

# PROJECT II

## Global Literacy Program with Nurigeul

By Sek Yen Kim-Cho

As stated in my previous reports on Nurigeul Literacy Project, I have established the ‘Nurigeul Literacy Project for Global Reachout’ at Kona, Hawaii, in cooperation with the University of the Nations (July 2003); ‘Nurigeul Mission Center’ in Korea (August 2003); and ‘Nurigeul Training Center’ in Buffalo, Hong Kong and various places according to the needs of training.

The Sejong Studies Institute which I opened in Buffalo in 1998 served as the foundational organization for each of these three centers.

Since all the activities of these centers have as their core project the implementation of Nurigeul for literacy program and developing the follow-up teaching materials, it is necessary to give in the following the rationale for continuing the Nurigeul Project.

### 1. Introduction

The Korean alphabet of 1446, known as *Hangeul*, is said to be truly one of the great achievements of human invention. It was created in 1443 and promulgated in 1446 by the Korean monarch Sejong (1397-1450) himself. The official title of this alphabet is “*Hwunmin Cengum*” which means “The Correct Phonetic Alphabet or The Ortho-phonic Alphabet for the Instruction of the People.”

*Nurigeul* is a globalized version of *Hwunmin Cengum* developed and extended to a universally applicable phonetic alphabet for global application by Sek Yen Kim-Cho especially for the literacy program and transliteration of the Bible for unreached people without writing systems.

*Nurigeul* means “global scrip” which is a combination of the Korean word “*nuri-globe*” and “*geul-script*”. The consensus among world’s leading linguists today is that *Nurigeul* demonstrates principles of design so far ahead of its time that only now, more than 550 years after its invention, are its remarkable qualities beginning to be appreciated.

The genius of its letter design lies not only in its lucidly rational structure, but also in its use of letter shapes. *Nurigeul* can be described as “visible speech sounds,” which pictorially depict the place of articulation and the manner of articulation as the sounds are being produced.

Contemporary scholars and linguists (Prof. Gary Ledyard<sup>1</sup>, Prof. James D. McCawly<sup>2</sup>, Prof. Robert Ramsey<sup>3</sup>, Prof. Geoffry Sampson<sup>4</sup>) consider *Nurigeul* as the most rational and scientific script among the writing systems in use today anywhere.

## 2. Universal Applicability of *Nurigeul*—Why *Nurigeul* is best fit for Literacy Program?

*Nurigeul* is created from the beginning for solving illiteracy problem by the originator of the alphabet in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century. King Sejong, the inventor of the Correct Phonetic Alphabet manifested the purposes of inventing the *Hwunmin Cengum* as follows:

- (1) “The speech sounds(語音) of our country’s language are different from those of China and are not communicable with the Chinese characters. Therefore, when my beloved ignorant people want to say something, many of them are unable to express their feelings in writing. Feeling compassion for them, I have newly designed twenty-eight letters, only wishing to have **everyone learn them at ease** and readily practice and use them conveniently everyday.” (Preface to the original text)
- (2) “Though only twenty-eight letters are used, their shifts and changes in function are endless. They are simple and fine, reduced to the minimum of finite rule, yet **universally applicable**. Therefore, **an intelligent man can get acquainted with the script before the morning is over, and even a stupid man can learn them in the space of ten days.**” (Head-compiler Chung’s commentary)
- (3) “**There is no application not provided for, no direction in which they do not extend.** Even the sound of the winds, the cry of the crane, the cackle of fowl and the barking of dogs—all may be transcribed. (Head-compiler Chung’s commentary)
- (4) “*Nurigeul* enables those who merely look at the system of writing to come to **self-understanding without teacher.**” (Head-compiler Chung’s commentary)

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<sup>1</sup> Gary K. Ledyard, King Sejong Professor of East-Asian History Emeritus and Director of the Center for Korean

<sup>2</sup> James D. McCawley, Adrew MacLeish Distinguished Professor, Dept. of Linguistics and East Asian Languages & Civilization, the University of Chicado

<sup>3</sup> Robert Ramsey, Professor of Asian and East European Languages and Cultures, University of Maryland

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Sampson, Professor, Dept. of computer Science and Artificial Intelligence in Cognitive sciences, Univ. of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9RH, United Kingdom. Author, *Writing Systems* by Stanford Press

The essential points can be summarized as follows:

- (i) King Sejong created an efficient script for the literacy program.
- (ii) It is a script so simple and easy that people can master it effortlessly.
- (iii) The letter design is based on the generative principle which permits us to develop an unlimited number of letter shapes.
- (iv) It is a self-instructional script without teacher.

The letter design of Nurigeul can be developed unlimited number of letter shapes by the visualization of the articulatory-acoustic data. In other words, as long as the phonetic description and associated articulatory configurations and perceived sound features are given, Nurigeul can generate the entire range of speech sounds, thus offering its universal applicability.

In order to actually grasp the function of Nurigeul, let's look at the word “**psychology**”. For a non-native speaker of English the word “psychology-[saikɔlədʒi]” can not be pronounced accurately without looking at the phonetic symbols in the dictionary. But if we transcribe the same word in Nurigeul “싸|ㅋ|러|ㅈ|ㅣ”, ten out of ten people will pronounce this word the same way it is written, because Nurigeul has one-to-one correspondence between one letter (**grapheme**) and one sound (**phoneme**).

