

## Language Politics and Cultural Power in the Kimchi Naming Controversy: The Case Study of XinQi

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### Abstract

This paper explores the intersection of language, identity, and cultural power through the kimchi naming controversy, focusing on South Korea's adoption of XinQi (辛奇) as the Chinese translation of kimchi. Beyond linguistic translation, this dispute reflects deeper negotiations over cultural ownership and national soft power between China and Korea. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power, the study employs qualitative discourse analysis combined with netnographic observation to examine media texts, government statements, and digital discussions on Weibo, Naver, and YouTube (2020–2024).

The analysis reveals contrasting discursive patterns: Korean narratives frame XinQi as a linguistic assertion of cultural sovereignty and heritage authenticity, whereas Chinese narratives interpret it as an unnecessary politicization within a shared food tradition. The controversy demonstrates how naming functions as a symbolic act of cultural diplomacy and identity negotiation in the digital era. The study argues that linguistic choices can simultaneously preserve and contest heritage, highlighting the need for intercultural dialogue and shared frameworks to promote sustainable cultural coexistence.

### Keywords

XinQi, Language Politics, Cultural Power.

