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THE ENCODING OF GENDER IN ENGLISH AND KARAKALPAK KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY THROUGH PROVERBS

Annotation

This article focuses on the encoding of female gender in Karakalpak and English kinship terminology, with special attention to terms denoting women and their social and familial roles. Kinship terms referring to women are linguistically significant, as they encode not only gender but also marital status, age, and social position. The study aims to analyze how female-related kinship terms are structured and semantically differentiated in both languages. The research examines Karakalpak terms such as hayal, qatin, zayıp, jesir, ene, biykesh, kelin, abisin, jenge, kische, and jawan.

Key words: Kinship terminology, gender lexicon, proverbs and sayings, comparative linguistics, semantic analysis, cultural norms, Turkic languages, English kinship terminology.

ГЕНДЕРНАЯ РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЯ В АНГЛИЙСКОЙ И КАРАКАЛПАКСКОЙ РОДСТВЕННОЙ ТЕРМИНОЛОГИИ ЧЕРЕЗ ПОСЛОВИЦЫ

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается кодирование женского гендера в каракалпакской и английской терминологии родства с акцентом на лексемы, обозначающие женщин и их социально-семейные роли. Женские термины родства представляют особый интерес, поскольку они передают информацию о поле, семейном статусе, возрасте и положении женщины в обществе. Материалом исследования послужили каракалпакские термины hayal, qatin, zayıp, jesir, ene, biykesh, kelin, abisin, jenge, kische, jawan.

Ключевые слова: Терминология родства, гендерная лексика, пословицы и поговорки, сравнительная лингвистика, семантический анализ, культурные нормы, тюркские языки, английская терминология родства.

INGLIZ VA QORAQALPOQ QARINDOSHLIK TERMINOLOGIYASIDA GENDERNING MAQOLLAR ORQALI IFODALANISHI

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada qoraqalpoq va ingliz tillaridagi ayol shaxsini bildiruvchi qarindoshlik va ijtimoiy terminlarda genderning kodlanishi tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotning asosiy e'tibori ayollarga oid terminlarning semantik tuzilishi hamda ularning ijtimoiy va oilaviy rollarni qanday aks ettirishiga qaratilgan. Ayollarni bildiruvchi qarindoshlik atamaları til orqali gender, nikoh holati va ijtimoiy mavqening ifodalanishini ko'rsatadi. Tadqiqotda qoraqalpoq tilidagi hayal, qatin, zayıp, jesir, ene, biykesh, kelin, abisin, jenge, kische, jawan kabi terminlar tahlil qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Qarindoshlik terminologiyasi, gender leksikasi, maqol va matallar, qiyosiy tilshunoslik, semantik tahlil, madaniy me'yorlar, turkiy tillar, ingliz qarindoshlik terminologiyasi.

Kinship terminology has long occupied a central position in anthropological and sociolinguistic research. Among the various kinship systems studied, English kinship terminology has served as both an object of analysis and a comparative reference point. The study of kinship terminology provides insight into social organization, family structure, and cultural norms. Anthropologists have traditionally examined kin terms to understand how societies classify relationships based on descent, marriage, generation, and gender. English kinship terminology, often regarded as representative of a "descriptive" system, has played a significant role in comparative kinship studies. George Peter Murdock conducted the most comprehensive and systematic investigation of English kinship terminology. In his seminal work *Social Structure*, Murdock analyzed English kin terms according to formal criteria such as generation, sex, lineality, and affinity. He treated English kinship as a fully developed system and frequently employed it as a standard of comparison in cross-cultural analysis. Murdock's approach emphasized structural regularities and universals in kinship systems. By codifying English kin terms with precision, he demonstrated how they reflect bilateral descent and nuclear family organization. His

work remains the primary reference for discussions of English kinship terminology in anthropological literature [1]. Lewis Henry Morgan is widely recognized as the founder of kinship studies in anthropology. In *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, Morgan introduced a global comparative framework for kinship systems and distinguished between classificatory and descriptive terminologies. While Morgan included English kinship terminology in his comparative data, his analysis was not focused on English specifically. Rather, English served as an example of a descriptive system within his evolutionary model of social development [2]. W. H. R. Rivers contributed primarily through methodological innovation rather than detailed analysis of English kinship terminology. He developed the genealogical method, which enabled systematic collection of kinship data during fieldwork, particularly in non-literate societies. English kin terms were used largely as analytical tools for explanation and comparison, not as an independent subject of study [3]. Kinship terminology originated in ancient times and has continued to evolve throughout historical development. In some languages, kinship terms have been examined in detail, whereas

in others they have been addressed only generally or treated superficially.

