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The Connection Between Children's Play Folklore and Other Genres of Folklore

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Abstract: Children's play folklore holds a significant place within the broader framework of oral tradition, serving not only as entertainment but as a tool for education, socialization, and the transmission of cultural values. In Karakalpak folklore, children's games reflect a rich interplay between oral poetry, riddles, proverbs, fairy tales, and traditional customs. These elements are not isolated but deeply interwoven, shaping the artistic, cognitive, and ethical development of children. While various folklore genres have been studied individually, the structural and thematic connections between children's play folklore and other genres in the Karakalpak context remain underexplored. This study investigates the interrelationship between children's play songs and other folklore genres, tracing their historical roots, cultural functions, and developmental significance. The research reveals that elements such as riddles, proverbs, and mythological characters are embedded in children's games, contributing to language acquisition, moral instruction, and social adaptation. Comparative examples highlight similarities across cultures, while local forms reflect national identity and folk pedagogy. The study presents a typological analysis of Karakalpak children's play folklore and shows how these games embody ancient beliefs, labor practices, and literary traditions, acting as living archives of cultural memory. Recognizing children's play folklore as a foundational educational and cultural medium underscores the importance of preserving and integrating it into contemporary pedagogical practices, thereby sustaining national identity and transmitting cultural knowledge to future generations.

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1. Introduction

Children's play folklore forms an integral part of our people's artistic oral tradition. It is not merely a standalone genre, but a multifaceted phenomenon closely intertwined with other folklore genres. These connections enrich the content, composition, and descriptive tools of children's games, turning them into an important instrument for children's cultural development. Game songs often feature motifs reminiscent of the plots found in legends and fairy tales[1].

Children's play folklore represents a vital component of the oral tradition, deeply embedded in the cultural and historical consciousness of the Karakalpak people. More than mere entertainment, it serves as a multifaceted phenomenon that supports children's intellectual, social, and moral development. These games are intricately connected to other genres of folklore — such as riddles, proverbs, legends, and fairy tales — enriching both their

form and function. Through rhythmic language, symbolic imagery, and playful interaction, children's folklore preserves ancestral wisdom while simultaneously adapting to modern pedagogical needs. The plots and motifs found in play songs often mirror the narratives of classic folklore, blending imaginative elements with life lessons and cultural identity. As such, children's games act as living vessels of tradition, transmitting values and knowledge across generations. Studying this interconnection reveals how folklore continues to shape the worldview and character of children, forming an essential foundation for national cultural continuity and literary development[2].

2. Materials and Methods

Regarding the peculiarities of children's songs, N.Davkaraev defines: "These peculiarities are, first of all, that they are sung in a collective manner, secondly, that they are performed as folk games, and thirdly, that they are sung in a question-and-answer form, that they are thematically diverse" and divides them into genres. The scientist studies the issues of performers of children's literature in folklore, the order of performance, and their role in the development of children's thinking[3].

Q.Ayimbetov writes that "gamesful songs are children's games, and when children games as a team, some of the games are performed with poetic songs".

3. Results

Children's play folklore is often interconnected with the following folklore genres:

Oral poetry (tongue twisters, rhymes, riddles) is the most fundamental and integral part of children's play songs. Games like "Ha, t yeler, t yeler..." and "Awelemen-duwelemen" are primarily word games, and their entire composition is based on the lyrics of the song[4].

Riddles play a crucial role in children's play songs. In Karakalpak children's play folklore, games with question formats like "Where are you going?" and "What does each person like?" use riddles to develop children's intellectual abilities, teach them to think and be quick-witted. Riddles introduce an element of intellectual competition into the game and expand children's worldview[5].

- Fairy tales and legends. Many children's games take their plots or characters from folk tales. Events in fairy tales are transformed into action in games. In Russian folklore, fairy tale characters like "Kolobok", "Gusi-lebedi" and "Babka Yaga" or their plots, are widely used in games. In European folklore, fairy tales such as "Blue cap" and "Three Little Pigs" form the basis of European children's games. Fairy tales develop children's imaginative thinking abilities, moral and ethical understanding, and give meaning and depth to the game[6].
- Proverbs and sayings Proverbs and sayings are used in some children's games or in their songs. Since proverbs and sayings are an integral part of oral tradition among Turkic peoples, they can also be found in games.
- Customs and traditions In many children's games, there is a tendency to assimilate and imitate the lifestyle and traditions of the people. These games introduce children to the historical heritage and social norms of their people, forming their cultural identity[7].

Studying the connection between children's play folklore and other folklore genres requires first examining when, under what circumstances, and for what reasons these games originated.

The genesis of children's play folklore dates back to ancient times and is based on several primary sources. In ancient times, people worshipped the forces of nature and performed various rituals to summon rain. In times when hunting and animal husbandry were the main occupations in human life, children learned by imitating the actions of

adults. Games reflecting animal behavior, hunting techniques, or cattle breeding processes have emerged[8].

