

# THE DESIGN AND USE OF THE HANGUL ALPHABET IN KOREA

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# OVERVIEW

- ◉ Introduction
- ◉ The Purpose of Hangeul
- ◉ Initial Users of the Hangeul Alphabet
- ◉ Chinese Influence Over Korea
- ◉ Usage of the Hangeul Alphabet
- ◉ Conclusion
- ◉ Future Thoughts
- ◉ References



# INTRODUCTION

- King Sejong the inventor, said, “The speech sounds of our nation are different from those of China and are not confluent in writing. Thus, there are many among the ignorant peasants who, when they have something they wish to say, are ultimately unable to express their meanings. Taking pity on this, I have newly created twenty-eight letters, and simply wish for any and all to learn them with ease and use them at their convenience in daily life”(Kim , 1997)

## INTRO. CONTINUED

- ◉ Before Hangeul, Chinese Hanja was used as the primary writing system
- ◉ Chinese characters common in Asia at the time, great influence
- ◉ Chinese couldn't express Korean thought very well using Hanja
- ◉ Chinese Hanja was difficult, the majority of Koreans were effectively illiterate
- ◉ Hangeul was not officially adopted into Korea until 1945, after gaining independence from Japan

# THE PURPOSE OF HANGUL

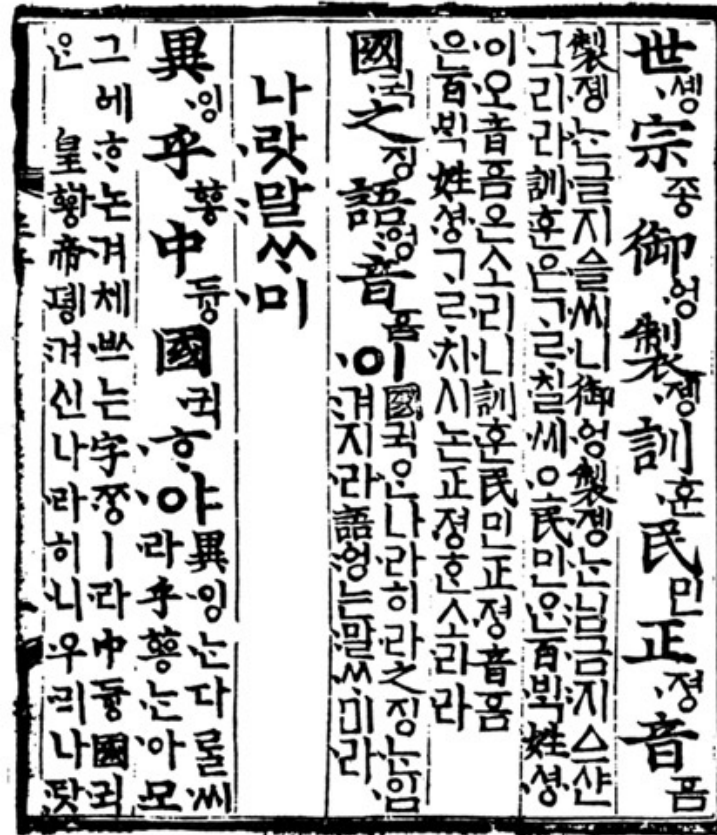
- ◉ Common folk could not write in Chinese Hanja
- ◉ Would give an opportunity to the common folk to become literate and informed
- ◉ Would close the information gap by allowing disseminating information



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Statue\\_Sejong\\_le\\_Grand.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Statue_Sejong_le_Grand.jpg)

# THE PURPOSE OF HANGUL CONTINUED.

- Aristocracy did not approve, wanted to maintain their high status
- Hangul was easy to learn and would allow for the expression of Korean thought



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hunmin\\_jeong-eum.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hunmin_jeong-eum.jpg)

# INITIAL USERS OF THE HANGUL ALPHABET

- ◉ Lower Class
  - Widely used by common folk as it gave both male and female a chance to become literate
- ◉ Woman
  - Women of all background types used Hangul as a writing method and helped the system endure
- ◉ Upper Class
  - Did not support the Hangul writing system and favored the Chinese Hanja despite Hangul's mass audience

