

Socio-Cultural Identity of Kinship Terms of the Kyrgyz Language

Gulzura Jumakunova

Ankara University, Turkey

Abstract: Kinship terms have an important place in the fundamental vocabulary of the Turkish society in terms of words used to express family relationships. Kinship terms involves multi-faceted relationships of the one who speaks and one being spoken to, the one who addresses and one being addressed on the basis of a certain social institution. For this reason, kinship terms may yield the desired results only when studied as the common element of several social sciences such as anthropology, history, archeology, ethnography and ethnology rather than only a linguistic element. The study of kinship terminology requires a comprehensive research that comprises the linguistic fields of ethnography and culture. While kinship terms constitute one of the fundamental groups of the vocabulary of a language with the names of body organs, colours and numbers, they carry several extrinsic characteristics distinguishing them from the other constituents of the group. The objective of our presentation is to determine the significant points in the formational and evolutionary process of the kinship terms in Kirgiz Turkish and to evaluate them in the light of factors involved in this process.

Key Words: Kyrgyz language, kinship terms, vocabulary, terminology, etymology.

Kinship terms as a name system used for interrelated categories of relatives play an important role within the basic vocabulary of the Turkish society. Kinship terms as the connections of social traditions reflect the multi-faceted relations of the speakers of a language based on many social institutions (. For this reason, desired reasons can only be obtained when kinship terms are studied as the common objects of many social sciences such as anthropology, history, archeology, ethnography and ethnology rather than only of linguistics.

Kinship terms in the Kyrgyz language, too, have occurred as a reflection of its socio-cultural structure which involves the unique life style of the Kyrgyz society, its moral values and codes of conduct, its traditions, its tolerations and prohibitions to the language. In this presentation, we will discuss the important points of the formation and development process of Kyrgyz kinship terms in the light of factors that proved to be effective in this process.

Kinship terms in the Kyrgyz language are distinct from other Turkish dialects in that they consistently conserve the oldest paradigms that systematize kinship relations in Turkish and still actively perpetuate them today. For instance, the Kyrgyz language still maintains a full set of old kinship terms whereas many other languages fail to name family relationships in detail or maintain only a small number of those names. We will try to clarify the Kyrgyz kinship terms as proof of what we have

asserted so far within the framework of three groups which are frequently referred in the field of etymology.

1. Family-based Kinship Terms
2. Kinship Terms Based on Marriage
3. Phony Kinship Terms Acquired Later

1. Family-based Kinship Terms

Family-based kinship is a kind of community made up of a nuclear family with all its members having blood ties with each other (Balaman, 1982). The kinship system which is dominant in the Kyrgyz society is the patrilineal kinship based on a single origin kinship system. In the patrilineal kinship system, family members are far more closely related to father-sided relatives and thus segregated from the children of female members. As a result, a social set with its own internal organization and set of interests is formed to survive for many generations and this set is called the paternal line.

Nuclear Family

Nuclear family is made up of a man and a woman whose marriage has been legalized, and their unmarried children. Such family formations potentially have 13 kinship terms. Nuclear family definitions within the Kyrgyz kinship system are very important because these definitions are universal for the paternal line and can be used for the whole generation without any modifications.

Chart 1**Nuclear Family**

ata	“father”
apa / ene	“mother”
aga	“brother”
ece	“sister”
karındaş	“sister”(for the brother)
siñdi	“sister”(for the other sister)
ini	“younger brother” (general)
küyöö / er	“husband”
ayal / katın	“wife”
bir tuugan	“sibling”
uul	“son”
kız	“daughter”
bala	“child”
üy bülö	“family”

Father: The identity of an individual is determined by the father in the patrilineal kinship system and for this reason it is strikingly significant in the Kyrgyz society that the word ‘baba,’ the father, appears in the center of this paradigm. This, perhaps, may be due to the weight the word ‘ata’ (father) carries in the family in the Kyrgyz language. When the words lineage, ancestry, origin and country are considered, it is possible to see that most of them are derived from the word ‘ata.’ For

example, *ata tek* means ‘origin, root, family’, *ata curt* means ‘motherland’, *ata-baba* means ‘ancestry, paternal line’ and *ata-coto* means ‘family’, etc.

