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The Evolution of Humaistic Concepts in Kazakh and Karakalpak Lyric Poetry: A Comparative-Typological Analysis

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Abstract: The article examines the evolution of humanistic concepts in Kazakh and Karakalpak lyric poetry during the 1960s-1980s through a comparative-typological lens. This period is characterized by a qualitative renewal of national literatures, where the synthesis of tradition and innovation facilitated a deep integration within the Turkic literary space. The study focuses on the inter-literary connections, reception, and creative transformation manifested in the works of prominent poets such as I. Yusupov, T. Aybergenov, and M. Makatayev. Using a comparative-typological methodology, the research identifies common ethno-cultural roots and spiritual values that shaped the humanistic discourse of both nations. The analysis reveals how institutional factors-such as cultural exchange days and translation activities-strengthened the literary ties. A significant part of the study is dedicated to "dedication poems" (arnau), which serve as a unique genre for expressing brotherhood and intellectual dialogue. The findings suggest that the humanistic evolution in this period moved from simple thematic descriptions toward a complex philosophical interpretation of national identity and universal human values, marking a transition toward modernism in both literatures.

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1. Introduction

The evolution and interconnection of literary works reflect the dialectical laws of cultural and historical development. Interliterary relations, reception, typological consonance, and creative transformation are among the key areas of focus in contemporary comparative literature. From this perspective, a systematic study of the relationships between Kazakh and Karakalpak literatures makes it possible to identify the internal dynamics of literary processes within the Turkic world[1].

During the 1960s-1980s, Kazakh and Karakalpak poetry experienced a period of qualitative renewal in both thematic content and poetic form. In this period, national literatures developed on the basis of a synthesis of tradition and innovation, correlating with integrative processes within the literary space of Turkic peoples. Kazakh-Karakalpak literary connections were clearly manifested in poetry, prose, and drama. The historical common roots of the two peoples, their ethnocultural unity, and the continuity of their spiritual values were conceptualized in poetic texts through the ideas of friendship, brotherhood, and kinship[2].

The sustained creative interaction of Kazakh and Karakalpak writers with the literatures of other Turkic-speaking peoples demonstrates the intertextual and intercultural character of literary development. In this regard, the connections between Kazakh and Karakalpak literature were especially intensively realized in poetry. Socio-political and cultural-institutional factors further stimulated this process[3]. The mutual organization of cultural and literary days, creative visits of writers, and the active development of translation practices established the institutional foundation for literary interaction. Prominent representatives of Karakalpak literature – Tileuber-gen Zhumamuratov, Tolepbergen Kaipbergenov, Ibraiyim Yusupov, Kh. Seitov, T. Seitzhanov, and others – artistically interpreted the historical identity, way of life, and worldview of the Kazakh people in their works[4].

A people's poet of contemporary Karakalpak poetry, T. Zhumamuratov, dedicated poems to prominent representatives of the Kazakh people such as Mukhtar Auezov, S. Mukanov, Abdilda Tazhibayev, and Askar Tokmaganbetov. For example, in his poem "To G. Ghulam," the Uzbek poet writes:

"Assalamu alaikum, Gafur aga,
Tashkent is closer to me than Almaty, aga,
Even if the distance is short, to one who is older,
It is proper to bow and offer greetings, aga.
Gafur aga, are your children and family well?
We all admire your excellence, You often say:
«Let me engage in an aitys with Sabit,'

Let us not find ourselves caught in between," – thus, he politely and appropriately engages in humorous banter[5]. At the same time, Kazakh writers addressed the theme of Karakalpakstan in their works, depicting the shared features of a common cultural and historical space. In the poetry of D. Abilev, M. Makataev, F. Ongarsynova, G. Kairbekov, S. Maulenov, E. Zikibayev, T. Aibergenov, and others, one can observe lyrical expressions of the deep-rooted kinship between the Kazakh and Karakalpak peoples. In their works, poets avoided dry narration and instead sought pure content and innovative forms. This phenomenon demonstrates the reciprocal nature of receptive interliterary connections[6].

Literary interaction was also profoundly reflected in the field of literary studies. In 1951, when Nazhim Daukaraev defended his doctoral dissertation in Moscow, Mukhtar Auezov served as his official opponent, which stands as an important example of scientific continuity and intellectual interaction. Furthermore, the scholarly connections between Kazakh literary critics such as Zeynolla Kabdolov, Tursynbek Kakishev, Zaki Akhmetov, and Karakalpak scholars contributed significantly to the development of comparative literary studies[7].

