

## Linguoculturological Interpretation of the Concept “Child” in Karakalpak Legends

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### ABSTRACT

*The article is dedicated to analyzing the reflection of the concept of “child” in Karakalpak legends as an important element of the national worldview and folklore tradition. Based on a range of folklore materials, including oral narratives and legendary texts, the semantic, cultural, and axiological components of this concept are identified and systematized. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which the concept of “child” is verbalized and symbolically represented within the structure of the legend, as well as to its functional role in shaping narrative meaning. The study demonstrates that the concept of «child» in Karakalpak folklore possesses a complex semantic structure, combining emotional, symbolic, and value-based characteristics. It is associated with ideas of innocence, purity, and vulnerability, while simultaneously functioning as a symbol of the future, continuity of lineage, and preservation of family and cultural traditions. In the axiological dimension, the child is interpreted as a supreme value and a sacred gift, embodying blessing, happiness, and social harmony. Furthermore, within the legendary discourse, the child often appears as an object of protection and care, which reflects deeply rooted ethnocultural norms and moral principles. The analysis also reveals that this concept serves as a key mechanism for transmitting collective experience and cultural memory across generations. The conducted research allows us to determine the specifics of reflecting traditional Karakalpak perceptions of childhood and highlights the significant role of the child in the system of ethnocultural values and social ideals.*

**Keywords:** Concept of “child”; Karakalpak legends; folklore; ethnocultural norms; semantics.

#### INTRODUCTION

The concept of “child” is considered one of the fundamental categories in the national linguistic picture of the world of the Karakalpak people. Its content has been shaped over centuries under the influence of historical conditions, traditional perceptions, religious beliefs, and folklore customs. The image of the child in Karakalpak legends represents a complex linguoculturological phenomenon that encompasses social, emotional-evaluative, and ethnopedagogical components. Analyzing this concept provides an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the specific characteristics of the Karakalpak worldview, their value systems, and the cultural memory of the ethnos.

Early information regarding the recording of oral folk art in the territory of modern Uzbekistan dates back to the period of classical literature and the medieval scientific tradition. From a literary perspective, Alisher Navoi was one of the first collectors and interpreters of folklore material. Among the scholars who worked with ancient texts, including the “Avesto”, representatives of the Timurid scientific environment (Ulugbek and his research circle) stand out, as well as medieval thinkers like Abu Rayhan Beruni, who documented various forms of folk legends. However, the formation of a systematic scientific approach to the study of legends and folklore genres occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries, coinciding with the establishment of Oriental Studies as a scientific discipline.

The word “legend” is derived from the Latin *legenda*, meaning “that which is to be read.” This term traces back to medieval literature, where biographies of saints and religious texts of an instructive nature were so named. Legends are oral compositions that often describe events or phenomena in a way that portrays the supernatural or imaginary as reality. Previously, they were studied as a combined genre along with myths (*apsana*) and narratives (*rawiyat*). Today, however, we have

begun to investigate legends as a distinct and independent field of research.

Systematic recording of legends, alongside Karakalpak folktales, began primarily in the 1930s and 1940s. In many instances, Karakalpak legends were not published separately but were included in collections of folktales, reflecting the initial stage of systematizing oral folklore. In 1961, K. Maksetov, T. Kamalov, and K. Mambetnazarov published the monograph titled "Karakalpak Legends and Anecdotes," in which the texts of Karakalpak folk legends were transcribed for the first time [1: 211]. This publication is of particular significance for folklore studies, as it not only allowed the oral heritage to be integrated into scientific discourse but also facilitated the genre identification of the legend as an independent form of oral creativity. Thus, this work became a crucial step in the process of systematizing, preserving, and studying the ethnocultural heritage of the Karakalpaks, creating a foundation for subsequent linguoculturological and genre-structural research.

Despite the existence of a specific corpus of recorded materials, the study of legends in Karakalpak folklore remains a research area that has not yet been sufficiently developed. At the same time, a number of researchers view legends as an independent genre of folklore and provide them with primary genre characteristics. Similar approaches are reflected in the works of N. Daukaraev, K. Ayimbetov, N. Japakov, and K. Maksetov, indicating the formation of the initial stage of scientific inquiry into this genre.

