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A Comparative Study of Taboo Expressions Related to Residence in Korean and Mongolian

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Abstract: This article examines and compares taboo expressions (taboo words, idiomatic expressions, and taboo proverbs) related to residential living in Korean and Mongolian. To do so, the article classifies and compares the types of words and expressions that appear in taboo expressions related to residence in the use of language and linguistic habits of Korean and Mongolian societies. The study then investigates types of taboo proverbs related to residence that are inherent in the languages of the two countries and their aspects of realization.

Keywords: residence; toilets; movings; women; braziers; roofs

1 Introduction

Taboo expressions related to living space in Korea and Mongolia contain life experiences which have been acquired over a long time in a given natural environment as

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well as wisdom that enables one to overcome hardship.¹ Furthermore, taboo expressions in Korean and Mongolian societies have been positioned as very important behavioral and moral standards, to the extent that auspicious signs and a feeling of foreboding are acknowledged in everyday life, in both actions and words. Thus, expression, style, or the symbolic system of taboo expressions related to living space in Korea and Mongolia, which are broadly classified into sedentary and nomadic culture, appear in various ways due to differences in customary law, gender, religion, and politics in the applicable nation.

Taboo expressions related to residential area in the two languages are clearly shaped by cultural or religious differences between Korea and Mongolia, as shown by language patterns that reflect these distinct standards. In other words, a language phenomenon based on sedentary culture as well as Confucian and Taoist ideologies appears in Korea, while a language phenomenon based on nomadic culture in addition to shamanism and Buddhist ideology often appears in Mongolia.² Similar to analogy in sociolinguistics, this language phenomenon illustrates principles and processes of formation that play a crucial role in the formation of ethnic and indigenous etymological systems. The target of this research is limited to language material recorded in South Korea, excluding North Korea in the examination of Korean, and language material recorded in Outer Mongolia, excluding Inner Mongolia for examining Mongolian. Additionally, the research will focus on five subjects – toilets, movings, women, braziers, and roofs – which are considered relatively important among various taboo words or idiomatic expressions related to residence.

1 A taboo word is a term or expression that is prohibited or socially discouraged because it violates cultural, moral, or social norms. These words often relate to sensitive subjects such as religion, sex, death, bodily functions, or other culturally significant issues. Taboo words are avoided in polite or formal communication and may be replaced by euphemisms to maintain social propriety. **2.** Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language* (2006): This foundational text examines taboo language across cultures, discussing why certain topics (e.g., sex, death, bodily functions) are considered taboo. The book explores how taboo words arise, are maintained, and how they influence linguistic behaviors like euphemism and dysphemism.

2 Materials on taboo words related to living space in Korea and Mongolia include: Duhyun Lee et al., *Establishment of Korean Folklore* (Ilchokak, 2004) for Korean; for Mongolian, Т. Намжил, *Монгол гэр бүлийн ёсуламжлал*, УБ: Улаанбаатар дээд сургууль [Т. Namz'il, *Family's politeness and tradition of Mongol*] (Ulaanbaatar Collage. 2005) and Нямбуу, Х, Нацагдорж, Ц. *Монголчуудын цээрлэх ёсны хураангуй толь*, УБ: Ардын цэргийн хэвлэл [Н. Nyambuу and C. Nacagdorz, *The Taboo Concise Dictionary of Mongolia Race*] [Ardin cerгийн hevlel. 1993]; Anna Lee, *Life and Customs of Mongolians* (Cheotnunaе, 2005); A. Oberfalzerová, *Metaphors and Nomads* (Charles University Philosophical Faculty, Institute of South and Central Asian Studies and Triton, 2006).

2 Comparing the Concepts of Taboo Language in Korea and Mongolia

Although taboo expressions and euphemistic expressions in Korean and Mongolian have a close relationship in terms of function and meaning, it is necessary to clearly distinguish the two concepts.³ Generally, euphemistic language in Korean and Mongolian has three functions: avoidance, courtesy, and camouflage. Of these, avoidance is particularly linked to taboos, such as those surrounding death. Therefore, while euphemistic language often arises in response to taboo subjects, it does not replace taboo language.

With regard to concepts of taboo language, terms like “taboo word” and “taboo proverb” are used in Korean. Linguistically, taboo language is described as folk language, while taboo proverbs are described as idiomatic phrases directing taboo targets and actions. For example, the word “die” is considered taboo in Korean. A traditional proverb, “When one opens a crock after seeing a dead body, the taste of soy sauce changes,” reflects this taboo, as it indirectly refers to death.⁴ On the contrary, the Mongolian language does not distinguish between taboo words and idiomatic expressions. Both are considered as taboo, which marks a noticeable difference from the Korean language.

As taboo words reflect the society in which they are used, taboo language related to life in Korea and Mongolia, the subject of this research, has differentiating characteristics reflecting sedentary culture (Korea) and nomadic culture (Mongolia), while, at the same time, representing the specific period or region’s social characteristics. By focusing on such factors contained in taboo words, this study aims to reveal aspects of the belief systems and daily lives of Koreans and Mongolians. It will do so by analyzing the linguistic characteristics of taboo words in both languages, as well as various styles of expression in their surface and deeper meanings, also referred to as sociocultural meanings.

