

# Paradigms of Cultural Linguistics

## Парадигми лінгвокультурології

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### Medieval Female Characters in the Literary Monuments of Turkic World: A Linguocultural Dimension

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Дослідження присвячене недостатньо вивченому порівняльному аналізу традиційних та інноваційних жіночих образів у середньовічних тюркських літературних пам'ятках.

Концептуальний зміст жіночих образів розглядається з культурної точки зору, з урахуванням того, як мовні засоби реалізують ці образи. Дослідження зосереджується на літературних творах казахської та киргизької традиції, аналізуючи ключові моделі жіночих персонажів, таких як *дружина-радниця*, *хранителька домашнього вогнища*, *вірна дружина*, *пророчиця*, *войовнича жінка*, *мати та сестра*. У дослідженні розглядається, як ці персонажі відображають цінності та норми середньовічного тюркського світу, підкреслюючи їхню лінгвістичну конструкцію за допомогою портретних замальовок, описів поведінки та емоційних виразів.

*Мета* дослідження – реконструювати лінгвокультурні моделі репрезентації жінок у середньовічних тюркських текстах та виявити подібності та відмінності між казахською та киргизькою традиціями. Дослідження проводилося на основі аналізу казахського героїчного епосу *Кобланди Батир*, киргизького героїчного епосу *Манас* і роману-хроніки *Кочівники* казахського письменника І. Єсенберліна. Для досягнення мети були застосовані такі *методи*: лінгвокультурний аналіз, концептуальний аналіз, контекстуальний аналіз, порівняльні методи та синтетичні підходи. Ці методи дозволили ідентифікувати ключові моделі та концептуалізацію жіночих образів у казахській та киргизькій літературі, виявляючи значні подібності та відмінності в їх зображенні.

«Дзеркальні» відповідності спостерігаються між казахськими та киргизькими традиціями в таких моделях, як *дружина-радниця*, *хранителька домашнього вогнища* та *вірна дружина*. Канкай виділяється як складна постать, що поєднує риси дружини та воїна. Карлиги та Сайкал, обидві войовничі жінки, демонструють розбіжні наративні траєкторії: Карлига перетворюється на дружину, Сайкал залишається дівою-героїнею. Фігура Жахана є більш складною, втілюючи в собі як *жінку-воїна*, так і *матір*. Ці персонажі були зображені за допомогою різноманітних лінгвістичних засобів, включаючи метафори, епітети, риторичні прийоми, гіперболи та символічні образи. Порівняльний



аналіз показав, що казахська література використовує ширший і більш нюансований набір лінгвістичних засобів, що призводить до більш витончених і багатогримірних жіночих образів. Щодо культурного контексту, дослідження виявило повторювані елементи сюжету, такі як жалоба після смерті героя та зображення жінок-воїнів, які беруть участь у героїчних битвах. Ці спільні мотиви ще більше підкреслюють мовну та культурну близькість жіночих образів в обох традиціях. Дослідження доходить висновку, що мовний та концептуальний аналіз жіночих персонажів у цих творах не тільки дає уявлення про середньовічні тюркські культурні цінності, але й створює основу для порівняльних досліджень у майбутньому.

Дослідження може слугувати підґрунтям для аналізу трансформації жіночих образів у різні історичні періоди та в межах різних літературних традицій, роблячи внесок у розвиток лінгвістики, культурології, гендерних студій і порівняльного літературознавства. Результати дослідження мають важливе значення для розуміння ролі жінок у середньовічних тюркських суспільствах і можуть слугувати основою для майбутніх наукових досліджень щодо зображення жіночих персонажів у різних культурах та історичних контекстах.

*Ключові слова: лінгвокультурна репрезентація, культурна семантика, дзеркальні образи, тюркські епоси, жіночі архетипи, концептуальні моделі.*

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## Introduction

A linguocultural analysis of female figures in Kazakh and Kyrgyz traditions is required to reconstruct behavioural and aesthetic models of womanhood in medieval literature. The relevance lies in the gradual reconstruction of medieval female images from literary, historical, folkloric, and linguistic evidence. Existing research focuses mainly on Europe; Turkic material remains underexplored. Therefore, the need to study them with the help of contextual and linguistic-cultural analyses remains. Comparisons between several similar linguistic and cultural areas are relevant for the following reasons: understanding the specifics of the literature and culture of a particular nation, identifying traditional and innovative features in the perception of female characters, and developing conceptual models specific to the Turkic cultural space. The relevance of the study of female patterns in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz literary traditions is determined, on the one hand, by the historical, cultural and linguistic proximity of these peoples and their cultures, and, on the other hand, by the original plot developments, behavioural reactions and conceptual content. Thus, the study of Kazakh and Kyrgyz literary monuments is relevant both from the point of view of culture and linguistics. The conceptualisation of female images is necessary in the paradigm of understanding the distribution of gender roles in different historical periods [Abdykulova et al., 2025; Ilieva, 2018]. Since national literature is an important source of information, where images are presented in full and in volume, from portrait sketches to descriptions of emotional states, this study is relevant. Literature was used to record details, speech patterns, and patterns of behaviour in different situations, which reflects the real picture of the world of medieval inhabitants, in particular women [Aliyeva, 2025; Kairbekov, 2016]. By identifying concepts, it is possible to define the aesthetics of female images, for example, a warrior woman, a wife-advisor, a faithful wife, and a woman-mother. For linguistic and cultural analysis, contexts play an important role, which can be used to confirm certain theses [Le, 2024].

