

Numerals as Cultural Codes: Semantic and Pragmatic Features in the Kazakh Linguo-Cultural Context

Zhuldyz Kurmambayeva^{†*}

Tanat Ayapova[‡]

Zeinekhan Kuzekova[§]

Gulnara Omarbekova[§]

Orazkul Ismailova[†]

Maussym Abduali[¶]

Abstract

This article investigates the linguo-cultural concept of numerals in the Kazakh language, which describes the approaches and classifications of the concept as a tool for the interpretation of the mentality expressed in this language. It also examines the relationship between language and culture through the lens of cognitive and linguo-cultural approaches, focusing on numerals as a main object of study. Numerals serve not only as markers of quantity but also as cultural symbols that encode a nation's values, beliefs, historical experience and traditions. The article gives a conceptual analysis of the cognitive aspects of phraseological and paremiological units with numerals such as "one", "three", "seven", or "nine". The findings reveal that these numbers embody both universal and culture-specific meanings, providing insight into the collective worldview of the Kazakh people. Mythological numerical images form part of the naive linguistic picture of the world, which represents the ways of perception and conceptualization of the world reflected in natural language, when the basic concepts of language are formed into a single system of views, a collective philosophy.

Keywords: Culture, Symbolism, Numerals, Linguistics

1 Introduction

Language is a mirror of national identity. Through language, we can observe how a nation perceives and conceptualizes reality. Even universal metaphysical concepts are understood differently in different cultures. Numerals are among the most portable units in language, but in many cultures they carry meanings that far exceed counting. In Kazakh ethnolinguistic tradition, number words function as compact cultural signs that encode social roles, ritual timing, and moral expectations. The number "seven" (*zheti*), for instance, organizes kinship memory through the well-known *zheti ata* rule and anchors ceremonial foods and commemorative rites; "forty" (*qyryq*) shapes the temporal architecture of life-cycle rituals, marking newborn naming and mourning thresholds; "three" underlies cosmological and domestic triads that signal completeness and closure. Such usages suggest that numerals in Kazakh operate as symbolic coordinates that stabilize worldview and social practice.

In this regard, although numerals may seem universal at first glance, they also carry culturally encoded background meanings shaped by the worldview of each nation. For example, the numeral "one" in the universal sense often conveys the idea of weakness or inadequacy: "The strong defeat one, but the wise defeat a thousand" (*Bilekty birdi jigar, bilimdi myndi jigar*); or, in Russian, "One in the field is not a warrior".

[†] Department of Foreign Languages, Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, 050010, 13 Dostyk Ave., Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

[‡] Department of Kazakh Language and Literature, Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, 050010, 13 Dostyk Ave., Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

[§] Department of Kazakh language and Turkic Studies, Nazarbaev University, 010000, 53 Kabanbay Batyr Ave., Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan

[¶] Department of Russian Language and Literature, Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University, 050000, 114 Gogol Str., Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

* Corresponding author, email: kurmambayeva.zhuldyz@proton.me

At the same time, “one” symbolizes loneliness or uniqueness, expressed in such statements as “Believe in the One God” or “Loneliness befits only God”; and in English: “One Lord and one king.” In the Kazakh language, the numeral “one” also functions as a quantifier in phrases denoting a measure or portion: *bir urtam* (“a sip”), *bir asym* (“a portion of food”), *bir kesh* (“one flight”), *bir kier* (“one wearing”), *bir zhapyrak* (“a leaf”), *bir attam* (“a step”), *bir uys* (“a handful”), *bir aydam* (“a period of time”), and many others. Thus, the study of numerals allows us to reveal not only their universal, cross-cultural meaning for counting, but also conceptual and symbolic values.

The magical symbolism of numbers is reflected in the phraseological units of every language, demonstrating that from ancient times, people have attached great importance to numbers. Numbers were believed to possess mystical power and sacred qualities. From early history, numbers have played a crucial role in human life, serving as a key to understanding the universe. They were not viewed merely as answers to the question “how many”, but also as symbols of specific qualities, as expressed in the belief that the world itself is sustained by the power of numbers.

From a cognitive perspective, each numeral holds a distinct place and significance, representing not only quantitative value but also symbolic transformations that vary according to different contexts. These symbolic shifts highlight the unity of human beings and nature, and the sacred role of numbers as cultural and conceptual markers.