3 Toilet

Toilet, a taboo word in both Mongolian and Korean, has many euphemistic words and taboo expressions. In Korean, for example, *byeonso* (便所, toilet) is expressed

³ A euphemism is a polite, mild, or indirect word or phrase used to replace a term considered harsh, offensive, or unpleasant. Euphemisms are often employed to navigate culturally sensitive topics or to soften the impact of communication.

⁴ Jaeki Shim, “Semantic Analysis on Korean taboo,” *Journal of Korean linguistics* 2 (1970).

euphemistically as cheuk (廁, room in the back), cheukcheong (廁圍, room in the back), cheukgan (廁間, room in the back), cheuksil (側室, backroom), honcheuk (溷廁, dirty place), tongsi (東屎, space to have a bowel movement) dongsa (東司, space to have a bowel movement), seogak (西閣, building on the west), geubhande (space to do needs in a hurry), jakeunjib (small house, space to urinate), bujeonghande (in denial, dirty place), dwitgan (restroom, room in the back), jeongbang (淨房, clean room), hoechijang (灰治粧, space built for excretion), jeongrang (淨廊, clean place, world of Buddha), cheongrang (圍廊, clean place), haeusil (解憂室, room to be worry-free),⁵ buksugan (北水間, place to wash the genital area or anus), mehwagan (梅花間, room where there are plum blossoms), and hwajangsil (化粧室, space for toilet use). In contrast to Korean, it used to be referred to as “to go and see one’s horse” (*mori harah*), “to fix one’s body” (*biye zasah*), and “toilet” (*z’orlon*) in Mongolian. The number of its expressions in Mongolian is very low, and the reason why the Korean language has more taboo words related to “byeonso (toilet)” is because the toilet is considered as shared communal space in Mongolia, while in Korea it is considered as a part of the living space, like the kitchen or living room.

In the past, in Korea, the *dwitgan* (뒷간, toilet) was placed as far as possible from the main building of the house or *sarangchae*. According to the ruins found in Iksan Wanggung-ri of Korea in 1989, noblemen in Baekje – one of the ancient Korean kingdoms – used a public toilet, which was East Asia’s first flush toilet. Dating back to the third or early fourth century, it was installed outside a fence. Also found in the ruins was a portable tiger-shaped urinal and a bedpan⁶ in Gunsu-ri, Buyeo-gun, Chungnam in Korea.

The lavatory of an outhouse was also located outside, beyond the gate. This often led to the fear of going outside to the *dwitgan* late at night, which intensified with the idea of the *dwitgansin* (뒷간神, deity residing in a lavatory). The *dwitgansin* is the deity of one’s family which is directly connected to shamanism (家神, deity of one’s family).⁷ Regarding religious beliefs, it was called *byeonsogaksi* (便所, newly married

⁵ “Place to relieve anxiety” is used for *byeonso* in the Buddhist temple in Korea. It is the same Chinese cultural word while it is also an euphemistic word used elsewhere, outside of such temples in Korean and Japan.

⁶ A bedpan was called Ho-ja, and the reason it was shaped like tiger’s mouth is due to a Chinese legend that Taoists urinated in a tiger’s mouth.

⁷ The Korean deity of one family guards the family’s home and determines their fortune. There are *seongjusin* (deity that governs the house), *jowangsin* (竈王神, deity in charge of the kitchen), *teojusin* (the god of the earth), *munsin* (門神, deity that prevents one from having misfortunes by guarding the door), *josangsin* (祖上神, deity that protects descendants), *samsin* (三神, deity that looks after the mother and her newborn baby (産兒)), *eobsin* (財運, deity that controls the family’s fortune), and *cheuksin* (廁神, female deity guarding the lavatory).

woman, female deity residing at the toilet), *chikganjosin* (廁間司命, deity guarding the toilet), *jeongnanggaksi* (淨廊, newly married woman, female deity residing at a clean space), *chiksibuin* (側屎夫人, married female deity residing at a space to move the bowels), and *chikdobuin* (廁度夫人, married woman in charge of a custom regarding the toilet). Two suffixes that appear in words for the deities of the lavatory, *-gaksi* (각시, woman who has not married yet) and *-buin* (婦人, married woman) reveal the idea of a “young woman who has not married yet” or a “married woman who is sensitive and changeable and enjoys going to toilet” in Korea, both of which were considered something one should be cautious of.⁸ Table 1 below displays taboo expressions related to toilet use in the Korean and Mongolian languages.

As shown in the taboo expressions above, actions such as moving or fixing a lavatory, scratching one’s head, *ggaggeuragi* (까그라기, rough beard on a grain of rice and barley) on a hand, falling into a lavatory, and making and eating rice cakes are all closely related to worship of *cheuksin* (廁神, deity guarding the toilet), which is one of *gasin* (家神, deity of one’s family) in Korea. Because one feared a female deity governing the custom of the toilet, the action of speaking or acting thoughtlessly in the toilet was prohibited. On the other hand, in Mongolia, when one saw a night sky, especially Polaris, moving the bowels was prohibited. Indeed, for generations Mongolians had considered the night sky a sacred area where the sky god lived and thus believed that when one violated this space or any of its associated customs, one aroused the anger of the sky god and would receive immediate punishment or misfortune.

The Korean taboo expression, “Moving a lavatory is bad,” a tradition of worshipping *cheukgansin* (廁間神, deity guarding the toilet), which is one of various *gasin* (家神, deity of one’s family), can be explored from a deep tradition of agriculture. In Mongolia, as seen with the taboo expression, “If you see Polaris, you are prohibited from moving the bowels,” the lavatory was considered part of the sacred universe. This can be traced to shamanistic beliefs which revered the sky as the highest object of worship and honored the Earth god Hanagi, who was respected as the matrix of life.⁹

⁸ Duhyun Lee et al., *Establishment of Korean Folklore* (Ilchokak, 2004), 220.

