Giddens suggests, hybridization is a feature of the modern world, and not just at particular geographical meeting places, the issues will also be relevant to places where there has been a more homogenous population with clearly established naming conventions because homogeneity will not be easily maintained in the future. The main question I raise in this paper then is: to what extent is standardization a potent force in personal naming? I will define standardization simply as the process that is centripetal in nature, working towards a reduction in variation and alternatives. The agent of change is very often a powerful body, typically governments or agencies

empowered by governments. In addition to this, social or cultural norms might also quietly keep a rein on the more exuberant or unruly tendencies in individual namers.

Laws and Customs

The interest of the state in personal naming can usually be related to bureaucratization, although the state might also have an interest in cultural or religious issues as well. Preferred naming conventions might be imposed overtly or covertly and in some instances the state might also approve legislation on the issue of personal names.

In general, states that have inherited the English legal system have relatively few rules in relation to personal names. The New South Wales Law Reform Commission (in Australia), for example, explicitly makes a contrast between the British and the (continental) European laws on personal names:

> There are very few established common law principles relating to the acquisition of names and legislation in Australia and England generally preserves the common law. This is in contrast to the complex legal and administrative rules in many European countries. (New South Wales Law Reform Commission 1998, 6)

We can take France to represent the continental position which I will discuss in a little more detail. (For a discussion on the name regulations in some other places like Bulgaria, Japan, Thailand and Indonesia, the reader may consult Jernudd (1994).) In France, 'only the father's surname can be legally transmitted to legitimate children' (Valetas 2001, 1); and where there is choice in the case of children born out of wedlock, the huge majority receive their fathers' surnames (Prioux 2001, 3). However, even in this tightly controlled situation, the stranglehold is beginning to be released if only slightly, as in the case of the regulation of given names.

> [A]s in other continental countries, [given] name selection was regulated by law. The Law of 11th Germinal Year XI, in force for nearly two hundred years, gave control over the choice of names to the State and restricted choice to names found in the Catholic calendars of the saints and those well-known from classical antiquity. The Germinal Law was revised in 1966 to allow the use of Muslim and other calendars, and by that date registration officials had in general become liberal in their application of the law. (Wilson 1998, 319)

Therefore, when their daughter was born in 1983, the Guillots were not allowed to name their daughter Fleur de Marie Armine Angèle as they wished: the name 'Fleur de Marie', the name of the heroine in Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842–43), and also the name of a flower known in English as Bleeding Heart. (*Fleur de Marie* literally means 'Mary's flower', Mary being a reference to the Virgin Mary.) The name was not approved because it does not appear in any calendar of saints' days. They appealed to the courts and were allowed, a year later, to include the hyphenated form Fleur-Marie, but not Fleur de Marie. (French *de* is roughly equivalent to English *of*.) The Guillots subsequently took the case to the European Court of Human Rights in 1996. By this time, the Germinal law had been repealed and in place in France was law no. 93-22 of 8 January 1993, where these provisions were made:

> A child's forenames shall be chosen by its father and mother ... The registrar of births, deaths and marriages shall immediately enter the chosen forenames on the birth certificate. Any forename recorded on the birth certificate may be chosen as the usual forename.
>
> Where the said forename or any one of them, either taken alone or linked to the other forenames or to the surname, appear to the registrar to be contrary to the child's interests or to the right of third parties to

> protect their surname, the registrar of births, deaths and marriages shall immediately so inform State Counsel, who may then refer he matter to the family-affairs judge.
>
> If the judge considers that the forename is contrary to the child's interests or infringes the right of third parties to protect their surnames, he shall order the name to be deleted from the registers of births, deaths and marriages.

Despite the new law, by a vote of seven judges to two, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that there had not been any contravention of human rights and upheld the French court's refusal of the parents' choice of name. Fleur de Marie remains Fleur-Marie officially. (The details of this case have been taken from the report in the Council of Europe (1996).)

There is sometimes confusion between law and custom. For example, many in France assume that women are legally required to take on their husband's surname.

