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# Metaphorical Expressions of Karakalpak Culture in Traditional Folk Songs

Kamalova Gulmaryam Makhsetdullaevna<sup>1</sup>, Tazhetdinova Sofia Minajatdinovna<sup>2</sup>, Saparov Rakhim Muratbayevich<sup>3</sup>, Allanov Ayapbergen Jabbarbergenovich<sup>4</sup>, Urazbaeva Gulshirin Kadyrbaevna<sup>5</sup>, Orazalieva Raziya Romanovna<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of "Universal Social and Humanitarian Sciences" of the Nukus Branch of the State Conservatory of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan

<sup>2-5</sup>Department of Music Education, Nukus State Pedagogical Institute named after Ajinyoz, Uzbekistan

<sup>6</sup>Department of Arts, Berdak Karakalpak State University, Uzbekistan

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## CORRESPONDENCE

\*E-mail: [gulmaryamkamalova@gmail.com](mailto:gulmaryamkamalova@gmail.com)

## A B S T R A C T

This study examines the role of metaphors in Karakalpak folk songs, with a specific focus on three traditional songs: *Aqsúngil*, *Yasha páriy*, and *Qiz Minayim*. Using a qualitative ethnolinguistic approach, the research explores how metaphors in these folk songs reflect and reinforce key cultural values, social structures, and norms within Karakalpak society. Metaphors are recognized as essential tools for conveying cultural beliefs about leadership, community responsibility, gender roles, and romantic relationships. The analysis categorizes metaphors based on Lakoff and Johnson's typology, distinguishing between ontological, structural, and container metaphors. The findings highlight how metaphors like "settling the lands", "driving herds of livestock", and "choosing the finest youths" underscore the cultural importance of land, livelihood, and women's roles as leaders and nurturers. Similarly, metaphors such as "multicolored dress" and "dawn breaking" reflect the deep connection between nature, beauty, and romantic love. These figurative expressions not only enrich the poetic quality of the songs but also embody fundamental aspects of Karakalpak worldview, where emotional connections and social unity are intertwined with the natural world's rhythms. By examining the metaphors in these folk songs, this paper contributes to the ethnolinguistic understanding of how language and culture are intertwined, offering new insights into the cultural identity of the Karakalpak people. The study highlights the importance of metaphor in shaping social relationships, fostering community cohesion, and transmitting cultural knowledge across generations. The research also opens avenues for future studies on the role of metaphor in other forms of oral literature in Central Asia.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Folk music has been a significant part of mankind's culture, in the sense that it is more than just mere entertainment or an artistic expression. They are expressive of the community's values, beliefs, systems, traditions, and history, which makes them carriers of culture and language, and contributes significantly to these categories. (Chingiz, 2024; Gulmurzaevna, 2018; Houssam

& Lamkhanter, 2016; Kartika & Mulyadi, 2024). Karakalpak folk music is associated with the culture and ethos of Karakalpaks, as their music links many Turkic elements along with professional musicianship typified by strong emotions led by ethno-linguistic dynasties, expressing characteristics such as artlessness, traditional textures, and designs also found in area carpets. They express the common sense of the community, inscribing cultural wisdom, social norms, and

beliefs in musical/lyrical form. The Karakalpak traditional songs (as oral heritage, passed down from generation to generation) present a particular window through which we can view how this culture perceives the world and its people and reflects on nature and society (Fernández-Llamazares & Lepofsky, 2019; Issahaku et al., 2024; Kamalova & Kamalova, 2021; Kurbanova, 2023; Levin, 2016):

Of the many linguistic devices available for meaning making, metaphors have been identified as a robust verbal method of connecting abstract ideas to practical human experiences—thus enabling cultural beliefs and values to be understood more deeply (Augé, 2019; Lakoff, 1993; Li et al., 2025). Metaphor is not simply a fancy linguistic decoration, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest, but is a basic cognitive operation by which we understand and express one thing (usually abstract) in relation to another (often concrete), shaping our thought, language, and actions. They argue in favor of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which assumes that our conceptual systems are metaphorically organized (see above) and that human metaphors – such as those of “TIME IS MONEY” or “ARGUMENT IS WAR” – indicate how experiences with concrete entities map onto abstract ideas, thereby rendering the abstract comprehensible via physical and cultural experience. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) categorize them into three kinds: structural (associating a concept with another, such as ARGUMENT IS WAR), orientational (attaching the conceptual metaphors to spatial schema like UP/DOWN, for example HAPPY IS UP), and ontological (treating abstract things in terms of physical objects/substances, for example THE MIND IS A MACHINE). These are not merely linguistic tricks, of course, but part and parcel of how we think and scaffold our understanding of abstract concepts in terms of more concrete experiences.

Metaphors are not only aesthetic elements in language, but they are also fundamental cognitive mechanisms that people use to better understand abstract and complex issues and express them more efficiently, drawing upon their life experiences or world knowledge (Al-Khaza'leh & Alzubi, 2022). This cognitive phenomenon explains the ubiquity of metaphors across a wide range of cultures and languages, not only relating to common human experiences but also conveying culture-specific connotations (Zheng & Zhu, 2025). Metaphor is a

common linguistic strategy for musicians to build compelling narratives through songs, allowing dense concepts to be articulated in an accessible way (Thu, 2019). It is, therefore, through studying conceptual metaphors in folk song texts that we gain deep insights into the cultural models and social structures of a group of people.

This article examines the role of metaphors in Karakalpak folk songs, focusing on three specific songs: Aqsúngil, Yasha páriy, and Qız Minayım. Each song is filled with metaphoric expressions that not only enrich their poetic aspect but also carry complex cultural meanings centered on leadership, love affairs, gender codes, and man's attitude to nature. The ethnolinguistic viewpoint offers an enlightening framework for thinking through these metaphors, as it argues for the role of language and culture in making sense of social life. This article focuses on the study of metaphors in three Karakalpak folk songs, classifies them based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) metaphor theory, and investigates how these metaphors reveal the main cultural concepts. Through analyzing the metaphors in these songs, the research also aims to discover how they serve as a vehicle for transmitting and consolidating cultural values and social structures among the Karakalpak people. The analysis will also bring to the forefront the sex-based culturalization of these metaphors and what it may reveal about women, leadership, and community obligation within Karakalpak culture.