⁹ Hangai represents the mother, the female principle, that is, Nature, both living and non-living: the earth, water, mountains, forests, animals, and other creatures (A. Oberfalzerová, *Metaphors and Nomads* [Charles University Philosophical Faculty, Institute of South and Central Asian Studies, and TRITON, 2006], 29).

Table 1: Taboo expressions related to toilet use.

Language Classification	Korean	Mongolian
Taboo word	<i>byeonso</i> (便所, toilet), <i>cheuk</i> (廁, room in the back), <i>cheukcheong</i> (廁圍, room in the back), <i>cheukgan</i> (廁間, room in the back), <i>cheuksil</i> (側室, backroom), <i>honcheuk</i> (溷廁, dirty place), <i>tongsi</i> (東屎, space to have a bowel movement), <i>dongsa</i> (東司, space to have a bowel movement), <i>seogak</i> (西閣, building in the west), <i>geubhande</i> (급한데, space to do needs in a hurry), <i>jakeunjib</i> (작은 집, small house, space to urinate), <i>bujeonghande</i> (부정 한데, in denial, dirty place), <i>dwitgan</i> (뒷간, restroom, room in the back), <i>jeongbang</i> (淨房, clean room), <i>hoechijang</i> (灰治粧, space built for excretion), <i>jeongrang</i> (淨廊, clean place), <i>cheongrang</i> (團廊, clean place), <i>haeusil</i> (解憂室, room to be worry-free), <i>buksugan</i> (北水間, place to wash the genital area or anus), <i>mehwagan</i> (梅花間, room where there are plum blossoms), <i>hwajangsil</i> (化粧室, space for toilet use)	<i>z'orlon</i> (toilet)
Idiomatic expression	<i>Mal bogi</i> (to go and see one's horse), <i>dwireul boda</i> (look back)	<i>mori harah</i> (to go and see one's horse), <i>biye zasah</i> (to fix one's body)
Taboo proverb	– <i>byeonsoese beon bbajimyeon geu sar-ami jukneunda</i> (if you fall into urine three times, you will die) – <i>byeonsoeseo meori geulgeumyeon sone ggasiraengi saengginda</i> (if you scratch your head in a toilet, you will break your hand) – <i>dwitganeul omgimeon nabbeuda</i> (moving a lavatory is bad) – <i>byeonsoreul ddeuteo gochimyeon jiban manghanda</i> (if you renovate a toilet, your family will go broke) – <i>byeonso aneda bireul dumyeon bame gwisineuro byeonhanda</i> (if you put a broom in the toilet, it will become a ghost at night) – <i>jeongcho bomnale namui jib byeonsoe gaseo daesobyeoneul bomyeon geu jibe uhwani ddeonaji anneunda</i> (if you	– <i>aillin gadaa oc'ood gert oroohoos o'mno' biyee ho'ngo'lo'hiig ceerlene</i> (you are prohibited to urinate outside before you enter the house you are visiting)^a – <i>altan gadas odnii zu'g harz' mori har-ahiig ceerlene</i> (if you see Polaris, you are prohibited from moving the bowels)^b

Table 1: (continued)

Language Classification	Korean	Mongolian
		relieve yourself in someone else's house early in January, the house will constantly suffer from misfortunes)
	– <i>byeonsoneun umulgwa meoli ddeoleo- jyeo itneun geoti jota</i> (it is better if a lavatory is far away from a well)	
	– <i>byeosoe bbajimyeon ddeok hae meo- kneunda</i> (if you fall into a lavatory, you have to eat a rice cake)	

^aХ. Нямбуу, Нацагдорж, Ц. *Монголчуудын цээрлэх ёсны хураангуй толь*, УБ: Ардын цэргийн хэвлэл [*The Taboo Concise Dictionary of Mongolia Race*] (Ardin cergiin hevlel, 1993), 5. ^бХ. Нямбуу and Нацагдорж, Ц. *Монголчуудын цээрлэх ёсны хураангуй толь*, УБ: Ардын цэргийн хэвлэл [Н. Nyambuу and С. Nacagdorз, *The Taboo Concise Dictionary of Mongolia Race*] (Ardin cergiin hevlel, 1993).

4 Moving

Isa (移徙, moving), *iju* (移住, moving a living place), *ijeon* (移轉, leaving), and *jeonchul* (轉出, leaving to move to another place) in the Korean language,¹⁰ and *nu'uh*, *s'ilz'ih*, and *otorloh* in the Mongolian language, which represent relocating the living space, are remnants of representative words that reflect the indigenous agriculture and nomadic cultures of Korea and Mongolia.

While *isa*, *iju*, *ijeon*, and *jeonchul* in Korean mean moving residence, *nu'uh*, *s'ilz'ih*, and *otorloh* in Mongolian mean searching for good pastures as part of the nomadic culture. This illustrates a clear cultural difference and the core principles and processes in the formation of linguistic expressions.

Korea and Mongolia share both commonalities and differences regarding customs surrounding movement. In the past, in Korea, when one travelled a long distance, they feared the *son* (a ghost interfering with one's work by following them and changing direction according to specific days). To avoid misfortune, one selected a lucky day (吉日, good day) when the *son* was believed to be inactive.

