



International Conference on Education, Psychology and Humanities

Hosted Online from Moscow, Russia

Date: 28th June, 2026

Website: <https://econferencia.com>

LIFE-CYCLE AND CALENDAR CLASSIFICATION OF RITUAL ETHNOGRAPHISMS IN UZBEK, KARAKALPAK, AND TURKMEN LANGUAGES OF KARAKALPAKSTAN

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Abstract

The division of ritual vocabulary merely into “wedding-related” and “mourning-related” units does not fully reveal its internal structure. A ritual is a system of actions, objects, and speech formulas performed at a specific time by designated participants. Therefore, its name often foregrounds only one feature of the event: in *beshikka solish* (“placing the baby in the cradle”), the object is central; in *ism qo‘yish* (“naming”), the result is emphasized; in *hashar*, the form of participation is foregrounded; while in *yo‘qlov* (“lament”), vocal performance occupies the central position.

The purpose of this article is to classify ritual ethnographisms according to their social function and their place in human life. Since local marriage customs are reserved for a subsequent article, the present study focuses on the groups associated with birth and childhood, labor and the calendar, as well as mourning and remembrance. Such a delimitation makes it possible to explore a new factual field in each article.

The material was drawn from explanatory and dialectological dictionaries, ethnographic descriptions, and three-language comparative records contained in the dissertation [1]–[7]. When assigning a unit to a particular group, its social function, rather than its name, was taken as the principal criterion. For example, although *beshik* is the name of an object, *beshikka solish* was included in the life-



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cycle group because it functions as a ritual through which the community collectively affirms the continuity of generations.

Each ritual was described according to five parameters: the temporal point of the event; the principal participant; the action performed; the object or speech formula used; and the expected social outcome. This approach makes it possible to compare names that differ formally but perform similar functions, as well as to identify local differences within the semantic scope of a single lexeme.

Birth and Childhood Rituals. In the Uzbek *beshikka solish* and *beshik to'yi*, and the Karakalpak *besikke salıw* and *besik toy*, an object-centered model can be observed: the cradle becomes the principal material marker of the event. The Turkmen *sallançaga salmak* foregrounds the action, whereas *bäbek toýy* places the participant of the ritual at the center. The cultural function is similar—to introduce the child into family and community life—but the way the event is lexically segmented differs.

In the sequence *ism qo'yish – at qoyıw – at dakmak*, the principal action and its outcome are shared. However, the person who conducts the ritual, the form of the blessing or good wishes, and the relative significance of ancestral memory and religious tradition in name selection vary across regions. This sequence represents an example of a non-object-based, purely action-oriented nomination and forms the semantic pattern “action + result.”

In the names *sunnat to'yi – sünnet toy – sünnet toýy*, the first component of religious origin is combined with the Turkic forms *to'y/toy/toý*. This name foregrounds not the medical procedure involved in the ritual, but its collective celebration. Therefore, within this group, the ritual name and the name of the action should be recorded as separate units.

Labor and Calendar Rituals. *Hashar* denotes the organization of collective labor and mutual assistance. In the Karakalpak context, *shembilik* may refer to



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collective work associated with a particular day, while in Turkmen speech *hashar* is used in an adapted form. Thus, the function-centered *hashar* and the time-centered *shembilik* are not exact translations of one another, but rather functional terms that intersect in particular contexts.

The Uzbek names *sust xotin/suv xotin*, the Karakalpak *jawin shaqirıw*, and the Turkmen *yagyş dilemek*, all associated with rain-invoking rituals, conceptualize the event in different ways. The first name centers on an image or personage, the second on the action of calling or invoking, and the third on a wish or supplication. Although the natural objective is the same, the lexical model of the ritual is divided into figurative, action-oriented, and speech-based strategies.

Names associated with harvest and livestock seasons collectively mark the beginning or completion of a particular type of work. It would be incorrect to regard them solely as occupational terms: when a ritual meal, prayer, prescribed order of participation, and specific participants are involved, the lexeme encodes a ritual function alongside its labor-related meaning.

Mourning and Remembrance Rituals. The Uzbek *yo'qlov*, Karakalpak *joqlaw*, and Turkmen *agy* denote a genre of vocal and poetic remembrance of a deceased person. *Yo'qlov* and *joqlaw* are formally close, whereas *agy* belongs to a different etymological root. The feature uniting all three is their function of collectively expressing mourning through performative speech.

Janaza in Uzbek and Karakalpak, and *jenaza* in Turkmen, denote the general name of the religious funeral ritual, whereas *yo'qlov/joqlaw/agy* represent a performative micro-genre within it. Presenting the macro-ritual and the micro-genre at the same classificatory level distorts the taxonomy. Therefore, a



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dictionary should distinguish separately between “ritual name,” “action name,” and “speech genre.”

Table 1. Functional Classification of Ritual Ethnographisms

Macro-domain	Uzbek	Karakalpak	Turkmen	Nomination focus
Birth	<i>besikka solish</i>	<i>besikke salıw</i>	<i>sallançaga salmak</i>	Object + action
Naming	<i>ism qo'yish</i>	<i>at qoyıw</i>	<i>at dakmak</i>	Action + result
Collective Labor	<i>hashar</i>	<i>shembilik</i>	<i>hashar</i>	Function or time
Rain Invocation	<i>sust xotin</i>	<i>jawın shaqırw</i>	<i>ýagyş dilemek</i>	Image, invocation, wish
Mourning Performance	<i>yo'qlov</i>	<i>joqlaw</i>	<i>agy</i>	Vocal remembrance

The classification demonstrated that comparing rituals according to their common social functions is more effective than listing them separately by ethnic group. The same function may be lexicalized in each language through one of several elements: an object, an action, a participant, a temporal reference, or a speech act. These differences reveal which feature of an event is given greater emphasis by a particular community.

In a practical electronic corpus, ritual lexemes should be provided with tags indicating the macro-domain, stage of the ritual scenario, participant, object, action, speech formula, and geographical area. This would enable researchers to retrieve not merely an individual word, but all units across the three languages that perform a particular function, for example, “birth ritual + incorporation of the child into the community.”



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The scholarly classification of ritual ethnographisms should therefore be based not on the formal structure of their names, but on their social function and position within the ritual scenario. In the birth-and-childhood group, the key features are the object, participant, and action; in the labor-and-calendar group, collective function, time, and appeals to nature are central; while in the mourning-and-remembrance group, the relationship between the macro-ritual and the performative genre constitutes the principal feature. Such a multi-level model makes it possible to demonstrate simultaneously the common cultural function and local naming strategies without artificially equating the linguistic material of the three languages.

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