

Analyzing the Naming System of Kavalan People in Qing Dynasty

Shinn-cherng Lee

ABSTRACT

During Qing rule, frequent contact and interaction with Han immigrants had caused plains aborigines to be much sinicized, making it hard to trace their traditional culture. However, historical documents contain a lot of traditional names of plains aborigines. Research into these names, and in particular, how the naming system was related to the concepts of marriage and kinship would increase our understanding of their traditional culture. Through analyzing names of the Kavalans, one of the plains aboriginal tribes, recorded in historical documents, this study attempted to reconstruct their long-established naming system, which would shed light on their traditional culture.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the analysis. First, the Kavalan people in Qing Dynasty had names both inherited from ancestors and newly created. Some names were commonly used by different tribal groups, while some were unique to a certain tribe; and new names were constantly created. There was clear gender distinction in names used, with only several that could be used by both sexes. The Kavalan people often named their children after close kin. Second, the Kavalan people adopted 'the patronymic naming system'. In other words, their names were patronymic with the father's name added as a suffix. Finally, such practice of the Kavalan people was taken as their tradition, not the result of Han influence.

Keywords: Qing Dynasty, Kavalan People, Naming System, Hereditary Naming System, Patronymic Linkage Naming System