The paper is an important contribution, as it addresses avoidance in ethnolinguistic studies through focusing on metaphor and Karakalpak culture (an area slighted in non-specific Central Asian linguistics). Through an examination of these metaphors, the study contributes not only to knowledge about Karakalpak language and culture but also to our understanding of metaphoricality as one central component in ethnolinguistic description. In the process, it contributes to our understanding of how language serves as a mirror and a tool for cultural identity.

## II. METHOD

Qualitative ethnolinguistic approach is used in the study for analysing metaphor domains utilized by three selected Karakalpak folk songs including the folk song “Aqsúngil”, “Yasha páriy”, and “Qız Minayım”, which makes it possible to delve into linguistic and cultural reflection of metaphors

against the social values, norms, and tradition born out of Karakalpak culture. As an investigative frame, methodology combines metaphor analysis and ethnolinguistic theory as it seeks explanations of the link between language and culture among the Karakalpak.

#### *Data Collection*

The information in the texts of three traditional folk songs (song epics) is an important aspect of Karakalpak orally formed literature. The folk songs were selected for their dense metaphorical content and for their relevance in Karakalpak culture, reflecting major cultural topics such as leadership, community duty, romantic love, or human existence within nature. The recordings were taken from published compilations of Karakalpak folk songs, as well as from collections of local folklore and oral accounts by traditional Karakalpak performers. All the songs were studied in the original Karakalpak, and English translations were created to facilitate understanding. The paper focused on the linguistic features used to express metaphors, as well as their cultural significance within Karakalpak society.

#### *Data Analysis*

The first step in the analysis was to isolate metaphors from the lyrics of the songs using close reading. Each metaphor was described as a comparison in which one thing is used to understand or describe another, with deeper cultural or societal values. After the metaphors had been identified, they were classified according to a well-known typology developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The metaphors were categorized into three classes: ontological metaphors, structural metaphors, and containerization (concepts as containers) metaphors. They obtained the cultural meanings of each metaphor. The second level of analysis was cultural contextualization, in line with which the metaphors were viewed not as linguistic but also from anthropological values, Karakalpak. These values include respect for the past, leadership roles, community relations, emotional work, and connection to nature – structural elements identified in current literature on Karakalpak culture, folklore, and oral tradition.

Finally, a cross-cultural analysis of the meaning of metaphors was achieved. These metaphors were then discussed in terms of how they were indicative and supportive of cultural attitudes, specifically towards leadership, gender

roles, economic obligations, romantic expectations, and the status of women in Karakalpak society. The research examined the ways in which these metaphors condition and mirror social identity among the Karakalpak society.

### III. RESULT

Based on the analysis of three folk songs, four main themes are identified through the use of metaphor, including beauty and nobility, nature and love, the concept of time and separation, and social role and leadership. Table 1 show in detail the result of metaphorical analysis of three Karakalpak folk songs which reflect the cultural rich meanings. As mentioned earlier, the analysis of the research is focusing on the thematic analysis of the metaphors found in the folk songs, below is the detailed thematic analysis of metaphors found in the folk songs.

#### **Metaphors of Beauty and Nobility**

This section delves into the rich metaphorical expressions that portray physical attractiveness and esteemed character within Karakalpak poetic tradition. These metaphors not only highlight aesthetic values but also implicitly link external beauty with internal virtues and societal roles. For instance, phrases equating a person's words to gold or their embrace to a thousand pieces of gold suggest a conceptual framework where intrinsic worth and preciousness are intertwined. The following examples are some metaphors from the folk songs that respect the concept of beauty and nobility:

- 1 Altıńǵa qaplayıq aytqan ǵapıńdı

“Let us cover what you say in gold” (*Aqsúńgil*)

In the song “Aqsúńgil,” the metaphor “Let's cover what you say in gold” is used, which is a structural metaphor where speaking is framed in terms of gold. Aqsúńgil. The word “gold,” universally associated with wealth and purity, makes it more important than the others because Gold is rarely found. In painting the two elements together, speech and gold, the metaphor suggests that what Aqsúńgil has to say is not just any ordinary thing but rather a valuable collector's item. Here, gold is used as a framing device for the perception that speech is something valuable, rare, and worthy of reverence. Golden was the rasp because Aqsúńgil's words were important, perhaps of a great wisdom or moral influence.