Why were legends mentioned alongside myths, fairy tales, and narratives during the Middle Ages? Based on the interpretation of literary scholar K. Maksetov [1], it can be argued that for a long time, researchers considered legends alongside folktales, narratives (*rawiyats*), and myths (*apsanas*). This practice stemmed from the limited availability of folklore materials for scientific analysis. Currently, through written monuments and the works of great thinkers such as Rabghuzi, Khoja Akhmed Yassawi, Sulayman Bakirghani, and Abulgazi Bahadur Khan, opportunities are emerging for the independent and comprehensive study of the myths and legends of the

Karakalpak people. Their contribution to the development of national folkloristics can be regarded as fundamentally significant.

What were the initial scientific efforts regarding the classification and genre definition of Karakalpak legends in the works of early researchers? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the foundational scientific works on the understanding and systematization of Karakalpak legends.

In his work *Complete Collection of Works*, the prominent literary scholar N. Daukaraev was the first to attempt to give legends a specific designation and define their characteristics, taking into account their content, themes, and artistic features. In his research, he refers to legends using the term “legenda” [2: 184]. The scholar identifies widespread anthroponymic heritage figures among the Karakalpaks – such as Asan Kaygy, Erejep Tentek, Aldar Kose, Jiyrenshe Sheshen, Khoja Nasratdin, Omirbek Lakki, Dawlet Karamanli, and others – as legends. He notes: “These were all real people. Nevertheless, although these legends describe historical facts very close to reality, they cannot be regarded as history because they have been passed down orally, modified, supplemented, or condensed. They only serve as necessary material for history” [2: 184]. Thus, in N. Daukaraev’s interpretation, legends function not only as a genre category but also as a tool for preserving, transmitting, and understanding the cultural memory of the Karakalpak people.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Karakalpak folklorist K. Ayimbetov classifies a specific layer of epic material as legends, considering such data within the framework of the legendary genre. He expressed the following opinion: “One type of folk tale is called a legend. We can also call legends historical tale-narratives” [3: 33]. According to the above, legends can be viewed as historical tales and narratives, which demonstrates their dual nature: they combine the function of artistic storytelling with culturally significant information, thereby reinforcing the values, worldview, and social experience of the Karakalpak ethnos.

What is the difference between a narrative (*rawiyat*) and a legend? We can find the answer to this question in the scientific article by A. M. Bekimbetov. In his work, *Genre Classification of Karakalpak Folk Legends*, Bekimbetov [4] discusses the distinctions between these two forms. Although both genres are connected to historical events, personalities, and locations, they perform different functions. In narratives (*rawiyats*), events are presented close to reality, whereas in legends, the material is artistically reprocessed: they contain more fantasy, hyperbolism, figurative techniques, and miraculous elements. The heroes of legends are usually more embellished and artistically developed. Despite their similarities, the legend and the narrative are distinct independent genres. Thus, the scholar reveals the specificities of these genres from the perspective of their cultural activities: the narrative acts as a preserver of historical memory, while the legend performs the function of an artistic-mythological interpretation of reality, being an essential part of the people's linguoculturological heritage.

Based on an analysis of the article by literary scholar I. Kh. Allambergenova, *The Role of Legends in Educating the Younger Generation*, the following conclusion can be drawn: the connection between the "child" and the genre of the legend is linked to the representativeness of the legend. The historical-cultural experience of the Karakalpak people is presented in a form as close as possible to factual data, which allows it to be distinguished from other folklore genres.

Mastering this genre helps form a stable cultural identity in the younger generation and ensures a connection with the traditions, customs, and historical realities of our ancestors. This, in turn, supports the significance of legends as a medium for the oral transmission of cultural heritage across generations. Furthermore, the perception of legends by a child fulfills an important educational function: this genre aids in shaping moral orientations, specifically developing the ability to distinguish between morally positive and negative phenomena. In this context, the legend serves as an effective educational tool and a supplementary pedagogical instrument that complements parental influence.

Karakalpak legends represent a significant layer of cultural memory, where traditional views on the birth of a child and their role within the family and society are transmitted through plots, images, and stable designations. In the field of linguoculturology, legends are viewed as texts that shape culturally grounded semantic manifestations, where the concept of the "child" is regarded as a fundamental element of ethnic identity.

The connection between legends and linguoculturology can be observed through the concept of the "child" in Karakalpak culture. In Karakalpak legends, the image of the child emerges as a carrier of meanings such as the continuation of the lineage, hope, and blessing; this is especially evident in plots concerning a long-awaited heir. This concept reflects core cultural values such as family continuity, respect for elders, and care for the younger generation. At the linguistic level, this is manifested in the use of hypocoristic (diminutive/endeearing) forms, as well as fixed expressions that reflect an emotional-evaluative attitude toward the child.

Thus, the interpretation of legends allows for the identification of the specific characteristics of the verbalization of the "child" concept and reveals its linguoculturological distinctiveness.