> In fact, the opposite is true: according to the law of August 23, 1794, still in force today, no person can legally bear any other name but his or her own birth name. Nonetheless, in France, almost all married women use their husband's name (91% in 1996). (Valetas 2001, 1)

Custom can therefore impose as great a standardizing force as a legal enactment, if not a greater one. The Singapore legal system is in the British tradition and therefore there are very few restrictions to how children can be named, although additional rules may be inserted by various authorities. The birth registration form does not include information about any restriction on names. Parents are also not required to indicate parts of names as constituting the surname or given name. This is understandable because, apart from the ethnic-Chinese community, the Malay and Indian communities constitute

significant groups, and many of them do not employ surnames but instead have a system of patronymics. There has been no attempt to encourage these communities to take on surnames in Singapore although individual families might be moving in that direction. (In neighbouring Malaysia, there was a proposal in 2002 from the National Registration Department for Malays to adopt surnames; this, however, came to naught.)

Despite the lack of legal rules and restrictions, there might be quasi-rules articulated by government agencies. For example, the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) of Singapore includes the following in its webpage on birth registration:

> For Chinese children who have been given a name in full Hanyu Pinyin version, the Chinese characters of his name must be reflected in the birth certificate. (Immigration & Checkpoints Authority 2004)

(We will discuss the notion of the 'full Hanyu Pinyin version' further below.)

Sometimes hospitals in Singapore might also try to prescribe rules, as seen in the Singapore General Hospital website:

> Any surname of the child to be entered in respect of the registration of the child's birth shall be that of the child's father. In cases where the child is illegitimate and the father is not an informant of the birth, the surname, if any, shall be that of the child's mother. (Singapore General Hospital 2004)

The Chinese Custom of Personal Naming

The Chinese naming customs are fairly well established, so I will just rehearse the main points here. The Chinese are one of the first people to employ hereditary surnames or *xing*; and by the second century BC all Chinese

(including the common folk) had surnames (Louie 1998, 16). Chinese writing is in the form of logographic characters, each character almost invariably monosyllabic (unlike, say, Japanese). Almost all Chinese surnames consist of single characters (and are therefore monosyllabic); unlike other traditions, there is also a more restricted number of surnames: 'a mere *19 surnames* occur in over half of the Han Chinese population ... And only *100 surnames* are found in 87 percent of the Han Chinese people' (Louie 1998, 35).

Given names usually consist of two characters, and are therefore disyllabic, although it is not uncommon to just have one character. Every character in Chinese is potentially available to be co-opted as part of a given name, so that what Louie calls 'manufactured names' are not considered unusual. It naturally follows that some given names will be ambiguous in terms of gender. If a given name consists of two characters, one of the characters might represent a 'generation name': this character will be shared with all the cousins of the same sex in the male line.

If we use of the name of the former leader of the Chinese Communist Party Mao Zedong as example, his name would be written in three Chinese characters. The first character, represented by *Mao* in the Latin script, constitutes his surname. The other characters, represented by *Zedong* in the Latin script, constitute his given name. None of these three characters are reserved for names only: the character represented by *mao* means 'hair' or 'fur'; *ze* means 'choose' or 'beneficence'; and *dong* means 'east'.

Older readers will remember, however, that the name was formerly written as Mao Tse-tung and this illustrates the problem of representing logographic characters in a more phonetic-based Latin script. For much of the 20th century, the system used to transliterate Chinese names was the Wade-Giles system (which the spelling Mao Tse-tung represents). A new system known as *hanyu pinyin* (often abbreviated to *pinyin*) was designed in the mid-1950s and promulgated by

the Chinese government in 1958. It was not until 1982 that it was adopted by the International Standardization Organization (Chen 1999, 186–187).

The other difficulty is that Chinese characters can be pronounced in a range of ways depending on the Chinese language (or 'dialect') spoken. Both Wade-Giles and pinyin attempt to represent Mandarin Chinese pronunciation. A speaker of Cantonese Chinese, when reading the three characters representing the former leader's name, would say Mou Jaak-dung. (Here I use the Yale system of transliterating Cantonese but omit tone indicators including <h> after vowels. There are other competing systems.)

The pinyin, Wade-Giles and Yale transliterations are standard systems. There are of course Chinese names that nonetheless have a conventional form which does not conform to any standard system, such as the name of the leader of the first president of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen. (This is based on the Cantonese Chinese pronunciation; in Yale Cantonese *Syun Yat-sin* and in pinyin Mandarin *Sun Yixian.*) Other names that do not conform to standard systems of transliteration include names that have been Latinized such as Confucius (in pinyin: *Kong Fuzi* or *Kong Zi*).