The purpose of the article is to investigate the linguo-cultural concepts of numerals in the Kazakh language within the framework of cognitive and linguo-cultural approaches. The study aims to reveal how numerals function not only as quantitative markers but also as cultural codes that preserve and transmit national values, traditions, beliefs, and the collective worldview. By analyzing phraseological and paremiological units with numerals, the article seeks to identify both universal and culture-specific meanings, demonstrate their symbolic and mythological dimensions, and show how they contribute to the formation of linguistic mentality and cultural identity.

2 Literature review

The concept of numbers appeared in very ancient times, but has gradually expanded and become more generalized and more abstract or spiritual. As Pythagoras famously stated: “The ruler of the world is number.” He believed that behind every phenomenon stood a number, and that numbers themselves carried both positive and negative qualities—good and evil, happiness and misfortune. According to him, the task of humanity was to recognize what each number signified and what it might bring. Within Pythagorean philosophy, the number one held the highest status. The entire universe was thought to originate from it.

The ethnographer (Potanin, 2007), reviewing earlier studies, emphasized that the numbers *three*, *seven*, and *nine* were considered sacred. In his view, the symbolic meaning of the number *seven* should not be explained merely by the veneration of the seven planets. Rather, he argued that its significance arose from long-term human observation of celestial bodies.

Dussipbayeva (2001) classifies numerals in the Kazakh language according to the categories of odd and even. In the work of Dzheldybaeva (2010), who specifically studied the quantitative usage of numeral concepts, greater emphasis is placed on the ethnocultural content of numbers rather than on their purely numerical meaning. The cultural meaning of numerals in relation to stages of human age within the national worldview is discussed in the research of Zhanataev (1998). The role of numerals in folk measurement units has been thoroughly examined by Kurkebaev (2003), followed by Kabyldina (2007), who investigated the nuances of meaning and usage of numbers in measurement terms. Karadzha (2005) conducted a specialized study on the numerative function of numerals, analyzing semantic similarities across Turkic languages.

Among the scholars who have studied the symbolic, religious, and ritual meanings of numerals is Toporov (1980). Comparative research on numerals has shown that common features can often be found across two or three languages. For example, Skorobutov (2004) investigated the meanings of numerals in the phraseological units of modern French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Research on the interconnection between language and culture through numerals has been actively developed since the early 2000s. For instance, Pelipenko (2016) examined the cognitive-semantic and linguocultural characteristics of numerative phraseological units. Khezheva (2017) investigated the image of the human being reflected in numerative phraseologisms of the Kabardian-Cherkess language within the framework of anthropolinguistics. Cui (2003) analyzed the semantics of numerals in Chinese and Russian from a linguocultural perspective. In addition, Devitskaya (2016) identified ancient cultural codes associated with beliefs and rituals related to numerals in the marriage traditions of the Kuban people.

3 Materials and methods

In world linguistics, numerals have been studied within various frameworks such as numerative words, numerative constructions, numerals, quantitative concepts, and phraseological units with numerical meanings. Even within the scope of metrological vocabulary, the semantic features of measurement terms are examined alongside the meanings of numbers.

When numerals become the object of linguistic research, they represent a universal conceptual category. Within this category, metric (measurement) vocabulary, quantitative (amount-related) vocabulary, and numerative vocabulary are all considered as part of numeral studies. At the same time, numbers function not only as linguistic units but also as cultural values. By uncovering the cultural motivation behind numbers, one can gain insight into a nation's customs, traditions, rituals, and belief systems. Moreover, the study of numerical concepts within the lexicon of material culture reveals a people's aesthetic worldview and the spiritual values regarded as sacred forces within their cultural consciousness.

In this research, our focus is not on the lexical meaning of numerals, but on their conceptual motivation and cultural-semantic functions. Although numerals have previously been examined in terms of their quantitative, ordinal, and measurement-related functions, they have rarely been studied as cultural symbols or as carriers of national values. The present study is therefore the first attempt in Kazakh linguistics to systematically identify the linguocultural foundations of numerals.

Our analysis does not concentrate on the ordinal or cardinal meanings of numbers, but rather on their stereotypical, culturally entrenched uses within the national system of values. For instance, repeating a newborn's name three times when naming (*ush ret qaytalau*), healing or cleansing by threefold incantation (*ush ret ushiqtau*), or purification by fire performed three times (*ush ret alastau*). Why is the act repeated three times? Similarly, why do Kazakhs conceptualize the world as divided into "four corners" (*duniyenin tort burishi*, *tortkul dunie*), reflecting a cosmological model of a round universe partitioned into four?

