

Corpus-Based Analysis of the Ethnocultural Connotation of “Gold” in Kazakh Fairy Tales

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Abstract—This article presents a corpus-based analysis of the ethnocultural connotation of “gold” in Kazakh fairy tales. The study aims to systematize and examine the symbolic and cultural meanings associated with gold through corpus data. In the Kazakh worldview, gold occupies a significant place in folklore, culture, and everyday life. Due to its radiant yellow color, intrinsic value, and rarity, it is portrayed in fairy tales as a sacred object endowed with mystical and supernatural qualities. Images such as a golden palace, a golden-horned deer, a golden tree, golden water, and golden hair symbolize not only material wealth but also culturally embedded meanings specific to Kazakh tradition. The relevance of the study stems from the lack of specialized corpus-based research devoted to this topic. The article clarifies the concepts of “connotation” and “ethnocultural connotation” and reviews their interpretation in both international and Kazakh scholarship. The distinctive features of the ethnocultural connotation of gold are identified through linguistic data collection, systematization, frequency and statistical analysis, and comparative analysis. The findings contribute to the development of theoretical and applied research in emerging areas of Kazakh linguistics, including linguo-folklore studies, linguoculturology, ethnolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and related disciplines.

Index Terms—connotation, ethnocultural connotation, gold, corpus, fairy tale

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, corpus linguistics—one of the branches of applied linguistics concerned with the collection, systematization, analysis, and processing of large volumes of linguistic data—has been developing rapidly in Kazakh linguistics. Corpus data are now widely used in numerous linguistic studies.

The first major linguistic corpus was the Brown Corpus, created in the 1960s at Brown University (USA) by Nelson Francis and Henry Kucera. The Brown Corpus consisted of one million word tokens and included 500 texts of approximately 2,000 words each. The texts represented various genres, including fiction by well-known American writers and poets, religious texts, newspaper and magazine articles, and others. The Brown Corpus became a model and stimulus for the creation of corpora in other languages.

Between 1970 and 1978, European scholars also began compiling text corpora and created the Lancaster–Oslo/Bergen Corpus (LOB Corpus), which included 500 texts of approximately 2,000 words each. In developing this corpus, Geoffrey Leech, Stig Johansson, Knut Hofland, and Roger Garside followed the principles established by the Brown University corpus.

One of the most well-known contemporary corpora is the British National Corpus (BNC), compiled between 1991 and 1994 by researchers from Oxford and Lancaster Universities. The corpus includes newspaper articles, religious and political texts, business documents, radio recordings, academic texts, and other materials.

Following the model of the British National Corpus, many countries established their own national corpora: the Russian National Corpus (containing 2 billion word tokens), the Bulgarian National Corpus (1.2 billion word tokens), the Czech National Corpus (3 billion word tokens), and others.

Kazakhstan has also taken part in this global trend. The National Corpus of the Kazakh Language currently contains 65 million word tokens, and this number continues to grow daily.

According to A. Zhubanov, the scholar who first introduced the concepts of “corpus” and “corpus linguistics” into Kazakh linguistics, a corpus is “a large collection of texts in electronic form, compiled across all functional styles of the Kazakh language and designed for public use through computer-based software” (Zhubanov, 2009, p. 3).

The National Corpus of the Kazakh Language (NCKL) is a large-scale electronic collection of millions of word tokens that comprehensively covers the lexical and grammatical system of the Kazakh language through deep annotation. It functions as an intelligent, specialized knowledge base that consolidates extensive information about the Kazakh language. At present, the NCKL consists of 16 purpose-built subcorpora. The official website of the National Corpus of the Kazakh

Language is: <https://qazcorpus.kz/>.

The National Corpus of the Kazakh Language has opened new opportunities for conducting various linguistic studies, including determining word frequency and valency, constructing semantic fields, performing statistical analyses, and developing linguistic models, among others. In this regard, the corpus-based analysis of folklore language—particularly the ethnocultural connotations found in fairy tales—represents one of the pressing research issues.

Folklore, and especially its distinctive genre of fairy tales, has consistently attracted scholarly interest in both linguistics and literary studies. This interest is not limited to examining the structural system of fairy tales, the diversity of characters, or the peculiarities of their plot development. It is also related to the fact that fairy tales vividly reflect the Kazakh national code—formed in the historical memory of the people over hundreds or even thousands of years and preserved to the present day. Today, corpus-based research on the language of Kazakh fairy tales is particularly relevant, as the study of a nation's worldview, culture, history, language, and knowledge accumulated over centuries is of great importance.

The purpose of this article is to systematize, analyze, and examine the ethnocultural connotation of “gold” in Kazakh fairy tales on the basis of corpus data. The research object of the article is the ethnocultural connotation of “gold,” which occupies a significant place in Kazakh fairy tales.