On account of the cult of Ancestors in the old Kyrgyz belief, the importance attached to the word *ata* is evident in its reverence to as high as the level of god, patron or master. For instance, in the Kyrgyz mythology, all the owners and protectors of animals are called with the name *Ata*: *Çolpon Ata* – the protector of sheep, *Kambar-Ata* – the protector of horses, *Oysul-Ata* – the protector of camels and *Çiçañ-Ata* – the protector of goats. The names of places, waters and lakes which are considered sacred as indicators of the Ground-Water cult are also expressed with the word *Ata*. For example, *Oluya Ata*, *Alma Ata*, *Çolpon Ata* (city names), *Kulun Ata* (the name of a lake), *Koçkor Ata*, *Isık Ata*, *Kambar Ata* (the names of places) etc.

As in every language, the definition of the nuclear family is very important in the Kyrgyz kinship system, because this definition is regarded as the foundation of paternal societies and this plays a significant role in the definition of non-family affinities. For instance, the difference in the Turkish kinship terminology which is expressed generally by similar terms is based on the frequency of use of nuclear family terms within and outside the family. The criterion here is “own” and “unfamiliar”, which is the set of semantics in “within the family” and “outside the family.” The terms in the nuclear family structure in the Kyrgyz society are used for the whole family without any modifications. Because the family tree which is strongly preserved and the marriage ban before seven generations are reinforced by kinship terms as well.

Chart 2. Siblings and In-family Kinship Terms

Siblings	Uncle and children of in-family relatives
aga, bayke ‘elder brother’ ece ‘sister’	aga, bayke ece
karındaş ‘younger sister’ (to the brother)	karındaş
siñdi ‘younger sister’ (to the elder sister)	siñdi
ini	ini

Kinship terms are rather confusing among the children of uncles or the children of such relatives who are allowed to marry each other after 2-3 generations, because family-based kinship terms have become intermingled with the marriage-based kinship terms at this point. However, no confusion is likely to occur in these two sets, as endogamy is forbidden in the Kyrgyz society.

In the paternal kinship system, generations are tied to the paternal side relatives and they are segregated from the girls who are tied to any other paternal structure. Since the children of girls are not from

the father's origin, they cannot use in-family terms and they are assessed within a different set of terms.

Chart 3. Siblings and Kinship Terms Outside the Family

Siblings

Children of Aunts / Uncles

aga, bayke 'elder brother'	ceen "cousin" / bölö 'cousin' / tayake "cousin"		
ece 'elder sister'	ceen	bölö	tayece
karındaş 'little sister' (to the brother)	ceen	bölö	tayece
siñdi 'little sister' (to the elder sister)	ceen	bölö	tayece
ini	ceen	bölö	tayake

Ceen: This term, which exists in all the Turkish languages, is used in the Kyrgyz language for the children of father's own daughters, elder or younger sisters (Direnkova, 1927). In the family as a whole, it is used for the children of all the girls. It is not used for all the cousins as in Turkish spoken in Turkey. Notwithstanding their gender and age, grandsons and granddaughters of girls are also called *ceen*.

This word is seen in old Turkish inscriptions as *jegän, jegän çur* and is still used in the Kyrgyz language as *ceen* 'cousin' and *ceençer / ceençor* 'the child of a girl's grandson / granddaughter' (KRS, 285). The word is thought to stem from *jek* 'foreign' in the old Turkish language. The word *jek* 'foreign' in the old Turkish language is conserved in phrases and idioms as *cek-caat* or *cerge-cek* 'distant / close relative'

and *cek körmek* ‘see as enemy’ in the modern Kyrgyz language (see *caat* ‘close, side’).