The study of female imagery in Turkic literary traditions has developed along several interrelated lines—gender metaphor research, analyses of Kazakh and Kyrgyz literary traditions, and comparative approaches. The functionality of gender metaphors in the linguistic and cultural picture of the world was analysed by K.B. Zhumasheva et al. [2023], who demonstrated that gender-unmarked metaphors are more common in the Kazakh language than gender-marked ones. In metaphorical nominations for men, social status and public authority were emphasised, whereas in representations of women, greater attention was paid to external beauty and appearance. Similarly, U.H. Huseynova [2020] examined the conceptualisation of female images in the Azerbaijani worldview, showing that linguistic units verbalising the concept “*woman*” carry both

positive and negative stylistic connotations. The latter, according to the author, reflect masculine-coded features in female portrayals. Both studies, however, focus on the semantic nature of metaphorical constructions and do not explore the broader artistic and stylistic means by which female characters are created in narrative discourse.

Within Kazakh cultural studies, the image of a woman has been analysed through the prism of national mentality, ethical norms, and worldview concepts. G. Nurysheva and B. Kaldayeva [2021] investigated the semantic and philosophical foundations of women's perception in the traditional Kazakh worldview, revealing the symbolic relationship between gender and morality. G. Orda et al. [2021] explored artistic representations of women in folklore and literary traditions—poetry, prose, and drama—demonstrating how their perception evolved from the indigenous Muslim era to the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. N.F. Bayramova [2022] examined folklore genres from a linguocultural perspective, distinguishing between “high” culture (epics, fairy tales, legends) and “low” or popular forms. These studies together provide a detailed picture of female imagery in Kazakh culture but do not consider parallels with the Kyrgyz literary context.

Compared to the Kazakh material, the study of women's images in Kyrgyz literature remains less systematic. Existing works mainly address the mythopoetic and ethical aspects of the *Manas* epic, yet they rarely analyse the linguistic mechanisms of character construction or their relation to gendered cultural codes. This absence highlights the need to examine the Kyrgyz tradition in direct comparison with related Turkic systems. While individual analyses such as those by Zhumasheva et al. [2023] and Huseynova [2020] provide valuable insights into gender metaphors, a comprehensive comparative perspective linking Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and other Turkic literary spaces has not yet been developed. Previous studies tend to treat each tradition in isolation, without addressing shared linguistic or conceptual models. The present research therefore aims to fill this gap by combining linguistic-cultural and conceptual approaches to the study of female archetypes within the broader Turkic worldview.

The scientific novelty of the present study lies in the fact that for the first time a comparative linguocultural analysis of female images in Kazakh and Kyrgyz medieval literary monuments is carried out on the basis of both conceptual and linguistic data. Unlike previous works, this research not only identifies key conceptual models (wife-advisor, warrior woman, mother, prophetic woman, faithful wife) but also systematises the linguistic mechanisms through which these models are realised—including lexical, morphological, and syntactic patterns, as well as figurative and rhetorical means. The proposed typology demonstrates the “mirror” correspondence of female images in the two traditions and introduces a unified framework for analysing their conceptual content in the Turkic cultural space.

The study addresses the linguistic tools used to create conceptual female images of the Middle Ages in literary monuments of the Turkic world, in particular Kazakh and Kyrgyz. The main *goal* is to reconstruct the linguocultural models of female representation in medieval Turkic texts and to identify similarities and differences between Kazakh and Kyrgyz traditions. Based on the purpose of this paper, the following *objectives* were set:

- to identify and classify the key conceptual models of female images in Kazakh and Kyrgyz literary monuments;
- to describe the linguistic levels and mechanisms (lexical, morphological, syntactic, and stylistic) that shape these models;
- to determine the parallels and divergences in the conceptual and linguistic representation of women across the two traditions;
- to interpret the revealed features in the context of the Turkic cultural worldview and gender role distribution in the Middle Ages.

The subject of the study was Kazakh and Kyrgyz literary works, which were examined in terms of the conceptual content of female characters and the linguistic resources used for this purpose.

## Materials and methods

In this paper, the study of female characters was carried out through the analysis of the Kazakh heroic epic *Koblandy batyr* [Kumisbayev, 2023], the Kyrgyz heroic epic *Manas* [Karaliev, 2010], and the chronicle novel *The Nomads* by the Kazakh writer I. Yesenberlin [2024], as these

works represent the most significant monuments of Turkic narrative heritage and embody the evolution of female imagery from oral epic tradition to written historical prose. Their selection ensures the representativeness of the corpus, since *Koblandy batyr* and *Manas* reflect the canonical structures of medieval heroism and gender roles in oral literature, whereas *Nomads* demonstrates the continuity and reinterpretation of these archetypes in modern literary form.

Based on these works, the interrelation between the cultural and linguistic paradigms of representing female images in the Turkic worldview was examined through a combination of *contextual, linguocultural, conceptual, and comparative methods*. Contextual analysis focused on key fragments from *Koblandy batyr*, *Manas*, and *The Nomads*—including monologues, laments, and portrait descriptions—to trace how emotionality, speech, and mental reactions reveal gender roles and values. Linguocultural analysis explored how cultural meanings are encoded in language, for instance, in Kurtyka’s wise counsel, Kanykay’s prophetic dreams, and Zhahan’s martial identity, where metaphors (“my silver is unbendable”), epithets, and symbolic objects (horse, weapon, attire) express traditional archetypes of wife, mother, sister, and warrior. Conceptual analysis identified the main models of female imagery—the wife-advisor, keeper of the home, mother, faithful or prophetic woman, and warrior—and compared their semantic and functional realisation across Kazakh and Kyrgyz traditions. The correspondence between *Kurtyka* and *Kanykay*, *Karlyga* and *Saikal*, *Zhahan* and *Chiyryda* was mapped in tabular form as mirror archetypes. Finally, the analytical-synthetic method integrated results to outline stable cognitive and emotional patterns of female representation and to connect them with broader issues in linguocultural and gender studies.

