

# A Comparative Study of Kinship Appellations Between China and South Korea

Qiuju Ling\*

College of Liberal Arts, Guizhou University of Finance and Economics, 550025, China

\* Corresponding author: Ling Qiuju (Email: Z1456399505@163.com)

**Abstract:** Appellation is an indispensable part of People's Daily communication, "appellation" is people according to relatives or other mutual relations and identity, occupation, etc. As a part of appellation, kinship appellation occupies an important position in the study of language and culture, and kinship appellation, as a basic vocabulary, has formed a strict system in each national language. It is relatively stable and reflects a nation's cultural tradition, life style, national psychology and other characteristics. Through the research and analysis of kinship terms in China and South Korea, this paper explores the similarities and differences between the two peoples' language and culture.

**Keywords:** Chinese and Korean kinship appellations; Language and culture; Similarities and differences.

## 1. The Connotation of the Title of Kin

The Encyclopedia of China says that "relatives" are "social relations arising from marriage, blood and adoption, and that they have legal rights and obligations to each other"; Cihai says that it is "the relationship between people arising from marriage, blood and adoption"; and the Modern Chinese Dictionary says that it is "a person who is related by blood or marriage". They say things differently, but in reality there is no big difference.

The "relative" in the Chinese title of kinship is different from the extension of kinship in modern times. In modern times, there are two main categories of kinship, namely immediate relatives and collateral relatives. Immediate family refers to a category of people who are directly related by blood or marriage, such as parents, children and husband and wife, while collateral relatives refer to people and their spouses, such as siblings, uncles, aunts, etc. Among these relatives, with the exception of the mother's wife and the uncle's spouse, they all have the same surname.

In the laws of South Korea, Article 777 of the Civil Code stipulates that the scope of relatives mainly includes the following three aspects: first, blood relatives within eight inches (blood relatives in Korean law include natural blood relatives and legal blood relatives). Natural consanguinity refers to blood relatives who are related by blood. Legal blood relatives refer to kinships that are not related by blood, but have legal rights to blood relations, such as kinship formed by adoption); second, in-laws within four inches (in-laws include in-laws of blood relatives and blood relatives of in-laws), and third, spouses.

Both China and South Korea are deeply influenced by patriarchal systems and hierarchies, and due to the development of agricultural economies, there is a certain patriarchal system and the idea of male superiority and inferiority of women in both countries. Moreover, South Korea and China have attached great importance to etiquette since ancient times, and at the same time are friendly neighbors, due to frequent exchanges, there are actually many similarities in the kinship predicates of Korean and Chinese, but there are also some differences, this paper mainly focuses on the kinship predicates often used in modern daily life, and

makes a simple understanding and comparison of Chinese and Korean kinship predicates, and then understands the similarities and differences between Chinese and Korean languages and cultures.

## 2. Similarities and Differences Between Chinese and Korean Kinship Titles

### 2.1. Patrilineal and maternal kinship titles

Chinese and Korean kinship titles are strictly systematic and systematic, and the Chinese-Korean kinship title system mainly adopts the narrative method, which is different from the analogy of English kinship titles, for example, we are familiar with the English aunt, etc., collectively called aunt, uncle, etc., and the Chinese and Korean kinship title system is quite complex and inseparable from the cultural system for thousands of years.

There are roughly three commonly used kinship title systems in Chinese, namely the tenth, the four, and the two. The ten-point method is to take oneself as the dividing line, count up to four generations: father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and then count down to five generations: sons, grandsons, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, and distant grandchildren, adding up to a total of ten generations, as well as related blood relatives, matrilineal relatives, and in-laws between the same generation. The quartile system is to divide the kinship title system into paternal, matrilineal, husband-in-law, and women's lines, the first two are easy to understand, and the latter two are relatives on the husband's side, such as father-in-law, mother-in-law, uncle, and sister-in-law. In the same way, the dichotomy is to divide the kinship system into two categories: consanguinity and in-law. Blood relatives refer to relatives and relatives who are directly or indirectly related to oneself: clan relatives (direct relatives, collateral relatives) and maternal relatives, all of whom have the same surname, and foreign relatives are relatives who are related to oneself by blood but have different surnames, such as maternal grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc. In-laws refer to relatives who are not related by blood and are born out of marriage, including uncles, aunts, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, etc.

The kinship title system in Korea is quite similar to that of Chinese, both of which use the descriptive method to address kinship, but the language and culture of any ethnic group have their differences. In Korean, there are mainly thirds and three-inch methods to classify kinship titles. This is similar to the Chinese language, but it is different. The Korean kinship system is generally said to be "one family, two halls", because Korean relatives are divided into patrilineal relatives, maternal relatives, and wife-in-laws. The first two categories are mainly the patrilineal and matrilineal kinship titles in Chinese, and compared with Chinese, what is more special is that they use the kinship predicates related to marriage as a separate kinship title system. The three-inch method, also known as the "inch method", is a calculation method specially used to express the scope of kinship and kinship in the kinship system of the Korean ethnic group, and due to its particularity, it will be introduced in the next chapter. This chapter mainly analyzes the similarities and differences between Chinese and Korean kinship titles from the perspectives of paternity and maternal line.