It also needs to be said that personal names in China are not exempt from change. Social conditions including the Chinese one-child policy has encouraged the loss of generation names and the prevalence of one-character (monosyllabic) given names (Li and Lawson 2002). Increased exposure to Anglo cultures (on the label 'Anglo', see the next section) has also led to the rise of English-based given names, at least at the unofficial level (Lee 2001), some of which (such as *Bison, Jeckyll, Redfox* or *Echo*) might appear very unorthodox.

Terminology

For this paper, I will use the term *surname* (SN) to refer to the hereditary name passed on, amongst ethnic-Chinese

Singaporeans, almost invariably from father to child. This is preferable to the terms *last name* or *second name* because it does not necessarily occur in final position. This is also the most common term in use in Singapore. Ordinals will similarly be avoided for the other names: I will employ the term *given name*.

Given that names in China are ultimately represented by Chinese characters, I will refer to the given names that attempt to represent these phonetically in the Latin alphabet as *Chinese-based given names* (CBGNs). Therefore, other given names will be *non-Chinese-based given names*. In view of the fact that the huge majority are from the repository of given names for Anglo children as represented by Hanks & Hodges's (1996) *Dictionary of First Names*, say, I will use the term *English-based given names* (EBGNs).

In this paper, I make a distinction between labels 'Anglo' and 'English' and their relevant cognate terms such as 'Anglicization' and 'Englishization'. I use 'Anglo' as a cultural label. This is, however, not suggest that Anglo culture is monolithic. The label, derived from *Angle*, the name of one of the invading tribes in Britain in the 5th century, is clearly a short-hand and includes the other tribes (the Saxons, Jutes and Frisians) who were also influenced by the Celts and subsequently the Scandinavians and Normans. I therefore use the term 'Anglo' and 'Anglo English' to refer to individuals and the varieties of English that claim an Anglo heritage – whether in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or elsewhere. I have avoided the label *British* because it is usually geographical or political in nature and it will not allow me to group together these varieties of English. The Anglo Englishes can therefore be contrasted to the Non-Anglo Englishes, which are robust varieties but whose speakers cannot lay claim to an Anglo heritage and include Singaporean English, Indian English and Nigerian English.

Mixing of Traditions

When Chinese communities move away from mother China, it is inevitable that traditions, including naming traditions, become mixed giving rise to hybridity. The notion of hybridity itself is course a prominent theme in cultural studies, useful 'in highlighting cultural mixing and the emergence of new forms of identity' (Barker 2000, 202). There is sometimes the assumption in the popular mind that cultural mixing is a modern or even post-modern phenomenon. This is clearly not the case. We have evidence of cultural mixing resulting in hybridized naming conventions in the ancient period. For example, many Greeks adopted Roman names, many without discarding their Greek names completely: 'Much more common was the option of adopting the proper Roman name form but with a Greek *cognomen* [ie personal nickname or inherited name], the style adopted by freedmen [ie emancipated slaves in Rome]' (Wilson 1998, 42). We also read of Jews in exile using non-Jewish names, so that in the 6th century BC Daniel was known as Belteshazzar whilst in exile in Babylon (Daniel 1.7). In these cases, the pattern seems to be that name conventions of dominant powers are adopted, a pattern still prevailing today.

As the English language has taken a prominent position as a global language (Crystal 2003), it would not be surprising if the mixing takes place in the direction of English. Much of the research on names comment on the significance of the influence of the naming traditions associated with the English-speaking community. This includes the black community in the US (Black 1996, Evans 1996) and South Africa (de Klerk 2002; de Klerk and Bosch 1995; de Klerk and Bosch 1996; Herbert 1997). Although the research in South Africa suggests that they are in a phase of Africanization at this stage, it seems clear that this is a reaction to the advances made by the English tradition on naming. Work on the Philippines (Aquino, n.d.) also suggests the increased influence of the English tradition.

The Chinese community is not exempt from this kind of influence. Louie (1998) writes on how surnames of the Chinese community in the US are becoming Americanized through re-spelling so that they conform to English spelling rules and conventions, as in *Nipp* (gemination), *Lym* (resembling the English surname Pym?) or *Mark* (resembling the English given name). What Louie calls Americanization I will call Englishization. The label, established through the work of Kachru (eg 1986), focuses on the change towards the rules associated with the English *language*, rather than the traditions of the Anglo community (in Britain, US, Australia, etc.) which we can call Anglicization. Obviously, both are inter-related, but it is the former that I will focus on.

Changes in the names of the Chinese community have received attention. Li (1997) focuses on how English-based given names are used in Hong Kong to signal westernization. I have elsewhere focused on the process of Englishization itself (Tan 2001; 2004). Informal forms of naming have also received attention (Li 1997; Wong 2003).