The perception of “own” and “other” in kinship terms is also confirmed in Kyrgyz proverbs and sagas. Non-familial kinships in these contexts are always regarded as the “other” and it is strongly stressed that they can never be “own”. In sagas, heroes who have fallen apart from their families eventually happen to find their origins and serve them. This is the indication of social understanding. For example, Manas’s son Semetey, who was adopted by his uncle in his infancy, upon learning that he was from the Kyrgyz origin and his actual father was Manas, immediately decided to leave his uncle’s house and return to Talas, his father land and never went back to the land of Tacik. Phrases in proverbs such as “*Ceen el bolboyt, celke ton bolboyt*” (A nephew never makes a sibling, nuchal skin never makes a fur), *Ceen kelgençe ceti börü kelsin*” (I would rather welcome seven wolves rather than a nephew) are also based upon the fact that *ceen* emphasizes the ‘other’ or the ‘foreign’.

Bölö: This term is one which identifies the children of aunts from different paternal origins in accordance with each other. Contrary to the interpretations that the origin of the word is the verb “to divide”, the word has been exactly adopted by the Kyrgyz language from the Mongol word *bül*, which means “aunt’s children” (MOT:94). Attempts by some researchers to associate the term with the word *bül* ‘family’ in the Mongol language are also incongruous, because these two homonymous words have exactly been borrowed by the Kyrgyz language (see Kyrgyz *bölö* “family”, “member of family” < Mongol *bül* “family”, “member of family” (MOT:93). The word *bölö* “family”,

which is seen only in the Kyrgyz language among all Turkish languages, is the indication of the great influence of the Mongol language, which has a significant role in the formation of Kyrgyz kinship terminology. The term *bölö* is used to identify the children of aunts regardless of their age or gender (Özder, 1981). In like manner, the children of all girls in the family are *bölö* to each other.

2. Marriage-Based Kinship Terms

This group is the most crowded and comprehensive of all kinship terminologies. This is due to the fact that kinship relations in newly-formed families after marriage are elaborately categorized and thus reflected in the language systematically.

In this group, complex “in-family” – “out-family” relationships that embody the “large family” occur to identify new kinships; in other words, new kinship terms such as those between spouses and their fathers and mothers in the nuclear family, those between the parents of the married young couple and those between children and their grandparents are formed.

In the Kyrgyz society, the marriage ban within the family has played a distinctive role in shaping the Kyrgyz kinship terminology based on marriage. The classification of terms has not only marked the boundaries of paternal side kinships, but also properly shaped out-family kinships and named them in certain sets. For instance, kinship paradigms of own relatives, mothers, brides and grooms incorporated from outside the family have systematically been specified in detail.

Kayın: The generalizing element of this group is the word of *kayın*. This term, which has a broad meaning that comprises “kinship by way of marriage”, appears in the formation of all the terms expressing the members of the group (Acıpayamlı, 1978). This paradigm in the Kyrgyz language is quite significant in that all of them are of Turkish origin and fully preserved as a group. In this group, nuclear family terms are preceded by the word *kayın* to make a new kinship term.

Relevant data according to which this term, widely used in almost all the modern Turkish dialects in various forms, has stemmed from the word *kadın* could be seen in old Turkish texts and some north-eastern languages: ET *gazyn*. Hak., Şor *hazyn*, Alt. *qajyn*, Tuv. *Kadyn* / *qatyn*, etc.

Chart 4. Samples for Parent Terms According to Wife and Husband (According to Woman)

kayın ata	“father-in-law”
kayın ene	“mother-in-law”
kayın aga	“elder brother-in-law”
kayın ece	“elder sister-in-law”
kayın siñdi	“younger sister-in-law”
kayın ini/kayni	“younger brother-in-law”
cezde	“brother-in-law (husband of elder sister-in-law)”
küyöö bala	“brother-in-law (husband of little sister-in-law)”

Chart 5. Samples for Parent Terms According to Wife and Husband (For the Man)

kayın ata/kaynata	“father-in-law”
kayın ene/kaynene	“mother-in-law”
kayın aga/kaynaga	“elder brother-in-law”
kayın ece/kaynece	“elder sister-in-law”
kayın ini/kayni	“younger brother-in-law”
baldız	“younger sister-in-law”
Baca	“elder brother-in-law”
Baca	“younger-in-law”

Another distinction in kinship terms based on marriage is seen in the classification of the parents of father and mother according to children in “large families.” The most important criterion here is again the perception of “own” and “other”(Osmonaliyeva,1983). The relatives of a child from the paternal side are classified in the *tuugan* “own family” group, whereas those from the maternal side are categorized in the *tay* “maternal relatives.”