As a result of the study, the ethnocultural connotation of “gold” in Kazakh fairy tales was analyzed and comprehensively examined using corpus-based methods.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the XII century, the concept of “connotation” (Lat. *Connotare*) was frequently used by philosophers to explain the meaning of words in philosophical, logical, and theological discussions.

The term appears in the treatise “*Summa Logicae*”, published in 1323 in Paris (France). The author of the treatise was the English philosopher, logician, and theologian William of Ockham (1288–1347). W. Ockham divided names into two types: “absolute names” and “connotative names.” In the treatise, an “absolute name” refers to the primary meaning, that is, the object itself, whereas a “connotative name” denotes words expressing different or similar meanings. He included in this category proper names and words expressing various feelings and faculties of the soul (Ockham, 1957).

The English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), in his work, published in 1843 “*A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*”, explained denotation as the extensional meaning of an object and connotation as its intensional meaning (Mill, 2008).

Later, in the XX century, foreign linguists such as Ch. Bally, V.V. Vinogradov, L. Hjelmlev, I.V. Arnold, R. Jakobson, R. Barthes, Eugenio Coseriu, E.M. Wolf, V.N. Telia, L.M. Vasilyev, U. Eco, O.G. Revzina, N.F. Alefirenko, G.I. Berestnev, V.I. Shakhovskiy, Z.Z. Chanysheva, and others emphasized the inseparable connection between connotation and human cognitive activity.

Bykova (2005) notes that connotations, as mental units of a special level, are formed at the intersection of the world image in speakers' linguistic consciousness and the linguistic worldview. She also argues that ethnoconnotation, as a specific type of cultural connotation, includes heterochronous and heterofunctional features of an ethnoconnotat, reflecting the affiliation of a linguistic unit with a particular ethnocultural space in the consciousness of communicants (Bykova, 2005).

“Connotations are relatively unstable; they differ considerably according to culture and the experience of the individual” (Al-Ghoweri et al., 2021, p. 613). “Cultural connotations play a crucial role in the formation of word meanings by adding supplementary, often latent associations that reflect the historical, cultural and social characteristics of a society” (Pateev, 2025, p. 111).

In Kazakh linguistics, the theoretical issues of connotation have not been studied as an independent research object, which determines the relevance of investigating this phenomenon. The topic of connotation has been addressed in the works of B. Abilkasymov, E. Suleimenova, R. Syzdyk, S. Isaev, D. Alkebaeva, N. Uali, M. Orazov, G. Kaliyev, Zh. Mankeeva, O. Burkitov, B. Momynova, E. Abakan, R. Avakova, A. Salkynbay, G. Khasanov, and others, within the frameworks of linguopoetics, lexical semantics, secondary nomination, linguostylistics, and related fields.

III. MATERIAL AND METHODS

According to the anthropocentric paradigm in modern linguistics, language is not merely a means of communication but also a reflection of human cognition, perception, culture, life experience, and cognitive abilities. From this perspective, the study of folklore—considered a treasury of the Kazakh national code—and its corpus-based linguistic analysis are of significant scholarly interest.

In analyzing the ethnocultural connotation of “gold” in Kazakh fairy tales on a corpus basis, Volume 74 of the one-hundred-volume collection “*Babalar Sözi*” (“The Words of the Ancestors”), published in 2011, was used as the research material. This volume contains a collection of fairy tales. The texts included in the collection were taken without any modification from original manuscripts preserved in the archives of the M.O. Auezov Institute of Literature and Art and the Central Scientific Library, as well as from collections published in the XIX–XX centuries and from fairy tales recorded among Kazakh communities in China and Mongolia. The volume comprises 80 fairy tales of diverse themes.

In the corpus-based analysis of the ethnocultural connotation of “gold” in Kazakh fairy tales, the following methods were employed: collection and systematization of linguistic data, frequency analysis, statistical analysis, and comparative analysis.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

“When a person perceives objects and phenomena in the surrounding world, emotions arise in their consciousness in relation to those objects or phenomena, and an evaluation of them is formed. A person conveys their subjective attitude, feelings, assessments, and positions toward the environment and surrounding phenomena through language. Without emotion and evaluation, meaning or language cannot possess completeness. In this regard, the expressive and evaluative function of language units in conveying human emotion is of great importance. From this perspective, identifying and systematizing the structure and types of ethnocultural connotation within the semantic space of folklore language also constitutes a subject of scholarly interest” (Zhuniskali et al., 2025, p. 106).

In our research, we aim to analyze and examine, on a corpus basis, the highly relevant issue of the ethnocultural connotation of “gold” in Kazakh fairy tales.