Guided by such questions, this study aims to identify the national worldview and background cultural knowledge encoded in numerals. Accordingly, the research examines the conceptual significance, cultural-semantic structure, and symbolic function of numerals in Kazakh culture, showing how meanings cluster around them within a shared ethnocultural framework. The findings demonstrate that, within Kazakh culture, numerals form a new cultural code rooted more in national characteristics than in universal stereotypes, while their ancient cultic meanings are marked by sacredness and powerful magical force.

4 Results and discussion

Numbers have held a significant place in human existence across all periods of history. They not only serve as tools for counting, but have also acquired symbolic value in the course of prolonged cultural and social development, revealing the cultural worldview of the society in which they were shaped. For this reason, their study belongs to the domain of cultural research and demands thorough exploration from philosophical, ethnographic, linguistic, and cultural perspectives. Such an approach makes it possible to reconstruct the integrated system of an entire culture.

The concept of numerals is also rooted in fundamental categories such as time and space. For example, Kazakh expressions like *zheti alem* ("seven worlds") and *tort tustik* ("four directions of the world") demonstrate how the universe is conceptualized within the Kazakh worldview. In national cultural traditions,

certain numbers appear with particular frequency and importance, notably *three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, forty, and sixty-two*.

In ancient times, numbers were endowed with meaning even before the emergence of language. Thus, numbers can be regarded as the key to understanding the mysteries of human worldviews. Since numeral systems exist in every language, the universal symbolic essence of numbers is also embedded in every language. Yet, the way in which these symbolic meanings are realized varies across languages. The significance of numbers and their symbolic functions throughout cultural history has been widely acknowledged (Kiseleva & Di, 2020).

The linguistic picture of the world largely corresponds to the image of the world reflected in human consciousness. Any national linguistic worldview, however, is grounded in universal human cognition while simultaneously shaped by the unique cultural experience of each people. The image of the world is therefore a holistic construct, arising as a result of human spiritual activity and the interaction between humanity and the universe. Differences in the linguistic picture of the world across ethnic groups reflect variations in cultural experience and knowledge, since linguistic signs are not direct reflections of external reality but rather products of human perception, memory, and lived experience. Because the life experiences of nations differ, so too do their linguistic worldviews and the cognitive models of reality reflected in language. Behind every word lies a fragment of truth, yet its linguistic representation differs from culture to culture.

In the process of perceiving reality, sensory impressions (sight, hearing, touch, taste, etc.) are first registered in consciousness, creating associations—the simplest way of forming a worldview. When such associations are repeated in collective consciousness, they solidify into stereotypes. Occasionally, individually generated interpretations of reality, in turn, give rise to figurative concepts. Together, these hierarchical layers of knowledge shape the conceptual picture of the world, which can be expressed through language. If conceptual images of reality are verbalized in multiple forms and meanings within a language, we can speak of the formation of a linguistic worldview. Thus, while the conceptual picture of the world exists in human consciousness, the linguistic picture of the world manifests within the language system. Numerals, particularly the basic units, embody this duality by serving as linguistic representations of the worldview.

In Kazakh linguistics, this phenomenon has been described in different terms: the linguistic picture of reality (Uali, 2007), the linguistic image of the world (Islam, 2004), and the linguistic worldview (Mankeeva, 2008; Smagulova, 1998). According to N. Uali's (2007) research, the linguistic picture of reality consists of two types of signs: linguistic signs and cultural signs. Linguistic signs convey denotative meaning, whereas cultural signs transmit cultural information derived from connotative meaning.

Every language reflects its own unique linguistic worldview, which is organized in accordance with the cultural cognition of its speakers. Through the linguistic picture of the world, we can identify the national worldview encoded in language. In this sense, the creation of a worldview represents the central mechanism by which humanity perceives and interprets reality.

The conceptual picture of the world differs from one language to another precisely because each nation perceives objective reality in its own way. For instance, the number *seven* is universally regarded as a symbol of luck. In Russian culture, this can be observed in expressions such as “Measure seven times, cut once”. In Kazakh culture, however, the sacredness and symbolic power of the number *seven* are so profound that they form an entire conceptual structure of their own.