Since the emergence of language, it has been closely connected with play. Words, voices, songs, and melodies greatly influenced the emergence and development of games. The natural need to increase children's energy and to move freely led to the emergence of games. Games have been an entertainment and stress-relieving tool for children.

Games allowed children to create a fantasy world, perform various roles, and realize their dreams. Some games help children overcome anxiety or fears (for example, games with the characters of "wolf" or "devil"). Ancient traditions, shamanistic rituals (some elements), and family values were passed down from generation to generation through games[9].

Forest lands, rural life, pre-Christian beliefs (Slavic mythology), and later Christian traditions influenced games among Slavic peoples. Labor activity (agriculture, fishing, forestry) also shifted to games. Various historical periods in European children's folklore (the Middle Ages, the Industrial Revolution), the development of urban life, fairy tales, and literature influenced the emergence of European games.

The social relations of former class societies, and later democratic principles, became part of the game.

The simplest and most convenient "toys" were natural substances. Games such as hitting stones against each other, building minarets from them, drawing pictures on the ground with sticks, or hitting each other. Playing, creating various shapes with sand (sand fortresses or imaginary nature) was a natural entertainment for ancient children. Imitating the behavior of animals, making their voices or chasing them[10].

Early humans communicated with each other through voices and rhythms. Through this, children developed language and communication skills. Children's nature is dynamic and energetic. Games were necessary for the constructive release of this energy. Active games such as running, jumping, and wrestling have existed since ancient times.

Archaeologists hypothesize that some of the earliest toys were simple figurines, balls, or summoning sound-producing objects made of stones, bones, or wood. These "toys" may date back to the Paleolithic period of human history (approximately 2.5 million years ago)[11].

The paintings on the walls of an ancient cave may sometimes depict dance-like scenes of human or animal movements, but we cannot definitively call this a dance. Even today, in tribes that have preserved their original way of life, it is observed that children's games imitate the traditions and labor activities of adults. This helps to make assumptions about the nature of early human games.

Such examples of children's literature can also be seen in the examples of early Karakalpak oral author's poetry, specifically from the 14th century. For example, Soppasly Sypyra zhyrau's *terme-tolgau*, which begin with «Bir degende ne jaman», «Qarshıǵa qustıń balası» are clear evidence of this. For example:

Bir degende ne jaman,
Bilimsiz ósken ul jaman.
Ekilemshi ne jaman,
Elewsiz ósken qız jaman .

These admonitions of Soppasly Sypyra zhyrau are widespread among the people. In it, it advises young people to be knowledgeable and wise, that is, it puts forward wise thoughts about the necessity of science, knowledge, and education for human life and purpose[12]. The bard's:

Qarshıǵa qustıń balası,
Qayında bolar uyası,

Qayınnıń túbin suw alsa,

Qayırar eken anası, - begins, it speaks of a mother's love for her child. These mournful lines, through the sorrow and grief of a bird whose chicks have been struck by disaster, resonate like the grief of a grieving mother, her ribs crushed, her hair disheveled, weeping bitterly for her child, her home torn apart by enemies and trapped in flames. This is embedded in the artistic poetic structure of the epic poem "Edige."

Bay balası bayǵa usar,

Baylanbay ósken tayǵa usar.

Biy balası biyge usar,

Biyik-biyik shıǵa usar , - In the lines of the "tolgau", though criticized for the wealthy children's tendency to feel easy on life, and for some children from prosperous households to become complacent with their parents' wealth, giving a superficial assessment of life, the folk wisdom, "Flowers grow from the roots of flowers," is promoted[13].

Such examples and literary folklore texts are extremely important in studying examples of children's literature and increasing interest in them. At the same time, we should support the scholar's attention to literary texts in various genres of folklore, folk songs, traditional songs, especially riddles and tongue twisters, which are important for children, as a source of the emergence and formation of children's literature.

In our opinion, the fact that the scholar-researcher was a writer, that is, engaged in artistic creation, greatly contributed to his scientific analysis and the drawing of substantial scientific conclusions. The scholar's following observation is also noteworthy: "Another aspect of the age-specific limitation of works in contemporary children's literature lies in its strict adherence to high moral standards and the truth of life[14].

Because if love songs are incomprehensible to children aged seven or ten, it's inappropriate to portray solving mathematical problems for children aged 3-6. Each work in children's literature should have a clear direction, and this direction should artistically enter and enter children's consciousness as new concepts through very concise, productive phrases .