**Table 1. Thematic analysis of metaphors found in Karakalpak folk songs**

Theme	Metaphor	Type of Metaphor	Song
Beauty and Nobility	Altıńǵa qaplayıq aytqan gápińdi “Let us cover what you say in gold”	Structural Metaphor	<i>Aqsúńgil</i>
	Múbárek jamalıń kórdim “I have seen your blessed beauty”	Ontological Metaphor	<i>Aqsúńgil</i>
	Mıń tilláǵa arzan deydi qushaǵı, “Your embrace is worth a thousand pieces of gold”	Structural Metaphor	<i>Aqsúńgil</i>
Nature and Love	Taqıyańdaǵı tumarıńa “Your tiara’s charm”	Ontological Metaphor	<i>Yasha páriy</i>
	Bir kóyleǵıń bardur ala “You have a dress that is multicolored”	Ontological Metaphor	<i>Yasha páriy</i>
	Biri gúldur, biri lala “One is a rose, another a tulip”	Ontological Metaphor	<i>Yasha páriy</i>
	Seyil eteli alma baǵa “Let us stroll together to the apple orchard”	Container Metaphor	<i>Yasha páriy</i>
	Shámen baylap gúller tersek “Tying our shawls together as we pick flowers”	Structural Metaphor	<i>Yasha páriy</i>
	Alma attım hawalındı, Qaytıp ózime dolandı, “I threw an apple toward your window, It circled back and returned”	Container Metaphor	<i>Qız Minayım</i>
Time, Separation, and Longing	Sen jatırsań shirt uyqıda “Your sleep is deep”	Ontological Metaphor	<i>Qız Minayım</i>
	Jambasıńa gıltiń battı “A stone has pressed into your side”	Ontological Metaphor	<i>Qız Minayım</i>
	Úshekke shıqtım jatpaǵa “I have come at dawn, not to lie down”	Structural Metaphor	<i>Qız Minayım</i>
	Koziń qıymas oyatpaǵa “I could not bear to disturb your eyes”	Ontological Metaphor	<i>Qız Minayım</i>
	Tań sarǵayıp atar boldı “The dawn is turning yellow and about to break”	Structural Metaphor	<i>Qız Minayım</i>
	Sholpan juldız batar boldı “The Venus star is about to set”	Structural Metaphor	<i>Qız Minayım</i>
	Hámmeniń yarı oyandı “Everyone’s beloved has awakened”	Ontological Metaphor	<i>Qız Minayım</i>
Social Roles, Power, and Leadership	Qara tereń urıqlını jaylaǵan “Settled the lands of the Black Teren clan”	Container Metaphor	<i>Aqsúńgil</i>
	Súriw-súriw pada malın aydaǵan “Driving herd after herd of livestock”	Ontological Metaphor	<i>Aqsúńgil</i>
	On tórt urıw jigıtlerin saylaǵan “Choosing the finest youths of the fourteen tribes”	Structural Metaphor	<i>Aqsúńgil</i>

In Karakalpak culture, there is a special respect for wise and authoritative speech, particularly when it comes from elders or public leaders. Words are never merely viewed as methods of communication but rather, and always, an embodiment of our character, experience, and moral place. Old men are highly respected for their wisdom in Karakalpak society, and their words are steeped in tradition, experience, and communal advice. The metaphor of gilding speech mirrors this social value by identifying Aqsúńgil as an

individual whose speech has power and authority. By utilizing gold as a metaphorical structure, the song associates Aqsúńgil with the honor given to wise speakers in the culture—her words are to be respected and honored.

Also, in nomadic cultures such as the Karakalpaks, language plays a crucial role in maintaining unity, preserving traditions, and instructing younger generations. It is the responsibility of old people and leaders to pass down wisdom through words, which are frequently

seen as a medium for keeping the community's values and identity. The metaphor of gold-sheathed speech subtly implies that there are certain voices—those filled with wisdom, rectitude, and moral clarity—that we must learn to treasure. By adopting this metaphor, the song highlights the social significance of language as a means of preserving wisdom and guiding the community.

2 Miń tillága arzan deydı qusháđı

“Your embrace is worth a thousand pieces of gold”  
(*Aqsúńgil*)

The metaphor “Your embrace is worth a thousand pieces of gold” from the song *Aqsúńgil* is a structural metaphor, where the act of embracing, typically a gesture of affection and care, is measured against the value of gold. By comparing *Aqsúńgil*'s embrace to a thousand pieces of gold, the metaphor highlights the immeasurable worth of her emotional warmth and nurturing qualities. Gold, being a universal symbol of wealth, rarity, and value, is used here to emphasize that the affection and care she offers through her embrace surpass material wealth in importance. It is a way of conveying that love, compassion, and emotional support hold a priceless and inestimable value within the context of human relationships.

The reference to gold in the metaphor reflects the honor and irreplaceability of *Aqsúńgil*'s hug, showing that love and intimacy are priceless when compared with material wealth. Sterling silver is often used as a symbol of wealth and status, but the pun on these images turns it into something much more valuable: emotional labor. This transformation embraces a form of physical affection into an intense, almost sacred expression of social and emotional bonding. According to the Karakalpak tradition, similar to that of other people in Central Asia, women's responsibility for preserving emotional communication in family and society is an important one. They are the main caregivers, nurturers, and emotional supports. A woman's warm embrace is seen as fundamental to the social cohesion of her community, for it represents warmth, security, and love. This metaphor thus conveys the social investment in women as emotive and nurturing agents. Embracing in games is a transformative act that not only offers physical comfort but also emotional healing and support.

Additionally, gold is closely tied to social

status, power, and wealth in Karakalpak culture. Through equating an embrace with gold, the song positions emotional care as a form of cultural capital, or something that has at least equal, and potentially more, value than material wealth. This metaphor workshops us into the assumption that women's emotional labor is essential to community survival and highly appreciated, such as material wealth (which may be valued far more in other scenarios), but not what you might traditionally expect.

3 Taqıyańdađı tumarıńa

“Your tiara's charm” (*Yasha páriy*)

The metaphor ‘Your tiara's charm’ in the song ‘*Yasha páriy*’ is an example of an ontological metaphor, describing a physical object (a tiara) that assumes a symbolic function. The tiara is more than a piece of decorative jewellery; it becomes a source of spiritual or physical power, indicating the magical or divine nature of the loved one. “Charm” implies that the tiara is more than just physically strong, that it has some otherworldly attraction; it asserts the amount of his beloved's beauty and presence is extraordinary, beyond those of the mortal realm: (ordinary) reality. This metaphor represents the tiara as more than a thing that makes a beautiful, attractive person; it is described as a symbol of a potent, quasi-ineffable force - emerging from the beloved and transmogrifying her into something greater than plain physical attraction. The metaphor serves to communicate how the beloved is not merely a beautiful woman, but a highly esteemed member of her community, honored and respected by all. Add to this that the tiara is used as a “charm”, and it suggests that her influence is also of a magical variety.