Research On Names In Singapore

The subject of names has received scant attention in Singapore. The most extensive study on personal names is by Jones (1997), although this is based largely on data obtained in the 1950s in Malaya (which Singapore was then a part of). Jernudd (1994) raises the issue of naming rights in relation to ethnic Chinese pupils in Singapore being required to have their names standardized to the *pinyin* system at the time. There has been some interest in place names (Savage and Yeoh 2004; Dunlop 2000). Savage and Yeoh, in their introduction, make the following comments that are relevant to my discussion of personal names as well.

> Singapore's street-names today reflect the co-existence of different systems of signification – colonial names; Malayanised names; numerical names; romanised

> names derived from different languages and dialects; *pinyinised* names; names adhering to various themes – each with its own onomastic pattern. (Savage and Yeoh 2004, 22)

We need to contend with *personal* names of different origins and of different romanization methods as well.

Standardization of Chinese Names in Singapore

The requirement made by the colonial government for the registration of the names of new-borns in the Latin alphabet can be seen as an initial attempt at standardizing names. Although the relevant agency today (the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority) allows the inclusion of names in other alphabets or in Chinese characters in birth certificates and identity cards, it is the version in the Latin alphabet that remains the official version. In this respect, Chinese names in Singapore differ from Chinese names in China where the official version is the one in Chinese characters. At the very least this encourages the Singaporean to form an attachment to the particular spelling of his or her name in the Latin alphabet. I have elsewhere described this as the first stage of Englishization of names in Singapore (Tan 2001).

However, given that there was, at the time, no generally accepted way of rendering Chinese characters into the Latin alphabet at the time, the tendency was to attempt to spell a Chinese character in the manner of English word. As this involves using a writing system not intended to represent Chinese sounds, the result could be a range of spellings to represent a Chinese character pronounced according to one variety of Chinese: so one might encounter *Teo, Teoh, Thio* or *Tio*. The result also was that the same Chinese surname could be rendered quite differently if the model was Dutch as in the Dutch East Indies or modern-day Indonesia, or French as in Indo-China (Jones 1997), where one might encounter *Tjo*. Compounded to this is the fact that *Teo* represents the

Teochew or Hokkien pronunciation of a Chinese character which could be represented as *Chang* (in Mandarin), *Cheong* (in Cantonese), *Chong* (in Hakka) and *Chiang* (in Hainanese). That there is this range of spellings should not be surprising as the vast majority of the Chinese in Singapore are descendants of immigrants from southern China where southern varieties of Chinese, such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew, Hakka and Hainanese, were spoken.

In China, it was not until 1955 that Mandarin (known as *putonghua* there) was promoted as the standard and unifying variety of Chinese and, together with it, the *hanyu pinyin* system of romanization in 1958 (Chen 1999, 23–24). In a similar vein, the Singaporean government sought to promote the Mandarin variety and eliminate other varieties of Chinese (collectively called 'dialect') with the Speak Mandarin Campaign launched in 1979. In 1981 Lee Kuan Yew, the prime minister then, declared that 'no Singaporean Chinese should speak dialect' (quoted in Gopinathan 1998, 24). The *hanyu pinyin* system of romanization was embraced together with Mandarin and in 1980 the Ministry of Education, with the support of the Lee Kuan Yew government, went on to announce pre-school pupils and Year 1 pupils in primary school would have their names rendered in *pinyin* (rather than the version recorded in the birth certificate). Therefore, my own name, *Peter Tan Kok Wan* in my birth certificate which reflects the pronunciation according to the Hokkien variety of Chinese, would have become *Chen Guowan Peter*. Not surprisingly this looks foreign to me and my surname would appear to be different from my father's. Pupils would be called by the *pinyin* version of their name. It is to this that Jernudd (1994) referred when he raised concerns about linguistic naming rights.

Also worthy of note is that a standard name order is prescribed: SN ^ CBGN ^ EBGN, whereas the version in my birth certificate is more traditional: EBGN ^ SN ^ CBGN. (I use the caret symbol ^ to mean 'immediately followed by'.) In

addition a disyllabic CBGN is to be written as one word (*Guowan*) in *pinyin* as opposed to two words (*Kok Wan*) or as two hyphenated words (*Kuo-wan*) in the Wade-Giles system.