We can transcribe the entire range of speech sounds by depicting the articulatory gestures of ‘Produced Sounds’ and discrete sound features of ‘Perceived Sounds’ through Nurigeul. Thus this generative Nurigeul can be applied to:

- Literacy Program for Non-literate<sup>5</sup> people
- Creating scripts for Pre-literate<sup>6</sup> People without writing systems
- Transliterating the Bible in the languages of unreached people

### **3. Literacy Program for Non-literate People with Complex Writing System**

The literacy workers have been considering a viable non-Roman writing system for non-literate cultures (Unseth 1980)<sup>7</sup>. They even thought of designing a new workable alphabet for literacy

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Non-literate’ means illiteracy caused by the complex writing system.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Pre-literate’ means illiteracy due to the lack of writing system.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Unseth 1980 SIL. The consideration of non-Roman orthographies in literacy programs LinuaLinks Library Version 4.0 1999 SIL International

program. However, we have no need to design any new scripts, because we already have *Nurigeul* which has been designed as a universally applicable phonetic alphabet. It is recognized as the best fit writing system for literacy program.

Many European and American scholars agree that the phonetic system underlying the entire design of *Nurigeul* qualifies it as the best instrument for human efforts against illiteracy.

Specifically for those literacy workers of non-literate people with complex writing system, such as Chinese characters and Mongolian Uighur script and millions of illiterate people with no proper writing system for their languages, *Nurigeul* is the most efficient and powerful script.

#### **4. Creating Scripts for Pre-literate languages without writing system**

According to German philosopher Heidegger, “Language is the House of Being.” We may modify this statement by saying that “The writing system is the house of language.” Without a writing system, language cannot fully function as the vehicle of culture. The universal transcribability and applicability of *Nurigeul* suggest the possibility of helping out those who have language but no writing system by creating *Nurigeul* scripts for them.

#### **5. Necessity of Field Study for Preliterate and Nonliterate People/Cultures**

At the UNESCO International Symposium on “Language in Cyberspace” held in Seoul in 2001, Mr. Kobayashi, Director of a leading computer center in Japan, declared that in order to have universal access to the Database in the cyberspace, “One Universal Character Set” is necessary. And UNESCO Chairman Christian Galinsky openly recognized the excellent quality of *Nurigeul* as a global script. This was also echoed by the Associate Chair, Victor Montviloff, who said that “*Nurigeul* is simply the best script for the transliteration of all human speech sounds.”

In order for UNESCO to adopt *Nurigeul* as ‘Universal Character Set’ for Universal Access to Database in Cyberspace, we have to bring about as many results of the field study as possible.

#### **6. Organizing the ‘Nurigeul Literacy Corps’ comparable to ‘Peace Corps’**

A volunteer organization must be deployed to areas of minority languages to transcribe the existing spoken languages into written forms using *Nurigeul*. The volunteers of ‘Nurigeul Literacy Corps’ like ‘Peace Corps people’ will teach *Nurigeul* script to all people who must be freed from their illiteracy.

## 7. Role of the Nurigeul Mission Center

“Nurigeul Research Center” is established in an effort to achieve the ‘Great Commission Literacy Project with Nurigeul’. In order to carry out such grand project, further research and development of multi-lingual teaching contents are necessary for the teachers, literacy workers, and missionaries. Such teaching contents include CD ROM Production, Fonts Design, and the follow-up primer constructions. It takes years of work for the Bible translators to translate the Bible in the minority languages, but with ‘transliteration of the Bible with Nurigeul’ it will take only one tenth of the time needed for its translation. Thus Nurigeul will expedite to provide the Bibles for unreached people. \*In order to accomplish successful literacy program ‘Production of Nurigeul CD-ROM, Titled: “Let’s Master the Global Script, Nurigeul in an Hour!’ is in great need!”

In order to fulfill the objectives of CD-ROM production, Nurigeul must be taught the way the originator has designed. Since the design principle of Nurigeul is based on the visualization of the articulatory-acoustic features of speech sounds. There is a strict correlation between the graphic shape and graphic function. Thus, once we acquire the Nurigeul symbols, we will be able to learn the whole Nurigeul system by heart.

However, Roman orthographies or other segmental writing system using symbols, whether they are alphabets<sup>8</sup> or syllabaries<sup>9</sup>, will require a huge burden of memorization. In addition, we can not, in the case of Roman orthographies, develop or extend the letter shapes on the generative principle as Nurigeul does. Nurigeul has five basic consonants from which virtually every pronunciation that is known to human can be constructed systematically and effortlessly. (Please see the Section *Why CD Rom is necessary?*)

Since Nurigeul is defined as ‘visible speech sounds’, the correlation between each segmental symbol and each segmental sound must be illustrated by graphic design or animation. In order to do so, the media of Flash Program and Director Program must be utilized for the effective illustrations. CD ROM is the only media that can show this correlation visually.