The tiara, in this figurative sense, embodies the cultural value of nobility and leadership in Karakalpak society. Beauty and Wisdom in Karakalpak Culture, like many Central Asian cultures, were embodied in beautiful women who possessed knowledge, which in turn conferred power and respect. The women are not only obligated to look after and care for their families, but also to serve as leaders and influencers. The tiara symbolizes the dual nature of a woman: on one hand, she nurtures and cares for her family, and on the other, she leads boldly in her social relationships. Women are typically the emotional and social ties that bind. They are valued for the

balance they seem to achieve in nurturing and leading, and what they do appears to affect not only their families but also society as a whole.

### Metaphors of Nature and Love

Another important theme from the metaphor analysis of the folk songs is the relationship between nature and love, which is prevalent in the song lyrics. This conceptualization frequently employs natural elements like flowers, animals, and celestial bodies to articulate the profound emotional experiences associated with love and beauty. This approach aligns with broader cultural patterns in which natural phenomena are consistently used to metaphorically express complex human emotions, such as the suffering often associated with love. Here are some examples from the song lyrics:

4 Biri güldür, biri lala

“One is a rose, another a tulip” (*Yasha páriy*)

The metaphor “There is a rose, there is a tulip” from the song *Yasha páriy* is an ontological metaphor in which two kinds of flowers (the rose and the tulip), symbolizing the beloved’s beauty and virtues, stand for... It is well-known that roses and tulips are symbols of beauty, purity, and procreativity. The comparison really adds to idealizing and glorifying the beloved as a perfect vision of beauty. All of this and more is implied when such flowers are employed, meaning the beloved must be graceful, elegant, and fecund beyond everyday standards, to special, even “holy” levels.

In this metaphor, the rose and tulip represent the purity, beauty, and fertility that are commonly associated with timeless nature. The rose is commonly seen as the ultimate representation of love, desire, and beauty—expressing the full intensity and nuanced complexity of the beloved’s appeal. The tulip, with its hard, harsh charm and beauty filled with color, offers an image of grace and resurrection. These flowers together seem to represent the harmony between passionate love (the rose) and tender growth (the tulip), symbolizing that the beloved is composed of both: emotional intensity and fragile beauty. Flowers have long been metaphors for beauty and life in many cultures, particularly in the Karakalpak culture, where nature is highly valued for its abundance and fertility. In Karakalpak custom, flowers symbolize life, rebirth, and the phases of nature. The rose and tulip metaphor welds the beloved to nature’s

most precious gifts, representing purity, life force, and emotional bounty. Like a flower that blossoms and blooms with the seasons, perhaps the beloved is seen as part of this bigger cycle of nature -- an embodiment of creation and transformation. This relationship between the love interest and nature mirrors the cultural significance of romantic relationships, in which beauty, love, and progress are deeply intertwined with the natural world’s blossoming.

In Karakalpak society, flowers are not only emblematic of natural beauty but also of fertility and life force. The rose and the tulip in this metaphor serve as a reminder that she is not only beautiful but also that her presence contributes to the growth and life of those around her. The rose, with its profound erotic connotations of love and passion, and the tulip, with its gentler reminder of birth and new life, express the depth to which the beloved impacts the emotional and spiritual experience of community. Moreover, the metaphor resonates with the beloved’s beauty by drawing on life cycles and seasons that are deeply significant in Karakalpak culture. The cycle of death, decay, and rebirth that occurs with the changing seasons reflects our human lives and loves. Here, likening the beloved unto flowers is helpful in that it naturalizes her beauty, as well as the love she elicits, suggesting to us a renewal and revivification of life. As flowers that bloom in spring and wither in autumn, the metaphor implies that even when the beloved’s beauty passes away, it is not for long: its real roots are sustained by the eternal seasons of nature and life.

5	Seyil eteli alma bağa
	“Let us stroll together to the apple orchard” ( <i>Yasha páriy</i> )

The metaphor “Let us walk to the apple orchard” as found in the song *Yasha páriy* is a container metaphor where the apple orchard acts as an abstract space standing for love and unity.” The orchard, symbolically as a container, metaphorically is where love can grow, thrive, and be nurtured. Narratively, the orchard is more than a specific location; it embodies potential for shared experience and mutual care between them as lovers. The walk into the orchard is literal and symbolic, a journey on foot that reflects the slowly unfolding nature of love - like fruit trees, it takes time, patience, and mutual care to bear the best

fruit.

Here, the orchard serves as a metaphor for the natural world and its seasons of growth and decline. Just as an orchard is a place where fruit trees grow and produce fruit over time, love is presented to us as something that cannot be produced overnight but rather takes more than just care to nurture through patience and waiting. This figurative language helps simplify the idea that love needs to grow, just as plants do, so it can be applied in real life to developing a relationship. In Karakalpak tradition, gardens are considered blessed and have boundless space. Orchards symbolize life and nourishment, providing food, shelter, and happiness to the community. They are powers of fruitfulness, richness, and food where people and their families can eat from their abundance once more. With a metaphor of the orchard for love, “The song reflects the idea that culturally we believe love to grow and flourish with nurturing over time, much like nature. The metaphor also represents the integration of earth and human life in Karakalpak culture. Orchards are not merely places; they are elements of an ongoing natural system in which growth and transformation never stop. This repetitive cycle mimics the dynamics of love that develops and evolves over time. Just as the Fruit Trees in an Orchard experience a season of development, blossoming, and the offering of fruit, so love has its stages of growth, which can be likened to maturity in relationship to Harvest.

#### 6 Shámen baylap güller tersek

“Tying our shawls together as we pick flowers” (*Yasha páriy*)

The metaphor “Tying our shawls together as we pick flowers” from *Yasha páriy* is a structural metaphor, where the act of tying shawls together while picking flowers is used to symbolize a deeper partnership and shared effort. The metaphor suggests the harmony, interdependence, and joint purpose that exists when not only do you work together to build a labour of love, but also to create life. Presentational: The tying together of the shawls represents ties, showing that relationships and romantic partners are formed through two people working together. Picking flowers is the way to go, and just like when you pick flowers, work together in a relationship. Tying shawls together represents two individuals joined in this activity, their lives intertwined through something shared. The shawls

are not infrequently also part of every person’s traditional attire, and as such, they symbolize the identities of the two individual parties. Something mentioned in common gives the promise that, however the two may differ outwardly, a common work, both for love’s sake and character’s, has been commenced between them. Put the same work into it. This act of togetherness and teamwork signifies that you’re both in the relationship together, and that means equally.

