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**Ethnolinguistic Peculiarities of Sacred Numbers**<sup>1</sup>Shara Mazhitaeva<sup>2</sup>Aigul Abdrazakova<sup>3</sup>Nurgul Abdrazakova

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**Abstract.** The article deals with ethnolinguistic peculiarities of sacred numbers in Kazakh and English languages, reflecting the spiritual life, traditions and customs. The authors examine the sacred numbers in fixed expressions compared languages.

**Keywords:** sacred numbers; ancient rituals; fixed expressions; national customs and traditions; conceptual domain; worldview; meanings; phraseological units in Kazakh and English languages.

**Introduction.** In Kazakh language and English as well the nature of sacred numbers as one of the lexical groups still needs careful examination and description from the point of general linguistics, ethnolinguistics, and culture studies.

We will make a short review to some peculiarities of using sacred numbers in phraseological word combinations and proverbs. Our interest to phraseological word combinations with Numerals can be explained by the fact that it still requires revealing some aspects of its nature.

Ethnolinguistic approach in studying language phenomena in Kazakh and English languages is aimed to reveal fully the nature of new lexis. Though, first scientific ethnolinguistic researches officially were found in XX century, we could meet many ethnolinguistic data in the works of classical linguists in English and Kazakh languages. The well-known scholars such as M. Kashkary, A. Navoyee, V. Gumbold, L. Vicergerber, and etc. devoted a lot of their works to the interrelation and correlation between language and culture, language and nation, the specific way of thinking that differs from other nations. Different semantical groups and layers that exist in General Lexicology of Kazakh language were carefully examined from the point of their ethnolinguistic value by academician A. Kaidar, E. Zhanpeyessov, M. Kopylenko, N. Uali, Zh. Mankeeyeva, A. Mukatayeva, K. Gabitkhanuly, N. Ongarbayeva and others.

The theory of German ethnolinguistics based itself on the works of scientist of the first part of the XX-th century A.Cepir and B.Worf and is closely connected with wide studying of everyday life, culture and languages of American's Indian tribes.

The numbers takes an important role in sacred vocabulary of Kazakh language. Everyone knows their practical function such in making numeral operations (to add, minus, multiply, divide and etc.) and symbolic function in counting as well, but they also interpret some sacred and magical meaning which has a power. "In early times people empowered numbers with sacred power, conceal meaning and strongly believed that they can influence to the world surrounding by their magic, they say that Gods used numbers for ruling the universe."

It is important to know that many numbers lost their magical meaning, so this fact played its role in their lexical usage. The sacred meaning of numbers in phraseological turns, proverbs,

riddles, beliefs, superstitions and games are codified. For example: Kazakh people have a tradition that are widely spread so called to open kumalak (small round stones for telling fortunes) "... the order in which 41 small round stones used coincide with numeral and functional character of the nature. Initially it seems that 41 stones were applied not only for telling fortunes, but as a key that helps to establish harmony between the universe and the world of Gods and spirits".

Thus, in the worldview of both nations numbers have cardinal, ordinal, measured meaning and holy numbers were widely used (holy, means sacral) to signify some sacred notions. We can find many facts that prove the existence of holy numbers from ancient history, customs and traditions that reflect general worldview of every nation.

A great number of fixed expressions, namely, phraseologisms and proverbs can be seen from the variety of sacred numbers coming from Kazakh people's concepts.

**Materials.** The materials we analyzed show a great variety of meanings sacred numbers interpret in the language. The same number in different languages can signify contrast meanings. For example, thirteen symbolizes bad luck in many cultures, such as English, German, Jewish, as a result people avoid labeling 13<sup>th</sup> house, 13<sup>th</sup> row in the cinema. 666 is an evil number and represent the Beast for Christians. But Kazakh people always divinities the number thirteen and Friday as a holy day from ancient times. If 13 date falls on Friday, it is regarded as the most holly day. At the age of 13 a man reaches maturity.

Four and seven are unlucky numbers for Chinese people. Eight is their favorite number and simply means and sounds similar to the word "prosperity".

Three – a sacred number has its own rich semantics. For many cultures number three is believed to be holy and plays an important role according to their worldview, traditions and beliefs. According to Mythological model of most cultures the universe consists of three levels, worlds. So that is one of the reasons to refer this number to sacred ones. In Kazakh language there is a proverb "Er kezegi ushke deyin" (A man has only 3 chances). From an ancient history we know that the structure of nomadic states was mainly based on 3 unions coming from the idea above.

In Kazakh culture there are a number of traditions, beliefs and concepts where we can see the number three considered to be especially significant. Thus, number three is respected for its power to give a birth. The baby in mother's stomach moves for the first time on the 3<sup>rd</sup> months, so this way she/he obeys to a sacred power of number three unconsciously. We can assume from this concept that first attempts to divinity numbers by some unbelievable power were made for the first time this way.

We fail to deny one fact that many historic periods later sacred meanings of numbers could have been forgotten, and people symbolizes them with new ethnocultural features and characters. There are some beliefs relating to number three: Three wealth: Health; ak Zhaulyk (a white kerchief of married woman, symbolizing a marriage). Five fingers (symbolizing a unity and peace). Three truths: Truth; Lie; a venerable age. Three heights: Power; Wealth; Wisdom.

