

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE VARIANTS OF THE FAIRY TALE
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Annotation: In this article, the issue of variability in fairy tales is revealed using well-founded evidence. Variations in fairy tales are highlighted using the example of the Uzbek folk tale "Quloqvoy." Also, various fairy tales under this title are analyzed.

Keywords: variation, plot, motif, beginning, medial part, conclusion, storyteller, listener.

Introduction

In folklore studies, one of the most important concepts expressing the form of existence of oral folk creativity is **variability (variantness)**. This phenomenon is characterized by the preservation of the general logical foundation and the main idea of a work, despite certain changes in its plot, composition, and system of characters.

Literature Review

In oral creativity, variability emerges from the mode of oral performance of a work. As noted: “The presence of several versions of a work with significant changes in its plot and composition gives rise to the phenomenon of variability. If the title of the work remains the same, the system of events is similar, and certain similarities in the actions of the characters are preserved, this constitutes variability.”¹.

Research Methodology

This article conducts a comparative analysis of Uzbek folk tales belonging to the “tiny hero” type, particularly different variants of the fairy tale “Quloqvoy” (“Quloqboy”).

Analysis and Results

During the course of the study, three independent variants of this fairy tale were identified. Among collections of Uzbek folk tales, we encountered three versions of “Quloqvoy” belonging to the “tiny hero” type that meet the above-mentioned criteria:

The “Quloqvoy” variant from the “**Sumbulqush**” collection (recorded in the Tashkent region from the repertoire of Habiba Ziyaeva).

The “Quloqvoy” variant from the “**Gulpari**” collection (Namangan region, from the repertoire of Murodilla Ziyodilla oqli).

The “Quloqboy” variant from the “**Odamtoy**” collection (Samarkand region, from the repertoire of Jiyanboy Kuchumboy oqli).

From a linguistic perspective, the titles of these tales are formed by using the word “ear” (quloq) as a proper noun, to which the suffixes “-voy” and “-boy”, expressing subjective evaluation, are added. Such forms of subjective evaluation attach to nouns and serve to convey the speaker’s varying attitudes toward a person or object.

¹ Madayev O. O‘zbek xalq o‘g‘zaki ijodi – Toshkent: Mumtoz so‘z, 2010. – B.34-35.

The traditional openings of the tales also differ from one another. The first tale titled “Quloqvoy” begins with the formulaic expression: “Once upon a time, there was and there was not...”

It begins with the formulaic expression: “Once upon a time, in ancient times, when peace and prosperity prevailed among the people, there lived in a certain land an old man and an old woman who had lived out their lives in contentment.”² In contrast, the second tale bearing the same title begins without any traditional artistic embellishment, using a simple narrative introduction: “In the past, there lived an old man and an old woman.”³ The opening of the “Quloqboy” tale, however, differs entirely from the initial (expositional) parts of the aforementioned tales: “There was and there was not; there was hunger and there was abundance.”⁴ In our view, this variation is the result of the storytellers’ individual performance skills. Despite the differences in the openings, the central problem remains the same—childlessness. As can be inferred from the excerpts above, the characters suffering from this condition are an old man and an old woman: “The old man and the old woman had neither a son nor a daughter.”⁵ “The old man had reached the age of sixty, and the old woman forty-five; they had no children.”⁶ In the “Quloqboy” tale: “There lived an old man and an old woman; they had no children.”⁷

In all three tales, the initial part begins with the motif of childlessness. However, the resolution of this narrative knot—namely, the birth or appearance of a child—is depicted differently in each case.

In the first tale titled “Quloqvoy,” the child appears suddenly as a helper to the sick old woman who is struggling to bring food to her husband. The old woman laments: “My old man will remain hungry. I would take the food to him, but I have no strength. If only I had a son or a daughter, they would have helped me and taken the food to their father,” she says sorrowfully.

At that moment, an unusual voice is heard:

“Mother, mother, why do you keep grieving, saying ‘I have no child’? I told you, I will take the food to my father,” it says.

The old woman, astonished, looks around in confusion, when suddenly a tiny Quloqvoy emerges from inside the slipper she had taken off at the threshold and says:

“Come, give me the food; I will take it to my father. He must be very hungry by now.”⁸ In the second tale bearing the same title, a natural pregnancy is depicted. During a conversation, the old woman tells her husband that she has developed a craving for sheep’s ears. The narrative then explains the purpose for which she cooks and consumes the heads of forty sheep brought by the old man from the market:

“The old woman cooked the heads of forty sheep and ate their ears. ‘Let me bear a child for this old man so that he will not be able to provide for it,’ she said, and ate them all. As months passed and days went by, the old woman approached childbirth. The old man had gone out to

² Гулпарӣ: ўзбек халқ эртақлари: 38-жилд / Ўзбек халқ ижоди ёдгорликлари 100 жилдлик. – Тошкент: Renessans press, 2024. – В.119.

³ Сумбул қуш: сеҳрли эртақлар. 19-жилд / Ўзбек халқ ижоди ёдгорликлари 100 жилдлик. – Тошкент: Фафур Гулом, 2020. – В.261.

⁴ Одамтой. Ўзбек халқ ижоди ёдгорликлари 100 жилдлик. 44-жилд / Тузувчилар: Ш.Турдимов, А.Абдужалилов. – Тошкент: Madad oshiyoni, 2025. – В.153.