The metaphor is deeply relevant to Karakalpak cultural values, an inherent concern for community and collective responsibility. In Karakalpak culture, however, collaboration of people is not just the key to harmony in personal relationships but also to communal success. Relationality, whether between family members, lovers, or friends, is seen as interdependent, such that the actions of one serve and benefit the group. Flower picking, although the image it inspires is commonly associated with beauty and enjoyment, also requires time, effort, and perseverance. It suggests, in other words, that relationships are full of pleasure and joy, yet also require some practical work. A relationship is just like a garden or an orchard; it can never flourish if you don’t nurture it. This straightforward Karakalpak conception of love and community coincides with the conviction that such experiences are not mere states to be acted upon but must be actively formed and sustained. Within a broader Karakalpak social context, the metaphor embodies the cultural significance of unity in both family and community affairs. This image of helping, working together, and holding someone up with the body is a metaphorical expression that serves to support the idea that sharing in mutual understanding is what people do when they’re falling in love; it’s also what holds a community together.

#### **Metaphors of Time, Separation, and Longing**

The section examines Karakalpak poetry as metaphor model of categorization and how time, space, and the psychological experience of longing are categorized through various metaphors in them and what implications they bring about on human relationships as well as on love. These powerful metaphors frequently utilize natural occurrences and daily experiences to express the bitter-sweetness of absence and hope for reunion that still remains. The following examples shows how time and psychological experience is concoded in

the form of metaphor which deliver through folk songs.

7 Jambasña giltiñ battı

“A stone has pressed into your side” (Qız Minayım)

The metaphor “A stone has pressed into your side” from *Qız Minayım* is an ontological metaphor, where the stone symbolizes an obstacle—whether physical, emotional, or psychological—that separates the lovers. The stone is not merely a physical object, but it represents the heaviness and difficulty that separation imposes on the relationship. In this metaphor, the stone acts as a symbol of obstruction, representing the challenges that prevent the lovers from being united. The stone (physical object) is a firm, solid matter literally bearing down on the beloved with pressure applied to their lover, indicating that separation and heartache are not ‘light’ affairs nor easily overcome, but heavy on both weights. It represents the emotional baggage and unfulfilled desire they both feel. The hardness of the stone adds to the metaphor, giving form to this emotional or psychological weight, representing the obstacles and challenges in interconnectedness between people who are isolated by situation, distance, or misunderstanding.

In Karakalpak culture, the stone has traditionally symbolized power, patience, and obstacles. Stones are usually regarded as being impenetrable and solid, like the troubles men face during their lives. The symbol of the stone that will push on the beloved’s side is indicative of a cultural tradition that suggests life, including love, must be endured, fought for, and overcome with determination. This metaphor is also used to emphasize the importance of persistence in life, which is a value that has traditionally been central to relationships within Karakalpak society. Couples are often experienced as a struggle, filled with frustration and setbacks. The stone signifies all the emotional and physical resistance that lovers encounter in being with each other. If the stone causes an obstacle in the path to move forward and obstructs further action, the metaphor implies that love can also be hindered by external or internal circumstances. The metaphor is that (like sure), true love, just like true resilience, is not about stumbling on the stones but rising and moving on notwithstanding the weight of its separateness.

8 Tañ sarǵayıp atar boldı

“The dawn is turning yellow and about to break” (Qız Minayım)

The metaphor “The dawn is turning yellow and about to break” in *Qız Minayım* is a structural metaphor, where the image of the dawn measures separation towards union. Dawn, which corresponds to the hour right before daybreak, is a time of transformation, so by extension, a night love meet-up.” In that metaphor, dawn is a clear representation of rebirth (even as a new day begins). The voice of morning, yellow and on the verge, describes dawn slowly dawning as morning/s a moment filled with anticipation. The breaking of the dawn signifies that their separation is coming to an end and that they are close to being reunited. In metaphor, the point is that love, like nature, works in cycles, and even its darkest and most difficult chapters must eventually yield to brighter, happier times.

As the night transitions today in Karakalpak culture, it’s not just a new day dawning. The metaphor, like the cycle of night and day, expresses this cultural conviction that even the most painful or devastating separations are finite and that renewal is a matter of “dawn.” The natural day and night are always being born afresh, rather like the coming and going of lovers, and the accompanying trust that, however long you are apart or in conflict, there will come a time of reunion. Therefore, the breaking of dawn is an emblem of both hope and renewal, and by extension, its corollary, so should any separation between the lovers end just as does night with a new beginning by day, culminating clearly into a new stage for this pair.

Additionally, the dawning of a new day is a symbol of hope and a fresh start. For the Karakalpak culture, dawn is a chance to start anew, restore life, and move forward. The metaphor suggests that one can have a “new” beginning and return to older approaches, thereby forgiving past events so that they can be collectively revisited once more. The metaphor of the morning turning yellow and ripe with dawn emerging suggests that this new start is finally here. In other words, there’s a sense of expectation and excitement in the air, representing love as nature continually moves towards regeneration and progress.

9 Sholpan juldız batar boldı

“The Venus star is about to set” (*Qız Minayım*)

The metaphor “The Venus star is about to set” from *Qız Minayım* is a structural metaphor, where the Venus star, a symbol of love and beauty, represents the fleeting nature of time and the urgency of reunion before the opportunity slips away. In this metaphor, time is personified as Venus, the goddess of love and beauty (associated with time in various cultures), who tears at him by pulling his hours out. The Venus star, “about to set”, as an association with reunification, means that the time of joining is running out. The placement of Venus implies the flow of time, not only the setting of the star at dusk, but also that one’s chance for love or reunion is diminishing with each passing day. The metaphor emphasizes temporal impermanence; such moments of contact, just as the planet Venus itself fades in time (vanishing as it rises), cannot be grasped directly before vanishing into history.