So, the number "four" symbolizes the "unity" and "concord". It is based on the belief the universe is made up of a combination of four eternal "elements" or "roots of all": earth, water, air, and fire. For many cultures the number four also symbolizes a sacred power. In Christianity number four is the number of the cross. There are four letters in God's name: JHVH. Number four is met several times in Bible. The four creatures on each side of the throne. 1. Lion; 2. Flying eagle; 3. Man; 4. Eagle. There are four angels standing on at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth. In Kazakh cultural worldview the number four also represents unity, balance, totality and stability. Such symbolic meaning is seen in the following phraseological units: tort arysstyn balasy (siblings), tort ayagy ten, tuligi sai boldi (wealthy), tort kosi tugel (all are present), dunienin tort buryshy (the universe), tort kubilassy tugendeldi (reached all his aims), tort turmany tugel sai (having everything for housekeeping) and others. We can give some more examples of sayings and phraseologisms relating to the number four: shartarap, tortkul, tort kul duniye, duniyenin tort burushy (the universe, four cardinal points: North – South – East – West), tort toksan, tort tulik (upper, middle, lower worlds). The number 4 and its equivalent geometrical shape, the square, were considered to be sacred by ancient cultures that believed the world was flat.

The number 7 is equally sacred amongst Islamic, Christian and Jewish religions and is especially significant for Kazakh people since the early times. According to Jewish and Christian mythologies it took six days to create the world with the seventh day being the sacred day - a day of rest. The Bible texts also recommend that fields were to be left fallow every seventh year as means

of allowing the earth to regenerate itself. Some Christians believe the number 7 represents the seven levels of hell. There are 7 dwarfs, giants, seven goats in European and Slavonic mind and literature and number of phraseologisms.

It is also well known that, of all numbers, there is no one which has exercised in this way a wider influence, no one which has commanded in a higher degree the esteem and reverence of mankind, than the number seven. The number seven depicts universal (cosmic) patterns.

In Kazakh language there are a number of phraseologisms, proverbs, collocations that shows the significance of the number seven for Kazakh people. For example: Мысалы: 7 zhut (losses) – drought; loss of livestock; fire; plague; war; earthquake; flood. 7 wealth: A brave man; A beautiful wife; Wisdom; Knowledge; Golden eagle; Rifle; Ganger.

The number seven is one of the most significant numbers in the Holy Bible. In the Book of Revelation the number seven is used throughout. There are seven churches, seven Spirits, seven stars, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, seven personages, seven dooms, and seven new things. seven symbolizes Spiritual Perfection. All of life revolves around this number. seven is used over 700 times in the Bible. It is used 54 times in the Book of Revelation.

These include: Jesus fled away on seventh day, and revived seven days later.

In our research we have found some proverbs and phraseologisms with three, four, seven numbers.

In the glossary of Kazakh phraseologisms by I.Kenesbayev there are 30 national concepts relating to the number 3; 14 collocations with the number 4; 25 collocations and concepts with the number 7.

In the glossary of English-Russian dictionary we collected 583 phraseologisms 141 with the number one, 98 with the number two, 21 with the number four, 13 with the number seven.

**Discussion.** Thus, there are a great number of works about sacred numbers in Kazakh and English lexicology. There are more proverbs relating the numbers one and two in English [1]. R. Samuell has pointed number seven as sacred in English Bible [2]. As for Kazakh lexicology according to I. Kenesbayev the numbers three, seven, nine and forty often referred to sacred ones [3, P. 14]. K. Dusipbayeva, F. Akhmetzhanova have concluded that in early times to holy number referred number three. This number symbolized three unity of the world – upper, middle and lower; the symbol of present and future [4, P. 27]. The linguist and scholar N. Ualiuly states that number seven had a great significance and he gives the following examples: “7 galams (planets), 7 worlds, 7 nations”, “you may know 7 foreign languages, but you must respect your native language of all”. These days 7 galam denotes “the whole world”, “the universe”. In this example seven does not have a numeric meaning. It is rather explains mythological view of the world in yearly times. The seven symbolizes the cross with its six directions plus the center – indefinite extents moving toward the top, the bottom, the right, the left, forwards and backwards.

K.Gabithkhanuly considers three, seven, nine and forty numbers as sacred amongst other numerals [5, P. 110]. To his view exactly the numbers mentioned above one can find more frequently in collocations. Fairy tales, zhurs, customs and traditions and other worldviews.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion we mentioned that the level of the numerals in building fixed expressions is not the same. In fixed expressions there are numerals certain number of the numerals that are used, such as «four», «seven», «nine», «forty». We also observed the tendency that cardinal numerals appear more often than ordinal ones. The numerals specified as far they can be used in different connotations and meanings in legends, customs and traditions and other types of folklore.

According to many scholars three, seven, nine, forty are sacred ones. In our opinion we can continue this list with the following numbers thirteen, fifty, twenty-five, sixty. In perspective we are planning to carefully examine them and their functions through analyzing linguistic materials.

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### **Этнолингвистические особенности сакральных чисел**

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**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена исследованию этнолингвистических особенностей сакральных чисел казахского и английского языков, отражающих духовную жизнь, традиций и обычаев народов. Авторы рассматривают сакральные числа в устойчивых словосочетаниях сопоставляемых языков.

**Ключевые слова:** сакральные числа; древние ритуалы; устойчивые словосочетания; национальные традиции и обычаи; концепт; мировоззрение; значение; фразеологические единицы казахского и английского языков.