# INITIAL USERS OF HANGUL CONTINUED

- Opposition
  - Korean elite continued to use Chinese Hanja as the preferred writing system
  - Ties with China, switching writing languages would be insulting
  - Elite scholars saw Hangul as a threat to their status, so they opposed it as well
  - As a result, Hangul was looked down upon for a great period in time, but it still survived

(Annals of the Joseon Dynasty, 1444)



# INITIAL USERS OF HANGUL CONTINUED

- ◉ Chinese Hanja vs. Korean Alphabet
- ◉ Chinese Hanja remained the official writing system until 1894
- ◉ King Joseon wanted Hangul to be the legitimate writing method of the people (Pratt, 1999)

◉ Chinese character :  
ideography  
over 50,000 characters  
八/人/入, 午/牛/干, 鳥/  
島/鳥, 往/住...

**Hangul alphabet :**  
phonemic system  
just 24 characters

# CHINESE INFLUENCE OVER KOREA



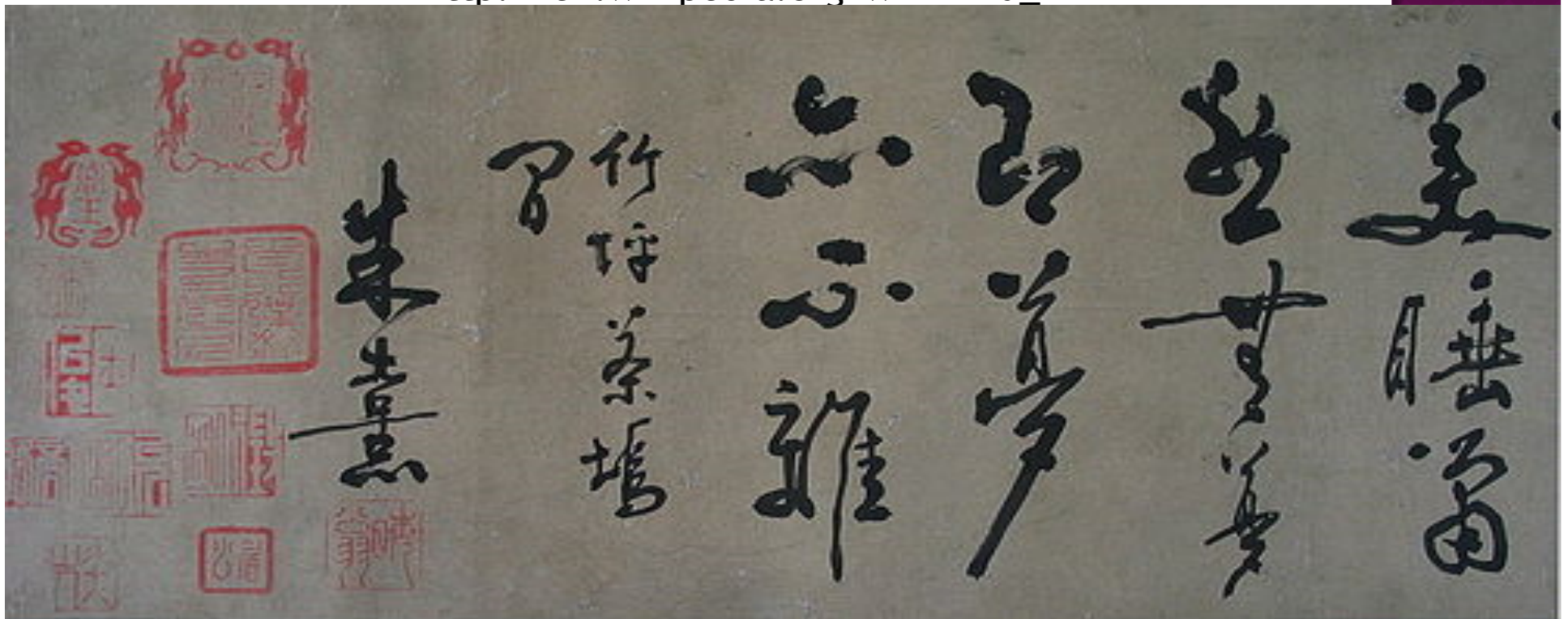
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Confucianism>