Numerals are a lexical category found in every language, since their origins date back to ancient times. According to mythological sources, the earliest meanings of numbers were not related to counting or quantitative function, but rather were perceived as symbols of high cultural value. A number itself is an abstract concept, yet in ancient mythology numerals served as signs for specific objects or phenomena. The significance of numbers in human life cannot be denied. However, in everyday life we often do not reflect on where numbers came from or why each numeral carries its own unique meaning. By contrast, our ancestors carefully evaluated the sacredness and symbolic qualities of every number, starting with “one”, and used each numeral according to its place, importance, and distinct function.

In the traditional Kazakh worldview, the linguistic image of numbers is shaped by background cultural knowledge. For example, the concept of *bir* (“one”) in Kazakh thought encompasses multiple dimensions:

- God / divinity (*bir Qudaiga siynyp*. . . – “trust in the one God”),
- loneliness (*zhalgyzdyn uni shıqpas, jayaudin shany shıqpas* – “a single voice cannot be heard, a lone traveler leaves no dust”),
- precision (*zheti ret olshep, bir ret kes* – “measure seven times, cut once”),
- primacy (*birinshi aiel - sheker, ekinshi aiel - beker* – “the first wife is sweet, the second is in vain”),
- quality over quantity (*mynnyn zhuzin bilgenshe, birdin atyn bil* – “better to know one man’s name than the faces of a thousand”),
- small quantity (*bir danin myn dan bolsyn* – “may one grain become a thousand”),
- unit of measure (*bir qainatym* – “one boiling,” *bir urttam* – “one sip,” *bir uys* – “a handful”),
- unchanging property (*birtoga, birqalyply* – “consistent, steady”),
- conclusion / culmination (*barin ait ta birin ait* – “after saying all, say the main one”),
- wholeness and unity (*bir kisidei, bir zhennen qol, bir zhagadan bas* – “acting in full unity”).

The symbolic field of *bir* (“one”) is not limited to these examples. The more varied its use in language, the broader its cultural and conceptual scope becomes. For instance, from the meaning of “loneliness” arises the word *bireu* (“someone, one person”), while from the meaning of “wholeness” comes the concept of *birlik* (“unity”). Thus, the numeral *bir* expands its conceptual domain, reinforcing its central role in the Kazakh cultural worldview.

The sacred treasure of the Kazakh people is their spiritual values. Among these, the philosophical reflections embedded in sacred numbers, which for centuries have served as a measure and guiding principle of life, require special study. The interpretations of numbers preserved in the linguistic repertoire clearly reveal the worldview, cognition, and logical reasoning of the people.

For the Kazakh people, the number *three* represents a linguophilosophical unity. In the Kazakh worldview, both good and evil are often perceived as culminating in sets of *three*.

- *Ush artyq* (– three virtues: *adaldyq* (honesty), *enbeksuigishtik* (diligence), *onerpazdyq* (creativity)).
- *Ush jamandyq* – three evils: *naqaq qan togu* (shedding innocent blood), *kisi malyn naqaq alu* (unjust seizure of property), *ata-babadan qalghan eski zhurt buzy* (destruction of ancestral land).
- *Ush aqyqat* – three truths: *shyndyq* (truth), *otirik* (falsehood), *karilik* (old age).
- *Ush quanysh* – three joys: *algys alu* (receiving gratitude), *ozindi koptin izdeui* (being remembered by the people), *isinnin oshpeui* (leaving behind enduring deeds).
- *Ush biik* – three heights: *bilik* (authority), *daulet* (wealth), *danalyq* (wisdom).
- *Ush asyl* – three treasures: *koz* (eye), *til* (tongue), *konil* (heart).
- *Ush yntyq* – three desires: *erkin omir* (freedom), *qurmetke bolenu* (being respected), *paidaly enbek etu* (useful work).
- *Ush tul* (Abai) – three voids: *qairatsyz ashı* (anger without strength), *turlausyz gashyq* (love without loyalty), *shakirtsız galym* (scholar without students).
- *Ush kedeylik* (Tole Bi) – three forms of poverty: *kejirlik* (stubbornness), *erinshiktik* (laziness), *uiqy* (oversleeping).
- *Ush baqytsyzdyq* – three misfortunes: *zhaman at* (bad reputation), *zhaman qatyn* (bad wife), *zhaman korshi* (bad neighbor).