According to the “Concise Etymological Dictionary of the Kazakh Language”: «1. Some researchers suggest that the word derives from the Mongolian *altın/ altin*, meaning “reddish copper”; 2. Others associate it with the word *al*, widely used in Turkic languages to denote “bright red, fire-like color,” based on the color of gold; 3. Still others argue that the word *altın* originates from the Turkic word *alty* (six). It is known that in earlier periods various objects served as money among the peoples of Central Asia. For example, among the Mongols silk fabric functioned as currency, among the Altai peoples animal skins were used, and among certain Turkic peoples (such as the Bulgars) the value of goods was measured by six squirrel skins. Over time, the words *alty* (six) and *tiyin* (squirrel; later “coin”) merged into *altın*, and when coinage appeared, a three-*tiyin altın* (later copper coin) was used as currency (especially in Russia and its dependent territories). For instance, in Russian *altynshnik* referred to a three-kopek coin and *pyataltynnik* to a fifteen-kopek coin. Later, when paper money replaced gold coins, the word *altın* returned from Russian in this modified form and in Turkic languages came to denote only the name of the precious metal (formerly associated with currency) (Iskakov et al., 1966, p. 35).

In the 40-million-word National Corpus of the Kazakh Language, 26,729 occurrences of the word *altın* (“gold”) were identified (Main Corpus – 4,324; Dialect Subcorpus – 49; Cultural-Representative Subcorpus – 13,587; Terminological Subcorpus – 945; Educational Subcorpus – 309; Proverbs Subcorpus – 43; Historical Subcorpus – 307; Parallel Subcorpus – 275; Writers’ Subcorpus – 1,620; Historical-Poetic Subcorpus – 396; Onomastic Subcorpus – 4,248; Advertising Texts Subcorpus – 48; Akhmet Baitursynuly Subcorpus – 108; Phraseological Subcorpus – 157; Contemporary Poetry Subcorpus – 262; Six-Language Parallel Subcorpus – 10; Oral Subcorpus – 41) (last accessed to <https://qazcorpus.kz/>: 03.02.2026).

In the Russian National Corpus, 335 texts and 908 examples containing the word “altın” were identified. In the corpus, the word was used in the meaning of “money, coin”. In Russian literature, culture, and everyday life, “altın” was employed to denote material value and financial relations (last accessed to <https://ruscorpora.ru/>: 03.02.2026).

In the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the word “altyn” occurred six times, all of which referred to texts connected with the Altyn-Tagh (Altun Tagh) mountain range of the Kunlun mountain system in Central Asia (last accessed to <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>: 03.02.2026).

In Volume 74 of the one-hundred-volume collection “Babalar Sözi” (“The Words of the Ancestors”), published in 2011 and containing Kazakh fairy tales, the word “altın” appears 400 times. Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the word forms of “altın” in Kazakh fairy tales.

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY OF THE WORD FORMS OF “GOLD” IN KAZAKH FAIRY TALES

Word Form	Frequency of use	Percentage	Example
Altın	308	77.0 %	«altyn saqına» (“gold ring”), «altyn tabaq» (“gold plate”), «altyn qapas» (“golden cage”), etc.
Altındy	34	9.0 %	«altındy tauyp alady» (“finds the gold”), «altındy äkelip beredi» (“brings the gold”), etc.
Altın-kümis	15	3.7 %	«altyn-kümis beremin» (“I will give gold and silver”), «altyn-kümispen syilaıdy» (“rewards with gold and silver”), etc.
Altınnan	10	2.5 %	«altynnan salynğan» (“built of gold”), «altynnan qaiyq jasaıdy» (“makes a boat from gold”), etc.
Altınga	8	2.5 %	«altınga ainalady» (“turns into gold”), «altınga syimai ketedi» (“does not fit into gold”), etc.
Altınmen	6	1.5 %	«altynmen aptağan» (“decorated with gold”), «altynmen jalatqan» (“gilded with gold”), etc.
Altını	4	1.0 %	«balanyñ altyny» (“the child’s gold”), «altyny men kümis köp bolğan eken» (“had much gold and silver”), etc.
Altınnıñ	3	0.75 %	«altynnyñ buymen» (“with the vapor of gold”), «altynnyñ artynan qorqyp» (“fearing because of gold”), etc.
Altındap	3	0.75 %	«aşın de altındap» (“gilding the interior”), «altındap qarğy taqty» (“put on a gilded bridle”), etc.
Altındy (adj.)	2	0.5 %	«altındy şymyldyq» (“golden curtain”), «altındy besik» (“golden cradle”)
Altındagan	2	0.5 %	«altındağan aq otau» (“gilded white yurt”), «altındağan ülken şahar» (“gilded great city”)
Altındardy	2	0.5 %	«qalğan altındardy» (“the remaining gold pieces”), «bül altındardy» (“these gold pieces”)
Altınım	1	0.25 %	«meniñ altynym» (“my golden one”)
Altındarıñdy	1	0.25 %	«myna altındarıñdy» (“your gold (pl.)”)
Altınyñdy	1	0.25 %	«altınyñdy almaimyn» (“I will not take your gold”)