As an abbreviated form of a guest, the *son* was also called *dusin* (痘神, a ghost thought to call from door to door and cause people to suffer from smallpox). This figure was known by many names, including *gangnambyeolseong* (江南別星, a ghost calling from door to door and causing smallpox), *byeolseong* (別星, a ghost causing

¹⁰ I(parting) + sa(house), i(parting) + ju(residence), i(parting) + jeon(moving), and jeon(moving) + chul(leaving).

smallpox), *mama* (a term for contagious smallpox), *yeoksin* (疫神, a ghost that spread infectious disease), *hogubyeolseong* (戶口別星, a ghost calling from door to door and causing smallpox), *hogwi* (戶鬼, a ghost calling from door to door), and *hogwibyeolseong* (戶鬼別星, a ghost calling from door to door and causing smallpox).¹¹ It is believed that these female ghosts were active at different times and in different directions: in the east on the second day of the month; in the south on the third and fourth days; in the west on the fifth and sixth days; and in the north on the seventh and eighth days. The *son* was thought to not be present on the ninth, tenth, nineteenth, twentieth, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth days of the month, as it ascended to the sky.

In Mongolian, various words correspond to the Korean *son* (손, devil): *c'o'tgor* (devil), *zetger* (devil), *s'ulmas* (witch), *ad* (devil), and *satan* (ghost). Like the Korean *dusin* (두신, devil), the *c'o'tgor* of Mongolia was also a ghost that called from door to door, bringing illness or death to children. Oberfalzerová, a Czech scholar of Mongolian studies, explains the characteristics of such a devilish figure in his book *Metaphors and Nomads*:

Hu'uhed ho'lsoh (fig., a bewitched child). This metaphor is used in situations when a child, a very little child, a baby, and so on starts to cry terribly and does not stop when the ger is visited by some person, then they say; "That comes from a demon!", hu'uhed orooh (lit., to wrap a child; fig., a child is under the influence of some negative force) – c'otgor, a child suffers from by many diseases.¹²

On the other hand, there is the Mongolian expression, "Asriin gurvan guravt" (three days of ominous foreboding, which are not godsent),¹³ which originated from Tibetan and corresponded to the Korean concept of "days without [the] *son*." This taboo expression naturally integrated into the nomadic culture of Mongolians after the introduction of Buddhism to the Mongolian plateau. At present, the fifth, fourteenth, and twenty-third day of every month are considered the "three days of ominous foreboding," on which movement is forbidden.¹⁴ Regarding this taboo expression which originated from Tibetan custom, Oberfalzerová explains the influence of Tibetan Buddhism on the lives of Mongolians as follows: "From the sixteenth century, Lamaism became the predominant religion (and in Mongolia it is truly a religion),

11 Kim, Byungmo et al., *Korean Folk Dictionary* (Korean Dictionary Research Publishing, 1994), 874.

12 A. Oberfalzerová, *Metaphors and Nomads* (Charles University Philosophical Faculty, Institute of South and Central Asian Studies, and Triton, 2006), 85–86.

13 Asar in Mongolian which descended from a-suri Sanskrit and lha-ma-yin in Tibetan means "not godsent," in other words, "foreboding."

14 Ч. Арьяасүрэн, *Монгол ёс заншилийн их тайлбар толь* (Урлах эрдэм, 2000), 312–16.

which absorbed the system of good and bad omens in an almost unchanged form. This became a kind of purifying institution, whose chief task (mainly that of the lamas) is to remove the consequences of wrong deeds, to neutralize evil, and to purify a person of it (Table 2–4).¹⁵

The common ground among taboo expressions related to moving in Korean and Mongolian lies in the influence of Tibetan Buddhism. The Korean concept of “day without the *son*” and “*Asriin gurvan guravt*” (foreboding three days) in Mongolian reflect such influence. The belief in *saengsahwabok* (生死禍福, living, dying, and being subject to misfortune and fortune) can be seen as an idiomatic expression rooted in the faith of a heaven-sent sky god (天神).

However, there is a distinct difference in the customs of moving in Korea and Mongolia. Whereas it was considered proper to make a hole in a door, leave doors open, or make a mess during a move in Korea, it was encouraged to clean the site whenever possible in Mongolia. This was because Mongolians nomads anticipated returning to the same location when the season changed, and thus they sometimes marked their sites with stone heaps.

5 Woman

Taboo expressions related to domestic life in Korea and Mongolia appear in connection to household management: *buin*, the person responsible for house-keeping (婦人, married woman), *jibsaram*,¹⁶ the wife (妻, a woman who became a partner of a man through marriage), and *gerhu'n* (a woman who managed the home).

The representative Mongolian word *gerhu'n* is a compound of *ger* (house) and *hu'n* (person). *Gergii*, *hatagtai*, *avgai*, *ehner*, and *bu'sgu'i*,¹⁷ which all mean *buin* or “wife,” have a form similar to *gerhu'n*. In Korean, *jibsaram* means *ansaram* (wife of the household), *naeja* (內者, woman of the household), *gyejib* (female, woman), *buin* (婦人, one's wife), *anae* (wife, woman who became one's partner through marriage), *anjuin* (female head of the household), *manura* (elderly wife), and *jieom* (one's own

15 A. Oberfalzerová, *Metaphors and Nomads* (Charles University Philosophical Faculty, Institute of South and Central Asian Studies, and Triton, 2006), 29.