In Karakalpak culture, time is considered of the essence and not to be wasted, especially in matters of love. The metaphor corresponds to the Karakalpaks’ belief that one should seize opportunities and not let such moments slip through one’s fingers. The clock of Venus is around to remind us that time is fleeting, that it waits for no one, and that love also has its moments when you must jump on the chance or let them slip by, never to return. This value of our culture seems to promote that which is immediate and active, indicating love as something to seize with both hands and revel in here and now before it disappears into the ever-spun web of time. Period The image of Venus setting is deeply associated with time in Karakalpak culture, and the metaphor implies that love must be pursued before it vanishes. The metaphor highlights the fleeting nature of time; those moments of connection, like Venus in the sky, are transient and must be seized before they fade into the past.

Besides, Venus, as an astronomical object, is eternally linked to love and beauty, including the Karakalpak. The metaphor is one that resonates with a cultural awareness of the stars and their patterns, especially of Venus as it traced its path across the night sky, personified into a human-like form. Venus, as a representation of the passage of time, also resonates with a Karakalpak sensibility that reflects on fading life as a natural phenomenon, and impermanence is an integral part. This link brings into focus the idea that, like how day turns to night, relationships change and all. The backdrop of Venus conveys the cultural acknowledgment

of the fleetingness of time and one’s necessity to recognize and act upon love before it is engulfed by time.

### **Metaphors of Social Roles, Power, and Leadership**

Another key finding coming out of the analysis are the ways by which metaphorical language configures understandings about social hierarchies, gender roles and order in society in terms of governance and leadership using frequently conceptual metaphor resources to express these complex social relationships. They frequently tend to borrow terms from domains they are familiar with, such as kinship, nature or warfare to articulate more abstract concepts of authority and community organization. According to the metaphorical analysis of metaphors in karakalpak folk songs, some core conceptual models behind them reflect the operator’s psychological attitude toward power, leadership and social system.

10 Qara tereñ urıqlını jaylağan

“Settled the lands of the Black Teren clan” (*Aqsúñgil*)

The metaphor “Settled the lands of the Black Teren clan” from *Aqsúñgil* is a container metaphor, where the land symbolizes responsibility, power, and heritage. The land is not only a physical territory; here, it encapsulates the historical and cultural heritage of the Black Teren clan. In the metaphor, the land is a vessel that cradles the values and customs of the Black Teren clan. The land cradles the cultural heritage, traditions, and responsibilities that have been passed on to them by their ancestors as far back as they can recall. Through colonization, *Aqsúñgil* is took root and passed on her people’s culture and values. The land also becomes a metaphor for legacy and responsibility, and *Aqsúñgil* is the guardian of that responsibility.

In Karakalpak society, the cultural association with this metaphor extends down to a belief in the importance of ancestry and tradition. In Karakalpak culture, land is not viewed as a resource but is inextricably linked to one’s obligations and responsibilities within the community. The metaphor draws attention to the fact that land, in a physical sense, and space, in an anthropological sense, are also symbolic, for their proper tending is indicative of a human being’s duty to maintain and protect the cultural memory, lifestyle, and worldview of their community. Among the

Karakalpaks, being put in charge of land represents a significant moral obligation. The one who is going to “settle or claim” has the responsibility of taking care not only of the land itself, but also that the old traditions, beliefs, and legacy left by their ancestors are preserved. Here Aqsúngil’s settlement of the land associates her not with the various beings red but rather with leaders and elders who are responsible for leading, guiding, and protecting their people. The metaphor is that it’s not just about being in control of a physical space, but also about protecting the collective heritage and ensuring that future generations flourish.

- 11 Súriw-súriw pada malin aydağan  
“Driving herd after herd of livestock” (Aqsúngil)

The metaphor “Driving herd after herd of livestock” from *Aqsúngil* is an ontological metaphor, where livestock is used to represent not only material wealth but also the ongoing effort required to sustain the community. The act of driving multiple herds signifies the continuous responsibility of caring for the community’s material and economic well-being. The metaphor of livestock is an ontological one because it frames wealth and sustenance in concrete terms. Livestock is not just an object of wealth; it represents the lifeblood of the community, the source of food, clothing, and economic stability. By driving herds of livestock, Aqsúngil is depicted as someone who not only protects and preserves the community’s material resources but also actively nurtures them.

Among the Karakalpaks, animals are an important symbol of wealth and life itself. The metaphor of driving and herding these animals reflects cultural investment in certain animals, most of which are raised for food—cattle, camels, and horses, are crucial not just as objects that sustain life but as symbols of wealth. The ownership of cattle is closely tied to status, wealth, and the ability to feed a family or village. Here, the metaphor projects Aqsúngil’s role as a provider and leader: someone who takes care of the community’s needs so that they may flourish. The archetypal association of cattle with wealth among the Karakalpak people is so deeply ingrained in daily life. Herding is more than an occupation. It is a culture that epitomizes self-reliance and longevity. In Karakalpak society, it is common for one’s wealth and economic security to be tied to the size of one’s flocks. The metaphor thus

highlights the importance of Aqsúngil in sustaining the economic welfare of her people, arguing that she is both a spiritual and material leader. She is not only a caretaker of wealth but also a leader who ensures that the community’s economic base remains strong and prosperous.