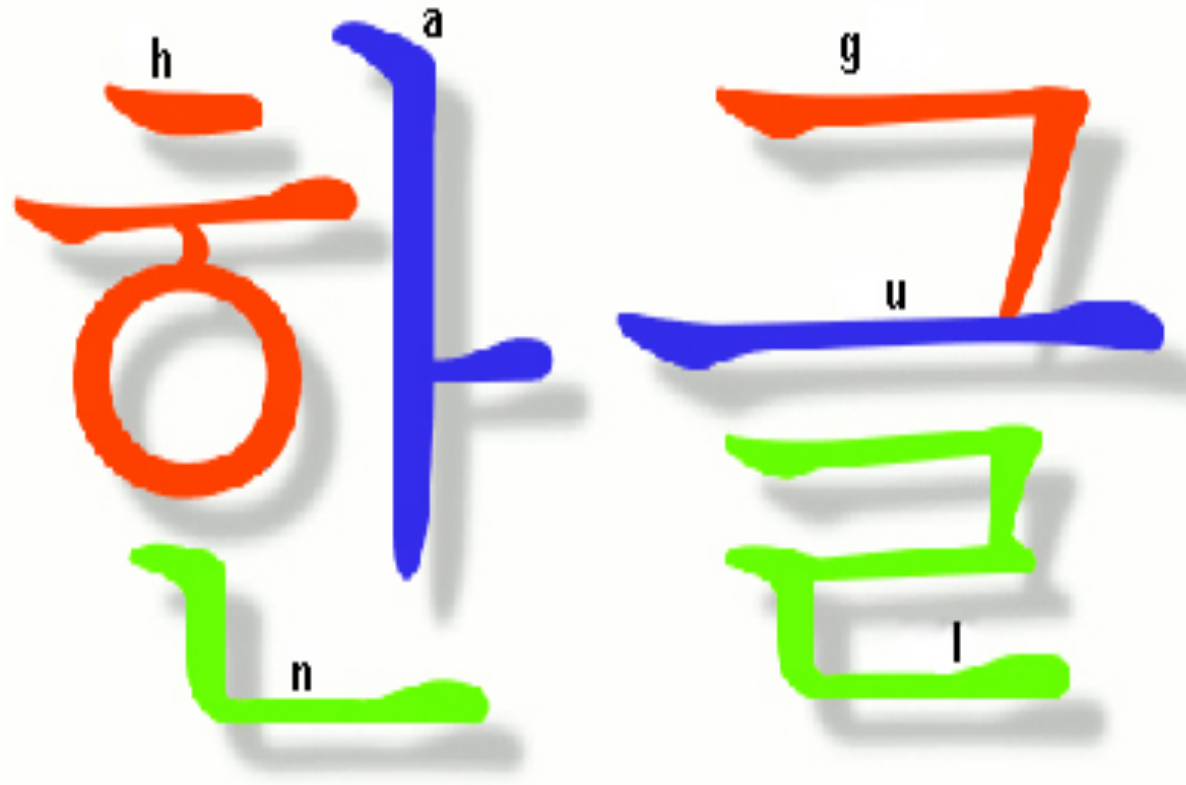
- Neo-Confucianism
- Culmination of
  - Taoism
  - Confucianism
  - Buddhism



Zhu Xi (1130-1200) was an influential teacher of Confucianism and was known for his fluid calligraphy skill and style. His teachings stressed the four texts of Confucius, and is the person attributed to the development of Neo-Confucianism.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhu\\_Xi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhu_Xi)





<http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/bender4/eall131/EAHReadings/module02/m02korean.html>

# USAGE OF THE HANGUL ALPHABET

- Eonhae is the term given to converting Chinese characters in Hanja to words in Hangul (Ji-Won, 2007)
- The first Eonhae works that appeared in Korea were *Hunmin-Jeong-eum Eonhae* and *Neungeomgyeong Eonhae*. Following this comes the Official Hangul Day on Oct 9 (South Korea) and Jan 25 (North Korea)



[http://search.kll.co.kr:8082/up\\_book/2647\\_nf/0.jpg](http://search.kll.co.kr:8082/up_book/2647_nf/0.jpg)

