

ABSTRACT
to the dissertation by Olzhas Zholdybayev
prepared on the topic “Comparative Poetics of Wedding Ritual Folklore
(Based on the Materials of the Turks of Central Asia) ” for the degree of
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General description of the work. Wedding ritual folklore is one of the most stable and significant layers of the spiritual culture of the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, and Turkmens). This complex includes *zhar-zhar*, *syñsu*, *toibastar*, *betashar*, farewell songs, as well as poetic texts performed during matchmaking, seeing off the bride, and introducing the bride into the groom's household. These folklore texts are viewed as a poetic system reflecting the people's worldview, social organization, moral and ethical norms related to the institution of family, and the symbolic meaning of rites of passage.

Relevance of the study. National customs and ritual folklore are regarded as key bearers of cultural memory and ethnic identity. Traditional wedding rituals and the poetic texts that accompany them (*zhar-zhar*, *syñsu*, *betashar*, *toibastar*, farewell songs, etc.) preserve the people's worldview, social structure, family values, and the symbolic meaning of transitional rituals. In the modern era of globalization and digitalization, when the threat of losing national cultural distinctiveness has become more acute, the systematic study and preservation of traditional folklore becomes an important mechanism for strengthening national identity and transmitting cultural values to the younger generation.

For the Kazakhs and other Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia (Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, and Turkmens), wedding ritual folklore represents one of the richest and most stable strata of traditional culture. These texts ensure the continuity of collective consciousness and spiritual tradition by poetically framing the most important stages of human life (birth, marriage, death). However, as a result of Soviet ideological policy in the second half of the twentieth century, the frequency of performance of many ritual songs declined, their content changed, or they were forgotten. During the Soviet period, the official part of wedding ceremonies was subject to ideological control, while many traditional poetic texts survived only at the private-family or rural level. Although the revival of national cultural heritage began after independence, the decreasing level of knowledge and performance of ritual songs among young people under the influence of urbanization, migration, and global cultural flows has today become one of the most pressing issues in preserving the cultural identity of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia.

Purpose of the study. To identify common poetic patterns, archetypal motifs, and national specificities of the wedding ritual folklore of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia through comparative-poetic analysis.

Objectives of the study:

- To describe the poetic macrostructures and compositional models of the main genres of wedding ritual folklore (*syñsu*, *zhar-zhar*, *toibastar*, *betashar*, and their analogues) in the context of the phases of rites of passage (farewell – crossing the boundary – union);

- To identify typological invariants and national poetic features through a comparative analysis of the system of tropes in ritual songs, their metrical-rhythmic structure, and the transformation of archaic motifs and fixed formulas in traditional syllabic verse;

- To reveal the linguopoetic and didactic functions of key spatial and material symbols (fire, *shañyraq*, threshold, bright path, black water).

Object of the study. The principal genres of wedding ritual folklore of the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, and Turkmen): *syñsu*, *zhar-zhar*, *toibastar*, *betashar*, and their analogues.

Research methods. In accordance with the purpose and objectives of the study, the following set of philological methods was used:

- *Comparative-poetic method* – employed as the principal tool for comparing the artistic system, macrostructure, and national poetic features of the four main genres of wedding folklore (*syñsu*, *zhar-zhar*, *toibastar*, *betashar*) among five Turkic peoples of Central Asia at the regional level;

- *Structural-typological analysis* – used to identify common typological invariants of ritual songs and compositional models characteristic of each phase;

- Linguopoetic analysis – applied to examine the system of tropes in the texts, the structure of traditional syllabic verse (7–8 and 11 syllables), and the transformation of archaic motifs and fixed formulas within poetic texts;

- *Structural-semiotic analysis* – employed to reveal how spatial oppositions and key material symbols (fire, *shañyraq*, threshold, bright path, black water) evolve from simple ethnographic details into didactic and linguopoetic metaphors.

Theoretical (methodological) foundations of the study. The methodological basis of the dissertation relies on fundamental philological concepts that examine folklore texts from the perspective of historical-typological analysis and comparative poetics (V. Zhirmunsky, B. Putilov, S. Qasqabasov, Z. Akhmetov, and others). A. van Gennep's theory of rites of passage and V. Turner's concept of liminality are used not in a purely ethnographic sense, but as a basic framework for substantiating the three-phase poetic macrostructure of folklore texts (separation – liminal phase – incorporation). The analysis of archetypal images and spatial oppositions in the texts is guided by Y. Lotman's cultural semiotics and V. Toporov's mythopoetic topography.

Main sources of the study. Within the scope of the topic, texts of wedding ritual folklore of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, and Turkmen) were used. The analysis draws on written and oral sources from the second half of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century.