2. Materials and Method

In recent years, systematic academic research has been actively conducted on Kazakh–Karakalpak literary relations. Monographs, textbooks, and scholarly articles have been published, examining interliterary interaction from comparative-historical and typological perspectives. Particular attention has been given to the poetry of the 19th century, with analyses focusing on shared ideas and social motifs in the works of poets of that period. Among the scholars who have specifically addressed Kazakh–Karakalpak literary relations are S. Toishybaeva, Amantai Sharip, K. Aralbaev, Sh. Smamutova, as well as Karakalpak researchers K. Orazymbetov and K. Zharimbetov. During the period of independence, the study titled "Kazakh–Karakalpak Literary Relations" by K. Aralbaev and Sh. Smamutova systematized these connections chronologically and enabled a period-based analysis of the evolution of interliterary relations[8].

3. Results and Discussion

Research highlights that themes such as the oppression of ordinary people under colonial rule, land issues, social inequality, violence, and the struggle for freedom are central concepts in poetic texts. These aspects are examined in the works of Kazakh and Karakalpak scholars within their historical and social contexts, revealing the artistic nature of resistance discourse and civic expression in poetry[9].

Poetry of the 1960s is regarded as a qualitatively new stage in Kazakh–Karakalpak literary interaction. During this period, a renewal of poetic form, the individualization of the lyrical subject, and the transformation of national poetic structures became clearly evident. The works of Mukagali Makataev, who elevated the traditional Kazakh *kara өлең* structure to a new semantic and aesthetic level, and the Karakalpak poet Shaudyrbay Seitov deepened the intonational freedom and internal dramatic tension of poetry. In Karakalpak poetry, poets such as Sh. Seitov, I. Yusupov, and T. Matmuratov revitalized the system of lyrical thinking by integrating the national poetic code with modern artistic methods. In T. Matmuratov's poems—"Gawqildasar Karakalpaklar," "Kara Tallar," "Awıldın Adamları," "Katkuda," "Turaklı Adam," "Moynaqtyn Kara Kyzy," "Hayallar," and others—the national identity and psychological characteristics of the Karakalpak people are skillfully depicted[10].

In the works of prominent Karakalpak poets T. Matmuratov and T. Zhumamuratov, local toponyms and hydronyms (such as the Amu Darya and Karatau) function not merely as geographical names but as ethnocultural markers within the author's worldview. In the lyric poetry of Tolepbergen Matmuratov, the image of the homeland is conveyed through the dialectical unity of microcosm and macrocosm:

"You are my Amu Darya, my Karatau... Though you seem as small as a palm, you are a whole world..." Here, the antithesis between "as small as a palm" (limited space) and "world" (infinity) emphasizes the ontological significance of the native land. In contrast, in the poetry of Tileuberdi Zhumamuratov, the image of the Jayhun (Amu Darya) serves as a metaphorical projection of historical memory and a source of life. The flow of the river is represented as a dynamic image of time and continuous development (personification)[11].

The anthropocentric paradigm in the lyrics of Kadir Myrza Ali. In the творчество of the reformer of Kazakh poetry, Kadir Myrza Ali, the lyrical subject transcends the boundaries of individuality and rises to the level of universal human values. In his poem "Zhanashyrga," the metaphor of "fire" symbolizes creative energy and civic stance. The axiological system of the poet's works consists of the following components:

Existential choice: a didactic reflection on the difficulty of "remaining human";

Humanistic pathos: recognition of "human power" (anthropocentrism) as the core of existence;

Ethical elevation: the portrayal of morality and ethical norms as a жизненный императив.

Poetic discourse and genre specificity In Kazakh literature, the works of Tolegen Aibergenov, who transformed poetic structure, Tumanbay Moldagaliyev, who elevated lyricism to a high aesthetic level, and Tolepbergen Matmuratov reflect artistic innovation within Kazakh–Karakalpak poetry. Their творчество requires comparative analysis in terms of poetic syntax, rhythmic structure, and metaphorical systems. As noted, "T. Matmuratov is a people's poet. He is always ready to bear the heavy burden of his people. Another's sorrow deeply affects him, while another's joy brings him delight. In his poetry, one can see sparks of народная мудрость. He expresses national traditions in an artistically powerful form. Even from everyday words, he is able to create meaningful and emotionally impactful poetry."

A particularly noteworthy figure is Tolegen Aibergenov. Born and raised in Karakalpakstan, he rose to a classical level within the Kazakh literary space. His

творчество demonstrates the conditional nature of cultural and literary boundaries and reveals shared foundations in poetic thinking. In the poetry of T. Aibergenov and I. Yusupov, one can observe the phenomenon of transnational literary identity and spiritual integration[12].

