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THE ROLE OF KARAKALPAK FOLK LITERATURE AND CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE IN PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the significance of Karakalpak children's folklore as an integral part of the nation's cultural and spiritual heritage. It examines various genres of children's folk literature, including lullabies, counting songs, game-related songs, labor songs, and wisdom-based sayings, highlighting their role in the intellectual and moral development of young generations. The research traces the historical origins of Karakalpak folklore, linking it to ancient and medieval traditions and analyzing its evolution through contributions from scholars and folklorists. Additionally, it discusses the systematic collection and publication of Karakalpak folk literature, emphasizing its educational and cultural value. While many traditional songs and games continue to influence children's upbringing, the study underscores the need for further research and documentation to preserve and adapt this rich heritage for future generations.

The rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the Karakalpak people includes an important section of folk literature, which consists of folklore works. These works have enriched the people's spirituality from ancient times to the present day, and they continue to live among the people due to their diversity. The population has been using various forms such as daily life, social thinking, didactics, art, and other developed expressions. The role of folklore in educating the younger generation to become modern, educated individuals is especially important.

Among the folk songs, there are many dedicated to children. Each poem dedicated to children is aimed at developing their thinking and guiding their play with specific actions. Therefore, studying the lyrical forms of children's folklore is particularly relevant in modern education, as it helps in the upbringing and teaching of children. In general, the terms «Folk Oral Literature», «Folk Creativity» and «Folk Wisdom» refer to various forms of folk literature, including poems, proverbs, riddles, sayings, anecdotes, and epics. The term «folklore» comes from the English language and denotes «folk creativity» or «folk wisdom». Thus, folklore refers to the collective creative works of a particular nation. When we look at the ancient sources of Karakalpak folklore, we can observe that it is connected to the cultures of the Sak-Massaget tribes who lived in the Eastern Aral Sea region in the 7th to 5th centuries BCE, which is considered the ancestral homeland of many Central Asian peoples.



The emergence and development of Karakalpak folkloristics has been significantly influenced by ancient sources, as well as medieval written monuments and works of Karakalpak literary figures from the 18th and 19th centuries.

In the 1960s, Karakalpak folklore gained attention for its multi-dimensional research focus. Folklore was systematically collected and studied by both foreign scholars and local researchers. Karakalpak folklore, rich in genres and diverse in nature, has been compiled into several volumes, with the publication of a hundred volumes of folklore works in November 2016 as a significant achievement. Karakalpak folklore stands as one of the treasures of world literature, with works that have their own unique value and significance. Karakalpak children's folklore was mainly studied by scholar I. Qurbanbaev and his books, «*Sketches of Karakalpak Children's Literature*» (1974) and «*Karakalpak Children's Literature*» (1992), delve into this subject in depth. Other folklorists such as N. Dawqaraev, Q. Ayimbetov, Q. Maqsetov and A. Alimov have also contributed to the field through their scientific works.

Based on the studies of children's folklore, we can conclude that genres such as children's songs, story games, lullabies, and riddles likely appeared earlier than other forms of folk literature. The fact that everyone loves children and the natural human instinct to show affection when seeing a child indicates that songs about children emerged early and were created by the collective community. It is also common for parents to sing softly to soothe their children. This suggests that these forms of folklore were created early on by the community as a whole.

The community also created various songs to teach children different skills and trades. These songs serve not only as entertainment but as a way of passing on knowledge about different professions, aimed at educating the younger generation in a specific way of life. According to the renowned scholar Q. Ayimbetov «The joy of play in children's games is expressed through poetic songs» Songs such as «*Awelemen-duwelemen*», «*Tulkishek*» and «*Hakke qayda*» exemplify this tradition.

N. Dawqaraev also points out the specific characteristics of children's songs. These songs are primarily performed collectively. They are also often mixed with other forms of folk games and are sung in a question-and-answer format.

In his works, I. Qurbanbaev categorizes children's poems thematically into:

1. Lullabies
2. Songs that teach counting and wit
3. Songs for games and entertainment
4. Songs that teach labor

However, these categories do not always perfectly match the content of the songs. Lullabies, for example, are typically sung only by mothers, while songs like «*Tisaw kesiw*» are not sung by children but by adults. Therefore, children's songs are defined by their particular performance style.

A more fitting thematic categorization for Karakalpak children's literature would be:

1. **Songs related to play and amusement:** These include songs like «*Tulkishek*» «*Ha'kke qayda*» «*Awelemen-duwelemen*» etc., which teach children how to respond quickly in games and develop their wit.



2. **Songs related to counting and cleverness:** These songs aim to develop children's logical thinking and mathematical skills, such as «*Bir-bir*» «*Shir aylanba*» and riddles.
3. **Songs related to labor:** These include songs like «*Ozar*» «*Quwirshaq*» and «*Gubek*» which motivate children to engage in work and crafts.
4. **Fables, humor, and satire:** These songs, like «*Qurbaqa*» «*Burge*» and «*Ertek*» are designed to stimulate children's critical thinking and cleverness.
5. **Traditional children's songs:** Songs connected to festivals such as «*Yaramazan*», «*Nawriz*» and «*Besik jiri*» which are performed during seasonal events and holidays.
6. **Songs related to nature and seasons:** These songs, such as «*Jawma ku'nim, jawma*» and «*Jemisim to'gildi*» describe nature and seasonal events.
7. **“Terme” (Proverbs) and wise sayings:** These songs, though simple, are full of wisdom and often aim to teach important life lessons.