- *Ush arsz* – three shameless things: *uiqy* (sleep), *kulki* (laughter), *tamaq* (food).
- *Ush tatti* – three delights: *zhan* (life), *mal* (wealth), *nemere* (grandchildren).
- *Ush bailyq* – three riches: *birinshi bailyq* - *densaulyq* (first wealth is health), *ekinshi bailyq* - *aq zhailyq* (second wealth is a good wife), *ushinshi bailyq* - *on saulyq* (third wealth is livestock).

When analyzing the concepts associated with the number *three*, it becomes evident that the ancestors who lived on Kazakh land understood the world through a logical perspective. These traditional Kazakh insights confirm that such wisdom is deeply rooted from a philosophical standpoint. In connection with the number *three*, certain aspects of national culture show differences across traditions. For instance, in Russian culture the phraseological unit *Bog troitsu lyubit* (“God loves the Trinity”) is widespread, yet it has no equivalent in Kazakh, since this idea is not characteristic of the Kazakh cultural worldview. In contrast, Kazakh features the expression *ush kundik pani* (“a worldly life of three days”), which symbolizes the brevity and transience of human existence. This meaning, while conceptually comparable, is expressed differently in other cultures. In English, there are also phraseological units involving the number *three* that convey similar symbolic associations, though in distinct forms. The most important observation is that the semantic role of ‘*three*’ remains universal, even if the expression varies across languages. For example:

- *All good things come in threes* - comparable to the Russian idea “God loves the Trinity.”
- *Number three is always fortunate* - expressing the association of “*three*” with luck and success.

Thus, although the linguistic realization differs, the symbolic significance of the number *three* demonstrates a shared conceptual foundation across cultures.

A concept is a complex structure that reveals human cognition. The active nature of its formation is most clearly manifested in the processes of human thinking. Information accumulated about a particular notion is organized through the conceptual system, forming a conceptual field. In other words, the multiple meanings, values, functions, and characteristics of a given notion are distributed into the cells of a conceptual field in accordance with the principles of cognitive linguistics. Thus, the human mind classifies and systematizes comprehensive knowledge about a concept within a conceptual framework (Di & Kiseleva, 2016).

According to N. N. Boldyrev (2000)’s research, when a concept is treated as a unit of background knowledge, only the objective features of abstract notions are taken as the basis. In this case, the core of the concept is formed by a cluster of object-related and figurative characteristics of the notion, since these derive from human sensory perception of the world and originate in the description of the elementary image of an object.

The number *seven* is universally regarded as a positive, sacred, and magical concept. In world culture, *seven* is often identified as a magical number and associated with the symbolism of the planets. In Russian tradition, the number *seven* is actively used to denote moments of happiness, as in *byt na sedmom nebe* (“to be in seventh heaven”) or *semero po lavkam sidyat* (“seven sitting on the benches”, referring to a large family).

In the Kazakh worldview, however, the number *seven* is considered a sacred concept. A conceptual analysis of *zheti* shows that beyond its numerical meaning, its magical and symbolic dimensions form the core of its conceptual field. *Seven* symbolizes magical power. In traditional Kazakh culture, practices such as *ushyqtau* (healing through ritual incantation), *alastau* (purification by fire or smoke), and treatments performed by shamans and healers stem from the reverence for the power of Earth and Sky, Sun and Moon, as well as sacred animals. These rituals are rooted in Tengrist beliefs and ancient spiritual traditions.

Seven is regarded as a protector against the evil eye. In Kazakh tradition, numerous rituals exist to ward off misfortune caused by envy or ill will. This belief is rooted in the understanding that human energy (*iqylas* – sincere intention, *naz* – emotional force) can be transferred through the eyes or words. The Kazakhs were among the first to recognize this and developed practices to counteract and heal the effects of the *til-koz* (evil eye).

For instance, when a family has a newborn child, the household ties seven pieces of cloth to the doorway to protect the baby and mother from harmful influence. Another custom involves inserting seven needles into a heart-shaped or ladle-shaped piece of fabric and hanging it above the door as a protective charm. Kazakhs also sewed seven small stones into cloth amulets, attaching them discreetly to the inside of a child's vest or clothing. Such talismans were believed to shield individuals, especially children, from the destructive power of envious glances or malicious speech. Beyond protection, these charms were thought to endow a person with inner strength and instill a sense of confidence.

