

KINSHIP SYSTEMS OF TURKIC PEOPLES: STRUCTURE AND HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

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Abstract: This article examines the use of kinship systems of Turkic peoples as a source for studying ethnogenesis and ethnic history. The author analyzes the structure and terminology of blood kinship and affinity (in-law) relations among Turkic peoples, as well as the historical stages of their development. Particular attention is paid to the variants of the word “kayin” (kayın, kaen, gayin, qayın) in Turkic languages as a key element that reveals the lexical foundations of the affinity system. The article emphasizes the necessity of integration between linguistics and ethnography and highlights the distinctive features of cultural and ethnic connections among Turkic peoples.

Keywords: Turkic peoples, kinship system, affinity relations, ethnogenesis, ethnic history, linguistics, ethnography, kayin, lexical analysis, cultural connections, family relations, language history

Annotation: В статье рассматривается использование систем родства тюркских народов как источника для изучения этногенеза и этнической истории. Автор анализирует структуру и терминологию родственных и свойственных отношений у тюркских народов, раскрывает их исторические этапы развития и влияние языковых процессов на этнографические особенности. Особое внимание уделяется роли слова каин (кайын, каен, гайын) как детерминатива в системе свойственников и сохранению древних структурных принципов в современных тюркских языках.

Ключевые слова: тюркские народы, система родства, свойство, этногенез, этническая история, лингвистика, этнография, каин, лексический анализ, культурные связи, семейные отношения, история языка

Annotation: This article explores the kinship systems of Turkic peoples as a source for studying ethnogenesis and ethnic history. The author analyzes both the structure and terminology of kinship and affinity relations among Turkic peoples, tracing their historical development and linguistic evolution. Special attention is given to the role of the word kayin (or kaen, gayin) as a

determinant in affinity subsystems and how ancient structural principles have been preserved in modern Turkic languages.

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Main text

Kinship systems occupy an important place in the social and cultural development of humanity. This is especially true among Turkic peoples, where kinship relations reflect not only family ties but also the formation of the entire ethnic system. Therefore, an in-depth study of the kinship system of Turkic peoples is a significant scholarly source for understanding their ethnogenesis (origin) and cultural-historical development.

Ethnographic and linguistic studies show that the kinship systems of Turkic peoples differ not only terminologically but also possess distinctive features in their internal structure, hierarchy, and affinity relations. This reveals the organic interconnection of cultural, historical, and linguistic relations among Turkic peoples.

The harmonious combination of linguistics and ethnography is of great importance in the study of Turkic kinship systems. On the one hand, linguists uncover the origin and evolution of kinship terms through the history and lexicology of Turkic languages; on the other hand, ethnographers analyze the real-life, cultural, and social value of these terms. For example, common Turkic words such as “ota” (father), “ona” (mother), “aka” (elder brother), “uka” (younger brother), “singil” (younger sister), “opa” (elder sister) are found in almost all Turkic languages, and their phonetic variants reflect language development. Such terms are an integral part not only of the language but also of the people’s culture.

According to scholarly sources, the kinship systems of Turkic peoples consist of two main parts:

- Blood kinship system – includes parents, siblings, children, and other direct blood relatives.
- Affinity (in-law) system – kinship relations formed through marriage: father-in-law, mother-in-law, kayin (brother/sister-in-law), son-in-law, daughter-in-law, co-parents-in-law, etc.

“Affinity relations” refer to kinship relations in general — social and biological ties between people established through blood, marriage, or adoption.

In Uzbek, the word “hesh” means “relative” or “close person.” Thus, affinity relations constitute the system of mutual relations within family and clan and represent the most fundamental social unit of society.

Types of affinity relations:

1. Blood kinship (biological kinship) – based on descent from common ancestors.

Examples: father–mother, brothers, sisters, paternal aunt (amma), maternal uncle (toğa), cousins, nephews/nieces, etc.

These relations are based on hereditary or biological connection.

2. Affinity through marriage – arises as a result of marriage.

Examples: father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law / sister-in-law (kayin), daughter-in-law, son-in-law, etc.

3. Kinship through adoption – legally and morally considered kinship even if not biological.

Example: adoptive parents and child.

Affinity relations form the foundation not only of family but also of social, moral, and cultural relations. Through them:

- traditions and customs are transmitted to the younger generation,
- respect, mutual assistance, and responsibility are cultivated within the family,
- order and solidarity are maintained in society.

For instance, in Uzbek society a clear distinction is made between paternal relatives (amma, buva, nephews/nieces on the father's side) and maternal relatives (toğa, khala, cousins on the mother's side). This distinction is closely linked to traditional family structure and customs.

Ethnolinguistic analyses show that among Turkic peoples the affinity system emerged after the blood kinship system, and in many cases its structure replicates the model of blood kinship. For example, the parallel relations between mother-in-law and mother, father-in-law and father serve as evidence of this.

The origin of the word “kayin” and its variants in Turkic languages

One of the most important markers of the affinity system is the word “kayin.” It appears in all Turkic languages in slightly modified forms: kayın, kaen, gayin, qayın, kayn, etc. It usually denotes “the parent or relative of one's spouse.”

Examples:

- Turkish – kayınpeder (father-in-law), kayınvalide (mother-in-law)
- Azerbaijani – qayınata, qayınana

- Uzbek – qaynota, qaynona

This phenomenon demonstrates that common cultural roots have been preserved among Turkic peoples. In some languages the word “kayin” is also associated, through the root “qay,” with meanings such as “another clan,” “going out to the steppe,” or “distant relative.”

Among Turkic peoples, kinship relations are not merely family relations but a fundamental element of social structure. For example, in ancient Turkic society the “urug” (clan) and “oymaq” (tribe) systems were organized on the basis of kinship. These systems reinforced the principles of social solidarity, mutual assistance, and responsibility. Moreover, lexical analysis of kinship terms reveals the people’s historical worldview, social values, and traditions. For example, the words “aga” (elder brother) and “ini” (younger brother) express not only age difference but also social relations of respect.

On the basis of the above, it can be concluded that the kinship systems of Turkic peoples are of great importance not only linguistically but also from the perspective of culture, history, and ethnic unity. Through these systems, a common cultural code and worldview have been preserved among Turkic peoples. The integration of linguistics and ethnography provides an opportunity to understand this process even more deeply.

The study of kinship and affinity systems of Turkic peoples is of crucial importance for uncovering their common historical roots. These systems reflect not only linguistic changes but also the most ancient layers of cultural traditions. As we have seen from the example of the word “kayin” in the affinity system, although Turkic languages differ from one another, their spiritual and historical commonality has been preserved. Therefore, research in this field should be conducted using an integrated approach that combines linguistics, ethnography, and history.

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