Let us turn to the following poem by T. Aibergenov:

“O people, I am with you, I would compare nothing to your sincerity. You are the source of my happiness, You are the force that inspired my talent! Together with you I climbed the peaks of life, We shared even a piece of dried curd and confided in one another. I was not born into this world in carefree joy, Merely to think of the pleasures of a single self!...” I. Yusupov:

“The day you meet good people,
Your soul becomes whole...
Your spirit rises with inspiration and vigor,
The day you meet good people...”

Or:

“O human being, Among people there are the good and the bad[13].

A human is the sun for another human,
A heart drinks water from another heart...”

Anthropocentric paradigm. Both poets place the figure of the “Human” at the center of the universe. T. Aibergenov’s line “O people, I am with you” and the Karakalpak classical poet I. Yusupov’s concept “A human is the sun for another human” represent shared metaphorical expressions of Turkic brotherhood and humanism. For Aibergenov, the people’s goodwill is the force that “gave wind to his talent,” whereas for Yusupov, encountering a good person becomes a source of “inspiration and vigor” (ilham and yosh). The images of “wind” and “yosh” function as typologically similar symbols of dynamic development and inner energy. The expressions “sharing a piece of dried curd” (Aibergenov) and “a heart drinks from another heart” (Yusupov) elevate the shared Kazakh–Karakalpak ethics of emotional connection and mutual sharing to an artistic level, demonstrating ethical continuity. As revealed in the study, the existential motif in the poetry of T. Aibergenov and I. Yusupov is grounded in common humanistic values. Aibergenov’s metaphorical hyperbole “you are the source of my happiness” finds a logical parallel in Yusupov’s aphoristic expression “a human is the sun for another human.”

Due to the geographical proximity of the Kazakh and Karakalpak peoples, their destinies are closely intertwined; however, differences in artistic techniques are also evident. A striking example is one of the most severe ecological losses of the 20th century – the Aral Sea. This catastrophe had a profound impact on the ecology and way of life of both peoples. Poets who once celebrated the Aral Sea with deep inspiration later turned to depicting its tragedy. The desiccation of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers, and the suffering of people from water scarcity, became central themes in poetry. The primary aim of poets from both nations was to portray the ecological disaster as a tragedy of humanity[14].

For instance, in Shaudyrbay Seitov’s poem “The Prayer of an Elderly Karakalpak to God,” the following sorrowful lines appear:

“Do not even call me your servant,
even if I beg for bread,
I will not ask you for crowns, thrones, or faith.
Even if I must stand firmly in your hell,
Just return my Amu Darya!

If you are not the serpent that has bound my Amu, If you are not the turmoil that has poisoned its waters, If there was no plan to destroy the Aral, Then return my Amu Darya!”

In Kazakh poetry, the Aral is metaphorically represented as the “pupil of the eye.” The drying of the sea is equated with the fading of the people’s vision and vitality, reflecting a national-scale tragedy. In contrast, in Karakalpak poetry (Sh. Seitov), the Aral symbolizes the “right to live.” The poet directly appeals for the waters of the Amu Darya, emphasizing that without the river, the people face disappearance (gumdan). Here, the issue transcends nature and becomes one of national survival. The image of the sea appears as a “voiceless mother,” a “wretched remnant,” a “fallen fortune.” Expressions such as “a cursed fate” and “a grieving mother” intensify the трагизм. The causes of the disaster are symbolized by phrases like “a heartless century,” “the destructive power of humanity,” “a planned scheme,” “a binding serpent,” and “poisoning chaos.” Symbolic details such as seagulls and fishermen’s nets evoke memories of a once-happy past. The waters of the Amu Darya symbolize the sole source of life and freedom[15].

The poem is dominated by sorrow and regret. Lines such as “What shall I do, my Aral, today only your shadow remains” express helplessness, giving the work an elegiac and philosophical tone. Rhetorical questions like “Where is that era?” and “Has your time come?” are intended to provoke reflection in the reader.

In Karakalpak poetry, the imperative (demanding) stylistic mode, exemplified by the refrain “Return my Amu Darya!”, gives the poem a distinctive emphasis and resolute intensity. The poet directly addresses higher powers (or authority), asserting: “If you are just, do not destroy the people.” This represents a clear manifestation of dramatic expression.

Two peoples – one destiny. Poets of both nations portray the Aral Sea through the image of the “Mother.” Kazakh poets describe the tragedy as “a mother who has lost two sons in one year,” emphasizing the depth of the catastrophe, while Sh. Seitov writes, “Let me cleanse the sorrow that has overflowed from my mother,” suggesting the inseparability of the fate of the land and the people. While Kazakh poets approach the Aral with compassion and sorrow, Karakalpak poets express it through dignity and assertiveness. However, both share a common fear: if the Aral dies, not only nature, but also spirit and culture will perish.