⁵ Гулпарӣ: ўзбек халқ эртақлари: 38-жилд / Ўзбек халқ ижоди ёдгорликлари 100 жилдлик. – Тошкент: Renessans press, 2024. – В.119.

⁶ Сумбул қуш: сеҳрли эртақлар. 19-жилд / Ўзбек халқ ижоди ёдгорликлари 100 жилдлик. – Тошкент: Фафур Гулом, 2020. – В.261.

⁷ Одамтой. Ўзбек халқ ижоди ёдгорликлари 100 жилдлик. 44-жилд / Тузувчилар: Ш.Турдимов, А.Абдужалилов. – Тошкент: Madad oshiyoni, 2025. – В.153.

⁸ Гулпарӣ: ўзбек халқ эртақлари: 38-жилд / Ўзбек халқ ижоди ёдгорликлари 100 жилдлик. – Тошкент: Renessans press, 2024. – В.120.

gather firewood. The old woman then gave birth to forty children at once.”⁹ In the “Quloqboy” tale, as in the second variant, a natural pregnancy also occurs: “Day by day and month by month passed, and the old man’s wife became pregnant. One day, the old woman went into labor. When the old man looked, it turned out that his wife had given birth to seven ears.”¹⁰

If we turn to the medial part of the tales, it becomes evident that all three versions contain common motifs such as being swallowed by a camel and being devoured by a wolf; however, these motifs are presented in different sequences and narrative forms.

In the first tale titled “Quloqvoy,” the protagonist is knocked unconscious and falls into a ditch after being butted by a mottled ox, after which he is swallowed by a blue-maned wolf. When the starving wolf approaches a flock of sheep, Quloqvoy, from inside the wolf’s belly, warns the shepherds of the danger. As a result of prolonged hunger, the wolf dies, and the tiny Quloqvoy emerges safely. Later, while resting under a camelthorn bush, he is swallowed again—this time by one of the caravan camels along with the bush. Eventually, Quloqvoy safely exits from the last camel slaughtered by the caravan leader.

In the second tale with the same title, the sequence of these motifs is altered. In this version, the camel swallows Quloqvoy together with a leaf he is lying on while grazing. After the camel is slaughtered, its remains become food for a hungry wolf. Following the advice of a fox, the wolf runs downhill at great speed, at which moment Quloqvoy jumps out from its belly and hides in the hollow of a willow tree.

In the “Quloqboy” tale, an additional episode is inserted between these two motifs, in which the protagonist is swallowed by a dog. After being eaten along with camelthorn by a starving camel, the old man slaughters the camel but fails to find his son inside. He throws the entrails to a dog, and Quloqboy, being inside them, enters the dog’s stomach. While the dog lies in the sun after feeding, Quloqboy cries out: “Father, whom do you love more—me or your dog? If you love me, take me out of the dog.” The old man kills the dog, but fails to find him. Later, a hungry wolf devours the dog, and Quloqboy ends up inside the wolf.

The endings of the three tales also differ. In the first “Quloqvoy” tale, the conclusion suggests continuity: “They say that the tiny Quloqvoy is still punishing greedy and unjust people while faithfully serving his elderly parents. And so ends my tale—may you live long.” This gives the impression that the story is ongoing.

In contrast, the second tale concludes with Quloqvoy’s marriage and attainment of happiness: “His parents decided to marry him off. In that land, there was a high-ranking official named Kaldaroz who had a daughter. They went to ask for her hand, fulfilled the required conditions, and after several days of wedding celebrations, gave the girl in marriage to Quloqvoy. Thus, Quloqvoy and his parents achieved their wishes and lived happily.”

Similarly, the “Quloqboy” tale ends with a wedding: “They invited their relatives and held a wedding for Quloqboy. Thus, the old man and the old woman rejoiced in their son and attained their long-desired happiness.”

From the above analysis, it is clear that these tales were not performed by a single storyteller. Our research shows that the “Quloqvoy” tale in the “Sumbulqush” collection was recorded by Jamoliddin Asomiddinov from the narration of Habiba Ziyaeva, a storyteller from the Tashkent region. The version in the “Gulpari” collection was recorded by the folklorist Malik Murodov from Murodilla Ziyodilla oqli of the Namangan region. The “Quloqboy” tale in the “Odamtoy” collection was recorded by Ernazarov from Jiyanboy Kuchumboy oqli of the Samarkand region. This indicates that the analyzed tales are widely распространены across different regions of the country.

⁹ Сумбул куш: сеҳрли эртақлар. 19-жилд / Ўзбек халқ ижоди ёдгорликлари 100 жилдлик. – Тошкент: Ғафур Ғулом, 2020. – В.261.

¹⁰ Одамтой. Ўзбек халқ ижоди ёдгорликлари 100 жилдлик. 44-жилд / Тузувчилар: Ш.Турдимов, А. Абдужалилов. – Тошкент: Madad oshiyoni, 2025. – В.153.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be suggested that these three tales may once have been performed in a single, unified form. Over time, certain motifs of the original version were either forgotten or supplemented, and as a result of the storytellers' performance skills and artistic refinement, multiple variants of the "Quloqvoy" tale emerged.

Given that these tales had both performers and audiences among the people, they were transmitted orally from generation to generation. Thanks to the dedicated efforts and hard work of collectors, they have survived to the present day. Therefore, identifying, thoroughly studying, and publishing such tales is an important scholarly responsibility.

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