As can be seen from Table 1, the word “altın” (“gold”) is most frequently used in its root form without any affixes (77.0%). This demonstrates that in Kazakh fairy tales the word “altın” predominantly performs an attributive function, expressing a qualitative characteristic of an object. Among the case forms, the accusative case (“altındy”, “altındardy”, “altındarıñdy”, altınyñdy) occurs more frequently with “altın” than the genitive, dative, ablative, or instrumental cases, while it is not used at all in the locative case. This indicates that in fairy tales the use of “gold” as an object of action (“found the gold,” “brought the gold”) prevails. Frequency analysis also shows that the verbal forms “*altındap*” (“to gild”) and “altındagan” (“gilded”) occur rarely in fairy tales. The compound word “altın-kümis” (“gold and silver”) (3.7%) conveys not only the literal meaning of two precious metals but also reinforces the ethnocultural connotation of “all wealth, abundance, prosperity”.

“Gold is one of the highly valued yellow precious metals with diverse meanings in traditional culture. Since gold is easy to process and highly resistant to environmental influences, it is used to produce decorative objects and to gild other metals... In Kazakh tradition, depending on its quality, quantity, and production technology, gold has several types: pure, alloy-free gold is called *ayırğan altın* and *qarq altın*. The word *qarq* historically meant uniform, without mixture. *Sap altın* (pure gold) and *sary altın* (yellow gold) denote refined gold. In the language of jewelers, terms such as *şi altyn*, *şym altyn*, *şymqai altyn*, *şyn altyn*, *şora altyn*, *ürğaşy altyn* etc., indicate high quality” (Traditional System of Kazakh Ethnographic Categories, Concepts and Terms, 2011, p. 163).

In Volume 74 of the fairy tales collection from the one-hundred-volume edition “Babalar Sözi”, only the phrase “shyn altın” (“true gold”) appears among the types listed above. In the fairy tale “The Golden Bird and the Gray Wolf,” it is stated: “The gray wolf galloped after the young man mounted on a truly golden-maned horse and the true tsar’s daughter” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 31). In this context, the phrase “shyn altın” carries the ethnocultural connotation of “genuine, authentic gold”. In the fairy tale “Qaratai,” the ethnocultural connotation of “pure, alloy-free gold” is conveyed by the phrase “nağız altın” (“real gold”): “He had built a magnificent palace and garden of *real gold*, inside of which there were wonders of every kind” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 214).

The red variety of gold appears in the fairy tale “Qaramergen”: “At one moment the door opened and a girl entered the house; her beauty was like the full moon, and her clothes were covered in *red gold*, whose radiance illuminated the dark house” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 13). In the tale “Arzy the Merchant,” the phrase occurs in the following excerpts: “Let us also take nine camels of *red gold* and divide them,” “The people cured from illness gave them, as promised, nine camels and as much *red gold* as their horses could carry,” “Mahmud’s companions also took as much *red gold* as they needed” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 44). In the tale “Zhana Mizandaran,” it is stated: “From the land you sold, a jar of *red gold* was found; you had forgotten about that gold, so go and retrieve it” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 356). In Kazakh culture and worldview, the color red carries both positive ethnocultural connotations—such as “strength, beauty, life, power, victory”—and negative ones, including “blood, danger, fire, flame, war”. In the examples above, however, the connotative meaning of the phrase *red gold* is associated with “beauty” and “wealth”.

“After being refined and processed, gold is cast into various forms, each with its own designation: a larger ingot is called *altın jamby* or *som altın* (also referred to as cast gold); a gold ingot the size of a horse’s hoof is called *at tuyaq*; a

slightly smaller one, comparable to a colt's hoof, is *tay tuyaq altın*; and a piece the size of a sheep's hoof is called *qoy tuyaq altın*. Smaller gold ingots also have specific names: a piece the size of a large button is called *tüime altın*; a coin cast in the shape of a sheep's head is known as *qoy bas dilda*, and so on (Traditional System of Kazakh Ethnographic Categories, Concepts and Terms, 2011, p. 163). These types of gold, however, do not occur in the analyzed fairy tale collection.

Nevertheless, the phrase “at basınday altın” (“gold the size of a horse's head”), which carries the ethnocultural connotation of “great size; immense wealth; valuable gain,” appears 14 times in Volume 74 of “Babalar Sözi”. For example, in the tale “Altın Topai,” it is said: “The rich man pleaded with the ogress: ‘I will give you gold the size of a horse's head, just let him go’” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 33). In “What Elemes Saw,” we read: “When Elemes saw the gold and dug further, another piece of gold the size of a horse's head appeared” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 129). In “The Wolf and the Young Man,” it is stated: “When the executioners dragged the old fish from its place, gold the size of a horse's head lay beneath it” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 196). The comparison of gold to the size of a horse's head in these examples is not accidental. In the Kazakh worldview, the horse is a sacred animal. At the same time, this comparison intensifies the ethnocultural connotation of “immeasurable wealth” in human consciousness. In fairy tales, the expression “gold the size of a horse's head” produces a far stronger expressive effect on the listener than simply saying “a lot of gold”.