Seven as myth: In Kazakh folklore, the number seven is strongly associated with mythological imagery: *zheti basty zhalmayyz* (seven-headed monster), *zheti dau* (seven giants), *zheti basty aidahar* (seven-headed dragon/serpent), *zheti qat zher asty* (seven layers of the underworld), and *zheti qabat temir ui* (seven layers of iron walls). These motifs illustrate how Kazakh imagination uses the number seven to symbolize calamities, hardships, and dangers.

According to folk narratives and fairytales, defeating a seven-headed monster or dragon is never an easy task, just as escaping from the seven layers of the underworld requires passing through numerous trials. Behind these mythical plots lies the historical experience of the Kazakh people: enduring hardships, surviving disasters, and overcoming times of great turmoil. Thus, the motif of conquering seven difficulties before attaining happiness reflects the collective memory of struggle and resilience preserved in Kazakh mythology.

Seven as the measure of sufficiency: In the Kazakh worldview, the number *seven* serves as a symbolic boundary that defines the measure of the universe, wealth, love, famine, days, and seasonal cycles. The sacredness of *seven* explains why the Kazakh people traditionally marked both blessings and hardships in groups of *seven*. Even the preparation of *Nauryz kozhe* (the festive spring soup) requires *seven* ingredients, while the essential qualities and treasures expected of an ideal young man are also enumerated in sevens. This reverence for the number *seven* as a sacred limit is deeply rooted in national consciousness and is clearly reflected in linguistic data preserved within the Kazakh language.

Zheti ata ("seven ancestors") is a unique cultural marker of Kazakh identity. No other nation has an equivalent concept. In Kazakh, *Zheti ata* is also referred to as *zheti tip* ("seven roots"). Expressions such as *zheti tupten beri qarai* ("from the lineage of seven generations") are still actively used in everyday speech. Stable phrases like *zheti atasynan zhau* ("an enemy from seven generations"), *zheti atasyna bitpegen* ("something not inherited from the ancestors"), and *zheti atasynan tuk kormegen* ("one who has never prospered throughout his lineage") reflect the deep cultural value placed on ancestry and the responsibility not to bring shame upon one's forefathers.

The well-known saying *Zheti atasyn bilmegen zhetemiz* ("He who does not know his seven ancestors is incomplete") emphasizes that knowing one's seven ancestors is considered a moral duty, especially for young men. Beneath this principle lies the idea of respect for ancestry, the preservation of unity among kin, and the recognition of *zheti ata* as a foundation of collective identity and cultural continuity.

The structure of the concept of *seven* in the Kazakh worldview is defined on the basis of several dimensions: linguistic (fixed expressions and phraseological units), psychological (protective rituals using seven objects to ward off the evil eye or harmful energy), and cultural. Examples are: *zheti ata* – seven ancestors, *zheti jurt* – seven kinship groups, *zheti amal* – seven seasonal cycles, *zheti gashyq* – seven lovers, *zheti qat kok* – seven layers of the sky, *zheti qabat zher* – seven layers of the earth, *zheti shelppek* – seven sacrificial flatbreads, *zheti qazyna* – seven treasures. For the Kazakh people, *seven* is not simply a numeral but a sacred cultural value, deeply embedded in language, psychology, and tradition.

Language is the mirror of national consciousness. Through language, we can observe the distinctive ways in which a nation perceives and interprets reality. Even universal metaphysical notions are understood differently in each cultural context. Beyond the universal meaning of numerals shared by all humankind, every nation encodes its own culturally specific background meanings in accordance with its worldview (Kydyrmoldina et al., 2025). This is shown clearly in the uses of the number nine:

1. *Togyz* (nine) refers to a gift consisting of nine different items. In traditional Kazakh culture, such a prize was awarded to the winners of horse races, wrestling matches, or artistic competitions. The *togyz* was a pre-determined and highly prestigious reward, symbolizing honor and recognition. In Kazakh tradition, the

togyz prize could be divided into two main types: *zhandy togyz* (“living nine”) – a gift consisting of livestock. For example, in a *bes zhaqsy* (five best valuables) set, the *zhandy togyz* might include a black camel or a mare with foal (sometimes a swift racehorse). *Zhansyz togyz* (“non-living nine”) – a gift made up of valuable possessions or luxury items. This could include a pile carpet, a fine sword or rifle, and high-quality clothing such as a fur coat or a silk robe. Other specific contexts are:

2. *Togyz* (nine) refers to a ceremonial gift presented during marriage rituals such as betrothal, the sending off of the bride, or the formal visit of the groom’s relatives (*quda tusu*). This traditional gift had to consist of nine different items, each carrying symbolic and material value. As part of the bride price (*qalynmal*), a special *togyz* dowry was presented. In the *zhaqsyly qyryq zheti* (forty-seven items of dowry), nearly everything required for a household was included: furniture, household goods, the bride’s clothing, and even a riding horse. In some cases, certain items were given in sets of *nine*, emphasizing the symbolic and sacred value of the number.

3. *Togyz* (nine) is a protector against the evil eye. In Kazakh tradition, the number *nine* was believed to have sacred, protective power. For example, when decorating a girl’s headdress or *bespent* (traditional jacket), bead ornaments were arranged in groups of *nine*. Similarly, the practice of attaching *togyz monshaq* (nine beads) or silver coins to a baby’s cradle or clothing as a talisman served to protect the child from envy or harmful energy.

4. *Togyz* (nine) is part of a mythological belief system. In Kazakh spiritual tradition, the sacredness of nine is evident in charitable rituals and offerings. For instance, the custom of distributing *togyz qap tary* (“nine sacks of millet”) as alms or memorial food reflects the symbolic role of nine in religious and cultural practice. The fact that these offerings were often made in sets of nine—or sometimes seven—underscores the perception of these numbers as sacred within the Kazakh worldview.

5. *Togyz* (nine) – The number nine signifies abundance and prosperity. Among the nomadic Kazakhs, the number nine was regarded as the pinnacle of existence. Its primary meaning is associated with longevity, while more broadly, nine symbolizes plenty, diversity, and multiplicity. This sacred numeral is deeply embedded in Kazakh idioms and proverbs that express the idea of prosperity and fullness:

Toigan uige togyz kel – “Bring nine to a household that has abundance.”

Togyz zholdyn toraby – “The crossroads of nine roads”, meaning a place where many paths meet.

Agasy aga bolgannyn qoly togyz bolar – “The hand of one whose elder brother supports him will be as strong as nine hands.”

Togyz qatynnyn tolgagy qatar keldi – “The labors of nine women came at once”, referring to being overwhelmed with multiple tasks or burdens simultaneously.

Togyz zhyl toq bolsan da, tobyq etin tastama – “Even if you live in plenty for nine years, do not throw away the meat of the ankle”, emphasizing the cultural belief in the sacredness of every part of food, including even the ankle meat.

Togyz qyrly, toqsan syrly – “Nine-sided, ninety-faceted”, describing a highly talented, versatile, and wise person.

Thus, the number nine in Kazakh cultural consciousness represents not only abundance but also the ideal of completeness, richness, and mastery.

Conclusions

From a cognitive and linguo-cultural perspective, numerals in Kazakh culture represent a vital channel through which the national worldview is conveyed. The study of numbers provides insights into the historical memory, traditions, and daily life of the Kazakh people. Through proverbs, phraseological units, religious practices and mythological narratives, numbers acquire symbolic dimensions that go far beyond their quantitative function.

Particularly significant are the numbers one, three, seven and nine, which are traditionally regarded as sacred. These numerals encode cultural values and serve as markers of identity, acting as a mirror of collective life. Their use demonstrates how language and culture are intertwined, shaping a distinctive mode of thinking unique to the Kazakh people.

In Kazakh tradition, numbers function not only as lexical units but also as cultural symbols and mythologemes, carrying encoded information about customs, beliefs, and moral principles. Basic numerals (one to nine) act as cultural signifiers, reflecting continuity across generations. Thus, numerals in the Kazakh language are deeply embedded in the cultural and linguistic heritage of the nation. They preserve sacred knowledge, reinforce collective identity, and highlight the inseparable relationship between language, culture, and worldview. Thus, the numeral possesses great potential and can function as a mythologeme, a cultural reality, and a cultural-semantic unit.