16 Here, *jib* means *anae* (woman who became one's partner through marriage). The house is seen as the origin of newborns in the primitive clan society.

17 *Ger*(house) + *gii*(woman who manages housework), *hata*(queen) + *gtai*(patriarch), *av*(father) + *gai*(woman who manages housework), *eh*(mother) + *ner*(sun), *bu's*(belt) + *gu'i*(none).

Table 2: Taboo expressions related to moving.

Language Classification	Korean	Mongolian
Taboo word	<i>isa</i> (移徙, moving), <i>iju</i> (移住, leaving), <i>jeon</i> (移轉, moving a living place), <i>jeonchul</i> (轉出, leaving to move to another place)	<i>nu'uh</i> (moving), <i>s'ilz'ih</i> (changing a pasture), <i>otorloh</i> (searching for a pasture)
Idiomatic expression	<i>jibeul biuda</i> (집을 비우다, moving)	None
Taboo proverb	– <i>isa gal ddae jimseungeul ssaerigo gamyeon bulgilhada</i> (it is ominous if you hit animals to make them move while you are moving) – <i>ddangeul pamyeon eomeoniga dolaga-sinda</i> (your mother will die if you dig the ground) – <i>jib jitgo got sanggae gaji anneunda</i> (you should not go to a funeral right after you build a house) – <i>isa gal ddaeneun mungumeongeul jijjeo notko gageona bangmuneul yeoleo notko ganda</i> (you should make a hole in a door or keep doors open when you move to a different place) – <i>isa gan cheot naleneun bukjoke meorireul notko janda</i> (on the first day of your move, you have to sleep with your head facing north) – <i>isa gal ddae bulgwa sogeumeul meonjeo gajyeogamyeon jota</i> (you should bring fire and salt when you move) – <i>isa gal ddae buli ggeojimyeon jibani andoenda</i> (a family will not flourish if their fire is extinguished when they move) – <i>jibeul jitgi jeone gosareul jinaenda</i> (you must offer a sacrifice before you build a house) – <i>nopeun gote jibteoreul jabeumyeon jiban sikguga modu geonganghada</i> (family members will be healthy if the house is located on a high site) – <i>dareun jibeuru isa gal ddae jeone sal-deon jibui mumpungjineun da jjitneunda</i>	– <i>geree nu'ulgehdee s'on bolon gadas zooson gazraa bo'gloz' cacal o'rgos-nii daraa nu;une</i> (when you move your <i>ger</i>, you must fill up the holes made by the stakes and scatter food)^a – <i>geriin zu'un talaas baruun tal ruu bucaz' yavaarai</i> (you should not drive a stake into the site of a <i>ger</i> if possible)^b – <i>geriin buiran deer ali bolohoor gadas zoodoggu'i</i> (you should not build a house on the site of other <i>ger</i>) – <i>gazriin ilc' hu'c'tei gazar luu c'iglu'u-len geree baridaggu'i</i> (you should not build a house in the direction of land with strong energy) – <i>nu'uz' baigaa ail bu'h ac'aagaa ac'sanii daraa geriin buuria zaaval ceverleh yostoi</i> (when you move, you must clean the site of your <i>ger</i> after you have packed up and loaded) – <i>gahai o'dor nu'uhiig ceerlene</i> (you should not move on pig day)^c

Table 2: (continued)

Language Classification	Korean	Mongolian
	(you must tear out the paper weather strips of your previous home before you move to another house)	

^aЧ. Арьяасүрэн, *Монгол ёс заншилийн их тайлбар толь* (Урлах эрдэм, 2000), 312–16. ^bThis angers the mother goddess, *etu'gen*. ^cХ. Нямбуу and Нацагдорж, Ц. *Монголчуудын цээрлэх ёсны хураангуй толь* (Ардын цэргийн хэвлэл, 1993) (H. Nyambuu and C. Nacagdorj, *The Taboo Concise Dictionary of Mongolia Race* [Ardin cergiin hevlel, 1993]), 19.

wife).¹⁸ Like “jib + saram,” these words show similar modes of formation to those in Mongolian.¹⁹

The language phenomenon which appears in these woman-centered names and taboo words shows that the Korean and Mongolian societies share a conceptual structure based on ancient matriarchal social systems.

As shown above, when taboo words related to women in Korean and Mongolian and terms for heads of households are analyzed from an etymological perspective, it is seen that they all reflect transitional processes in the evolution of the family system in human society. In Korean, *manura* was originally an honorific title (for *buin*) to refer to one's master or a person of high status, such as a king or queen: “man” of *manura* is derived from a word meaning “head,” while *ura* originates from *orae*,²⁰ meaning “door” (門) or “one's family” (家門). The term *manura* refers to a woman of high status, reflecting a matriarchal society.

In Mongolian, *avgai* (wife), which is the equivalent of *buin*, combines *av* (father) and *gai* (woman who manages housework). Some Mongolians condescendingly interpret this name to mean “She becomes a lifetime burden after marriage.” This reflects how both *manura* in Korean and *avgai* in Mongolian were originally honorific names but were later reduced to terms which degraded the wife.