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Alphabets’ are orthographies which have separate symbols for vowels and consonants, as in Roman (Latin), English, Spanish, Russian or Korean.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Syllabaries’ are writing systems which have separate symbols for each syllable, such as Japanese *Kana* (Hiragana or Katakana), Chinese, Cherokee.

## 9. My Nurigeul Mission Activities in the Field

### 9-1. Nurigeul Implementations

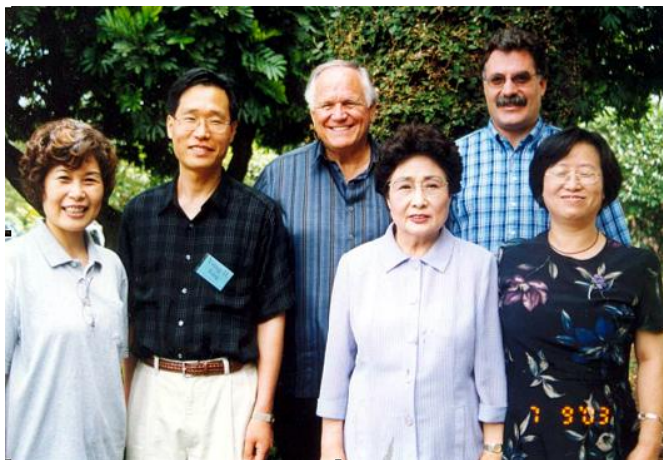
In 2003, my Nurigeul Project was expanded to quite a large area, including the University of the Nations' literacy project. This University of the Nations has 55 campuses and 550 Training Centers under the name of YWAM (Youth With A Man) organization all over the world.

Their primary concern is the global mission for unreached people. In order for reaching out those people they needed a very efficient writing system to make them possible to read and write.

Thus, the U of N and YWAM adopted Nurigeul as Global Writing System for the literacy program. The title of the project is "Great Commission Literacy Project with NURIGEUL (Global Writing System), Developed by Dr. Sek Yen Kim-Cho.

During the two weeks from June 30<sup>th</sup> to July 12<sup>th</sup> I taught Nurigeul intensive course for literacy workers, group of 60 people at Kona, Hawaii where headquarter of U of N and YWAM is located.

The following is a picture of Nurigeul Literacy Corps gathered from Korea, Canada and the US to join Nurigeul literacy program at Kona, Hawaii.



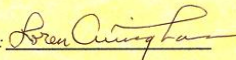
▲ Back row from left: Dr. Loren Cunningham, president of Univ. of Nations and Dr. David Hamilton, vice president of U of N.  
Front row: Mrs. Choi, Dr. Yong Song, Dr. Sek Yen Kim-Cho and Rev. Deborah Oh.

#### ***A Memorandum of Spiritual Collaboration toward fulfillment of the Great Commission***

*We, Dr. Kim-Cho and Dr. Loren Cunningham, gratefully acknowledge God's word to us personally to see that all people have access to the Bible. They must therefore develop the ability to read His Word so that they might experience life in all its abundance.*

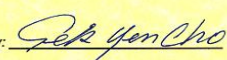
*To this end, we gratefully recognize God's voice in guiding each of us separately, to bring us together from our distinctive backgrounds and giftings, to a spirit of unity in Christ and His purpose.*

*We also desire to obey as the Holy Spirit guides us individually to use our individual influence and giftings into collaborative projects towards God's good plan in the fulfillment of the Great Commission.*

By: 

Name: Loren Cunningham

Date: July 11, 2003

By: 

Name: Sek Yen Kim-Cho, PhD

Date: July 11, 2003

▲ The copy of the Agreement between Loren Cunningham and Sek Yen Kim-Cho

## **9-2. Additional Visiting for Nurigeul Instruction**

In addition, I have visited ten more training centers in Korea, Jeju Island and Canada to instruct Nurigeul for the Nurigeul literacy corps people during the days from September through October 30.

## **9-3. Participating in the 2003 Summer Rally of Korean Christians**

I was invited by “THE YEAR 2003 SUMMER RALLY OF KOREAN CHRISTIANS” as one of the key speakers. The great rally was held in OSANRI PRAYER RETREAT HALL which could accommodate up to 10,000 people.

The topic of the speech: The Synergy of Nurigeul and Gospel

Date: August 5 ~ 8, 2003

## **9-4. Visiting Hong Kong Program for Nurigeul Training**

February 23 ~ 28, 2004

Participating countries: Korea, China, Hong Kong and Macau

## **9-5. Nurigeul Training Program at Nepal for three weeks**

Date: February 6 ~ 24, 2004

A Professor and eight graduate students participated in Nurigeul Instructions for Nepali people as voluntary teachers from Nam-Seoul College.

Two research assistants were dispatched to Nepali Literacy Program to teach Nurigeul.

Forty-nine people from various areas of Piple tribe were given Nurigeul instruction.

“Nurigeul Research Center in Korea” supported the entire Nepal project from contributions by donors in Seoul and myself.

## **9-6. Compilation of Textbooks for Nurigeul Instruction**

Two textbooks were written by myself:

A. Primer-Construction of Nurigeul

B. Let's Master the Nurigeul Script in One Week's Intensive Course