## Results

This section examines how female figures are linguistically represented through recurrent language patterns in Turkic epic discourse. Among the most salient features are kinship-based forms of address, emotionally marked speech, metaphorical transfers involving animal and bodily imagery, advisory speech, and lament structures. In the analysed material, affective vocatives and possessive forms are used to express closeness and family solidarity, while metaphorical images such as “my horse” and “my wings” convey attachment, support, and emotional dependence. Women’s counsel is often structured through directive and formulaic expressions, whereas laments are characterised by repetition and parallel constructions that verbalise grief, anxiety, and emotional tension. Taken together, these recurring linguistic patterns reveal culturally specific models of female representation in Turkic epic tradition.

The early Turkic epic tradition was shaped by both Western and Asian influences [Ozturkmen, 2020; Doszhan, 2023]. The approximate time of origin of the Kazakh heroic epic *Koblandy batyr* was the 15th century, and the events of the Kyrgyz heroic epic *Manas* are quite broad, as they begin in the second half of the 7th century and end in the 15th-16th centuries. The story of *Koblanda* tells of the batyr’s struggle against the Kyzylbash invaders, and the story of *Manas* tells of the struggle against the Chinese invaders [Karalaev, 2010]. I. Yesenberlin’s novel-chronicle *The Nomads*, specifically its first part “The Conspired Sword,” was also examined in terms of the representation of women during the Middle Ages (15th century). *Koblandy batyr* focuses on two main female characters: 1) the image of Kurtyka represents a typical figure of a wife-advisor to her husband, associated with depth and wisdom; 2) the image of Kobikta Khan’s daughter *Karlyga*, representing a fiery and passionate nature, ready to sacrifice her family ties for her beloved. *Kobland*’s sister and mother, *Anylak*, are also vivid female characters.

The linguistic construction of Kurtyka’s image as a “wife-advisor” reflects a culturally significant model of pragmatic femininity in Turkic epic tradition. This role is primarily realised through emotionally marked speech and advisory dialogue addressed to the hero. For instance, the farewell formula “*Арыстаным, аман бол...*” (“My lion, take care of yourself...”) employs an affective vocative combined with an animal metaphor to express both emotional attachment and supportive encouragement before the hero’s departure [Kumisbayev, 2023]. Such forms of address perform an important pragmatic function in the epic discourse, as they simultaneously convey affection and moral support.

Kurtyka’s speech also contains metaphorical expressions that emphasise constancy and reliability. A representative example is the phrase “*илеуі жоқ күмісім*” (“my silver is unbendable”),

where the metaphor of silver symbolises firmness and stability of character. In this context, the metaphor functions as a linguistic means of expressing moral integrity and loyalty. Through such figurative language, the character’s speech constructs the image of a wise and steadfast spouse whose role complements the heroic actions of the male protagonist. These linguistic features correspond to the traditional epic motif of the advising wife, where female wisdom is presented as an important element of the hero’s success.

A different expressive pattern can be observed in the speech of Karlyga, whose monologue demonstrates a strong emotional tone conveyed through metaphorical transfers involving animal imagery. A central example is the line “Қолқанатым, құйрығым... Суырылып озған жүйрігім” (“You are my tail and my wings, my horse that has broken through”), where images of wings, tail, and horse metaphorically express closeness, support, and inseparable connection between the speaker and the hero [Kumisbayev, 2023]. The parallel syntactic structure of the utterance creates an anaphoric effect that intensifies the emotional impact of the monologue. Through these metaphors, the female character’s speech constructs an image of kinship devotion and emotional solidarity within the heroic narrative.

The analysis of female imagery in I. Yesenberlin’s historical novel *The Nomads* also reveals several recurrent linguistic and cultural representations of women. Based on the examination of 33 contexts, the following categories were identified: woman as a keeper of family values – 39% (15 contexts), a beautiful woman – 28% (11 contexts), a faithful woman – 15% (6 contexts), a warrior girl – 15% (6 contexts), and a loving mother – 3% (1 context) (Figure 1).

