

What's in a Name?

Ruth M. Grubel

In the balcony scene from Shakespeare's tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, the heroine speaks to her lover with these famous words:

“What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.”

Without considering the details of Shakespeare's story, we can easily accept Juliet's statement that a rose smells as sweet when we call it something else, such as ばら. How important is a name - really?

I am asking this question because I recently saw a photo of a letter written by Chancellor Bates, and the printed name on the Kwansei Gakuin letterhead was “West Japan College.” Evidently, the name “Kwansei Gakuin” must have been too difficult for non-Japanese to understand, so a translation was used to identify our school to English speakers. Although we no longer call ourselves West Japan College (or University), we often hear from both Japanese and non-Japanese speakers that the pronunciation of Kwansei Gakuin is difficult.

According to the *Kwansei Gakuin Centennial History*, our school's founder, Walter R. Lambuth and the person who would become the second president of Kwansei Gakuin, Yoshioka Yoshikuni, considered many things when they chose a name for the new school in 1889. In those days, few schools, including Christian schools, had “Gakuin” as part of their names, so it was considered to be a rather innovative choice. “Kansai” was also not a common term in the late 19th century, but in contrast to “Kanto” or eastern Japan, the founders wanted their new school to focus on leadership in western Japan, so decided to include that regional name. Even the pronunciation was chosen to reflect the style favored by progressive students of the day.

Now that nearly 126 years have passed, both “Kansai” and “Gakuin” are in common use, and the “Kwansei” pronunciation is an anachronism. It is true that our school name is part of our identity now, and each member of Kwansei Gakuin has a personal connection to it, but rather than focusing on West Japan, we are reaching out to a global 21st century society while continuing to base our educational philosophy on the principles of Christianity and our mission to nurture world citizens who embody “Mastery for Service.” Just as Juliet's rose would smell as sweet by any other name, our school's reputation will also continue to “be sweet” if it is based on the effective pursuit of our inspiring ideals, regardless of the name on our letterhead.

(院長)