Words and phrases expressing quantitative and dimensional meanings are frequently used together with the word “altın” (“gold”). For example, in the fairy tale “Arzy the Merchant,” the phrase “toğyz tüie altın” (“nine camels of gold”) appears: “Now that you have returned to your homeland, this girl and the nine camels of gold are yours” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 45). In this excerpt, the phrase “nine camels of gold” reinforces the ethnocultural connotation of “great treasure, abundant wealth.” Considering that one camel can carry approximately 200–300 kg of load, “nine camels of gold” would amount on average to more than two tons of gold, symbolizing immense wealth. The number nine also holds special sacred significance in the Kazakh worldview, representing completeness and ultimate fullness. Thus, “nine camels of gold” denotes not merely a quantity but the ultimate limit – “no greater wealth is possible”. Its ethnocultural connotation can therefore be defined as “absolute wealth, the highest status”.

In the fairy tale “The Poor Man's Three Sons,” the phrase “tık tūrğan boıymdai altın” (“gold as tall as my standing height”) appears: “I will go and bring the girl, but give me gold as tall as my standing height,” he says (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 138). In this context, the ethnocultural connotation of the phrase “gold as tall as my standing height” is associated with the “value of life” and “human freedom”.

Kazakh fairy tales also contain expressions such as “*bır tabaq altın*” (“one plate of gold”), “*on tabaq altın*” (“ten plates of gold”), “*bır köterem tilla altın*” (“one gold coin”), “*eki etek altın*” (“two hems full of gold”), “*jüdyryqtai altın*” (“gold the size of a fist”), “*bır süiem altın*” (“a span of gold”), and “*bır qap altın*” (“a sack of gold”), all of which convey quantitative and dimensional meanings. For example, in the tale “The Bird of Fortune,” it is said: “If my mother gives you *one plate of gold*, I will give you *ten plates of gold*,” and when he spits on the ground, *ten plates of gold* fall from his mouth (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 164). In the tale “The King Who Had a Dream,” we read: “The king rejoiced and said, ‘This man is a learned saint,’ and once again rewarded him with one gold coin and respectfully sent him on his way” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 169). (Here, the word *tillä* is of Persian origin and means “gold coin” or “gold.”) In the tale “Go There, Bring Here,” it is stated: “The viziers, embarrassed before the king, took *two hems full of gold* and went around the city proclaiming: ‘If anyone knows the road from which there is no return, we will give this gold’” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 208). In “Akhmetzhan,” we read: “One day, one of the shepherds found *gold the size of a fist*” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 246). In “The Golden-Tailed Snake,” the snake says: “From now on, I will give you *a span of gold* every day to atone for my guilt” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 312). In “The Khan and the Young Man,” it is stated: “When the ashes had cooled during the night, they placed a ring and *a sack of gold* into the young man's hands and buried them in the ashes” (Babalar Sözi, 2011, p. 338). These expressions – *one plate of gold*, *ten plates of gold*, *one gold coin*, *two hems full of gold*, *gold the size of a fist*, *a span of gold*, *a sack of gold* – are rooted in the traditional Kazakh system of measurement and quantity. They reinforce the ethnocultural connotations of “abundant wealth, great treasure, substantial gain, prosperity,” while simultaneously conveying evaluative and expressive meaning.

The ethnocultural connotation of “altın” (“gold”) in the Kazakh language functions both as a noun and as an adjective. Corpus analysis shows that in Kazakh fairy tales the ethnocultural connotation of “gold” occurs 35 times in a substantive (nominal) meaning and 99 times in an attributive (adjectival) meaning. These data indicate that in Kazakh fairy tales the ethnocultural connotation of “gold” is predominantly realized in its qualitative (adjectival) function. The corresponding quantitative data are systematically presented in Tables 2 and 3 of the study.

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY OF THE SUBSTANTIVE (NOMINAL) USE OF THE ETHNOCULTURAL CONNOTATION OF “GOLD” IN KAZAKH FAIRY TALES

Word combination	Frequency of use	Percentage
At basyndai altyn (Gold the size of a horse's head)	14	40 %
Qyzyl altyn (Red gold)	5	14 %
Bır süiem altyn (A span of gold)	3	8.5 %
Bır tabaq altyn (One plate of gold)	2	5.7 %
On tabaq altyn (Ten plates of gold)	2	5.7 %
Bır qap altyn (A sack of gold)	2	5.7 %
Toğyz tüie altyn (Nine camels of gold)	1	2.85 %
Tık tırğan boıymdai altyn (Gold as tall as my standing height)	1	2.85 %
Bır köterem tilla altyn (one gold coin)	1	2.85 %
Ekı etek altyn (Two hems full of gold)	1	2.85 %
Jüdyryqtai altyn (Gold the size of a fist)	1	2.85 %
Şyn altyn (true gold)	1	2.85 %
Nağyz altyn (real gold)	1	2.85 %
Total	35	