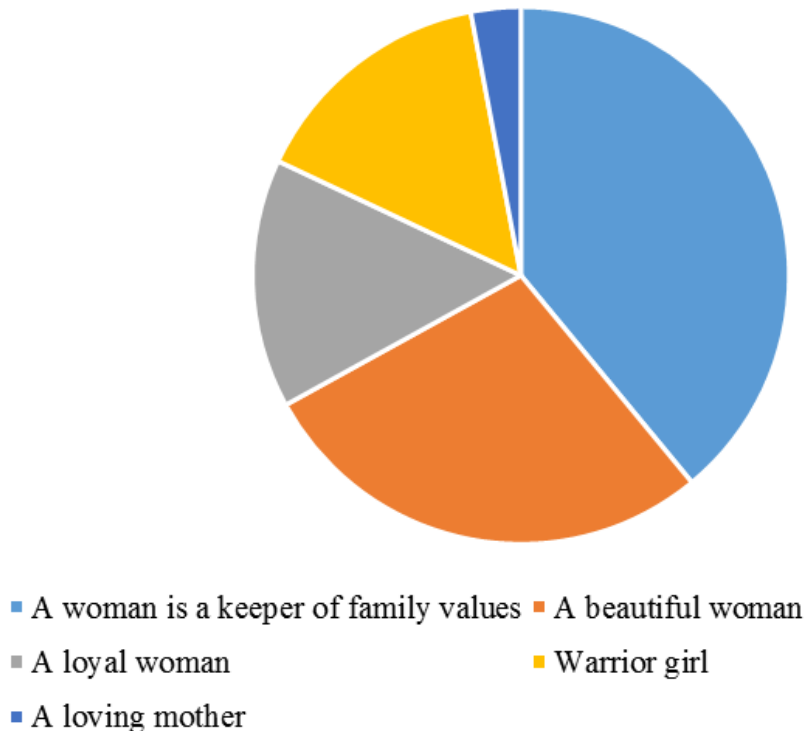


Fig. 1. Key Concepts of Female Characters in *The Nomads* [Yesenberlin, 2024].

These quantitative indicators were obtained through contextual selection, where each occurrence of a female character’s description, speech, or evaluative reference was treated as a separate analytical unit. The classification was based on the dominant semantic and functional

features of the context, including the attributed social role of the character, the emotional tone of the passage, and the type of linguistic realisation, such as portrait description or direct speech. For example, Rabiū-Sultan-Begim frequently appears in scenes of dialogue with her husband, where she participates in practical decision-making. In one such episode, Abulhair consults her before a horse race: “Ханым, үш күреңді тойға мінбей апарыңдар. Тарланкөкпен бірге бәйгеге салмақпын,” (“Hanum, bring the three bay horses to the race. I intend to run them together with Tarlankök”). Rabiū-Sultan-Begim replies: “Үш күрең бәйгеден келсе бірге келеді, қалса бірге қалады” (“If the three bay horses return from the race, they will return together; if they fall behind, they will fall behind together”) [Yesenberlin, 2024]. In this dialogue, the collective representation of the horses emphasises unity and coordinated action, illustrating how imagery related to horses and racing conveys the idea of shared effort and mutual dependence.

Yesenberlin’s novel is also characterised by detailed portrait descriptions of female characters. The image of Rabiū-Sultan-Begim is constructed through epithets and similes that emphasise beauty and social refinement. For example, the phrase “қарақаттай мөлдіреген үлкен бота көздері” (“large, currant-clear eyes”) combines natural imagery with aesthetic evaluation typical of Kazakh literary poetics [Yesenberlin, 2024]. Descriptions of traditional clothing and ornaments further situate the character within the cultural environment of nomadic society, linking external appearance with markers of social status [Sarybaeva et al., 2015; Baizhanova et al., 2015].

In contrast, the character of Zhahan is introduced through narrative episodes that emphasise her independence and active participation in events. Her portrait description includes elements of traditional attire, such as the “меруертпен торлаган қызыл барқыт сәукеле” (“red velvet headdress adorned with pearls”), which reflects the material culture and aesthetic norms of the historical period [Yesenberlin, 2024]. These portrait details contribute to the visual representation of the character and illustrate the diversity of female images in the novel.

The emotional dimension of female characters in the Kyrgyz epic is linguistically expressed through interrogative constructions, evaluative statements, and emotionally marked syntax, which function as indicators of inner tension and reflection [Karalaev, 2010; Ozturkmen, 2020]. A representative example is the utterance “Құрымаудың жалғыз жолы тек майдандасу ма?” (“Is battle the only way to survive?”), where the interrogative form conveys doubt and contemplation regarding the necessity of conflict. In this context, the rhetorical question serves as a linguistic means of expressing the character’s emotional state and attitude toward the unfolding events. Such speech forms illustrate how internal feelings and reflections of the character are verbalised through expressive syntactic structures in the epic narrative. The example demonstrates the active role of the female voice in articulating emotional and evaluative perspectives within the Kyrgyz epic tradition [Karalaev, 2010]. Another expressive device used in the episode is hyperbole, which intensifies the dramatic scale of the battle. For example, the text exaggerates the force of the confrontation by stating that during the clash “ай сексен бөлүнүп кетти” (“the moon broke into eighty pieces”), a figurative expression that amplifies the epic magnitude of the event. These stylistic devices contribute to the depiction of Kanykay as a courageous and powerful character within the heroic narrative [Karalaev, 2010; Ozturkmen, 2020].

The epic narrative also contains brief portrait descriptions that emphasise the unconventional nature of Kanykay’s character. For instance, the text notes that at the age of twelve she resembled a boy, which highlights the contrast between traditional expectations of femininity and her exceptional qualities. This contrast is further reinforced through the rhetorical question “Бул Каныкей бейбакты Ургаачы деген оңобу?” (“Can we call her a woman?”) [Karalaev, 2010; Ozturkmen, 2020]. The interrogative form functions as a stylistic device that draws attention to the unusual characteristics of the character and emphasises the narrative tension between conventional gender roles and the heroic image attributed to Kanykay.

