

CULTURAL NAME ORDERING (CNO) CONVENTION

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Abstract

For the past century or so, it has been the convention to reverse the order of the family name and personal name of Asian authors in international conferences and proceedings, etc. With the rise of China and its inevitable dominance in the 21st century, this piece of unconscious western chauvinism will need to change. This short essay suggests a new convention that should be suitable and fair to both eastern and western names.

1. Introduction

Until the past decade or so, western scientists and thinkers dominated international conferences and academic authorship, so when the occasional Asian author appeared, it was natural for the western editors to reverse the order of the Asian's name, i.e. put his/her personal name first, and the family name second, i.e. according to the usual western convention. However, in eastern cultures, the convention is to put the family name first and the personal name second, the reverse of the western convention.

We are now (2012) at a tipping point, where the number of Asian names in international conferences etc is pretty much fifty fifty, so that Asian authors will soon start to question the traditional naming order. They will want to change the way things are done. I see three possible "cultural name ordering conventions."

a) The Western Dominated Name Ordering Convention

This is the current convention, i.e. put the personal name first, and the family name second. So if an author is Asian, then his/her name will be reversed, to make it conform to the Western convention. This feels rather Western chauvinist and provincial minded to Asians.

b) The Eastern Dominated Name Ordering Convention

This is a new convention, namely to put the family name first, and the personal name second. So if an author is Western, then his/her name will be reversed, to make it conform to the Asian convention. This feels rather Asian chauvinist and provincial minded to Westerners.

c) The Cultural Name Ordering (CNO) Convention

This convention, that I now propose, is fair to both sides, to Westerners and to Asians. It is quite simple. It contains three essential ideas, namely

- i) Put the family name first, if the author's name is Asian.
- ii) Put the personal name first, if the author's name is Western.
- iii) To avoid confusion as to which name is the family name, write the *family* name in CAPITALS

For example, DENG Xiaoping; Jack KENNEDY.

When alphabetical lists need to be made of such authors, family names can still be used for the ordering, e.g.

Tom BRADSHAW, CHANG Min, Susan DANIELS