- 12 On tórt urıw jigitlerin saylağan  
“Choosing the finest youths of the fourteen tribes”  
(*Aqsúngil*)

The metaphor “Choosing the finest youths of the fourteen tribes” from *Aqsúngil* is a structural metaphor, where the act of choosing is framed as a decision-making process that has a significant, long-lasting impact on the community. This metaphor positions Aqsúngil as a wise and influential leader, responsible for selecting individuals who will shape the future of her people. In this metaphor, the act of choosing symbolizes more than just picking individuals; it represents leadership, responsibility, and foresight. By selecting the “finest youths,” Aqsúngil is shown as someone who has the vision and wisdom to identify individuals who will serve the community well in the future. The metaphor elevates Aqsúngil’s decision-making process, indicating that her choices are not made lightly but are crucial to the well-being and prosperity of the community. The metaphor also reflects the Karakalpak cultural value of leadership and wisdom, which are highly prized in this society. Leaders are expected to be not only strong and capable but also wise, discerning, and thoughtful in their decisions. The metaphor emphasizes that leadership is not just about holding power but about making decisions that will benefit the community in the long term. By choosing the finest youths, Aqsúngil demonstrates her commitment to the future, ensuring that the next generation is prepared to take on the responsibility of leadership. This reflects the Karakalpak belief in the importance of educating and grooming future leaders who can carry forward the community’s traditions and values.

Furthermore, the metaphor emphasizes the interconnectedness of the Karakalpak people, with the reference to “the fourteen tribes” symbolizing the broader social structure of the community. The act of choosing from among these tribes underscores the idea that leadership in Karakalpak culture is not just about one individual or family but is a communal responsibility that affects the entire social fabric. The metaphor suggests that the

unity and strength of the community depend on the careful selection of leaders who can guide the people in harmony with one another.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The research into the terms of metaphors in the Karakalpak folk songs *Aqsúngil*, *Yasha páriy*, and *Qız Minayım* indicates that there is a deep interaction between language and culture since metaphors are used as instruments to encode and propagate key cultural values as well as social patterns. In these metaphors, we see how the Karakalpak people draw on metaphors to discuss core issues of identity, leadership, and emotional bonds. This study is not only revealing for metaphors in Karakalpak culture but also gives more insight into wider issues involved in ethnolinguistic research on the intersection between language, consciousness, and social behavior.

##### Cultural Symbols and Identity

The symbolic use of land, animals, and nature highlights the significance of inheritance, social structure, and leadership in Karakalpak life. In *Aqsúngil*, the land is not simply a physical space; it represents duty, inheritance, and cultural permanence. This is a clear-cut case of metaphors constructing the self in culture. The figure of *Aqsúngil* also repositions herself as caretaker of her family's past, present, and future, as it were. In ethnolinguistics, this type of metaphor reflects the ethno-conceptualization of humans interrelating with the land as a cultural memory and means of upkeep (Martinez et al., 2022; Rusho, 2018; Zabadi et al., 2025). The "settling" of the land metaphorically links *Aqsúngil* to leadership positions that reinforce the validity of preserving cultural identity, and reinforcing the cultural value placed on territoriality as a symbol of sovereignty and continuity.

The figure of speech "the herding of herd after herd of camels" also conveys the cultural significance of wealth and food. Among the Karakalpak, whose society is agricultural and herding-based, wealth and stability are symbolized by livestock. Ethnolinguistically, this metaphor highlights the interdependency between the natural environment and the social organization of the community (Benavides, 2013; Kerven et al., 2021). Livestock, as a symbol of wealth, resonates not only as a form of capital but also as a shared resource to

ensure thriving communities and social stability. As a metaphor, it is culturally relevant, linking economic survival to community responsibility, a sentiment not lost on the people of Karakalpakstan.

##### Power and Leadership in Karakalpak Society

The imagery of "taking the best young men from the fourteen tribes" in *Aqsúnqul* immediately resonates with Karakalpak notions of leadership. Rather, selection is presented as doing critical work – implying that leadership in Karakalpak society is not just about individual power, but also the capacity to make decisions with a positive, long-term impact on the health of the community. It makes sense for the wise ruler, a quality highly valued in the Karakalpak tradition. Ethnolinguistically speaking, this metaphor serves as a social script that conveys messages about leadership and governance from one generation to the next through language. It underscores the importance of intergenerational value transmission and choosing leaders who can be representative and effective as world leaders (Garfield et al., 2020; Kelly & Nicholson, 2021; Schönpflug, 2001; Trommsdorff, 2008).

The song posits that leadership should not just consist of providing good examples and guidance; leaders must also carry with them the cultural obligation to select only those who will maintain their society's values. By placing *Aqsúngil* in the role of person making these decisions, the song underscores her status as a wise and strategic leader whose decisions determine the community's future direction. This reflects the ethnolinguistic metaphor of language as power, as the selected words and symbols in the metaphor position *Aqsúngil* within a system of authority and responsibility from the perspective of his audience. This is not just a political form of leadership; it is also symbolic, with moral weight.

##### Metaphor as Cultural Preservation

The metaphors in these songs do more than expand the poetic landscape; they serve as cultural instruments of value and normalization. It is through metaphors such as "tiara's charm" (in *Yasha páriy*), a multicolored dress representing the beauty of a woman, and an apple orchard as a symbol of love and care shared that the songs encapsulate cultural presuppositions related to beauty, romance, and oneness. The metaphors ethnolinguistically signify a culture that values the interplay of the natural world, individual, and

community (Baránková, 2025; Didi & Chi, 2020; Ivanova et al., 2021; Li, 2021). The multi-colored dress may be compared to the Karakalpak notion of beauty, as it is characterized by dynamism and variability – it is tradition itself that changes, much like nature. This metaphor draws on the concepts of diversity and complexity in Karakalpak culture, emphasizing the importance of a world where beauty is not static but something that needs to be nurtured over time.

Moreover, the image of “walking in pairs to the apple orchard” also shows that the culture values fostering others’ experiences and building connections. In traditional Karakalpak homes, orchards are considered sacred places and symbols of abundance, peace, and community care. The apple orchard as a container of love is a metaphor that emphasizes mutual nurturing, a theme central to Karakalpak ideas of family and community. Ethnolinguistically, this metaphor reinforces the idea that love and emotional labor are critical to sustaining not just individual relationships but also the broader social fabric (Al-Khaza’leh & Alzubi, 2022; Didi & Chi, 2020; Li, 2021; Perović & Vuković-Stamatović, 2021).