We can see that, first of all, the Chinese and Korean kinship title systems are strictly systematic, and they all divide and summarize kinship titles from different perspectives, and each system is quite complex, even if it is a native of the ethnic group, it is necessary to make a detailed division to fully understand. Secondly, the total number of kinship titles in China and South Korea is very large, and the above are only some of the commonly used systems listed by the author, and the reality is more complicated, and for the case of a large family population, kinship titles are even more complicated. Then, the Chinese and Korean kinship titles are rich in pattern, and the kinship titles have a dualistic symmetry. If there is a male name, there must be a corresponding female name, and the two have a high degree of consistency in this characteristic. Finally, in terms of ideology, they all reflect a certain patriarchal thinking, the father's relatives can add the prefix "pro", and the mother's relatives can be prefixed with "outside", which reflects the distinction between relatives and alienation from the title. Another example: the father's brothers are divided into "uncle" and "uncle". However, the father's sisters are not clearly classified, but are collectively referred to as "aunts." This phenomenon reflects the relatively low status of women and the fact that they are not valued on an equal footing with men in society.

And the two are different. First of all, it is obvious that there are more titles in Chinese, such as the father's brother, which can be called "uncle" in Chinese, but only "백부" in Korean, and secondly, in some ways, Korean pays more attention to gender differentiation than the Chinese kinship system. For example, as you can see from the table above, there are different names for boys and girls for older brothers and sisters. To his brother, men call him "형" and women "오빠", and similarly, to his sister, men call her "누나" and women "언니". Then, the Korean language attaches more importance to the "husband line" than the Chinese language, and the Korean kinship system of the husband and wife lines is unequal. It is mainly reflected in the honorifics used, but there is no such difference in modern Chinese. For example, the Korean language refers to the husband's brother-in-law as "서방님" and the wife's sister-in-law as "동서" or "surname + 서방" (님 is the Korean word for respect). In Korean, sometimes the choice of title is different whether the addressee is married or not, for example, in Korean, a married

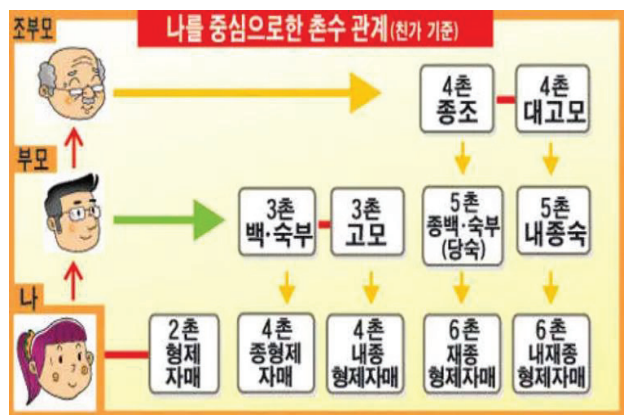
uncle (younger than his father) is called "작은 아버지", while an unmarried uncle is called "삼촌". This is also related to the traditional ideology and culture of South Korea, which has always had a small population, so the historical task of getting married, starting a family, and reproducing offspring is more urgent and severe than that of China.

## 2.2. Face and back scales

Titles are divided into back and face. There are two forms of language application in Chinese and Korean kinship titles, and the face title is a face-to-face or more formal (or colloquial) address for relatives, which has a sense of cordiality and casualness. The back title is a more pronoun behind the back of a relative or a homely (written) name, which is relatively serious and formal. The use of the two mainly depends on the occasion of use, the identity of the addressee, and the historical time, so it is very complicated and difficult to generalize. For example, in the traditional Chinese era, the formal names of the superior were very close. The emperor's grandparents, the theory is that the emperor and the empress dowager can be called directly after death, such as Emperor Wu's grandfather is Emperor Wen, and when others mention it, they call it "Emperor Xiaowen". If grandma dies, she will also use a nickname, and if she is alive, she will be called the queen mother. Face and back titles are a very important demarcation between Chinese kinship titles. Some titles are mainly used as back titles, such as "stepfather, stepmother, husband, wife, lover", etc., which are mainly used in face names, and rarely appear in back names. Such as "grandpa, grandma, grandpa, grandma, father, mother, uncle, aunt, uncle, aunt, brother, sister" and so on are not only used as face names, but also as back names. From the perspective of the effect achieved by verbal expression, the face title is mainly to greet the alleged relatives and achieve the purpose of communicating with them, while the back title mainly explains the relationship between the speaker and the alleged relatives to achieve the purpose of clear expression.

There is a difference between Chinese and Korean pronouns and back pronouns, which can also be seen from the previous section. In terms of facial pronouns, first of all, Korean pays more attention to gender differentiation than Chinese, and the male and female pronouns have completely different titles, and secondly, Korean pays more attention to the distinction between older and younger than Chinese, and even friends of the same generation will add specific honorific words, and the system of respect and inferiority is vividly reflected in the predicates. In terms of back titles, as in Chinese, the relative predicates of the Korean back name system are sometimes shared with the face name system, such as "elder brother, sister", but some are usually separated, such as "father, mother, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother", but in Chinese, sometimes "father, mother, grandfather, grandmother" can also be used for face pronouns, which is relatively widely used compared to Korean, but there are fewer cases. On the other hand, the back title in Chinese is generally not used for face pronouns, and Chinese generally do not call their spouse "lover" in person, while in Korean this is the case, relatively rarely.