According to the data presented in Table 2, in Kazakh fairy tales the phrase “*at basyndai altyn*” (“gold the size of a horse’s head”) has a significantly higher frequency of usage compared to other word combinations. Today, the expression “*at basyndai altyn*” has largely fallen out of active use in the Kazakh language and has acquired an archaic character, since it represents a metaphorical figurative comparison typical of the nomadic way of life and rooted in everyday practical experience. Similarly, such expressions as “*bır tabaq altyn*” (“one dish of gold”), “*on tabaq altyn*” (“ten dishes of gold”), “*bır köterem tilla altyn*” (“one thin tilla gold”), “*ekı etek altyn*” (“two hems full of gold”), “*jüdyryqtai altyn*” (“gold the size of a fist”), “*bır süiem altyn*” (“a span of gold”), and “*bır qap altyn*” (“a sack of gold”) are found only in folkloric texts. In contrast, the phrases “*qyzyl altyn*” (“red gold”), “*Şyn altyn*” (“true gold”), and “*nağyz altyn*” (“real gold”) remain active lexical units in modern Kazakh. In Kazakh fairy tales, “*Şyn altyn*” and “*nağyz altyn*” reinforce the ethnocultural connotation of “pure, unalloyed, natural, of high quality, highly valuable,” adding an evaluative nuance. The expression “*qyzyl altyn*” found in fairy tales denotes not only the color of gold but also carries the meaning “archaic: pure gold, unalloyed gold” (Dictionary of the Kazakh Literary Language, 2011).

TABLE 3
FREQUENCY OF ADJECTIVAL USAGE OF THE ETHNOCULTURAL CONNOTATION OF “АЛТЫН” IN KAZAKH FAIRY TALES

Word combination	Frequency of use	Percentage
Altyn jal (golden mane)	24	24.2 %
Altyn qūs (golden bird)	23	23.2 %
Altyn jylqy (golden horse)	11	11.1 %
Altyn köl (golden lake)	9	9 %
Altyn müizdi (şubar) kiik (golden-horned [spotted] saiga)	8	8.08 %
Altyn qūlyn (golden foal)	8	8.08 %
Altyn ağaş (golden tree)	7	7.07 %
Altyn terek (golden poplar)	3	3.03 %
Altyn su (golden water)	2	2.02 %
Altyn bāiterrek (golden Baiterek)	1	1.01 %
Altyn tūlym (golden forelock)	1	1.01 %
Altyn şaş (golden hair)	1	1.01 %
Altyn qūiryqty aiğyr (golden-tailed stallion)	1	1.01 %
Total	99	

According to the data in Table 3, word combinations related to horses – “*altyn jal*” (“golden mane”), “*altyn jylqy*” (“golden horse”), “*altyn qūlyn*” (“golden foal”), and “*altyn qūiryqty aiğyr*” (“golden-tailed stallion”) – are particularly frequent. For example, in the fairy tale “The Golden Bird and the Grey Wolf” we find: “If you accomplish this task, I will willingly give you *the horse with the golden mane* and the golden bridle” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 29). In the tale “The Treacherous Relative”: “Their *golden horses* graze beneath that lake; each month they are brought back to the stable and returned again” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 264). In another episode: “When it foals near dawn, it gives birth to a fine *golden foal*” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 262). In the tale “The Wolf’s Kindness”: “He sees before him a stallion tied up, with a silver mane and a *golden tail*” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 328) and etc. The horse occupies a special place in traditional Kazakh culture as the most revered of the four types of livestock. In the life of nomadic Turkic peoples, the importance of the horse was immense... Its multifaceted role in the ethnos’ existence profoundly influenced traditional beliefs, customs, and legal relations, elevating the horse to a cult status... Like other peoples, the Kazakhs regarded the horse as a gift from the Creator and as a symbol of the higher world. The ritual of *at tuldau* (removing a deceased person’s horse from use) further demonstrates the deep connection between the ethnocultural community and the horse. In the mythopoetic consciousness of the ethnocultural collective, when the hero faces hardship, magical horses capable of speech and counsel appear (as in the tales “Er Töstik,” “Altyn saqa,” etc.). In epic and historical legends, such horses include Koblandy’s Tayburyl, Alpamys’s Baishubar, Kambar’s Karakaska, as well as the steeds of later batyrs – Raiymbek’s Kokoinak and Kabanbay’s Qubas. In folkloric tradition, such extraordinary horses function as markers of the hero’s bravery and immense power.