For Kazakh folklore, the principal materials were the extensive corpus of *zhar-zhar*, *syñsu*, *toibastar*, *betashar*, and other ritual songs contained in Volume 90 of the series *Babalar Sözi: One Hundred Volumes – Ritual Folklore*, as well as texts published in the works of H. A. Arghynbayev, K. Matyzhanov, B. Uakhatov, S. Qasqabasov, and Zh. Aymukhambet. For Kyrgyz folklore, the collections *Kaada-Salttar. Ak Batalar* (edited by A. Akmataliev), A. Murzakmetov's *Kyrgyz Yrym-Zhyrymdary*, and A. Bekbolotov's *Materials of Folklore and Dialectological Expeditions* were used. For Karakalpak folklore, the main sources were the collection *Karakalpak Folklore* and ritual songs in the works of B. Beknazarov, M. Karimov, B. K. Bekzhanova, and G. M. Khozhaniyazova, including samples of the song *Häwzhar* (*Hauzhar*). For Uzbek folklore, the classical collection *Uzbek Khalq Marosim Qoshiq lari* by M. Alaviya and ritual folklore texts in the works of H. T. Zarifov, N. Mallayev, T. Mirzayev, and B. Sarimsakov were used. The comparative analysis also included materials from Turkmen folklore, including the collection *Creativity of the Peoples of Turkmenistan* by G. I. Karpov and N. F. Lebedeva, as well as works by A. Dzhikiyev containing samples of wedding rituals and ritual songs.

Overall, the research materials encompass a body of written and oral sources from the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century, which provides a sufficient basis for a comparative-poetic analysis of the historical dynamics and current state of wedding ritual folklore among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia.

Scientific novelty of the study. For the first time, the dissertation presents a systematic comparative-poetic analysis of the wedding ritual folklore of five Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, and Turkmen) at the regional level. The main aspects of the novelty are as follows:

- For the first time, on the basis of the theories of A. van Gennep and V. Turner, the universal three-phase poetic macrostructure of the four main genres of wedding ritual folklore (*syñsu*, *zhar-zhar* / *yor-yor* / *häwzhar*, *toibastar*, *betashar* / *kelin salom*) was comprehensively identified among five Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Karakalpaks, Uzbeks, and Turkmen), and the typological invariants of their compositional models were established;

- The common linguopoetic nature of ritual songs was investigated, and for the first time the mechanisms of transformation of archaic motifs and fixed formulas within the structure of traditional syllabic verse (7–8 and 11 syllables) were systematically substantiated in scholarly terms, in line with P. G. Bogatyrev's theory of aesthetic transformation and on the basis of the ideas of Academician Z. Akhmetov;

- For the first time, the function of the main archetypal and spatial-material symbols of wedding folklore (fire, *shañyraq*, threshold, bright path, black water) as linguopoetic markers of liminal boundaries and as didactic metaphors emerging from ordinary ethnographic details was revealed in the light of the semiotic and mythopoetic concepts of Y. M. Lotman and V. N. Toporov; their national variants were demonstrated through comparative analysis.

Theoretical and practical significance of the study. The results of the dissertation may be used both for theoretical generalizations in folklore studies and philology and for solving a number of practical tasks:

- First, the phased poetic models and symbolic system of the wedding ritual folklore of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia identified in the study may be used to supplement curricula and teaching materials for university courses such as “Kazakh Folklore,” “Folklore of the Turkic Peoples,” “Poetics of Folklore,” and “Linguocultural Studies”;

- Second, the results of the comparative textual analysis may be applied in projects for the digitalization of national cultural heritage, including the creation of electronic corpora of folklore texts, annotated databases, and multimedia platforms;

- Third, the materials of the study may contribute to the development of methodological recommendations for the correct, scientifically and philologically grounded use of traditional ritual songs (*zhar-zhar*, *syñsu*, *betashar*, *toibastar*) in organizing national wedding ceremonies and cultural festivals;

- Fourth, the work may serve as a basis for developing practical recommendations for educational programs aimed at improving the textual and cultural literacy of the younger generation, including special courses, electives, and interactive learning materials.

Thus, the results of the study make an applied contribution to the effective use of folklore texts in educational and cultural practice on the basis of their scholarly analysis.

Main results and conclusions submitted for defense.

1. The wedding ritual folklore of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, and Turkmen) is based on the universal three-phase macrostructure of rites of passage (separation, liminal phase, incorporation). This common model is realized in national folklore through the compositional invariants of four principal poetic genres: *syñsu* (separation), *zhar-zhar* / *yor-yor* / *hāwzhar* (transitional dialogue), *toibastar* (initiation), and *betashar* / *kelin salom* (integration).

2. The common linguopoetic nature of ritual songs is determined by the transformation of archaic motifs and fixed formulas within the structure of traditional syllabic verse (7–8 and 11 syllables). In this respect, the genre *zhar-zhar* performs the function of a poetic mediator that mitigates the anxiety of separation, whereas *toibastar* and *betashar* function as didactic-imperative poetic models that consolidate a new social role.

3. The main archetypal symbols of wedding folklore (fire, *shañyraq*, threshold, bright path, black water) are not merely ethnographic or domestic details, but stable linguopoetic markers denoting liminal boundaries. In the phase of integration, these spatial-material images turn into didactic metaphors that consolidate the bride’s new social status and norms of behavior, thereby reflecting the national poetic specificity of each people.

Publication and approbation of research results.

The main scientific results and conclusions of the dissertation have been published in the form of 8 articles in domestic and foreign publications, as well as in proceedings of international scientific and practical conferences. Among them, 1 scientific article was published in the international Scopus database, and another scientific article was published in co-authorship. Three articles were published in journals included in the list recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Three articles were published in proceedings of international conferences.

Structure of the dissertation. The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references, and an appendix.