### 3. Korean Inch Method



Compared with the West, the Easterners are more cautious and strict in the division of kinship. In China, for example, the names of relatives are very complicated. The same is true for South Korea. In Korean dramas, we often hear the term "Sancun (삼촌)" referring to Dad's brother, that is, uncle or uncle. The reason for this title is that Koreans "quantify" kinship and measure the distance between people in the unit of "inch". On the basis of the following basic provisions, the smaller the number of inches, the closer the relationship, and vice versa. The calculation of inches is abstract and difficult to understand in words. Therefore, through the pictures, we can quickly figure out the relationship between Koreans.

South Korea has a long-established calculation method for measuring the kinship between relatives: the inch method (촌수). From the above figure, we can see that the algorithm is based on oneself, the distance from my spouse is zero inches, the distance from my parents is one inch, and the distance from my siblings is two inches (one inch between me and my parents, and one inch between my parents and other children). Because they have one inch with their parents, and their parents have two inches with their siblings, uncles and aunts are 삼촌, which literally means "three inches". The children of uncles and aunts, i.e., their cousins (cousins) are 사촌, which literally means "four inches". Similarly, great-grandparents can also be referred to as "Sancun", but they are generally not called "사촌" because it does not show respect for them. The children of their cousins (cousins) are "five inches", and so on, but at most to "nine inches", beyond nine inches, they are not related, and other relatives are collectively called distant relatives. In addition, it needs to be noted that "inch" is only used to measure the distance between relatives, and when addressing each other, in addition to fixed words such as "three inches" and "outer three inches", it is generally necessary to use specific words such as "dad" and "mother". In addition, the formulation of the inch law is mainly to avoid marriage between close relatives, because South Korea has a small population, more people with the same surname, and many ancestors have the same origin, so the Korean marriage law is also based on the number of inches, stipulating that marriages within eight inches are not established. In general, the Korean inch calculation system provides the basis for ordinary people to maintain Korean etiquette in a popular and simple way, and provides a simple basic basis for blood relatives not to marry.

In addition, relatives on the father's side can be prefixed with the prefix "pro", and relatives on the mother's side can

be prefixed with "outside". So it is also "three inches", "pro three inches" refers to the uncle (father's brother), and "outer three inches" refers to the uncle.

### 4. Conclusion

There are many kinds of kinship predicates, and the cultures they contain are also colorful, with both similarities and many differences.

First of all, a comparative analysis of the Han and Korean kinship titles system shows that the two languages have certain commonalities in kinship titles: first, both have the rigor and complexity of the system. Second, the total number of titles in both is relatively large. Third, the commonality of the pattern: how many titles there are in the paternal kinship, there are correspondingly as many titles in the mother's kinship, and the whole kinship title system presents a dualistic symmetrical pattern. At the same time, there are some different differences: First, Korean places more emphasis on gender differentiation. Second, the Korean language places more emphasis on distinguishing between the older and the younger. Third, the Korean language tends to be more patriarchal.

Secondly, the cultural connotation of the title of Han and Han kin. The cultural roots of the Chinese language can be traced back to the feudal ideology of "male superiority and female inferiority" formed in China for thousands of years for the purpose of maintaining social hierarchy. The Chinese title of kinship is deeply rooted in the influence of traditional Confucian and Mencian Confucian etiquette and religion. Under the influence of traditional Chinese culture "etiquette", we are required to correct our names in interpersonal interactions, everyone must be clear about their social identity and social status, and strictly abide by various hierarchies. This principle should be observed even in cases where you are not related to yourself, such as "Aunt Zhang, Uncle Wang". China and South Korea have a deep historical relationship since ancient times, and the two countries have many similarities in the political, economic, and cultural fields, which also affect various rules and systems in interpersonal communication.

As a part of the predicate, the relative predicate occupies an important position in the study of language and culture.

### References

- [1] Pu Lianyu. Korean Nationality Kinship System and "Inch Counting Method"[J]. Heilongjiang Nationality Series, 1999(01): 75-78. DOI:10.16415/j.cnki.23-1021/c.1999.01.021.
- [2] Nie Ying, Yang Qizhen, Nie Linghong. A comparative study of Chinese and Korean kinship predicates from a cross-cultural perspective[J]. Journal of Guangxi University of Education, 2021 (04): 48-51.
- [3] Park Ju Yeon. A comparative study on the conversion of predicates of Han and Han kinship [D]. East China Normal University, 2016.
- [4] Li Xianglin. A comparative study on the predicates of Chinese and Korean kinship [D]. Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 2012.
- [5] Jin Shouxuan. A comparative study on modern kinship predicates in Han and Han countries[D]. Shandong University, 2011.
- [6] Zhao Zhongshu. Research on modern kinship predicates in China and Korea [D]. Shandong University, 2008.