The Kyrgyz epic also includes Saikal, the maiden-goddess whose autonomy reinforces the diversity of female archetypes. The protagonist is amazed by her courage, so he proposes marriage but is refused because the girl does not want to interfere with Manas and Kanykay’s relationship. Attention is focused on the secret disappearance of Saikal, as she was supposed to accompany Manas to another world: “Кыямат болуп Манаска, Кызырдуу Сайкал кетти...” (“Saikal went to Manas after the end of the world...”) [Karalaev, 2010; Ozturkmen, 2020]. Table 1 presents the main conceptual models of women’s images (Table 1).

Table 1

**Conceptualisation of female characters in Kazakh and Kyrgyz literary traditions**  
 (on *Koblandy Batyr*, *Manas* and *The Nomads*)

Tradition	Work / Character	Dominant conceptual role	Linguistic realisation	Cultural function
<b>Kazakh</b>	Koblandy Batyr – Kurtyka	Wife-advisor	Affective vocatives; advisory speech and evaluative expressions	Female wisdom supporting the hero’s actions
	Koblandy Batyr – Karlyga	Devoted woman / emotionally expressive character	Metaphorical transfers involving animal imagery (“horse”, “wings”, “tail”); parallel syntactic constructions	Expression of loyalty and emotional solidarity
	Koblandy Batyr – Karlygash	Sister / family member	Expressive syntax; emotionally marked statements	Representation of kinship attachment and family bonds
	Nomads – Rabiū-Sultan-Begim	Faithful wife / household adviser	Dialogic speech with the husband; evaluative descriptions; portrait epithets	Representation of family roles and domestic counsel
	Nomads – Zhahan	Independent female character	Portrait descriptions; references to attire and appearance	Illustration of diverse female roles in the narrative
<b>Kyrgyz Tradition</b>	Manas – Kanykay	Courageous and active female character	Emotional monologues; parallel constructions; rhetorical questions	Expression of determination and active participation in events
	Manas – Saikal	Autonomous female character	Dialogic statements expressing refusal of marriage	Representation of independence and personal choice
	Work / Character	Dominant conceptual role	Linguistic realisation	Cultural function

Note Shared linguistic patterns include kinship-based forms of address, metaphorical transfers between animal and human domains, and emotionally marked speech such as laments. In the analysed material, Kazakh texts more frequently emphasise domestic and relational contexts of female speech, whereas Kyrgyz epic passages more often present female characters in situations associated with heroic events and conflict.

Based on the table, it can be concluded that female images in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz literary traditions demonstrate a number of comparable conceptual roles. In both traditions, female characters are frequently associated with family relations, emotional support for the hero, and participation in important narrative episodes. For example, the images of Kurtyka, Rabiū-Sultan-Begim, and Kanykay are connected with advisory or supportive roles in relation to the male protagonist, which emphasises the importance of female speech and counsel within the narrative structure.

At the same time, certain characters illustrate different narrative trajectories. Thus, the images of Saikal and Karlyga contrast in their relationship to marriage: Saikal refuses Manas’s proposal, while Karlyga eventually becomes Koblandy’s wife. These differences demonstrate the diversity of female roles represented in the two epic traditions.

In Yesenberlin’s novel *The Nomads*, female characters are portrayed through a combination of dialogue, portrait description, and participation in narrative events. Such representations expand the range of female images within the historical narrative and illustrate how women are depicted in different social and familial contexts in the literary works under consideration.

The comparative structure below visualises the *mirror mapping* of central female archetypes across Kazakh and Kyrgyz epic traditions. Each line indicates conceptual and linguistic parallels that reflect the shared Turkic worldview. This mapping demonstrates how similar gendered roles—*wife-advisor*, *warrior woman*, *mother*, and *prophetess*—are linguistically encoded through overlapping metaphorical and pragmatic models: the *kinship-vocative system*, the *animal-human metaphor*, and the *lament-prophecy discourse frame* (Fig. 2).

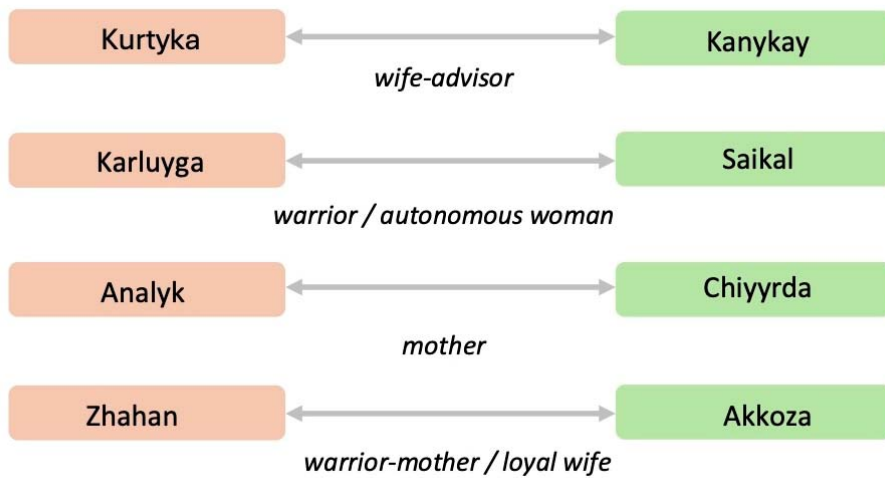


Fig. 2. Structural correspondences of female archetypes in Kazakh and Kyrgyz epics

The mirror alignment confirms the systemic nature of gender conceptualisation across the Turkic cultural continuum. While the Kazakh tradition exhibits greater lexical elaboration and portrayal expressivity, the Kyrgyz corpus foregrounds evidential, prophetic, and martial discourses. Together they reveal a stable cognitive-linguistic matrix of womanhood as wisdom, agency, and sacrifice within the medieval epic worldview.