# USAGE OF THE HANGUL ALPHABET

## ○ Religion

-Just like Confucius was important to the Chinese, Buddhism was important for the Hangul (Ji-Won, 2007)



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/88/SelectedTeachingsofBuddhistSagesandSonMasters1377.jpg>

# USAGE OF THE HANGUL ALPHABET CONT'D.

- ◉ **The growing use of a second alphabet to express oneself kept facing criticism and even earned many nicknames**
  - **Eonmun (Vulgar Script)**
  - **Amkeul (Woman's Script)**
  - **Ahaekkeul (Children's Script)**

**(Ji-Won, 2007)**

# USAGE OF THE HANGUL ALPHABET CONT'D.

## ○ Resurrection

- During the late 16<sup>th</sup> century Hangul flourished in popular literature through long and short verse literature known as Gasa/Sijo literature
- In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Hangul saw commercial success as more novels were being translated and imprinted from Chinese novels.

(Pratt, 1999)

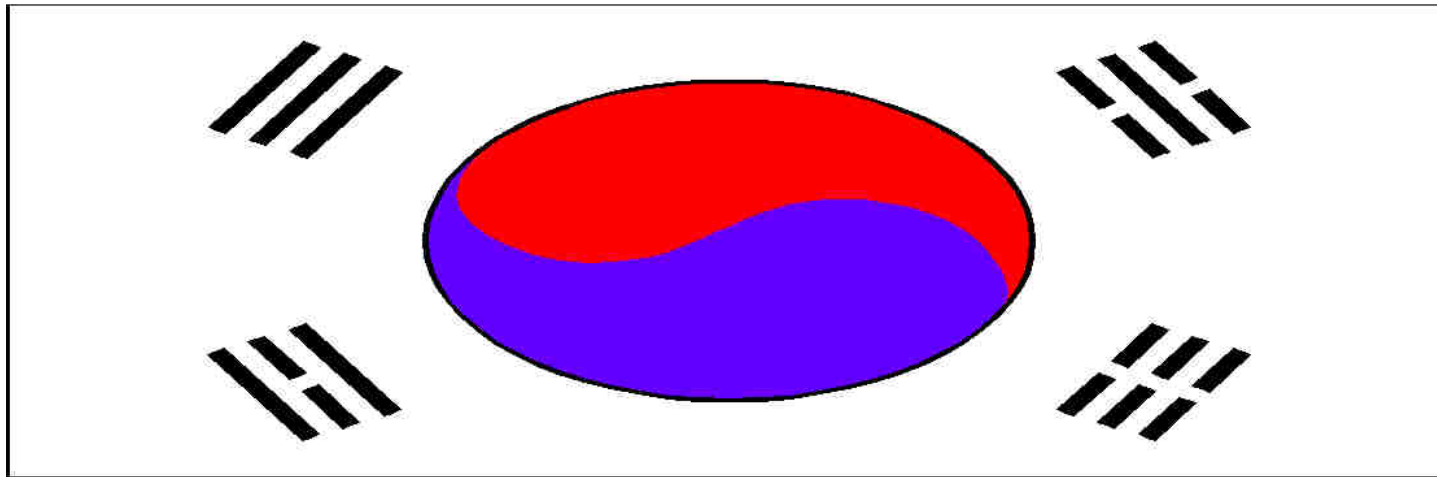


# USAGE OF THE HANGUL ALPHABET CONT'D.

- ◉ Hangul gained great use and acceptance during the 19<sup>th</sup> century period of Korean Nationalism
- ◉ 1894 marks the official year in which the government adopted Hangul into official documents
- ◉ Annexed by Japan 1910 but was used officially in 1945 once Korea received independence.

# CONCLUSION

- ◉ Hangeul spread literacy and gave a sense of Korean nationalism which was used to gain sovereignty



<http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Union/8324/korea.jpg>

# FUTURE THOUGHTS

- To further answer questions we could:
  - 1. Trace the evolution of Hangul from its initial design until it was officially adopted
  - 2. Use more sources that detail the historical achievements of Nations that create their own writing system
  - 3. We could also trace the impact Hangul had on surrounding primitive tribes and see whether or not the language had an impact for them as well

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