Chart 6. Kinship Terms for Children from Maternal and Paternal Sides

Tuugan

Tay

çon ata ‘grandfather’	tay ata ‘grandfather
çon ene ‘grandmother’	tay ene ‘grandmother’
aga ‘uncle’	tay aga / ake ‘uncle’ (mother’s brother)
ece ‘aunt’	tay ece ‘aunt’ (mother’s sister)
ini ‘uncle’s son’	tay ake ‘uncle’ (mother’s brother)
siñdi ‘uncle’s daughter’	tay ece ‘aunt’ (mother’s sister)
cene ‘aunt’ (uncle’s wife)	tay cene ‘aunt’ (uncle’s wife)
cezde “brother-in-law” (aunt’s husband)	tay cezde “brother-in-law” (aunt’s husband)

Tuugan: The term is used for all the relatives in the family. The root of the word stems from the verb *tuu-<tuv-<tug* “to give birth to”. Those under the category of *tuugan* are the ones who are prohibited to marry each other in the Kyrgyz language. From this general meaning, more elaborate identifications like *cakın tuugan* “close relative”, *alıs tuugan* or *kıyır tuugan* “distant relative” could be derived. The meaning of sibling also comes from this term: *bir tuugan* “born from the same mother”. *Karındaş* and *catındaş* “from the same womb, from the same mother” are synonyms. But the word *karındaş* in the Kyrgyz language later semantically narrowed into “brother’s younger sister”.

Tay: The general meaning of the word is “mother’s relatives” and it is a group name. It is used to identify all the members of mother’s “large family” group. The older version of this term which is no longer used separately in the modern Kyrgyz language has remained only in

some proverbs and idioms. For example, *er tayın tartat* “Gallant man takes after his uncle’s relatives”, *caman tayın taanıbayt* “A bad guy does not recognize his uncle”, etc. The root of the word comes from *tay* 1. “equivalent, equal”; 2. “the load balanced on animal’s back” (KRS, 1965). From this word has derived *taylamak* which means “to equalize, to balance”, *tay-tayla* “the newly-born child’s maintaining his balance”. From this point, it can be concluded that the term *tay* stems from “mother’s family that matches with father’s family”.

3. Phony Kinship Terms

Phony kinship terms linguistically and nationally constitute the most original part in the subject of kinship. For this reason, there is no complete similarity in this group even in closely-associated languages like Kyrgyz and Kazak. Group members are not subject to family-based or marriage-based classifications. They are made up of some special symbols arising totally from the sociological structure of the community and traditional domestic practices of individuals within that society (Nominhanov, Ts. D., 1958). While some of these symbols constitute particular sets which could be transformed into kinship by combining with nuclear family terms, most of them are used separately.

The necessity to classify particular states of people arising from certain events (death, divorce, adoption, friendship, peer group, citizenship, etc.) has paved the way for the formation of these *phony kinship terms acquired later*. They are not plenty in number. In the Kyrgyz language, *ökül atalık* “surrogate parenthood”, *ayaştık* “kinship coming from friendship”, *emçek ene* “nursing mother”, *kindik ene* “real

mother”, *ögöy* “step”, *cetim* “orphan”, *asırandı* “foster child”, *cesir, tul* “widow” are some examples for this group.

Surrogate family. This term is a sociological concept entirely peculiar to the Kyrgyz society. We have previously stated that Kyrgyz people are not allowed to marry one from their own families (Osmonaliyeva, 1983). As a result, marriages are mostly possible by taking brides from distant places. A surrogate family is chosen by the groom for the bride whose mother and father are far away (*ökül* < Ar. deputy, surrogate). These surrogate parents are assigned by groom’s family prior to religious wedding ceremony. This surrogate family has to attend the ceremony. This is a serious ritual to be followed and it can be implemented in the absentia of the surrogate family as well. It brings certain responsibilities both for the real and the surrogate family at the same time. One who solemnizes the marriage is responsible for reminding them about their obligations. After the marriage ceremony, the bride has a symbolic family from whom she can receive any kind of assistance. Whenever she faces problems in the family, this symbolic family is the first authority she should refer to.