The following Table 2 systematises the principal linguistic tools employed in the construction of female characters within Kazakh and Kyrgyz epic traditions. Each group of devices reflects a distinct layer of character formation from external portrayal to inner emotionality and collectively demonstrates how linguistic expression encodes cultural values, moral ideals, and gendered behavioural models characteristic of the Turkic worldview.

Table 2

**Linguistic Tools for Female Character Construction in Kazakh and Kyrgyz Epics**

Linguistic Tool / Level	Description of Linguistic Realisation	Cultural and Narrative Function
<b>Portrait Sketches</b>	Lexical and syntactic patterns describing appearance, attire, and external attributes (epithets, similes, evaluative adjectives).	Reflect aesthetic ideals and social characteristics of female characters in the narrative context.
<b>Characterisation by Others</b>	In isolated cases, female characters are additionally characterised through brief dialogic or narrative evaluations provided by the narrator or other characters.	Present social attitudes toward female characters and situate them within family and social relations.
<b>Behaviour and Actions</b>	Narrative descriptions of actions and participation of female characters in events.	Illustrate the roles and involvement of female characters within the plot.
<b>Emotional State Descriptions</b>	Expressive syntax and lexical indicators of emotional states (vocatives, repetition, interrogative sentences).	Convey emotional reactions and personal attitudes of female characters.
<b>Artistic Speech Techniques</b>	Use of metaphor, parallel constructions, and expressive repetition in monologues and dialogues.	Enhance emotional expressiveness and emphasise key moments in the speech of female characters.

This table systematises the main linguistic devices that contribute to the creation of female images in Kazakh and Kyrgyz epic traditions. Each category reflects a specific dimension of verbal representation—external, relational, behavioural, emotional, or artistic—and shows how language is used to construct socially and culturally meaningful images of womanhood. The interaction of these linguistic levels illustrates the integrative nature of Turkic poetics, in which speech acts,

metaphorical expressions, and emotionally marked syntax participate in shaping the images of the wife, mother, and female companion. The analysed linguistic tools therefore serve not only expressive functions but also act as verbal means of representing cultural memory, social values, and gendered roles in the epic tradition.

It should be noted that in the context of medieval Turkic culture, the system of female characters presented in both epic works is reflected in a similar way. These parallels confirm the shared narrative framework of the Turkic epics. For example, the crying of Koblanda the batyr's mother is the crying of Kanykay after Manas's death, the raising and selection of the horse by Kurtka is the sending of the horse Tayburyl to help Manas, the battle between Kanykay and Chubak is the battle between Saikal and Manas. From the point of view of cultural studies, the texts of the works under consideration present Turkic traditions, including descriptions of weddings, heroic battles, laments, prophetic dreams and omens. The construction of female images draws on language-internal resources—lexical choice (kinship, evaluative vocabulary), syntax (parallelism, comparative patterns), and discourse conventions (laments, advisory speech)—which, together with figurative and rhetorical devices (metaphor, hyperbole, gradation, anaphora, antithesis), encode culture-specific models of femininity in the Turkic world. For example, the analysed texts contain metaphorical constructions related to animals (such as the horse, camel, and lion), as well as symbolic signs that portend trouble and reflect the anthropomorphisation of natural phenomena (Table 3).

*Table 3*

**Linguistic tools used to create female characters**

Linguistic tools for creating female characters	Kazakh literary tradition	Kyrgyz literary tradition
Portrait characteristics using epithets	+	-
Metaphorical transfers	+	+
Rhetorical figures	+	+
Hyperbolisation, gradation	+	+
Monologue speech	+	-
Descriptive and comparative constructions	+	+
Introduction of linguistic and cultural images-symbols	+	

Kazakh and Kyrgyz epics exhibit mirrored systems of female imagery grounded in shared Turkic narrative and linguistic conventions. The conceptual field of female characters in the Kazakh tradition is more widely represented, despite the larger volume of the Kyrgyz epic. Kazakh folklore places greater emphasis on the emotional expression of women through monologic speech, realised by diverse language-internal resources such as evaluative vocabulary, address forms, and parallel syntactic constructions, complemented by figurative and rhetorical devices. In Kyrgyz epics, the images of women are still less voluminous, except for the image of Kanykay, which combines the image of a helper wife and a warrior woman.

## Discussion

The study analysed Kazakh and Kyrgyz female images of the Middle Ages, in particular, the similarities in linguistic and cultural traditions. It is necessary to note that the system of constructing female images in the examples under consideration is mirrored in terms of conceptual content. At the same time, it should be noted that the presentation of female characters in the analysed literary texts differs, in particular, there are differences in monologue speech, and artistic means.

The study of female images on the example of folk tales became the basis for the work of A.E. Sugiarti and A.D. Bhakti [2022]. The results of the study of folklore have shown that women are perceived to a greater extent in terms of the objectification of sexual nature, as well as objects of power. As a rule, they were portrayed as passive, and their employment was focused on the domestic environment. The study of folk tales emphasised that women's images were not separated from patriarchal ideology, which means that folklore texts are far from fostering ideal values. In the study of medieval female images on the example of the experience of Kazakhstan

and Kyrgyzstan, the opposite trend to the results of the researchers was noted. The perception of women in the Turkic world included not only paying attention to beauty and attractiveness but also to their activity in public life [Jumaev, 2022; Azhimov et al., 2026]. The characters of Kazakh and Kyrgyz folk epics help their husbands, make important decisions at their own risk, and act as advisers and warriors. Thus, despite the early period of their creation, the female images examined in this study are characterised by a high degree of activity, consciousness and occupy important positions in the social world order.