As the scholar correctly understood, the portrayal of heroes in folklore and epic works, based on a number of interconnected plots and beautiful compositions, their patriotic ideals and struggle for honest love, specifically Gulayim in "Forty Girls," who defends her homeland from enemies; Alpamys in "Alpamys", who fights selflessly for his homeland and honest love; the image of the brave young Alpamys; the courage of the hero Qoblan; and so on, undoubtedly, captivate children. We believe it's not excessive for them to even attend performances staged on theatrical stages. Of course, all of this is a rich and beautiful heritage dedicated to children in Karakalpak folklore. Therefore, they should not be overlooked in the study of children's literature, but should be studied as the main national foundations and sources of written children's literature[15].

Children's play songs or other children's works are closely related to games. Because, along with playing various games, children, firstly, exercise themselves physically, and secondly, by incorporating them into these games and performing various songs and other literary works, develop their thinking, in other words, satisfy their spiritual needs.

When we studied the foundations of Karakalpak children's play folklore and compared it typologically, it became clear that while the same play song is performed differently among different peoples, its form and foundation are the same. This means that each nation's unique national character, its historical past, has influenced these games and songs, yet it testifies to the shared past.

As children grow in age and consciousness, their thinking changes, and accordingly, their play. As they grew older, they strived for marksmanship, physical fitness, and the desire to be strong and brave. For this, they dreamed of resembling the epic heroes Qoblan,

Alpamys, Gulayim, Maspashsha, Er Ziywar, Sharyar, Edige, and others from old epics they had heard from their elders. Thus, to learn marksmanship, strength, and resourcefulness, they also invented games like "Dordyan" and "Soqr teke» (Blind Goat)". Of course, while knucklebones and ball games trained children in shooting and running skills, they played too much, delaying useful activities and causing harm. That's why people

Asıq oynagan azar,
Top oynagan tozar,
Hammesinen qoy bagıp,
Quyriq jegen ozar,

encouraged children to engage in productive work. These games played by children in the past initially had a certain influence on child-rearing. However, as the demands of the time changed, these games fell out of use and lost their power. Some of them were even harmful to children. For example, in the early days of «Saqa óltirmek», children were taught marksmanship, but now "Tir" (shooting) has taken its place. It is much more useful for children. The "Wrestling" and "Blind Goat" games still retain their strength. Along with this, the games «Ayn-ğayn gúbelek», «Ay kórmek», «Ayqulash» and the songs performed in them reflect traces of children's early lives. Thus, Karakalpak children were educated through the immortal heritage created by the people, specifically through folk pedagogy. Folk pedagogy is a vast field. It requires special research.

The plot of children's play folklore is reminiscent of the plot of a certain fairy tale or legend. In children's folklore, this genre, along with its playful elements, plays a significant role in the importance of artistic expression. The words in poems are distinguished by their literal meaning and consisting of regular lines.

4. Discussion

The analysis of Karakalpak children's play folklore reveals its deep interconnection with other genres of oral tradition, reflecting a rich system of cultural transmission and developmental function. These games, far from being mere pastimes, represent a sophisticated form of folk pedagogy embedded in the collective memory of the people. Their narrative elements borrow heavily from riddles, proverbs, fairy tales, and mythological plots, providing not only entertainment but also cognitive and moral education. The typological parallels with other cultures suggest a shared human impulse to educate through imaginative play, even while the stylistic expressions remain culturally distinct. Through symbolic actions and poetic language, children's games mirror societal structures, historical consciousness, and traditional values. Moreover, their adaptability across generations reflects changing educational needs while retaining core functions such as socialization, emotional development, and cultural literacy. The inclusion of heroic imagery from epics like Alpamys, Gulayim, and Qoblan within children's games reflects an aspiration to embody courage, resilience, and patriotism from a young age. As children mature, the evolution of their play reflects their psychological development and growing social awareness. This underscores the importance of preserving and studying children's folklore not merely as literature, but as a pedagogical tool vital for identity formation. The decline of some traditional games due to modern influences poses a risk to the transmission of intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, integrating the study of children's play folklore into broader folkloristic and educational discourse is essential for sustaining cultural continuity and enriching the understanding of childhood in ethnographic contexts.

5. Conclusion

Humanity's earliest children's games did not appear spontaneously; rather, they were formed based on their lifestyle, cultural connections, and biological and psychological needs. They have been an integral part of human growth, learning, and

social adaptation. These games have become a universal tool for children to discover their world and prepare for the challenges of their future life.

Because children's play folklore is closely intertwined with other folklore genres, it serves not only as entertainment for children but also as a primary tool for learning cultural heritage, developing social skills, and fostering intellectual development. Through these connections, children learn about the history of their people, the richness of their language, cultural traditions, and values through play. As a result, children's games contribute to the preservation of national characteristics and their transmission from generation to generation.

Children's play folklore, rooted in lifestyle and cultural traditions, serves not only as entertainment but also as a vital means of transmitting heritage, developing intellect, and shaping identity. Its deep connection with other folklore genres ensures the continuity of values and collective memory across generations through playful yet meaningful experiences.

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