Thus, the Aral theme in Kazakh and Karakalpak poetry is not merely an ecological issue; it is an artistic synthesis of historical memory and anxiety about the future of both peoples. Kazakh poets deepen the tragedy on a spiritual-philosophical level, whereas Karakalpak poets elevate it to the level of socio-political protest. Together, these two perspectives construct a comprehensive poetic map of one of Central Asia’s most significant humanitarian disasters.

The study of 20th-century literary and cultural relations reveals the predominance of themes such as friendship, brotherhood, and ethnic and historical unity in poetry. The creative interaction between Kazakh and Karakalpak poets is not limited to thematic similarity; it is also reflected in poetic form, systems of imagery, and methods of representing the lyrical subject. Although Karakalpak literature has been studied in connection with Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Bashkir, and Tatar literatures, scholarly works demonstrate that its interaction with Kazakh literature is distinguished by its intensity and depth.

The gradual weakening of ideological constraints during the Soviet period contributed to the expansion of literary discourse. Poets partially freed themselves from political conjuncture and increasingly focused on national identity, patriotism, the inner world of the individual, and spiritual drama. The phenomenon of the individual and civic lyricism became leading themes in 20th-century poetry.

In this context, the works of Mukagali Makataev, Syrbay Maulenov, Tolegen Aibergenov, and Mukhtar Shakhanov reflect spiritual quests, resistance to social injustice, and civic positions at an artistic and philosophical level. In Karakalpak poetry, Tileuberdi Zhumamuratov, Shaudyrbay Seitov, Ibraiyim Yusupov, and Tolepbergen Matmuratov paid particular attention to revealing the inner world of the lyrical subject.

Thus, the evolution of Kazakh–Karakalpak literary relations developed in close connection with historical and social conditions, ideological transformations, and the renewal of poetic form. Contemporary studies increasingly approach this process within the frameworks of interliterary interaction, cultural transfer, and poetic modernization. Such research contributes to a deeper theoretical understanding of the integrative nature of Turkic literatures.

4. Conclusion

The results of the analysis demonstrate that Kazakh–Karakalpak literary relations constitute a complex interliterary phenomenon shaped by historical and cultural determinants and marked by a stage-based evolution. In 19th-century poetry, motifs such as resistance to colonial oppression, protest against social injustice, and the depiction of the people's fate formed a shared ideological and conceptual foundation for both literatures. In this period, archetypal models of national consciousness and the discourse of freedom were established in poetic texts, laying the groundwork for subsequent artistic developments.

The poetry of the 20th century, particularly that of the 1960s–1980s, represents a qualitatively new stage in Kazakh–Karakalpak literary interaction. As ideological restrictions of the Soviet period gradually weakened, poetry exhibited increased individualization of the lyrical subject, greater use of inner monologue and psychological depth, and the renewal of national poetic structures. During this period, the relationship between poetic form and content was reconsidered at a new aesthetic level, and the traditional *kara өлең* structure underwent intonational and rhythmic transformation.

These processes are reflected in the works of Mukagali Makataev, Tolegen Aibergenov, Tumanbay Moldagaliyev, Syrbay Maulenov, and Mukhtar Shakhanov, who vividly portrayed civic lyricism and the spiritual drama of the individual. In Karakalpak poetry, Ibraiyym Yusupov, Tileuberdi Zhumamuratov, Shaudyrbay Seitov, and Tolepbergen Matmuratov explored the inner world of the lyrical subject, as well as issues of national identity and historical memory, through modern artistic approaches.

Comparative analysis demonstrates that the process of poetic renewal in both literatures is not limited to thematic convergence; it also exhibits typological similarities at the levels of metrical structure, imagery systems, poetic syntax, and intonational models. Such convergence indicates the active functioning of mechanisms of cultural transfer and literary reception. Furthermore, the bidirectional nature of literary relations—characterized by mutual influence and reception—highlights the integrative character of Kazakh–Karakalpak poetry.

From a theoretical perspective, examining Kazakh–Karakalpak literary relations within the frameworks of interliterary communication, cultural integration, and poetic modernization allows for a comprehensive understanding of their development. This approach also facilitates the interpretation of 20th-century literary and cultural processes beyond national boundaries, situating them within the broader context of the Turkic literary space.

In conclusion, Kazakh–Karakalpak literary relations constitute a dynamic system grounded in historical continuity and spiritual unity, continuously renewed through artistic evolution. Their poetic outcomes not only enrich the internal development of national literatures but also serve as an important mechanism of cultural and spiritual integration within the Turkic world. Future research in this field may be expanded through the deeper application of intertextual analysis, discourse analysis, and comparative methodologies, thereby further enhancing the theoretical framework of the subject.

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