From the linguistic and cultural perspective, the Turkic concept of *kız* ('girl,' 'young woman') functions as a cultural macro-concept that defines moral norms and collective expectations of femininity. As shown by G. Shokym et al. [2022], the lexeme *kız* and its derivatives are semantically saturated with connotations of purity, loyalty, and honour, while in modern discourse, it acquires social meanings of education and autonomy. This conceptual evolution aligns with the historical variability observed in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz epic material, where female characters combine domestic and heroic traits within one semantic field. The semantic dynamics of female representation in Turkic culture can also be related to broader archetypal mechanisms. M. Duman [2020] argues that heroes in Turkic epics often "cross the line" between moral poles—good and evil, order and chaos—through symbolic confrontations. The same mechanism applies to female characters: crossing social and gender boundaries becomes a mark of strength and agency rather than transgression.

This feature explains why figures such as Kanykay and Zhahan embody both domestic virtue and martial courage—a reflection of the archetypal model of balanced duality typical of Turkic mythology. At the same time, contemporary gender studies shed light on the persistence of traditional stereotypes. N. Sakallı Uğurlu et al. [2021] show that in Turkish culture, single and married women continue to be stereotyped differently, reflecting a stable dichotomy between independence and moral legitimacy. In contrast, the epic prototypes of Turkic women blur this boundary: the ideal woman is both independent and morally legitimate. Similarly, G. Kutuk [2025] demonstrates that gender stereotypes in language learning reflect social cognitive frameworks inherited from national traditions. This finding supports the idea that linguistic representations of women in the Turkic epic were already an early form of social cognition—language used to transmit value systems and behavioural models.

The metaphorical encoding of femininity in Turkic literature may be considered in relation to broader cross-cultural patterns. As F. Reali and L. Avellaneda [2023] observe, the metaphor of the "warrior" in feminist discourse functions as a linguistic framing device for agency and resistance. In the analysed Kazakh and Kyrgyz texts, female characters are likewise portrayed through linguistic forms that foreground courage, resolve, and active participation in significant narrative episodes. Although the specific metaphorical models differ, the general tendency to associate female figures with strength and agency is also evident in the Turkic epic tradition. Likewise, D. Öcalan et al. [2025] reveal, through metaphor analysis, that migrant Turkish women continue to conceptualise femininity through bodily and nature-related imagery, which demonstrates the durability of traditional metaphorical frameworks in shaping female self-perception. The system of proverbial and fixed expressions is another linguistic layer encoding gendered norms. As shown by M. Abdullaeva [2024], proverbs in Turkic languages categorise gender relations through dual evaluative patterns: positive axioms of loyalty and sacrifice coexist with cautionary moralising formulas that regulate behaviour. In the Kazakh and Kyrgyz epics, these proverbial models are integrated into direct speech—laments, blessings, and advisory formulas—demonstrating how traditional oral ethics are realised through discourse structures.

National identity and linguocultural symbolism also interact dynamically in the representation of femininity. R. Ysmailova et al. [2024] show that in modern Kyrgyz culture, identity is transmitted through cultural symbols, lexical archaisms, and idiomatic patterns that preserve the collective worldview. This mechanism mirrors the medieval function of female archetypes as linguistic mediators of moral order. Similarly, M.M. Matkomilovich [2024] highlights that translating heroic figures in Turkic texts requires preserving cultural symbolism rather than literal meaning—a principle applicable to the semantic reconstruction of women's images as well.

The archetype of motherhood and compassion continues to define Turkic emotional poetics. G.A. Usenova [2023], analysing the image of the mother in Karakalpak literature, notes that

linguistic structures of endearment, repetition, and lamentation encode collective memory and the sacred function of maternal voice. This pattern corresponds to the laments of Kanykay and Analyk in the Kyrgyz and Kazakh epics, where repetitive syntax and emotional rhythm create a linguistic ritual of grief and prophecy.

The correlation between cultural symbolism and character design is visible even beyond literature. B. Ucan [2024] demonstrates that pre-Islamic Turkic beliefs continue to inform visual and linguistic archetypes of women—from the protective spirit to the warrior guardian. These findings confirm that the Turkic linguistic worldview remains deeply embodied, with gender imagery functioning as a cognitive interface between myth, ethics, and identity. The representation of gender roles in children’s books in America, the Czech Republic and Spain was studied by L. Roberts et al. [2022]. The study was based on the timeframe from 2010 to 2020. The results of the authors’ study showed that all the cultures under consideration are conservative, but Czech books are closest to the traditional distribution of gender roles, and American books are more provocative in their presentation of male and female characters, i.e. they include not only traditional but also non-traditional elements.

Thus, even in medieval works, there was already an understanding that a woman was a strong, deep and warlike personality, ready to defend her rights and principles. Archetypal patterns can regulate entire communities, including through gender attitudes, and the failure to comply which leads to the minimisation and erasure of so-called “marginalised people.” C.Y. Thornton [2021] addressed archetypal figures and patterns regardless of gender. The results of our research show that women’s images are equally archetypal and innovative, making them look voluminous and interesting to analyse.