As children grow, their thinking evolves in terms of their age, and their games also change accordingly. The more they hardened, the more they strived to be skilled in marksmanship, physical strength, and bravery. To achieve this, they aspired to resemble the heroes of ancient epic tales they had heard from the elders, such as Qoblan, Alpamis, Gu'layim, Maspatscha, Er Ziywar, Sharyar, Edige, and other epic characters. By the way, to learn strength, and cleverness, they invented games like “Dórdiyan” and «*Soqir teke*» Although games involving shooting and ball games trained children in marksmanship and running, excessive play led to neglecting useful work, sometimes causing harm. For this reason, Karakalpak folk said:

Asiq oynagan azar,
Top oynagan tozar.
Hámmesinen qoy bagıp,
Quyriq jegen ozar.

In the past, these games had a certain strength in the upbringing of children. However, as time passed and the demands of the era changed, these games gradually became irrelevant and lost their significance. Some of them even became harmful to children. For example, the game of “*Sag'al o'ltirmek*” (hunting) was once used to teach children marksmanship, but now it has been replaced by «*Tir*» (shooting with a gun), which is very beneficial for them. The game «*Gu'resiw*» (wrestling) and «*Soqir teke*» (blind goat) are still practiced and have maintained their relevance. Alongside them, games like «*Ayn-g'ayn gu'belek*» (Butterfly) and «*Ay ko'rmek*» (Moon gazing), and “*Ayqulash*” songs performed in these games, also reflect the life traces from children's fairy tales. Thus, children in Karakalpakstan were raised through the immortal heritage created by the people folk pedagogy. Folk pedagogy is a vast field that requires thorough research.

Children's folklore is still an incomplete treasure, and what has been collected can be found in various educational books from the 1930s, in the manuscript archives of the Karakalpakstan branch of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and in issues of the journal «*Karakalpak Literature and Creativity*» (now Amudarya) from the 1930s and 1940s. By the 1950s, some collected samples of children's folklore were included in the «*Karakalpak Folk Music Anthology*» (Nukus, 1956) as part of the reader series. In recent years, collections of children's folklore have been published in separate booklets. A large portion of Karakalpak folk literature, including children's folklore, has been included in the 20-volume



edition of the «Karakalpak Folk Literature» and in the 100-volume collection that began to be published at the beginning of the 21st century. Many fairy tales, epics, and ethnographic materials related to the upbringing of children, which are part of the folk tradition and also hold great significance in children's folklore, were collected by notable researchers such as P. Richkov (1950), N. Muravey (1819-1820), Ch. S. Valikhanov (1840), Rizo, Quli Mirzo (1872), N. Ostroumov (1891), A. Rossikova (1891), A.I. Belyacy (1903), and others. Following them, prominent scholars like N.A. Baskakov, A.S. Morozova, S.E. Malov, A.A. Sokolov, N. Davqaraev, Q. Ayimbetov, U. Kojurov, R. Qosbergenov, N. Japaqov, Q. Maqsetov, S. Kamalov, A. Karimov, S. Nietullayev, N. Kamalov, Q. Mambetnazarov, A. Alimov, A. Tajimuratov, K. Mambetov, S. Bahadirova, Yu. Paxratdinov, K. Allambergenov, S. Qozoqboyev, K. Palimbetov, and others enriched the folklore of children's literature through the expeditions they organized to collect folklore. The collected folklore, most of which has been published, holds immense significance in the upbringing of children and in introducing them to the history, traditions, socio-economic conditions, and culture of our people.

The rich and diverse folklore of the Karakalpak people serves as a crucial element of their cultural and spiritual heritage. Among the various genres of folk literature, children's folklore holds a special place, contributing to the intellectual, moral, and creative development of young generations. Through lullabies, counting songs, game-related songs, labor songs, and wisdom-based sayings, Karakalpak folk pedagogy has long played an essential role in shaping children's understanding of life, social values, and cultural identity. The study of Karakalpak children's folklore reveals its deep historical roots, linking it to the traditions of ancient and medieval times, as well as to the literary contributions of scholars and folklorists from the 18th century onward. Despite changes brought about by modernity, many traditional children's songs and games continue to hold educational value, while others have been adapted to contemporary needs. The systematic collection and study of Karakalpak folklore, culminating in extensive anthologies and scholarly works, have preserved this invaluable cultural legacy.

Children's folklore remains an evolving field, requiring further research and documentation. Many aspects of traditional songs, games, and oral narratives still need to be explored in depth to fully understand their role in the upbringing and education of future generations. By continuing to study and preserve these traditions, Karakalpak folklore can remain a vital and enduring part of both national identity and global cultural heritage.

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