The position taken about pinyin Mandarin-based names is most closely associated with Lee Kuan Yew. He also referred to the birth names in his opening of the Speak Mandarin Campaign in 1984:

> When parents registered their children's names, between Aug 1982 and July 1984, one-fifth registered only their dialect names [*ie* names based on non-Mandarin varieties of Chinese], a total rejection [of Mandarin and pinyin].
>
> Over one-third registered their dialect names, with full Pinyin in brackets, a concession to their identification with other Chinese of different dialects, a tentative and reluctant acceptance.
>
> Nearly one-quarter registered their surnames in dialect and their personal names in Pinyin, a partial acceptance ...
>
> One-fifth did so in full Pinyin, a full acceptance. (Lee 1984, 18)

He then went on to note the increased proportion of children with 'Western or Christian personal names' (EBGN) – 35%, up from 7.6% in 1964. We assume that this is said with some disapproval since he dropped his own EBGN *Harry* when he entered politics and none of his children bear EBGNs.

The position taken on the Chinese language in Singapore seems to be close to the position taken in China: the encouragement of Mandarin as the unifying variety and the promotion of the *pinyin* system of romanization; in addition it supports the use of the reformed, simplified characters. This makes the situation in the other two Chinese dominant regions – Hong Kong and Taiwan – different from Singapore. Neither uses the simplified characters. There is no attempt to repress the Cantonese variety of Chinese in Hong Kong

(Bolton 2003). In Taiwan non-Mandarin varieties particularly Hokkien (known as 'Taiwanese' there) are receiving prominence.

Goh Chok Tong became Singaporean Prime Minister from 1990 to 2004. Towards the end of his term of office, he was asked to compare his style to that of his predecessor Lee Kuan Yew. His reply was:

> I think his own character, his own historical experience makes him a very firm leader; that means a no-nonsense leader, who is very much top-down. He has an image of being very authoritarian. Whereas, my style is softer, I would say gentler and probably, more in keeping with the mood of the day. (SINGOV 2004)

It was during this period that the practice of automatic conversion of Chinese names into the *pinyin* system in schools was halted. From 1992, schools recorded pupils' names in the form indicated in the birth certificate. Against this background of discussion about name standardization, there has been no real research on the actual form of names recorded in birth certificates.

Data

Birth records in Singapore, unlike those in some countries, are not open to inspection and attempts to secure permission to use them as data have not been successful. For this reason, I relied on 'opportunistic data', and I have limited them to a single source: this is the names recorded in the *St Andrew's School Annual 2003*, a school magazine published annually by St Andrew's Junior and Secondary Schools. I have pulled out the names of pupils in the sixth year of the junior or primary school. (A primary school is roughly equivalent to an elementary school in the US context.) Although it is a single-sex school, parents in Singapore generally adopt the same naming practice for children of either sex. (I can vouch for this

as someone familiar with a range of families here.) Although St Andrew's Junior School is an Anglican school, admission is governed by the rules of the Ministry of Education, and in 2000, less than 10% of the pupils were admitted under the criterion of church connection. The majority were admitted based on the proximity of their homes to the school (45%) or on their having elder brothers in the school (31%). Finally, the school has a range of pupils including one class in the top range and one class in the bottom range of the streaming examinations held at the end of Year 4. The other eight classes are in the middle range. It therefore seems to me that the range of names would not be totally unrepresentative of the names of children in Singapore of that age group.

Another relevant point is that the school is neither an independent or autonomous school (which signal élite status in Singapore). No school fees are charged in the junior school and, in common with schools that are neither independent nor autonomous, the secondary school charges S$5 (about US$3) per month. (A secondary school would be roughly equivalent to a middle school and the first half of high school in the US context.)

In addition to the names of pupils in Year 6, the magazine also included names of pupils at the end of secondary school: Years 10 and 11 (Secondary 4 and Secondary 5). I have chosen not to include these in my analysis because secondary schools take in a significant number of foreign pupils. A four-year gap is also too small for a longitudinal study. My focus will therefore be on the divergences from the traditional pattern established by Jones(1997).

Finally, it is also important to note that the names in the school magazine represent official names (*ie* as found in the birth certificate.) The vast majority of the pupils would have been born in 1991, after about ten years of ethnic Chinese pupils in Singaporean schools being required to have their

names represented in *pinyin*, and just before this requirement was eased. This represents the post-Lee Kuan Yew period.