Thus, it is possible to outline a wide range of issues related to the study of female characters: archetypal regularities and patterns, traditional and innovative features in folklore texts, the basics of conveying emotionality in the context of the Middle Ages, and stereotypical representations of women. It should be noted that significant results have been achieved in the context of the study of medieval traditions, as most of the problems have already been outlined and there is a need for an in-depth analysis of female images in the context of different linguistic and cultural traditions.

## Conclusions

The study of the linguistic and cultural specificity of female characters in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz literary traditions has fulfilled its main objectives: identifying, classifying, and comparing the key conceptual models of women and the linguistic mechanisms through which they are realised. In particular, five major archetypal models were confirmed—the wife-advisor, the warrior woman, the keeper of the home, the mother, and the prophetic or faithful woman. The analysis revealed both shared and divergent features in their representation, demonstrating that the two traditions are closely related linguistically and conceptually but differ in stylistic expression.

Kurtyka and Rabiū-Sultan Begim combine the parameters of a wife-advisor, a keeper of the home, and a faithful and caring spouse, forming the Kazakh counterparts of Kanykay in the Kyrgyz tradition. Analyk and Zhahan correspond to the archetype of the mother and protector, sharing conceptual similarities with Chiyyrda. At the same time, Karlyga and Saikal display a shared belligerent quality, yet their narrative paths diverge: Karlyga evolves into a wife, whereas Saikal retains the image of a maiden-goddess and warrior throughout the epic. Zhahan represents a hybrid image, combining the traits of the mother and the warrior, while Kanykay appears as the most multidimensional figure, uniting the functions of strategist, caretaker, and prophetess within a single conceptual field.

From the linguistic perspective, the study determined that Kazakh texts employ a broader and more diversified set of expressive tools—including an extensive range of epithets, metaphoric transfers (“animal–human,” “nature–human”), rhetorical figures, gradation, hyperbole, and symbolic imagery. Kyrgyz epics, by contrast, rely less on portrait description and symbolic detail, although the image of Kanykay stands out for its linguistic richness and emotional depth. These findings confirm the mirrored structure of the two systems of female imagery and demonstrate that Kazakh literature places greater emphasis on emotional expressiveness and verbal individuation, while Kyrgyz narratives prioritise functional and heroic aspects of femininity. The research contributes new insights into how female conceptual models in medieval Turkic literature reflect

the interplay of linguistic, cultural, and cognitive factors. The comparative typology and linguistic mapping proposed here offer a new framework for analysing gender representation across Turkic traditions.

Future research should expand the corpus to include other Turkic and non-Turkic epics, test the stability of the identified models across genres and epochs, and apply frequency-based and semantic approaches to track shifts in emotionality, syntax, and metaphor. The practical significance of the findings lies in their applicability to comparative linguistics, cultural and gender studies, and historical poetics, where the proposed framework can serve as a methodological basis for analysing female representation in diverse literary and historical contexts.

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## Medieval Female Characters in the Literary Monuments of Turkic World: A Linguocultural Dimension

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This study addresses the understudied comparative analysis of traditional and innovative female figures in medieval Turkic literary monuments.

The conceptual content of female figures is examined from a cultural perspective, with attention to how linguistic means realise these images. The study focuses on literary works from the Kazakh and Kyrgyz traditions, analysing key models of female characters, such as the wife-advisor, the keeper of the home, the faithful wife, the prophetic woman, the warrior woman, the mother, and the sister. The research examines how these characters reflect the values and norms of the medieval Turkic world, highlighting their linguistic construction through portrait sketches, behavioural descriptions, and emotional expressions.

The main goal is to reconstruct the linguocultural models of female representation in medieval Turkic texts and to identify similarities and differences between Kazakh and Kyrgyz traditions. The study was carried out through the analysis of the Kazakh heroic epic *Koblandy batyr*, the Kyrgyz heroic epic *Manas*, and the chronicle novel *The Nomads* by the Kazakh writer I. Yesenberlin. The following methods were employed: linguocultural analysis, conceptual analysis, contextual analysis, comparative methods, and synthetic approaches. These methods allowed the identification of the key models and conceptualization of female images in Kazakh and Kyrgyz literature, revealing significant similarities and differences in their portrayal.

“Mirror” correspondences are observed between Kazakh and Kyrgyz traditions in models such as the wife-advisor, keeper of the home, and faithful wife. Kanykay is distinguished as a composite figure combining wife and warrior features. Karlyga and Saikal, both warrior women, display divergent narrative trajectories: Karlyga transforms into a spouse, Saikal remains a maiden-heroine. The figure of Zhakhan is more complex, embodying both a warrior woman and a mother. These characters were depicted using a variety of linguistic tools, including metaphors, epithets, rhetorical devices, hyperbole, and symbolic imagery. The comparative analysis revealed that Kazakh literature employs a broader and more nuanced set of linguistic tools, resulting in more elaborate and multidimensional female images. In terms of cultural context, the research identified recurrent plot elements such as mourning after a hero’s death and the depiction of female warriors engaging in heroic battles. These shared motifs further reinforce the linguistic and cultural proximity of the female images in both traditions. The study concludes that the linguistic and conceptual analysis of female characters in these works not only provides insights into medieval Turkic cultural values but also offers a foundation for comparative studies in the future.

The research can be used to examine the transformation of female images across different historical epochs and literary traditions, contributing to the broader fields of linguistics, cultural studies, gender studies, and comparative literature. The findings are significant for understanding the role of women in medieval Turkic societies and can serve as a basis for future academic inquiry into the representation of female characters across various cultures and historical contexts.

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