### Metaphor and Time

The metaphorical use of time in *Qız Minayım* with phrases such as “The Venus star is about to set” and “The dawn is turning yellow and about to break” highlights the fleeting nature of love and separation. From an ethnolinguistic perspective, these metaphors of time underscore the cultural perception of temporality in Karakalpak society. Time is often viewed as something precious and ephemeral, especially in relation to love and human connection (Al-Abdullah, 2020; Al-Jarf, 2023; Sultonkulov & Mamadjanova, 2024). The metaphors suggest that opportunities for emotional connection, much like the setting of Venus or the breaking of dawn, are temporary and must be seized before they vanish. This reflects a cultural understanding of impermanence and the need to act decisively in matters of the heart, which is a strong cultural norm in Karakalpak society.

The findings of this analysis carry significant implications for our understanding of the ethnolinguistic relationship between language and culture. They reveal how metaphors are not only tools for aesthetic expression but also cultural constructs that encapsulate the values

and worldviews of a society (Lai, 2018; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). In Karakalpak culture, the metaphors examined in these folk songs serve to reinforce and preserve cultural identity, highlighting the deep connections between leadership, community responsibility, and romantic ideals. These metaphors also emphasize the cultural continuity of the Karakalpak people, as they use language to convey messages about heritage, family structures, and the role of women in their society.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate the significance of ethnolinguistics in explaining how metaphor functions as a mediating force between language and culture. By dissecting metaphors, it becomes possible to decode how social roles, values, and norms are embedded in language, influencing the way people perceive and interact with their environment. This method illustrates how our collective consciousness is formed, and individual action is directed within culture by the force of metaphor. The current study also fills a void in ethnolinguistic studies by addressing the Karakalpak language and its cultural metaphors, which, for the most part, are not prevalent within the general body of ethnolinguistics literature. Through the study of these folk songs, this study provides a novel approach to grasping language and culture in Central Asia. The results of the study reveal the volume and richness of Karakalpak metaphors, which serve as a cultural instrument for preserving the value system in society and transmitting knowledge. Moreover, this study develops the theory of metaphor as a form of cultural transmission; that is, it proposes that metaphors are not merely linguistic adornments but social tools for framing ideologies and worldviews. This study serves as a corpus grounding for further investigation into ethnolinguistic metaphors in other minority languages and communities, and an example of the ways in which metaphor can serve as a (socio)linguistic-cultural construct.

Although this analysis provided us with significant insights, there are limitations that need to be acknowledged. The lack of theoretical frameworks and the limitation in sample size also indicate that the metaphors in Karakalpak folk songs have not yet been sufficiently explored empirically; thus, much more work needs to be done with a larger number of songs (or oral traditions, proverbs) to provide a comprehensive description

of Karakalpak metaphors. Moreover, the meaning of metaphors is inherently subjective, and cultural differences among members of the Karakalpak community may influence people's understanding of them. Consequently, the results reported here should be viewed in the context of a broader conversation taking place within ethnolinguistics.

It is thus recommended to use this dataset as a basis for future studies dealing with ethnolinguistic metaphors in other types of Karakalpak literature (poetry, oral texts, tales, etc.). Further research of this nature would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the grounds on which metaphors are used to articulate and maintain cultural values across different contexts. Furthermore, contrastive comparisons of Karakalpak metaphors with metaphorical expressions in other Turkic languages or Central Asian cultures may provide valuable insights into common cultural components and different language-based construction patterns that influence the application of metaphors in their societies.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study has explored the role of metaphors in Karakalpak folk songs, focusing on three representative songs: *Aqsúńgil*, *Yasha páriy*, and *Qız Minayım*. Through a qualitative ethnolinguistic approach, the research has demonstrated how metaphors serve as powerful linguistic devices that reflect and reinforce the core values, social structures, and cultural practices of the Karakalpak community. The analysis revealed that the metaphor in these songs was not simply an instrument of style, but rather it is connected to the cultural representation of identity, leadership, gender relations, and emotional connections between people within Karakalpak society. The link between metaphor and culture was further illuminated through an examination of gendered metaphors, which not only reflected the position of women in Karakalpak society but also revealed these expectations. In these metaphors, the respect for women's dual roles as leaders and nurturers is emphasized, further strengthening their centrality in the community. This mirrors a more general cultural norm in Karakalpak society, where the importance of social life and relations, advocacy for one another, and emotional work are seen as

essential to social cohesion. The research offered some rigor and interesting contributions, but examining only three folk songs has its drawbacks. A more in-depth study of a larger oral text corpus, such as proverbs or narratives, could provide a broader view of the metaphors employed in different genres of Karakalpak culture. Moreover, future research might investigate shifts in the meaning of gendered metaphors under current Karakalpak circumstances, where gender roles are changing at a rapid pace.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

Informed consent was granted from all respondents, and their identities had been on the private and confidential files. This study fully complies with the ethical standards and publication guidelines of Jurnal Arbitrer

## CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

**K. G. Makhsetdullaevna**, contributed to the conceptualization, design, and analysis of cultural metaphors, with a focus on Karakalpak culture.

**T. S. Minajatdinovna**, led the literature review, developed research questions, and provided insights into cultural contextualization.

**S. R. Muratbayevich**, assisted in data collection, metaphor categorization, and cross-cultural analysis.

**A. A. Jabbarbergenovich**, contributed cultural insights, refined the analysis methodology, and supported final interpretation.

**U. G. Kadyrbaevna**, focused on synthesizing results and integrating findings into broader cultural and cognitive discussions.

**O. R. Romanovna**, assisted in data analysis, final editing, and ensured clarity in the manuscript.

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The authors declare no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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