References

- Boldyrev, N. N. (2000). *Kognitivnaya semantika [Cognitive semantics]*. Tambov Univ. Publishing.
- Cui, H. E. (2003). Semantics of number names in Russian and Chinese: A linguocultural aspect (PhD dissertation and abstract). Krasnodar.
- Devitskaya, E. D. (2016). The sacredness of the number three in Kuban wedding rituals. *Philological Sciences. Theory and Practice*, 2(56), 92–93.
- Di, Y., & Kiseleva, L. A. (2016). Phraseologisms with a numerical component in Russian and Chinese: A linguocultural aspect. *Philological Sciences. Questions of Theory and Practice*, 6(60), 75–77. <https://doi.org/10.30853/filnauki.2016.6.2.16>
- Dussipbayeva, Q. S. (2001). Qazaq eskilikteriniñ sandar jüesindegi tildik körinisteri [Linguistic reflections of numbers in Kazakh antiquities] (Candidate dissertation). Almaty.
- Dzheldybaeva, R. B. (2010). Mölşerlik uğymdy bildiretin sözderdiñ qazaq jäne qytai tilderindegi valenttik-distributivtik zañdylyqtary [Valence-distributive patterns of quantitative terms in Kazakh and Chinese] (Candidate dissertation). Almaty.
- Islam, G. A. (2004). *Yazykovaya kartina mira i kul'tura [Linguistic picture of the world and culture]*. Flinta.
- Kabyldina, L. (2007). Mölşer, ólshem magynalarynyñ funktsiõnal-semantikalyq órisi [Functional-semantic field of quantitative and measurement meanings] (Doctoral dissertation) [117 p.]. Candidate dissertation. Astana.
- Karadzha, O. (2005). Türki tilderindegi numerativti söz tireksteri [Numerative constructions in Turkic languages] (Doctoral dissertation) [130 p.]. Candidate dissertation. Almaty.
- Khezheva, M. R. (2017). The image of man in numerative phraseologisms of the Kabardian-Cherkess language. *Philological Sciences. Theory and Practice*, 186–188.
- Kiseleva, L. A., & Di, Y. (2020). Linguocultural basis of comparative studies of phraseology of unrelated languages. *European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences (EPSBS)*, 555–561. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2020.10.05.74>
- Kurkebaev, Q. Q. (2003). Qazaq tilindegi ólshemdik atawlardyñ etnolingvistikalyq sipaty [Ethnolinguistic features of measurement terms in Kazakh] (Doctoral dissertation). Candidate dissertation. Almaty.

- Kydyrmoldina, E., Darmenkulova, R., Amirov, A., Sarsembayeva, M., & Aigul, D. (2025). Linguocultural aspect of English phraseological units with numbers. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, 7(8), 440–450. <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i8.9859>
- Mankeeva, Z. (2008). *Qazaq tilindegi etnomädeni atawlarning tanymdyq negizderi [Cognitive foundations of ethnocultural terms in the Kazakh language]*. Jibek Joly.
- Pelipenko, L. M. (2016). Cognitive-semantic and linguocultural features of numerative phraseological units (on the material of English and Russian) (Doctoral dissertation) [208 p.]. Adyghe State University.
- Potantin, G. N. (2007). Some questions on the study of beliefs, legends, superstitious customs, and rituals among the Kyrgyz. In *Ethnographic and Folklore Works, Vol. 6* (pp. 1–512). Altyn Kitap.
- Skorobutov, D. I. (2004). Comparative analysis of quantitative phraseological units in modern Romance languages (French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese) (Doctoral dissertation). PhD dissertation. Moscow.
- Smagulova, G. N. (1998). *Magynalas frazeologizmderdin ulttyq mädeni aspektleri [National-cultural aspects of synonymous phraseological units]*.
- Toporov, V. N. (1980). On numerical models in archaic texts. In T. V. Tsivyan (Ed.), *Structure of the Text* (pp. 3–32). Nauka.
- Uali, N. (2007). Söz mädenietiniń teorıialyq negizderi [theoretical foundations of speech culture] (Doctoral dissertation) [Doctoral dissertation abstract]. Almaty.
- Zhanataev, Q. Ä. (1998). Adamnyń jas ereksheligine, jynysyna qatısty atawlar [lexico-semantic and ethno-linguistic study of age and gender terms] (Doctoral dissertation) [Candidate dissertation]. Almaty.