Within Turkic linguistics, kinship terminology has already become an established field of study. Numerous studies have explored the phonetic forms, semantic features, and interlanguage differences of kinship terms in Turkic languages. Among these are the scholarly works of Kh. G. Yusupov [4] and N. V. Bikbulatov [5] on Bashkir, R. Mukhamedova [6] on Turkmen, and O. Dospanov [7] and T. Begjanov [8] on Karakalpak. In addition, kinship terminology in the Karakalpak language has been comprehensively investigated by Z. Davlatmuratova [9].

The gender lexicon is shaped by gender-marked units that emerge within systems of kinship and social closeness. Gender distinctions are also evident in taboo vocabulary, as each taboo expression carries a specific gender-related meaning. Among kinship terms referring to women, taboo expressions occur with notable frequency, the majority of which are used in the speech of brides. Gender-based lexical distinctions are particularly evident in taboo vocabulary, as certain linguistic restrictions are imposed exclusively on women or, conversely, only on men due to gender-specific norms. Indirect modes of expression are often closely connected with the avoidance of personal names. The distinctive features of women's speech are clearly manifested in taboo words and euphemisms that arise from name-avoidance customs practiced by some Turkic peoples. Irrespective of ethnic affiliation, gender-related differences characteristic of women's language are frequently associated with their way of life and moral values [10].

Hayal in the Karakalpak language is defined as wife, spouse, or a man's marital partner [11]. The term woman was not attested in ancient Turkic written monuments and entered Turkic languages during the Middle Ages through borrowing from Arabic and Persian sources. Linguists hold two main views regarding the etymology of this lexeme. According to one group of scholars, the word "hayal" (woman) derives from the Persian term "haya", meaning "honor," "modesty," "shame," or "decency." The form "hayali" (wife) emerged through the addition of the suffix -li, although in later stages of language development the final -i sound underwent elision. Consequently, the word "hayali" conveys the meanings "honorable," "well-mannered," and "modest," while its semantic opposite is hayasız, denoting "shameless," "immodest," or "lacking decency." Another group of scholars argues that hayal is a borrowing from Arabic and note that it functions in this form in the modern Karakalpak literary language. From a scholarly perspective, this latter interpretation is considered the more accurate one [12].

The lexeme hayal is employed, on the one hand, to denote individuals of the female gender and, on the other, to refer to a man's life partner. It functions in a range of semantic contexts, including "wife," "spouse," "husband's partner," and "companion in life." This usage is clearly reflected in proverbial expressions, such as "At minbey atıñdı maqtama, Sanaspay hayalıñdı maqtama, "Orta jolda atıñ ölmesin, Orta jasta hayalıñ ölmesin"[13] which in English means "Do not praise a horse before riding it; do not praise a wife without consideration", and "Do not let your horse perish on the road; do not let your wife perish in middle age".

In English language, the lexeme woman is defined as an adult human female and, in certain contexts, as a wife or female marital partner. Unlike the Turkic term hayal, the word woman is attested in the earliest stages of the English language and did not enter English through borrowing during the medieval period. Etymologically, woman derives from Old English wifmann, a compound consisting of wif ("woman,