Sexual and hierarchical division in Korean and Mongolian households reflected the culture of the time and its thinking. In traditional Korean homes, men occupied

¹⁸ For jieomi in Korean, “ji” is changed from “jit” which is an older version of Korean for house. Although *jieomi* originally meant the mother of a house, today it is used to refer to the wife condescendingly (An, Okkyu, and Jeonghwan Oh, *Etymology Dictionary* [Northeast Joseon ethnic education publishing, 1989], 300).

¹⁹ An(household) + saram(person), nae(household) + ja(person), gye(marriage) + jib(house), bu(my)+in(person) an(household) + ae(woman), an(household) + juin(owner), man(our) + ura(person), ji(house) + eomi(mother).

²⁰ An, and Jeonghwan, *Etymology Dictionary* (Northeast Joseon ethnic education publishing, 1989), 190.

Table 3: Taboo expressions related to woman.

Language Classification	Korean language	Mongolian language
Taboo word	<i>jibsaram</i> (집사람, wife of household), <i>ansaram</i> (안사람, wife of household), <i>naeja</i> (內者 wife of household), <i>gyejib</i> (계집, female, woman), <i>buin</i> (婦人, wife), <i>anae</i> (아내, wife, woman who became one's partner through marriage), <i>anjuin</i> (안主人, female head of the household), <i>manura</i> (마누라, elderly wife), <i>jeomi</i> (지어미, own wife), <i>cheo</i> (妻, woman who became a partner of a man through marriage)	<i>gergii</i> (wife) <i>hatagtai</i> (wife) <i>avgai</i> (wife) <i>ehner</i> (wife) <i>gerhu'n</i> (wife, wife of the household) <i>bu'sgu'i</i> (wife, women)
Idiomatic expression	<i>nae yeoja</i> (내 여자, my female) <i>nae saram</i> (내 사람, my person)	<i>maani er</i> (my person)
Taboo proverb	– <i>maewol chodatsaenal yeojaga chulibhameyeon gachuki andoenda</i> (a woman should not go outside on the fifth day of the month) – <i>achimputeo jibaneseo yeojauilumsorina keun useum soriga nameyeon jaesu eobda</i> (the sound of a woman's crying or laughing brings bad luck) – <i>chunyeo mitaeseo yeojaga ulmyeon bulgilhada</i> (if a woman cries under the angled rafter, it is ominous) – <i>yeojaga yongmarureul taneomeumyeon bulgilhada</i> (if a woman crosses a ridge tile, it is an ominous sign)	– <i>huuc'in toonii neelhevc'nii hu'reeg gald s'ataadaggu'i ba emegtei hu'n gar hu'rehiig horiglodog</i> (old pieces of the skylight should not be burned off and a woman is prohibited to touch them) – <i>toono bosgoz' barihdaa tuhain ailiin geriin ezen yum uu hu'u ni bis' bol o'rgoz' baridaggu'i</i> (people other than the head of the household or sons should not lift the skylight) – <i>emegteic'u'ud u'see zadgai taviz' ger dotor bolon geriin gadaa yavdaggu'i</i> (a woman should not move inside or outside the house with her hair untied. This is a sign of being or becoming a widow)

the southern and eastern parts, while women occupied the northern and the western parts, representing a balance of *yin* and *yang*. In contrast, in a traditional Mongolian *ger*, men occupied the western part and women the eastern parts.

Table 4: Taboo expressions related to the roof.

Language Classification	Korean	Mongolian
Taboo word	<i>jibung</i> (지붕, roof) <i>okgae</i> (屋蓋, roof) <i>cheonjang</i> (天障, skylight) <i>cheonjong</i> (天井, skylight)	<i>toono</i> (skylight or opening for ventilation) <i>gegeevc</i> (skylight or opening for ventilation) <i>deever</i> (top of the <i>ger</i>)
Idiomatic expression	None	None
Taboo proverb	– <i>jibung wie bballe neolmyeon haerobda. Sarami jukeasseul ddaena haneun geosida</i> (it is harmful to dry laundry on the roof. You are only supposed to do this when someone has died) – <i>ggume jibunge ollagameon bulgilhada</i> (it is ominous if you climb onto the roof in a dream) – <i>chunyeo mitaeseo yeojaga ulmyeon bulgilhada</i> (it is ominous if a woman cries under the angle rafter) – <i>yeojaga yongmarureul taneomeumyeon bulgilhada</i> (it is ominous if a woman climbs onto the ridge of the roof) – <i>saesaeksiga sijib gaseo got cheonjan-geul chyeoda bomyeon bulgilhada</i> (it is ominous if a new bride looks at the ceiling) – <i>jibunge homina naseuro jagukeul naemyeon gananhaejinda</i> (you become poor if you make a scar on the roof with a hoe or a sickle) – <i>gaega jibung wie ollagameon jaesu eobda</i> (it is bad luck for a dog to climb onto the roof) – <i>daki jibung wie ollagameon bi onda</i> (it will rain if a chicken climbs onto the roof) – <i>iga bbajimeon jibunge, sontobeun byeonsoe beorinda</i> (you should throw your teeth over the roof and throw your nails in the toilet)	– <i>toono deer suuhiig ceerlene</i> (you should not sit on the skylight) – <i>toonoor damz'iz' doos' buuhiig ceerlene</i> (you should refrain from lifting the skylight and going down through it)^a – <i>huuc'in toonii hu'reeg gald s'ataa-daggu'i bo'go'od emegtei hu'n gar hu'rehiig ceerlene</i> (you should not burn off old skylight frames, and women are prohibited from touching them) – <i>geriin deeverees dusalz' bui boroonii dusliig garaaraa tosc' avdaggu'i. Tegvel u'yer usnii gams'ig tohioldono gez' boddog</i> (you should not touch water from the eaves of the <i>ger</i> with your hands. This will bring a flood). – <i>geriin tooniig o'rho'or bu'teesen baival ter aild ordoggu'i</i> (you should not enter a house if the skylight of the <i>ger</i> is covered) – <i>toono bosgoz' barihdaa tuhain ailiin geriin ezen yum uu hu'u ni bis' bol o'rgo'z' barihiig ceerlene</i> (people other than the head of the household or sons should not lift the skylight)