I will need to admit that, although I think that the data set is not unrepresentative of the population of ethnic Chinese children of that age, it is a small set. I would therefore be more confident about the general patterns and less so about the details (*eg* popular EBGNs) being applicable to the larger population.

Analysis

A total of 359 names were recorded. Of these, names without Chinese-based surnames were removed. There were 89 such names, which comprised 22.9% of the total. This is consonant with the general population distribution of Singapore, where 76.8% are ethnic Chinese and 23.2% are not (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2001). There was no difficulty or ambiguity in the removal of these 89 names, with perhaps the exception of one: in the case of *Timothy Gunawan Sia*. *Gunawan* is a possible Indonesian surname, and *Sia* a possible Chinese-based surname; I decided that *Sia* was the surname, because it would otherwise be the CBGN and monosyllabic CBGNs are unusual.

Three of the 89 had CBGNs (in italics below, and surnames in capitals) as in

Mark *Yaohua* MASILLAMONI
Shaun FONES *Hong Xuan*
Wenxiang Caspar FRANCIS

Masillamoni and *Francis* are Indian surnames, and *Fones* is an English surname. (On *Francis* as an Indian surname, see the next paragraph.) It can be assumed that these are children of mixed parentage. Of interest is the arrangement of the names EBGN ^ CBGN ^ SN or EBGN ^ SN ^ CBGN or CBGN ^ EBGN ^ SN. Only the first two pattern appears for names with

Chinese-based surnames, possibly indicating the strength of feeling that CBGNs should appear after surnames.

Most of the 89 names follow clearly South Indian or Malay tradition, such as *Thiagaysen s/o Chandrasegaran* and *Muhammad Asyraf b Rahim* respectively. (Many, though not all, Indian and Malay names employ a system of patronymics in place of surnames, and this might be explicitly signalled by abbreviations like *s/o* for *son of* and *b* for *bin* or 'son of' in Malay). The North Indian tradition, unlike the South Indian one, might include the employment of surnames. Indian Christians (Protestants, Roman Catholics and Orthodox alike) might also (like the Welsh) have traditional male Christian given names as surnames (personal communication, Sunita Abraham). I personally know people of Indian descent named *Mark Alexander*, *Mary Thomas* and *Celestina Paul*; in each of those cases, the second element is the hereditary surname.

This then leaves us with 270 names. This is not a very large number but will be indicative of the naming patterns amongst the ethnic Chinese in Singapore. Of these, the vast majority have CBGNs (260 or 96.3%), and a large majority (200 or 74.1%) have EBGNs. As indicated above, SNs might occur initially or elsewhere; nonetheless there has been no ambiguity or difficulty in identifying the various elements of the name in almost all cases largely because most SNs come from a limited central pool of possibilities, eg there are large numbers with the SNs *Tan* (39), *Lee* (21), *Lim* (15), *Ng* (15) and *Leong* (10). There is only one case where there is possible ambiguity: *Tan Ling Ken*. I have categorized *Tan* as SN and *Ling Ken* as CBGN, although it is possible to see *Ling* alone as the CBGN and *Ken* the EBGN. I went for the original categorization because disyllabic CBGNs are much more common than monosyllabic ones. In two other cases – *William Kuan John* and *Sean Wong Leon* – I have categorized *John* and *Leon* as CBGNs although both are possible EBGNs. The deciding factor is that there are already EBGNs and these have been placed before the SNs.

I referred to the comments made by Lee Kuan Yew about EBGNs above. With about three-quarters of the boys having official EBGNs, this element now appears firmly entrenched in the naming system in Singapore. This element is also beginning to be found in ethnic Chinese names elsewhere. For example, Bolton notes that in a survey he conducted with Bacon-Shone in 1993 in Hong Kong that '56 per cent of the population had an English name, with 43 per cent claiming to use the name "all the time", and 30 per cent having an English name on their ID cards' (Bolton 2004, 114).