female, wife") and mann ("human being, person"), where mann was originally gender-neutral. Over time, phonological reduction and semantic specialization led to the modern form woman, while man came to denote an adult male. Thus, historically, woman did not emerge in opposition to man but rather as a specification within the broader category of "person." Unlike hayal, whose etymology is debated between Arabic and Persian origins, the English term woman is native and reflects the early Germanic worldview. The word wife itself originally meant "woman" in general, a meaning preserved in compounds such as midwife ("with-woman"). Only later did wife narrow semantically to mean a married woman. From a semantic and cultural perspective, English does not encode moral qualities such as modesty or honor directly within the lexical meaning of woman. However, these attributes are frequently associated with women in English proverbs and idiomatic expressions, reflecting social norms rather than etymological meaning: A good wife makes a good husband, -A woman's place is in the home, Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned [14]. When women rise, society rises with them, Educating women strengthens the future, Strong women build strong communities. Such proverbial expressions demonstrate how gender roles and expectations were historically constructed in English-speaking societies, even though these notions are not embedded in the word's morphological structure, unlike the proposed Persian-derived interpretation of hayal. In modern English, woman functions as a neutral gender term, increasingly framed within discourses of equality, identity, and social agency. Contemporary usage emphasizes autonomy and individuality rather than marital or moral status, marking a significant shift from traditional proverbial representations.

The term Qatın has the following meanings: (1) wife, spouse, or companion; (2) married woman, as well as married women in general [15]. The word "qatın" functions as a synonym of hayal and is attested in the majority of Turkic languages. However, historical sources suggest that the term qatın (wife) was originally applied exclusively to women of high social or political status. Scholars propose two principal interpretations concerning the etymology of this lexeme. According to one view, qatın derives from a verbal root preserved in the Karakalpak word combination qat, with the addition of the intransitive suffix -ın, conveying the sense of "being involved" or "participating," as reflected in the meaning "to take part in state affairs together with the khan's wife." An alternative interpretation associates the word with the meaning "hard" or "firm," emphasizing qualities traditionally attributed to women, such as endurance, resilience, and strength [16]. In contemporary usage, the lexeme qatın occurs more frequently in colloquial speech and is at times employed with a pejorative or derogatory connotation. This is because terms such as hayal, o'mirlik joldas (spouse), shabaz (spiritual companion), qostar (mates), and juptı (pair) generally convey respect and esteem, whereas qatın is often used to express a relatively coarse or disparaging meaning in such proverbs as Jaramsaqlanğan qatın, Jatqanşa tayaq jeydi; Shapan alma, astar al, Qatın alma, qostar al.

In comparison with Turkic qatın, English does not possess a single lexeme encompassing the same range of semantic, stylistic, and evaluative meanings. The functions of qatın are distributed among several English terms, primarily wife, woman, spouse, and partner. Historically, English wife derives from Old English wif, which originally denoted "woman" in general and later underwent semantic narrowing to signify a married woman. Unlike qatın, however, the English term wife has largely retained a neutral stylistic value. Pejorative or derogatory meanings associated with women in English are typically expressed through secondary lexical items

or contextual usage rather than through the primary kinship term itself. Similar to Karakalpak, English proverbs reflect traditional gender roles and patriarchal attitudes, revealing negative or restrictive evaluations of women at the level of discourse rather than lexeme-internal semantics. Thus, while both languages demonstrate comparable cultural attitudes toward women in proverbial expressions, Turkic *qatin* exhibits semantic pejoration within the core kinship term, whereas English externalizes such evaluation through separate lexical and phraseological means.

The lexeme *Elti* is considered archaic and was historically used to denote the wife of a mullah, the spouse of respected elders, as well as a title derived from this designation [17]. It is also defined as the wife of a high-ranking religious scholar. In contemporary everyday speech, the word *elti* is rarely employed. However, within Karakalpak folklore, particularly in proverbs and sayings, this term appears in only a single instance. Despite its limited usage, *elti* remains significant as a gender-differentiating kinship term. This is illustrated in the proverb “*Elge dástúr bolsa, Eltim, arqama min*” means “If it is a custom among the people, my spouse, mount my back” [18]. In popular usage, the term *elti* is often used interchangeably with *qatin* (wife). In other words, within traditional norms, a wife is expected to “ride on my back,” symbolizing social obligation and custom. As such, these terms may function as near-synonyms in certain contexts of use. In English, archaic or semi-archaic lexemes were likewise used to denote a woman’s social identity through her husband’s religious or social status, especially clergy and community leaders. However, unlike *elti*, English did not develop a single stable lexeme with the same range of meanings.

