

Who are the *we* 'uri' in Korean?

우리 남편은 누구 남편인가?

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It is usual for Koreans to use *wuri* 'we' to talk about their spouses, as in *wuri nampyeon* 'my husband' [we husband] and *wuri manura* 'my wife' [we wife]. But this does not mean that the husband or wife in question has multiple spouses. Rather it is usually understood that they have only one spouse. If so, how can one use, e.g., *wuri nampyeon* (or *wuri manura*) to refer to the husband (or wife) of one person, i.e., the speaker herself (or himself)? Recently, many works in Korean linguistics and philosophy address this question. While they offer a wide variety of ingenious answers, most of them assume that if the *wuri* in those phrases are used as a plural pronoun (a Korean counterpart of, e.g., the English *we*), the pronoun cannot semantically refer to a single person. In this article, I will argue that this is a mistaken assumption, for (a) plural terms (e.g., 'Cicero and Tully', 'they') can refer to one thing, and (b) there is a general phenomenon of using plural pronouns (e.g., 'we') to refer to one person. The latter phenomenon is called *nosism*, which includes the *royal* or *majestic plural* (*pluralis majestatis*). Thus, I will argue that the use of *wuri* in *wuri nampyeon* or *wuri manura* is a case of nosism, and discuss why Koreans prefer the apparently illogical *wuri nampyeon* [we/our husband] to the straightforward *nae nampyeon* [I/my husband].