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## **A Comparative Study Of Surname Culture Between Arabic And Chinese**

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## Abstract

Name is a symbol system, it contains rich social and cultural significance, is a part of national culture. To a certain extent, surnames reflect a nation's long history, culture, thought, and economic activities. It seems that we can see the multi-level and pluralism of culture and the shadow of the whole national history in the process of surname change. This paper discusses the cultural differences between Chinese and Arab surnames from the aspects of their origin, naming methods, psychological factors, and the comparison of surname characteristics, to deepen the understanding of the differences, To have a further study and understanding of the culture it represents.

**Keywords:** Chinese names; Arabic names ; comparative.

## المخلص

الاسم هو نظام رمزي يحتوي على أهمية اجتماعية وثقافية غنية ، وهو جزء من ثقافة الشعوب. تعكس الألقاب تاريخ الأمم الطويل وثقافتها وفكرها وأنشطتها الاقتصادية. كما أنه يمكننا أن نرى تعدد العادات والثقافات وتغيرات التاريخ بأكمله من خلال عملية تغيير الاسماء. تناقش هذه الورقة الاختلافات الثقافية بين الأسماء الصينية والعربية من جوانب أصلهم ، وطرق التسمية ، والعوامل النفسية ، ومقارنة خصائص الاسماء ، لتعميق فهم الثقافات المختلفة لكلا الشعبين ، للحصول على مزيد من الدراسة والفهم.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأسماء الصينية؛ الأسماء العربية؛ مقارنة.

## **Introduction**

Name is a language phenomenon of human society, which has important historical significance and research value. The formation and development of a name are closely related to social, cultural, historical, religious, ethnic, and other factors. Names contain a lot of cultural and historical significance, reflect the consciousness and tendency of different nationalities towards beauty, and express their psychological feelings and spiritual sustenance. Names are like a mirror, which directly or indirectly reflect the social culture, human life, and thoughts. Therefore, the name is not only a symbol of blood but also closely related to social development. It is the expression of religious ideas, which can stimulate national consciousness and reflect national integration. In a nation, the name is the link between people and the basis of cultural identity.

## **The characteristics of Chinese and Arabic names**

A name is a word or expression that refers to a person. In most cultures, the reference of a person consists of two parts: surname and first name. Every family member will inherit the surname of the previous generation, followed by the personal name. First names and last names constitute the formal reference of a person.

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## 1.The composition of Chinese names

The Chinese name consists of two parts, the first is the surname, the second is the first name, and the first name comes after the surname. Since matriarchal society, surnames have appeared. In ancient times, many of the surnames of the Han people had the word "女 (women or girl)" beside them, such as Yao (姚), Jiang (姜), Ji (姬) and so on. It can be inferred that the first surname came into being in the matriarchal clan period, which is related to society and culture.

The origin of the surname includes the following aspects: first, the surname is the name of mother, which appears in mother society; secondly, the surname is the animal worshipped by the ancients, such as horse(马 ma), ox(牛 niu), sheep(羊 yang), dragon(龙 long), etc; Third, the surname is the name of the Kingdom, such as Zhao, song, Chen, Wu, etc.; fourthly, the surname is the position held by ancestors in the court, such as Si ma and si tu, both of which are ancient positions; Fifthly, family name means glorious status; Sixth, the family name is the name of the region; Seventh, surnames are Occupation names, such as Tao(pottery) and tie(iron); Eighth, the surname is another name for ancestors, such as Xuan yuan, one of the ancestors of Chinese people.

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Most surnames in China are made up of one word, rarely two or more words. In the long history, no one knows how many surnames there are in China. According to statistics, there are about 3500 surnames in China, of which 100 are commonly used, and the most commonly used are Li, Wang, and Zhang.

Chinese names have their own characteristics and traditions, some of which are single words, some of which are two words. The names of people of the same tribe should be based on their generations. The names of people of the same generation are mostly composed of two characters, one of which is similar or even the same.

In ancient times, those with the knowledge or high position had not only names and surnames, but also characters and numbers. The word is to express his moral cultivation, and the number is to show his age, living environment, hobbies, and personal hope. They expressed their pursuit of life through characters and numbers.

Nowadays, with the development of the times, Chinese names are also developing. In Contemporary Chinese, except for the basic surname and first name, It is rare to have " character" or "number" . "number" is mostly the pseudonym of literati.

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## 2.The Composition of Arab names

the own name, father's name, grandfather's name, great grandfather's name, and great-great grandfather's name, sometimes add a nickname. These five parts constitute a complete name, such as Abdullah Khalid Musa Nasser Alqurashi (عبدالله خالد موسى نصير القرشي). In this name, (Abdullah) is his own name, (Khalid) is the name of the father, and (Musa) is the name of the grandfather, (Nasser) is the name of the great grandfather, (Alqurashi) is the name of great grandfather. The real name precedes the other four parts. Usually, everyone has a name, and in rare cases, one has two names, such as Mohamed Ali. "Mohammed" and "Ali" names for one person.

In Arab countries, it is very common for many people to use the same name, such as the names of Mohamed, Fatima, Aisha, and so on. Arabs add the name of their father or grandfather to their own name, reducing the probability of re-naming and making it easy to identify.