^aSince ancient times, Mongolians have regarded an opening for ventilation as a medium of communication between the great universe, comprising the blue sky, and human beings. They revered skylights to the extent that when a shaman, who interacted with the gods of heaven and controlled wind and rain, died, they would bury the body with the skylight covering or surrounding the body.

6 Brazier

In Mongolia, the youngest son traditionally inherited the household finances and became its custodian. The term *otgon*, which means the youngest, originated from the Turkic language and means “king of fire” or “owner of fire.”²¹ The meaning of *gal golomt* (brazier), which has been used since ancient times, has two meanings: *gal* and *golomt*. *Gal* refers to the ancestral fire of the *ger*; in other words, the “fire of the brazier.” *Golomt* refers a tree or pillar in the center of a location. As fire was located in the location of a *golomt*, *gal golomt* encompasses the following meanings: a bondstone for creating fire, its ashes, a tree containing sparks, and the aforementioned pillar. *Gal golomt* is considered the most precious place in the Mongolian home. If the home were a country, *gal golomt* would be its capital.²²

In Korea, *hwaro* (火爐, fire pot), *hwadeok* (火, brazier), and *gama* (가마, kiln) were objects that were used for heating or cooking, typically in the kitchen where the *jowangsins* (조왕神, kitchen god) resided, the second most revered deity after *seongjunsin* (聖主神, the household god). Along with ashery, where ashes were used as manure, *hwaro*, *hwadeo*, and *gama* were highly valued in Korea’s agricultural society and as such were (symbolically) placed in the center of the kitchen.

The Korean god of fire, who is also the brazier deity, is *hwadeokjingun* (火德眞君, god who rules fire), who oversees fire in the shamanistic myth;²³ it corresponds to the god of fire (*galiin burhan*) in Mongolia. A total of 78 gods exist in Korean shamanistic mythology. Of these, four play major roles alongside *cheonjiwang* (天地王, god of the sky and land), the Great Jade Emperor: *beongaejanggun* (번개將軍, god of thunder and lightning), *byeorakjanggun* (벼락將軍, god who controls fire), *hwadeokjingun* (火德眞君, god who rules fire), and *pungudosa* (風雨道師, god of wind and rain).

The gods of Korean mythology were heavily influenced by Taoism and Buddhism. In particular, most gods of the sky, including the Great Jade Emperor, were influenced by Taoism because of the freedom of religion which was part of Chinggis Khaan’s thirteenth-century policy. The term *burhan* (Buddha) in *galiin Burhan* reveals the Buddhist influence in Mongolian culture, indicating the god’s role in protecting the household.

²¹ Anna Lee, *Life and Customs of Mongolians* (Cheotnnunae, 2005, 224).

²² T. Namz’il, *Family’s politeness and tradition of Mongol* (Ulaanbaatar Collage, 2005), 36–37.

²³ In the epic shaman song of Jeju Island in Korea, *munsin* (門神, deity preventing one from misfortune by guarding the door) is presented as the husband and *jowangsins* (deity of the kitchen) is presented as the wife.

Fire, ashes, and embers are viewed as important in both Korean and Mongolian domestic life. Funeral rites in both cultures have individuals lighting fire and passing through it to purify their spirit when returning from a burial.

The brazier in both Korean and Mongolian domestic life is treated as a sacred object and protected from misfortune. Not only the fire of a brazier but also skylights and thresholds are seen as sacred, symbolically linked to the sky, and treated with care.

7 Roof

The Korean words *jibung* (지붕, roof), *okgae* (屋蓋, roof), *cheonjang* (天障, skylight), and *cheonjong* (天井, skylight)²⁴ mean the top of a house. In Mongolian, the equivalent words *toono*, *gegeevc*, and *deever*²⁵ are rich in symbolism and shamanistic tradition, presenting the sky as the highest point of reverence.

From ancient times, Koreans, who also held a tradition of viewing the sky as the highest point of reverence, called the roof *jibung* (지붕) or *okgae* (屋蓋), representing its position as the highest point of the home. They also used the terms *cheonjang* (天障) and *cheonjong* (天井), both meaning skylight, to metaphorically refer to the roof as the palace of the emperor (天皇), as seen from within a room.

Toono in Mongolian corresponds to *jibung* in Korean, with both referring to a skylight or an opening for ventilation. When Mongolians built a new *ger*, they first installed a skylight (*toono*) at the top of the *ger* while reading celebratory poetry. This tradition connects to the historical development of Mongolian houses. In ancient times, Mongolians lived in huts dug into the grounds with roofs of mud. These dwellings did not have a door, with skylights (*toono*) used as a point of entrance and exit instead. Soon, an *o'rh* (a cover for the skylight) was added to the *o'rh ail* (home), which resembles modern familial traditions valuing skylight.²⁶ As Mongolians believed that all auspicious light or signs enter through the roof, they greatly revere it. Further, as the skylight is a point of entry for light, it is also called *gegeevc*.