(The Traditional System of Kazakh Ethnographic Categories, Concepts, and Terms, 2012, p. 516). Since the Kazakh people regarded the horse as a sacred animal, in fairy tales it is often equated with gold, thereby reinforcing the ethnocultural connotation of “exceptionally valuable, sacred, incomparable, unique being”.

The daily life, culture, and worldview of the Kazakhs were closely connected with nature and the surrounding environment; therefore, various animals, birds, and trees frequently appear in fairy tales, myths, and legends. In Kazakh fairy tales, the word combination with the highest frequency that contains the ethnocultural connotation of “gold” is “golden bird”. For example, in the fairy tale “The Wolf’s Kindness”, it is said: “The wolf and Saq came, found the nest among the reeds, and when they looked under the *golden bird*, they saw one large egg” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 331). In the fairy tale “The Golden Bird and the Grey Wolf”: “Once upon a time, a *golden bird* came to this garden” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 25), and “The two mounted the golden-maned horse and took the *golden bird* and the golden cage” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 31). The word combination “golden bird” in the Kazakh worldview denotes not only the color of the bird but also combines profound sacral and axiological meanings. In mythological consciousness, a golden-colored bird—such as the Samuryq bird, which connects the upper and lower worlds—frequently appears in Kazakh fairy tales. In these tales it is also called “zymyraq”. In Volume 74 of Babalar sozi, which contains fairy tales, the word samuryq / samyryq occurs 37 times (in the tales “Bekbolat”, “Gül and Samyryq”), and “zymyraq” occurs 54 times (in the tales “The Bird from Whose Mouth Clusters of Flowers Fall When It Laughs and Strings of Pearls Fall from Its Eyes When It Cries”, “The Young Man Who Cast a Fishing Rod”). The word combination “golden bird” contains such ethnocultural connotations as “the bird of happiness that does not fall into everyone’s hands,” “the bird of dreams,” “the bird of imagination,” etc. This further demonstrates the close connection between human life, birds, and nature.

The ethnocultural connotations “Altyn köl” (“golden lake”) and “altyn su” (“golden water”) appear in the fairy tale “Külmeskhan, Äzimkhan, Aiazkhan”: “He came to the girl who had done him a favor earlier and told her that he was searching for the *golden lake*,” and “After seeing the amulet, he gave his steed to Aiazkhan and explained how to retrieve the *golden lake*” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 334). In the fairy tale “Kün astyndağy Künikei qyz” (“The Maiden Künikei Beneath the Sun”): “One bathed in *golden water*, the other in silver water,” and “As he was walking, he saw a great Baiterek tree; at its foot there were two wells, in the first *golden water*, in the second silver water” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 123). The combination of the word “gold” with “lake” and “water” shows that in the Kazakh worldview water and lakes are perceived as “extremely valuable, sacred sources of life”.

Among the Kazakhs, myths, fairy tales, and legends about sacred trees (terek, baiterek) have been preserved to this day. The frequent occurrence of the ethnocultural connotations “altyn ağaş” (“golden tree”), “altyn terek” (“golden terek”) and altyn baiterek (“golden baiterek”) in fairy tales demonstrates that the Kazakh worldview, way of life, culture, and existence are closely connected with nature, particularly with trees. For example, in “The Maiden Künikei Beneath the Sun”: “There is also a beautiful *golden tree* growing deep underground; if you bring it and plant it before your palace, your splendor will increase even more” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 124). In the fairy tale “The Silent Stone”: “Second, let a *golden terek* be erected on the right side of the village. Third, let a spring flow beside the *golden terek*. Fourth, let every kind of wild animal in the world be tied to the *golden terek*” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 322). In “The Treacherous Relative”: “Take that bridle and go to the head of the lake; on its shore there stands a tall *golden baiterek*” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 264). In these tales, the “golden tree,” “golden terek,” and “golden baiterek” function as ethnocultural connotations expressing the unity and harmony between human beings and nature.

The mythozoonym “golden-horned (dappled) saiga” appears in “The Maiden Künikei Beneath the Sun”: “The boy presents the *golden-horned dappled saiga* to the khan” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 123), and in the fairy tale “The Golden-Horned Saiga”: “*The golden-horned saiga* suddenly turns into a white-bearded old man” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 240). This mythozoonym emerged from the Kazakh worldview and vivid imagination. The saiga in Kazakh culture, folklore, and consciousness is a sacred animal, a symbol of freedom, beauty, and purity; its horns are believed to possess healing power and cure various illnesses. Therefore, the Kazakhs did not regard saiga horns merely as natural objects but equated them with gold, highly valuing them. Gold itself was also used for medicinal purposes. People believed that drinking water from a golden vessel or from a vessel containing gold items was beneficial to health.