Of the 201 EBGNs (because one of the 200 names contain two EBGNs), the vast majority (180 or 89.6%) are fairly standard EBGNs, which for my purpose means they can be found in Hanks and Hodges (1996). High-frequency EBGNs include *Jonathan* (7 occurrences), *Nicholas* (7), *Benjamin* (5), *Daryl* (5), *Jeremy* (5) and *Shaun/Shawn* (5). Many have an ultimate biblical source (*Jonathan, Benjamin, Jeremy* > *Jeremiah, Shaun/Shawn* > *Sean* > *John*), but they should not all be thought of as Christian names, since these figures would greatly exceed those who identify themselves as Christian. The 21 (10.4%) 'non-standard' names include those from more unusual sources, such as less common names from the Bible (*Darius, Jotham*), foreign sources (*Rico*, the pet form of Italian *Riccardo* or Spanish *Ricardo*) and names derived from surnames (*Alton, Garrick, Levin, McKenzie, Richmond, Sherwin*); as well as apparently made-up names (such as *Avriel, Azarel, Deon, Edbert, Jerrayne, Jervin, Jonald, Kelgene, Kenric, Sherwyn*). All of these are not unusual and have been noted by Wilson (1998) or Dunkling (1995) in British or American contexts. Indeed, the practice of conferring surnames as given names was noted in 1605 by Camden (1974 [1605]): 'surnames of honourable and worshipful families are given now to mean men's children for Christian names' (p. 150). Of the 180 standard EBGNs, 10 have unorthodox spellings (such as *Darrenn* for *Darren, Derik* for *Derek, Donavan* or *Donovan, Jerrold* for *Gerald*), and most of them appear to be deliberate

attempts to create unique spellings rather than 'errors'. It has sometimes been remarked that Singaporeans use pet forms of names as official names. *Rico* has already been mentioned; however, apart from that I can only find two others – *Jimmy* and *Ken*. The data therefore does not show that tendency.

As far as EBGNs are concerned, the majority of the names are those that might be employed in the major English-speaking countries, though names that are popular might be different. Daryl, for example, would not feature in a list of popular boys' names in the US, UK, Canada or Australia. They are standard EBGNs rather than made-up names. It is also possible that the list of popular EBGNs in Singapore will change more quickly because there is no strong tradition of conferring an older relative's name (*eg* the father's, uncle's or grandfather's name) on a new-born boy; there is in fact a taboo against this in Chinese societies. Lee's (2001) comments about the prevalence of non-standard EBGNs in China do not apply to Singapore. There is clearly a strong tendency towards standard EBGNs.

I turn now to the SNs and CBGNs and see the effects of the previous decade when attempts to standardize them were strongest. (See the earlier discussion on *pinyin* names in schools.) *Pinyin* can often been recognized by its use of distinct letters like <x> or <z> and particular combinations such as <ao> and <zh>, as well as its avoidance of other combinations such as vowel or consonant letter gemination. Ultimately, though, a Chinese dictionary employing *pinyin* is a ready resource. In many cases, there is little difficulty in deciding whether a name is in *pinyin* format or not. Examples include the following. (As before, SNs are in capitals and CBGNs in italics.)

CHEN *Guanjie* Nicholas
LI *Guicai* Jason
LIU *Zhaobo*

On the other hand, a name like

LIN *Mu Hsuan*

is not in *pinyin* because the digraph <hs> is not available in *pinyin* and disyllabic CBGNs should be fused and spelt as a single word. The form appears to be influenced by the Wade-Giles system (where <hs> is used). The *pinyin* form would be

LIN *Muxuan*

Other examples of names that do not conform to *pinyin* include the following.

CHAN *Mun Kit* Walter (SN and CBGN in Cantonese form)
TAN *Chinn Hao* Nicholas (SN in Hokkien/Teochew form; CBGN in non-*pinyin* Mandarin)
Ignatius TAN *Zhen Hao* (SN in Hokkien/Teochew form; CBGN in pinyin spelling, but not fused)[1]
Levin TAN *Chun Kiat* (SN and CBGN in Hokkien/Teochew form)

Of the 270 names, there were only 9 names (3.3%) in full *pinyin* format if we disregard EBGNs. Of the 270 names, 10 lack CBGNs. If we consider these 260 CBGNs alone, 41 (15.8%) are in full *pinyin* format, as in the following. (The 41 include the 9 names mentioned earlier.)

KOH *Zhenming* Edwin
Paul SIM *Ruiqi*

This seems to suggest a low compliance with the *pinyin* format. Nonetheless, if we ignore the matter of punctuation and count the CBGNs that are in *pinyin* format apart from the requirement of having them fused, we find another 137

CBGNs, making 52.7% of the CBGNs *pinyin*-like, as in the following names.

> Abel FOO *Chuan Zong*
> LONG *Tian-En* Ian
> ER *Guo Xiong* Marcus
> CHAN *Hao Yi*

If we combine the *pinyin* and *pinyin*-like CBGNs, the number rises to 178 (68.5%), making this a clear majority of the 260 CBGNs. The rest of the CBGNs could be based on Mandarin sounds but spelt in more idiosyncratic ways; or they could be based on non-Mandarin sounds.