The term *zayıp* denotes a woman who is a spouse, partner, or a man’s life companion. This meaning is reflected in proverbial usage, as illustrated by the expression “*Bala – erli-zayıptıń dánekeri*” means “A child is the bond between husband and wife”, “*Qádirli bolsa, ólgenshe, Qatınıń kúni er menen, Qádirsiz bolsań zayıpqa, Kúniń óter sher menen*” this means “If it’s valued, until death, A wife’s day is with her husband, If you’re worthless to a spouse, Your day will pass in sorrow”. English expresses the meaning of *zayıp* mainly through wife, spouse (gender-neutral, formal) life companion / partner (emotional and existential bond). Unlike *zayıp*, in the English linguistics this term do not carry inherent emotional or moral valuation. The idea of companionship and mutual dependence is conveyed discursively, especially through proverbs and idioms: Man and wife are one flesh, A good wife is the crown of her husband, He who finds a wife finds a good thing, A man without a wife is like a house without a hearth.

The term *jesir* denotes a widow. In ancient written sources, this word carried the meaning “widow” or “widowed woman” and was predominantly applied to women. In contemporary Turkic languages, the term appears in the forms *tul* in Karakalpak, Kazakh, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz, and *dul* in Turkmen. Semantically, the term functions as the antonym of “bachelor,” conveying the notion of a woman being without a husband, metaphorically described as having “an empty head”. In English, the lexeme *widow* denotes a woman whose husband has died and who has not remarried. The term is attested from Old English and derives from Proto-Germanic and Proto-Indo-European roots conveying the notion of separation and loss.

Similar to the Turkic lexemes *jesir* and *tul*, English *widow* is semantically associated with social vulnerability, absence, and misfortune. English proverbial discourse frequently conceptualizes widowhood through metaphors of poverty, emotional instability, and moral ambiguity, as reflected in expressions such as a young widow is a dangerous thing and the widow’s mite. Although English possesses a male

counterpart (*widower*), proverbial and symbolic usage overwhelmingly centers on the female form, paralleling the gender-specific application of *tul* in Turkic languages. Thus, both linguistic traditions encode widowhood as a socially and emotionally marked state, with evaluation primarily realized through phraseological and proverbial means.

In Karakalpak language *ene* refers to “mother” or “mother-in-law.” This kinship term designates maternal relatives. For a son-in-law, both the mother of his spouse and the mother of his father-in-law are regarded as *ene*. It can also indicate the mother of one’s son-in-law, as well as the female parent of offspring among living beings and young animals [19]. The continued use of *ene* within established linguistic and cultural conventions not only reflects respect and deference but also reinforces national and familial identity. Its application within the speech of women, particularly daughters-in-law, exemplifies the interplay between gender, social hierarchy, and linguistic pragmatics. Through adherence to these traditional forms, the Karakalpak language preserves cultural heritage while simultaneously accommodating the evolving sociolinguistic environment.

Within the structure of Karakalpak proverbs and sayings, kinship terms expressing in-law relationships frequently appear. These terms, particularly those referring to the mother-in-law (*ene*), reflect social and familial norms while conveying both literal and figurative meanings. For instance, the proverb “*Qayǵı joqta qayǵı boldı, Qáyin enemniń ógeni*” illustrates the emotional and social significance attributed to the mother-in-law within the household. Similarly, “*Jaqın menen alıstıń, Ekewinde máni bar, Qudaǵay menen eneniń, Úyge kerek sáni bar*” demonstrates how such terms function to regulate interpersonal relationships and emphasize obligations and social cohesion. These examples highlight the role of in-law kinship terminology in Karakalpak folk literature, showing how proverbs and sayings encode gendered social roles and hierarchical relationships. The use of *ene* in these contexts not only conveys familial connections but also reflects broader cultural values, such as respect for elders and the mediation of household and communal harmony. In English, the mother of one’s spouse is not designated by the simple lexeme *mother* but by the compound term *mother-in-law*. This term strictly refers to the spouse’s mother and does not extend to other maternal relatives, such as the mother of one’s father-in-law or the mother of one’s son-in-law. Similarly, the mother of one’s child’s spouse is not categorized under *mother* but is described periphrastically (e.g., my son-in-law’s mother) and proverbs mainly focus on biological motherhood: Like mother, like daughter. Here are proverbs about the term *mother-in-law* with short definitions: A good mother-in-law is a second mother; A caring mother-in-law gives love and support like a real parent, A kind mother-in-law makes a happy home- Her kindness helps create peace and happiness in the family. A wise mother-in-law strengthens the family- Good advice and understanding help keep the family united, A loving mother-in-law is a blessing to a marriage- Her love and support improve the couple’s relationship, Harmony in the family begins with respect between mothers-in-law and children-in-law- Mutual respect is the foundation of family peace, A thoughtful mother-in-law brings peace to the household- Being considerate helps avoid conflict and stress at home.