Arabs add aliases to their full names, which can be the names of mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, brothers, or sisters. Most aliases are the names of fathers or sons, such as Ibn (ابن) or bint (بنت), ex. Mohammad Ibn Ahmed, Hind bint Utbah, expressed the blood relationship between the two persons.

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In addition to the original name, father's name, grandfather's name, the nickname is also an integral part of the full name of some Arab countries. Some nicknames are the occupation of a person or his grandparents, while others reflect his moral behavior, skin color, or the skin color of his grandparents. not everyone has a nickname.

Because the full name of the Arab is too long and difficult to use, people simplify the name and use part of it instead of the full name. After evolution, the preserved part of the name has become the most well-known name, and the full name is no longer widely used.

## **Social and cultural differences behind Chinese and Arabic names**

### **1. Differences in name selection**

The differences between Chinese men's and women's names are greater than those in Arab countries, especially in the choice of name meaning. In the feudal society of China, the social status of men and women was unequal. Because of this, Chinese men usually choose words to express bravery, Women's names tend to choose words with soft meaning. Chinese parents also call girls masculine names in the hope that their daughters will have a brave and tough character better than men. Besides, some Chinese women's names also reflect the importance and love of their parents for their sons.

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In Arab countries, there is not much difference between the names of men and women, and the meaning of the name is usually different, Which distinguishes the name of the male and the name of the female.

## 2. The difference of traditional culture

Chinese names reflect Confucianism. Confucianism is an important part of Chinese traditional culture. It is not difficult to find the imprint of Confucianism in Chinese names. Such as five virtues (wisdom, benevolence, faith, courage, strictness) ( 智、仁、信、勇、严), five religions (righteousness, kindness, friendship, courtesy, filial piety) ( 义、慈、友、恭、孝). In addition, Confucianism also attaches great importance to it "Obedience(顺从)" also appears in some Chinese names.

For Arab society, Islam was founded in the Quraysh tribe of the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century. After long-term development and expansion, more and more people believe in Islam. Therefore, many Arab names are related to Islam, which is different from the Chinese name culture.

## **Social and cultural similarities behind Chinese and Arabic names**

### **1. The idea that men are superior to women in names**

In the history of the development of Chinese and Arabic name culture, the idea that men are superior to women is reflected, which is deeply related to the enlightenment factors in the development of Chinese and Arabic traditional culture.

In ancient China, with the end of matrilineal society and the emergence of paternal society, men's status in society became higher and higher. This phenomenon is particularly obvious after the Song Dynasty. This kind of feudal Neo had a profound influence on Chinese name culture, especially women's names. For example, a woman's name is Wang, her father's surname is Li, and the woman's full name It's Li Wang. After she got married, she had to change her name from her father's to her husband's. If her husband's surname is Zhang, she should change her name to Zhang li wang.

After the fall of the Qing Dynasty, with the development of society, the movement of advocating equality between men and women gradually rose, and the status of Chinese women gradually improved. Nowadays, Chinese women still use their father's surname after marriage, and the phenomenon that men are superior to women is no longer prominent.

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Different Arab countries have different social traditions, although the traditional moral rules It has changed, it still exists in some countries. For example, the Gulf countries are relatively conservative, they have more requirements for women, and the use of women's names is relatively small, while Egypt, Lebanon, and other countries are relatively open, and they have fewer restrictions on women, and the use of women's names is relatively large.

## 2. Preference of words in names

whether in China or Arab countries, parents have placed their good wishes in naming and choosing words for their children.

Some Chinese names include Kang(健康, Jian Kang, healthy), Fu(幸福, Xing fu, happiness) and other words, expressing the hope that future generations can obtain happiness, longevity, peace and good fortune. In addition, the Chinese believe that the names of their children carry the hope of their parents. In order to express their good wishes, parents will name their children "Jian gong, Jian ye" and so on, hoping that their children will have a good development in the future.

Similarly, the names are given by Arabs to their children also contain beautiful meanings. Arabs believe that heaven is an ideal living environment, where abundant rain, streams, and flowers. Their love for heaven is also fully reflected in their choice of names for their children, Some people name their children, *فردوس* (heaven). Other Arab names reflect people's social status, Such as Emir (Prince).

### **Name selection taboo in China and Arab countries**

Chinese culture is extensive and profound, and there are many kinds of naming words, but there are also taboos, such as the name of the deceased can not be used. Once used, it is not only against taboos but also disrespectful to ancestors. In addition, the name of the emperor can not be used, otherwise, it is against the principle of "monarch and Minister".

Similarly, in Arab society, there are taboos in naming, such as Arab names, which generally do not appear as annoying animal names. Arabs think that foxes can cheat people, snakes are very vicious, donkeys are ignorant, so these animal names will never appear in Arab names.

## **Conclusion**

A name is not only a special symbol of a person's social life but also a mirror. Through it, we can find many cultural elements and understand the political, economic, social, historical, and geographical conditions of a nation. Due to the historical and cultural differences between China and Arab countries, people have their own preferences and characteristics in naming. However, it is undeniable that names are closely related to social culture in both Arab countries and China. On the one hand, the meaning of the name is closely related to the people's ideological and moral, life pursuit, and so on; on the other hand, the name words reflect the historical environment and reality at that time. Therefore, it can be said that name is the key factor leading to the gate of national culture. Using the key of the name will help us better open the gate of culture, better explore Chinese culture and Arab culture, and better understand the development process of the two civilizations.

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