In Korean, *cheonjang*, which describes the emperor's palace, reflects the linguistic phenomenon influenced by Confucian and Taoist ideologies. The Mongolian term *toono* reflects the ideology of a sky god, worshiped as the most powerful deity, and has shamanistic influences.

Ceilings in both Korean and Mongolian living spaces carry deep cosmological meanings, symbolizing the vastness of the transcendental universe and the

24 Ji(house) + bung(cover), ok(house) + gae(cover), cheon(sky) + jang(palace), cheon(sky) + jong(well).

25 Toono(window), gegee(light) + vc(object)', dee(upper part) + ver(object).

26 T. Namz'il, *Family's Politeness and Tradition of Mongol* (Ulaanbaatar Collage, 2005), 115.

comparative insignificance of the human beings that inhabit this space. The sky above the ceiling was a sacred realm where the individual went after death. Both societies saw roofs, sacred trees, and birds as connecting the moral and heavenly realms.

As demonstrated in the taboo words and idiomatic expressions above, the Korean language reflects Confucian and Taoist traditions which were introduced from China. Thus, the space in the home which is connected to the *jibung* (roof), such as the *cheonjang* (天障, ceiling), *chunyeo* (angle, rafter), and *yongmaru* (ridge of the roof), carries many taboo words and idiomatic expressions that are held sacred.

On the other hand, only the skylight of the *ger* is held sacred in Mongolia, as well as words and idiomatic expressions related to the light of the sky and the shamanistic ideology of the sky god. These concepts often appear in Mongolian language and culture. First, paragraph 246²⁷ of *Secret History of the Mongols*, written in the thirteenth century, states, “After the death of shaman who took [the] sky as the best target for worship, the shaman opened a ceiling of ger and left along with [his] body.” This reflects the extent to which Mongolians in the Middle Ages revered the skylight of the *ger* to which the sky is connected. Second, idiomatic expressions related to light further reflect Mongolians’ reverence of the skylight. Mongolian folk tales describe sunlight as light permeating a woman’s body and causing pregnancy,²⁸ as seen with Alangua in the *Secret History of the Mongols*.

This belief in the power of light relates to the influence of good fortune and the transition of the soul after death. The ceiling of the *ger* features prominently in tales such as Alangua in *Secret history of the Mongols* and in traditional Mongolian delivery rites. When a pregnant woman experiences labor pains, the custom is to wind a long skein of thread around a pillar near the brazier up to the ceiling and then tie it outside. Such a ritual reflects the belief that new life is given by the sky.

27 After covering the hole at the top of the tent in which one had placed the boy, after the third night, the hole at the top of the tent was opened and left with his body (Park, Kim, and Choi, *Comprehensive Study of the Secret History of the Mongols* [Minsokwon, 2006], 247).

28 There was a story among Mongolian ancestors about Boduncar, the progenitor of the Borzigin clan. Boduncar’s mother, Alangua, gave a birth to three children, including Boduncar, without a husband. In one scene, Alangua tells her sons, “Every night a yellow man followed a light through the ceiling or an upper chink in the door and rubbed my belly. Then the light infiltrated into my belly” (Park, Kim, and Choi, *Comprehensive Study of the Secret History of the Mongols* [Minsokwon, 2006], 56).

8 Conclusions

This study has examined the types and patterns of taboo words and idiomatic expressions related to domestic life in the Korean and Mongolian languages. The development of taboo words is affected by various socio-psychological factors. As Korea and Mongolia have different natural environments and different traditions, distinct religious and cultural worldviews formed in each country, which have had a profound effect on linguistic expression. This study explored such a development through taboo expressions, and classified taboo words and idiomatic expressions related to life in Korea and Mongolia into five subjects: toilets, movings, women, braziers, and roofs. The key findings are summarized below.

First, with regard to the toilet, in Korean, taboo words and idiomatic expressions related to situations in which one fixes or falls into the toilet were explored through the Korean fear and reverence of the female god of the toilet. Expressions to prohibit disrespectful behavior in the toilet were explored; the expression, “If you see Polaris, you are prohibited from moving the bowels,” further shows the reverence for gods in this space. Mongolian beliefs show reverence for deities of the sky and earth, with the latter revered as a matriarch.

Second, although there are cultural differences between farming and nomadic lifestyles, both cultures contain expressions that reflect a fear of ghosts interfering in the act of moving. Both Korean and Mongolian reflect Tibetan Buddhism, such as selecting a day when there is no spiritual interference (吉日, lucky day) in moving.

Third, most words in both languages that refer to a married woman are compound words, such as *jibsaram*. The idiomatic expressions were formed from expressions that reflected the matriarchal society that emphasized women’s domestic roles, such as housework.

Fourth, with regard to braziers, words and idiomatic expressions of both countries had a shared reverence of the fire god, with fire in the living space seen as sacred.

Finally, most idiomatic expressions related to the roof in Korean were expressions that regarded it and its connected parts (angles, rafters, and ridges) as sacred due to Confucian and Taoist influences from China. In contrast, idiomatic expressions in Mongolian mostly comprised of expressions revering the ceiling of the *ger* due belief in the sky god.²⁹

29 We leave other taboo words for future research.

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