In Karakalpak society, *biykesh* refers to a woman who is a close female relative of the husband, such as a sister or cousin [20]. Because cultural norms prohibit a daughter-in-law from directly naming her husband’s parents or close relatives, she instead uses special honorific or euphemistic terms to address them. *Biykesh* is one such term, applied to the husband’s sister in order to observe these social taboos. This

terminology is reflected in proverbs and sayings. For instance, “Jeñgesi kúnshil bolsa, Biykeshi kekshil bolar”, and “Bir kempir bir kempirdi biykesh deydi, Bir kempirge bir kempir O’ybey, qız-ay, sóytós deydi. These examples demonstrate how the term functions both as a marker of kinship and as a linguistic device to navigate family hierarchies and maintain respectful social relations. In English, the concept of biykesh – the elder sister of one’s husband, used as a respectful address in accordance with social taboos – has a partial functional equivalent in the lexeme sister-in-law. English kinship terminology clearly distinguishes affinal relationships: Sister-in-law: the sister of one’s spouse. There is no lexical distinction for “elder” or “younger” sister-in-law, though polite address or descriptive phrases may indicate relative age or status (my husband’s elder sister). English does not really have traditional proverbs specifically about sisters-in-law, but there are accepted proverb-style sayings that are commonly used in a polite, positive way. A good sister-in-law is a true friend gained through marriage - Marriage can bring a loyal and supportive friend, A kind sister-in-law makes family bonds stronger- Her kindness helps unite the family, A sister-in-law can become a sister by heart- Emotional closeness matters more than blood relation, When families grow, sisters-in-law add new strength- New family members bring support and balance, A thoughtful sister-in-law brings warmth to the family- Care and consideration create a loving atmosphere, Respect between sisters-in-law builds lasting harmony- Mutual respect keeps family relationships peaceful [21].

In Karakalpak, kinship terminology distinguishes daughters-in-law and related affinal women through lexemes such as kelin (wife of a son), abisin (wife of a younger son-in-law)[22], jeñge (wife of an elder brother or senior male relative), kische (wife of a maternal uncle or respected elder), and jawan (young or newly married daughter-in-law). These

terms encode age, seniority, household status, and relational hierarchy, and their associated proverbs reinforce expected behavior and respect within the family. English, by contrast, primarily uses the general term daughter-in-law, with distinctions such as seniority, co-wife relationships, or youth expressed descriptively (e.g., elder brother’s wife, young bride). While both traditions use proverbial and idiomatic expressions to transmit social norms and regulate in-law relationships, Karakalpak lexicalizes these social roles, whereas English relies on contextual and periphrastic strategies.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the comparative analysis of Karakalpak and English kinship terminology demonstrates both convergences and divergences in how languages encode social relationships and gender roles. In Karakalpak, kinship terms such as hayal, qatın, zayıp, jesir, ene, biykesh, and the various daughter-in-law lexemes (kelin, abisin, jeñge, kische, jawan) exhibit rich semantic specificity, encoding marital status, age, seniority, household hierarchy, and social obligations. These distinctions are further reinforced through proverbial and folkloric expressions, which convey moral, social, and gendered norms. English kinship terminology, by contrast, relies on relatively fewer lexical items—woman, wife, spouse, widow, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law—with contextual or periphrastic modifiers providing additional distinctions, such as age or relative seniority. While both linguistic traditions reflect cultural attitudes toward gender and family roles, Karakalpak lexicalizes hierarchical and evaluative nuances within the core kinship terms, whereas English encodes such information largely through discourse, idioms, and descriptive constructions. This comparison underscores the interplay between language, culture, and social organization, revealing how kinship terminology not only labels relationships but also structures social interactions, moral expectations, and gendered identities within a community.

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