Chart 7. Surrogate Parenthood (Surrogate Family) Sample

Ökül ata “bride’s symbolic father”

Ökül ene “bride’s symbolic mother”

Ökül uul “groom for the surrogate family”

Ökül kız “daughter for the surrogate family”

Ökül ece “daughter for the children of the surrogate family”

Ayaş: Wives of friends are *ayaş* to each other. For example, husband's friends to the wife and wife's friends to the husband are called *ayaş* (KRS, 1965). The degree of closeness can also be spread over nuclear family terms as a whole and a sampling system occurs.

Chart 8. The Sample of Ayaştık (Kinship Coming from Friendship)

Ayaş ata "friend's father" or "father's friend"

Ayaş ene "friend's mother" or "mother's friend"

Ayaş ake "friend's brother" or "brother's friend"

Ayaş ece "friend's elder sister" or "elder sister's friend"

Ayaş siñdi "friend's younger sister" or "younger sister's friend"

Ayaş ini "friend's younger brother" or "younger brother's friend"

Conclusion

Kyrgyz kinship terms have arisen from the reflection of several social and cultural traditions in the Kyrgyz society as well as its social rules and values. That the Kyrgyz kinship terms are very well preserved to reflect all old kinship terms in Turkish as full paradigms in detail shows that it has the capacity and value to serve to several related scientific fields in various studies.

It has been established that Kyrgyz kinship terms are generally of Turkish origin. The influence of the Mongol language can plainly be seen in borrowings. That certain Mongol terms are seen only in the

Kyrgyz language is also a significant point: *törkün* “woman’s own relatives”, *bülö* “family”, *abısın*, *acın* “sister-in-law”, etc. Very few Persian terms exist in the Kyrgyz language. Although Russian has a great role in the Kyrgyz vocabulary, it has no effect over kinship terms.

Borrowed words in Kyrgyz kinship terms are very few in number and this indicates the fact that Kyrgyz kinship terms which were formed long ago are still closely followed today and these terms are not affected from other foreign languages except for the Mongolian.

References

- Acıpayamlı, O. (1978).** Halkbilimi Terimleri Sözlüğü. Ankara: TDK Publications
- Balaman, A.R. (1982).** Evlilik, Akrabalık ve Türleri. İzmir: İleri Kitap Publications
- Caferoğlu, A. (1932).** “Kaşgarlı Mahmud’a Göre Akraba Adları”. Türk Dili, XXVII, 253: 23-26.
- Direnkova, N.R. (1927).** “Brak, terminı rodstva i psihologičeskiye zapretı u kirgizov”. Sbornik etnografičeskih materialov etnografičeskogo otdeleniya geogr. fak-ta LGU. № 2, Leningrad.
- Ismailov, I. (1966).** Türkiy tillarda kavm-karindoshlik terminlari. Taşkent.
- Mongol oros tol. (1957).** Moskva: Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo inostrannih i natsionalnih slovarey.- (MOT).

- Nominhanov, Ts. D. (1958).** Terminı rodstva v tyurko-mongol'skih yazıkah. Voprosı istorii i dialektologii kazahskogo yazıka. Alma-Ata.
- Osmonaliyeva, B. (1983).** Ob etimologii nekotorıh slov kirgizskogo yazıka, svyazannıh s rodstvom. Tyurkologicheskiye issledovaniya, Frunze.
- Ozankaya, Ö. (1975).** Toplumbilimler Sözlüğü. Ankara: TDK Publications.
- Özder, M.A.(1981).** Türk Halk Biliminde Düğün-Evlilik-Akbalık Terimleri Sözlüğü, Ankara.
- Yong-Song Li. (1999).** Türk Dillerinde Akrabalık Adları. İstanbul.
- Yudahin, K.K.(1965), Kirgizsko-russkiy slovar. Moskva: İzd-vo Sovetskoy Entsiklopedii.- (KRS).

Received 22 Sep 2014, Screened 10 Oct 2014, Accepted 6 Nov 2014