Since ancient times, the Kazakhs have believed in the magical power of hair and regarded it as sacred. The word combinations “Altyn tūlym” (golden braid) and “altyn şaş” (“golden hair”) appear in the fairy tale “Omar and Gaziza”: “However, Gaziza did not follow her brother’s advice; when she washed her head in running water, the *golden braid* attached to her hair fell off” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 96), and in “The Son of Khan Ushar”: “The fisherman who caught the *golden hair* presented it to the khan” (Babalar sözi, 2011, p. 155). Tūlym is a lock of hair left on both temples of a young girl; it is also called tūlym şaş, tūlymşaq. It is usually left when a girl turns one year old. This custom was performed as a protective ritual so that the girl would not be affected by the evil eye and would grow up beautiful and graceful. From that age, the girl’s hair was not cut; the tūlym left from infancy was later braided together with the grown hair, often decorated with beads or stones (The Traditional System of Kazakh Ethnographic Categories, Concepts, and Terms, 2017, p. 466). In the excerpt from “Omar and Gaziza”, the hair ornament itself is also called tūlym. In “The Son of Khan Ushar”, the word combination “golden hair” indicates that hair was considered sacred, rare, precious, and worthy of being presented to a khan. The ethnocultural connotation of “golden hair” expresses not only its physical color but also its sacred and mystical nature.

In the mythologies, folklore, worldviews, and cultures of many peoples, gold is associated with the Sun. For example, in Ancient Egypt, the Sun god Ra sails in a golden boat and warms the earth with his golden rays. In Chinese culture and philosophy, gold symbolizes not only wealth but also the emperor's "infinite power," "happiness," and "longevity". In the Ancient Greek myth of King Midas, gold acquires the connotations of "greed" and "insatiability". "The Bashkir anthroponymy reflects some ancient beliefs related to metals. For example, the word *altyn* 'gold' is closely associated with the upper world, that of the sky and the sun" (Khisamitdinova, 2016, p. 124).

"The attribute 'golden' is associated with magical objects and supernatural beings of the otherworld. In epic tales and folklore, magical items made of gold possess healing powers, which may be linked to the use of golden objects in the ritual and healing practices of the Altai people in the past. Gold is connected with ideas of supreme justice and divine grace, it is regarded as a primary measure and a symbol of wealth, power, and beauty" (Oinotkinova, 2021, p. 65).

In the Kazakh worldview, the ethnocultural connotation of "gold" signifies not only the metal and its color but also the most valuable things in human life. For example, "*altyn uaqyt*" ("golden time"), "*altyn jürek*" ("golden heart"), "*altyn mnez*" ("golden character"), "*altyn jan*" ("golden soul") etc. These ethnocultural connotations occupy a special place in Kazakh culture and worldview. The word "gold" conveys not only material wealth but also positive spiritual values.

In Kazakh culture, there are numerous proverbs related to gold: *A person is corrupted by words, gold by brass; Wisdom does not change, gold does not decay; Do not take gold, take wisdom; Gold is valuable in the marketplace; Gold does not lie on the ground, a bad master cannot find water; Even an angel may stray upon seeing gold; Gold is not valued while in hand; Gold is tested by fire, a person is tested in absence; Gold is stone, grain is food; Dig deep where gold is found; Gold is valued where it is found.* "These proverbs provide information about the ethnocultural significance of gold in traditional society and about the place of wealth and abundance within the moral and ethical norms of the nomadic environment. At the same time, the concept of gold was used in aesthetic and ethical senses. Calling someone "like gold" could both praise a girl's exceptional beauty and describe a person's nobility. For example, people refer to the descendant of a good person as "a fragment of gold," meaning the living trace of a worthy individual" (The Traditional System of Kazakh Ethnographic Categories, Concepts, and Terms, 2011, p. 163).

V. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the ethnocultural connotation of "gold" in Kazakh fairy tales is multifaceted and wide-ranging. Through the ethnocultural connotation of words, the culture of a nation, the people's way of life, worldview, and cognitive perception are manifested.

The article provides a comprehensive corpus-based analysis of the ethnocultural connotation of "gold" in Kazakh fairy tales, supported by specific examples. In the course of the research, Volume 74 of the hundred-volume edition "*Babalar sözi*", which contains a collection of Kazakh fairy tales, was used as the primary source.

Based on the issues discussed in the article, the following conclusions were drawn:

- corpus-based analysis of the language of folklore, including ethnocultural connotations in fairy tales, is one of the pressing research issues;
- in the Kazakh worldview, ethnic culture, and folklore, the word "gold" possesses a distinctive connotative character;
- in the corpus-based analysis of the ethnocultural connotation of "gold" in Kazakh fairy tales, the methods of data collection, systematization, frequency analysis, statistical analysis, and comparative analysis were applied.

Thus, the study identified the unique features of the ethnocultural connotation of "gold" in Kazakh fairy tales through corpus analysis. The research findings may be applied in further theoretical and practical investigations within new directions of Kazakh linguistics, such as corpus linguistics, linguistic folkloristics, linguoculturology, ethnolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and related fields.

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