In legendary discourse, the concept of the "child" is manifested as a multi-component semantic-axiological structure, encompassing emotional, symbolic, and cultural-value components. At the level of the associative field, this concept is linked to categories such as love, care, and anxiety, as well as perceptions of purity and the future.

#### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the traditional culture of the Karakalpak people, the concept of the "child" occupies a central place in the system of value coordinates, serving as a symbol of the continuity of the race, a bearer of genealogical succession, and an inheritor of cultural traditions. Its axiological load is evident in the interpretation of the child as a supreme value and a symbol of blessing, prosperity, and social harmony. Within the framework of the legendary

narrative, the child also functions as an object of protection and patronage, which ensures its connection with the categories of morality, sincerity, and spiritual purity. Thus, this concept not only reflects basic cultural views but also embodies fundamental worldview orientations associated with the ideas of continuity, lineage, and the preservation of spiritual heritage.

Let us examine specific legends that embody the concept of the "child." For instance, in the legend *The Marriage of Khakim Ulykpan* [5: 81], the fate of the child appears as a cultural symbol of a generation whose destiny is determined not only by the family but also by the moral position of society. His passive submission expressed through the phrase "if [the father] says go, he goes" reflects a traditional Turkic cultural warning against excessive obedience that renders a person weak and "unhappy." The public punishment in the marketplace serves as a societal test: the indifference of the people indicates a breakdown of moral norms, while the fate of the child becomes a measure of the collective conscience. The girl who stands up for him was the first to see him not as an object of punishment, but as a human being; this demonstrates her cultural significance in showing mercy and protecting the vulnerable. Her attitude simultaneously elevates the child's dignity his vulnerability awakens compassion in her, which in turn becomes the guarantee of her recognition as a worthy bride. Thus, the image of the child in this legend shows that the true morality of a society and an individual is revealed only through their treatment of the weak and dependent.

In the legend *Bravery is the Work of a Risk-Taker* (Táwekelerdińisi) [5: 141], the concept of "perzent" (offspring) is primarily associated with the idea of "vulnerability" and the necessity of protection, reflecting the traditional value of preserving the lineage in Turkic cultures. A sixteen-year-old girl represents the honor of the family; her loss is perceived not just as an individual tragedy but as a social grief affecting the entire clan. The father's struggle to protect his child embodies the cultural ideal of parental responsibility and sacrifice. Here, the child is not an independent subject but a carrier of collective honor, reflecting the traditional patriarchal model of society. Even the hero who rescues the father motivates his actions by

concern for the future the "descendants" which aligns with the concept of the child as the successor of the generation and the keeper of memory. Consequently, the image of the child in the legend is realized through cultural meanings of honor, the future, purity, and clan responsibility characteristic of the Karakalpak and broader Turkic mentality.

In the legend "Gara Gursak" [5: 168], the child is shown as being of utmost importance to the Karakalpak clan. The text notes: "...Even in the womb (*qaraqursaq*), there is someone waiting for their share! The word *qursaq* used to mean 'pregnancy'..." Even an unborn infant is considered a member of the family, and care is provided in advance. The term *Garaqursaq* shows that a child is treated with respect even before birth. The character Kanjygaly allocates land for his yet-to-be-born son so that he may have his own place in life. This demonstrates that every child is inherently valued and has a right to their own future.

The next legend is "Alti Jasar Asqar" (Six-Year-Old Asqar) [5: 176-177]. In this legend, the child is depicted as an exceptionally significant and cherished member of the family within Karakalpak culture. Despite being only six years old, he is respected, loved, and listened to. For instance, the text highlights the continuity of family traits, noting that his father, Orazak, was similarly headstrong in his own childhood, which underscores the influence of family heritage on character. Furthermore, the physical closeness such as the child resting his elbow on his father's knee and the father's affectionate gestures symbolizes intimacy, care, and love. Consequently, children are regarded as the continuers of the lineage and as a "gift from God." In this context, boys are raised from childhood to be strong, courageous, and resilient. In general, children are considered the foundation of family happiness; they transmit traditions and make life more complete and joyful.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be stated that the image of the child occupies a vital place in Karakalpak legends, reflecting the

fundamental values of the people. The child is understood as a symbol of the future, purity, and hope, as well as the successor of the generation. The legends emphasize the necessity of protecting and caring for children, highlighting their importance to both the family and the community. Thus, the concept of the “child” allows us to perceive the Karakalpak attitude toward childhood and to understand how moral and cultural perspectives have been transmitted from generation to generation.

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