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Abstract. This article explores the educational dimensions embedded in Karakalpak folk epics, such as *Kyrk Kyz*, *Alpamys*, and *Edige*, emphasizing their role as carriers of moral, cultural, and social values. Through a qualitative analysis of narrative structures, characters, and symbolic motifs, the study examines how these epics function as informal tools for transmitting virtues like courage, loyalty, respect for elders, and communal solidarity.

Keywords: Karakalpak folk epics, educational values, moral education, cultural heritage, bakhshi tradition.

INTRODUCTION

Karakalpak folk epics represent a rich cultural and historical legacy, preserving the worldview, traditions, and moral foundations of the Karakalpak people. Beyond their artistic and entertainment value, these epic narratives serve as an important vehicle for moral, social, and cultural education. The epics—such as *Kyrk Kyz*, *Alpamys*, and *Edige*—convey values like courage, loyalty, respect for elders, solidarity, and justice, which have long functioned as informal but powerful educational tools within Karakalpak society. Through vivid characters, dramatic conflicts, and symbolic imagery, these works communicate the ideals and lessons that shape individuals' understanding of their identity, their responsibilities to the community, and their roles within the natural and spiritual world. Examining the educational issues embedded in these epics allows us to understand how traditional oral literature not only reflects cultural values but actively transmits and reinforces them across generations [1].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

One of the most evident educational functions of Karakalpak folk epics lies in their capacity to instill moral virtues. Heroes and heroines in these narratives often embody idealized qualities such as bravery, honesty, hospitality, and resilience, while antagonists serve as cautionary figures who face consequences for arrogance, betrayal, or cruelty. Through these contrasts, audiences, especially young listeners, internalize clear distinctions between virtuous and dishonorable behavior. The oral nature of these epics, performed by storytellers (bakhshi) in communal settings, reinforces their educational impact by transforming the stories into shared social experiences [2]. The communal recitation not only entertains but also strengthens intergenerational ties, with elders using the stories to teach younger members about the moral codes and customs central to Karakalpak identity. Furthermore, the epics emphasize communal values over individual ambition, illustrating that true heroism is measured by service to the people rather than personal gain. This collectivist ethic, deeply rooted in nomadic and clan-based traditions, resonates throughout the narratives, teaching audiences the importance of unity and mutual support as foundations of social stability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Karakalpak folk epics also play a critical role in educating individuals about their cultural heritage, history, and cosmology. Through depictions of battles, migrations, and alliances, the epics preserve the collective memory of the Karakalpak people's struggles and triumphs. They teach listeners about the importance of defending one's land, honoring ancestors, and upholding the customs that bind the

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community together. The narratives also reflect a close relationship between humans and nature, with recurring motifs of the steppe, rivers, and animals symbolizing harmony and resilience—values essential to survival in the region’s challenging environment [3].

By embedding these elements within engaging storylines, the epics provide an accessible medium for young audiences to absorb complex aspects of history and tradition. They also offer a sense of continuity, connecting modern generations to the experiences and wisdom of their forebears, which strengthens cultural pride and collective identity.

Another notable educational aspect of Karakalpak folk epics concerns their portrayal of gender roles and expectations. While many characters reflect the patriarchal structure of traditional society, some epics, notably *Kyrk Kyz* (“Forty Girls”), present strong, capable female warriors who defend their homeland and lead their people. These depictions challenge stereotypical notions of passive femininity and provide alternative role models, particularly for young female listeners. Through such representations, the epics contribute to nuanced discussions of gender, courage, and leadership within the cultural framework, subtly educating audiences about the diversity of roles women can play in both historical and moral narratives.

Conversely, the emphasis on loyalty, chastity, and maternal virtues in many tales reinforces traditional expectations, illustrating the dual role of these epics in both preserving cultural norms and, at times, pushing the boundaries of conventional gender roles [4].

The *bakhshi*, or folk storyteller, holds a central position in the educational function of Karakalpak epics. Acting as both performer and cultural custodian, the *bakhshi* adapts stories to suit the audience’s age and context, emphasizing particular moral or social lessons as needed. Through tone, rhythm, and audience engagement, the storyteller transforms the epic into a participatory experience that encourages reflection, discussion, and communal bonding. The pedagogical role of the *bakhshi* is particularly important in rural or traditional settings, where formal educational structures have historically been less accessible. In such contexts, epic performances have served as an informal but vital form of moral and civic instruction, complementing family and community teachings.

While rooted in oral tradition, Karakalpak folk epics retain relevance in modern educational contexts. They offer rich material for teaching not only literature and history but also ethics, cultural studies, and social cohesion. By integrating epic narratives into curricula, educators can engage students with lessons on courage, justice, environmental stewardship, and respect for cultural heritage. Furthermore, the epics’ storytelling techniques—character-driven plots, metaphor, and music—can enhance students’ appreciation for oral and literary traditions, stimulating creativity and critical thinking. In multicultural educational settings, the study of Karakalpak epics can also promote intercultural dialogue, showcasing how local traditions contribute to the broader human heritage of storytelling and moral education.

CONCLUSION

Karakalpak folk epics embody a unique convergence of art, history, and pedagogy, serving as powerful tools for transmitting moral, social, and cultural lessons. They not only entertain but also educate, shaping the values, identities, and worldviews of generations. From promoting virtues such as bravery and solidarity to preserving collective memory and cultural pride, these narratives have long functioned as a form of informal education deeply intertwined with Karakalpak communal life. In modern times, their integration into formal education can further enrich learning experiences, ensuring that these narratives continue to inspire resilience, ethical awareness, and cultural appreciation among new generations.

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