The ordering of names conforms to one of the following two patterns:

> SN ^ CBGN ^ EBGN
> EBGN ^ SN ^ CBGN

In other words, CBGNs (where they exist) always follow SNs. EBGNs (where they exist) can occur initially or terminally; 77 (38.5%) occur initially and 123 (61.5%) occur terminally.

There can be no question then that personal names among the ethnic Chinese in Singapore have undergone change. The typical name, as indicated by Jones (1997), given in the 1950s did not contain an EBGN. The SN as well as CBGN was based on non-Mandarin pronunciations according to English conventions. The typical name in our data contains an EGBN. The SN is in the same form as the 1950s SN. However, the CBGN will be based on Mandarin pronunciation, and is likely to be *pinyin*-like rather than fully *pinyin*.

Where EBGNs are concerned, the use of standard forms is overwhelming. However, it is interesting to note that there is a general refusal to comply with *pinyin* conventions completely with SNs and CBGNs. The resistance is greatest

with SNs. This is perhaps understandable because this is the element that maintains the continuity from generation to generation. It is this element that has its form remaining constant if we compare names given in the 1950s and the 1990s. Whilst the *pinyin* form might be similar to non-*pinyin* forms in some cases (*eg* Li and Lee), they can also be very different from each other, *eg* Wu and Ng/Goh; Chen and Tan; Zhang and Teoh (see Jones 1997, Appendix D). There is significantly higher compliance for CBGNs alone, but even here, they are mostly *pinyin*-like rather than completely *pinyin*.

Conclusion

I now need to return to the issue raised earlier and attempt to answer the question of how adequate the rubric of standardization is to describe the phenomenon of name change in Singapore. In the case of EBGNs, this appears to be less of a case of standardization than the adoption of standardized given names prevalent in the Anglo-English-speaking nations. This is more of a case of adoption than standardization because EBGNs were rare for a child born in the 1950s but has since become normal. The adoption of EBGNs can in part be accounted for by the increased use of the English language in Singapore, particularly in the private and home domains; and the increasing influence of Christianity (Tan 2004).

As far as CBGNs are concerned, standardization is indeed a useful way of describing the changes that have occurred. On the one hand, there is a strong movement towards having them representing pronunciations based on the *standard* variety of Chinese, ie Mandarin Chinese. There is also a strong movement towards representing the pronunciations in the Latin alphabet using the *standard* romanization, ie *pinyin*, although this is likely to be *pinyin*-like rather than full-fledged *pinyin*.

The SNs, however, present a different picture, with a strong resistance to Mandarin Chinese and *pinyin* forms.

Ironically, though, this might be seen not as a resistance to standardization, but a case of the traditional form such as *Chua, Lee, Tan* and *Teoh* perceived as being established and therefore already standardized.

Finally, the name order advocated by the government (SN ^ CBGN ^ EBGN) has also overtaken the traditional one (EBGN ^ SN ^ CBGN) – at least insofar as names as represented in official documents are concerned.

The overall picture that emerges is that Singapore, as a participant in the world community, can be said to be in line in moving towards standardized names, although the government has back-pedalled from the stronger push made by the Lee Kuan Yew government to one, in the Goh Chok Tong government, that is more tolerant of individuality. This too appears to be in line with the overall global sentiment of the time. International tendency is towards loosening control, and therefore within the shorter time frame, the movement seems to be away from standardization. This is confirmed by the discourse of human rights which emphasizes individual rights over authority over a group. Goh Chok Tong's so called 'gentler' style of government seems to be in keeping with this, which he describes as 'the mood of the day' (SINGOV 2004).

In Europe, the standardization of language and of personal names appears to be precipitated by the movement towards a modern order of society with its emphasis on competition rather than subsistence in the feudal period. Many former colonies of western powers including Singapore had to make the transition much more quickly. Variation came to be seen as a problem. The partial standardization of the hybrid personal naming system in Singapore can be seen as the collective response to the new social thrust. A hybrid naming system also does not seem exempt from this same centripetal force towards standardization, and with more states coming into line with the globalized order, it appears likely that the forces of standardization will be extended to names in places beyond Europe and the Americas.

Note

1. The *pinyin* system allows only an apostrophe when there might be ambiguity in syllabification, as in *Kang'en* to make clear that it is not to be pronounced *kan+gen*.

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