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LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF THE TURKIC WORLDVIEW IN KUNSÁG COUNTING-OUT RHYMES (based on the studies of István Kongur Mándoky)

The article analyzes counting-out rhymes in the children's folklore of Turkic peoples from both linguistic and worldview perspectives. The aim and scientific significance of the study are to consider the Cuman-Kipchak children's counting-out rhymes preserved in the Kunság region of Hungary as a historical and linguistic and cosmological model. The theoretical framework of the study is based on the analysis of numerical sequences and the relationship between object-related and actional components in the texts. These elements are interpreted as a linguistic reflection of the structure of the world characteristic of the Turkic worldview. The scientific novelty of the article lies in the conclusion that counting-out rhymes from the Kunság region should be regarded not merely as a game or a folkloric text, but as a linguistic and cosmological micro-model of the Turkic worldview. Therefore, the important objectives of the article are to represent the linguistic structure of Cuman-Kipchak counting-out rhymes, to systematize the reconstruction principles proposed by István Kongur Mándoky, and to determine the worldview-related meaning of the number-object-action sequence. To achieve these objectives, a combination of historical-comparative, ethnolinguistic, semiotic, and cognitive methods was applied. The numerals and individual lexemes found in the Kunság counting-out rhymes discussed in Mándoky's work are presented in comparison with their forms in Kazakh, Karachay-Balkar, Nogai, Kumyk, and Dobruja Tatar, demonstrating their common Turkic basis. The analysis reveals the structural stability of the texts, the use of numerals in first-person possessive forms, and the archaic character of semantically unclear lexemes. From a practical perspective, the results of the study can be used in academic courses on Turkic folklore, ethnolinguistics, and cognitive linguistics. In conclusion, counting-out rhymes function as a cognitive and cultural mechanism through which the world is perceived as an ordered system in Turkic cultural memory.

Keywords: counting-out rhymes, children's folklore, Kipchak heritage, István Kongur Mándoky, Turkic worldview, linguistic representation, ethnolinguistics, cognitive model, mythological-ritual structure.

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Куншаг санамақтарындағы түркілік дүниетанымның тілдік репрезентациясы (Иштван Қоңыр Мандоки зерттеулері негізінде)

Мақалада түркі халықтарының балалар фольклорындағы санамақ жанры тілдік және дүниетанымдық жағынан кешенді түрде талданады. Зерттеудің мақсаты мен ғылыми маңызы – Мажарстандағы Куншаг аймағында сақталған құман-қыпшақ балалар санамақтарын тарихи-лингвистикалық дерек деп тану және тілдік-космологиялық модель ретіндегі қызметін айқындау. Ал зерттеудің теориялық негізі болса, санамақ мәтіндеріндегі сандық тізбек, заттық және әрекеттік компоненттердің өзара байланысын түркілік дүниетанымға тән әлем құрылымының тілдік көрінісі ретінде қабылдануға бағытталады. Яғни, Куншаг аймағындағы балалар санамақтарын ойындық немесе тек фольклорлық мәтін шеңберінде емес, түркілік дүниетанымның тілдік-космологиялық микромоделі деген тұжырым мақаланың ғылыми жаңалығы болып негізделеді. Осы негізде зерттеудің басты міндеттері ретінде құман-қыпшақ

рылымын сипаттау, И.Қ. Мандоки ұсынған реконструкция қағидаларын жүйелеу және сан-зат-әрекет тізбегінің дүниетанымдық мәнін анықтау болып бекітілді. Бұл міндеттерді жүзеге асыру барысында тарихи салыстырмалы, этнолингвистикалық, семиотикалық және когнитивтік талдау әдістері кешенді түрде қолданылды. Мандоки еңбегінде қарастырылған Куншаг санамақтарының сан есімдері мен жекелеген лексемалары қазақ, қарашай-балқар, ноғай, құмық және добружа татар тілдеріндегі формаларымен беріліп, ортақ түркілік негізі көрсетілді. Талдау нәтижесінде, санамақ мәтіндерінің құрылымдық тұрақтылығы, сан есімдердің бірінші жақтық тәуелдік формасында берілу ерекшелігі және семантикалық тұрғыда мағынасы түсініксіз лексемалардың архаикалық сипаты айқындалды. Практикалық жағынан зерттеу нәтижелері түркі фольклоры, этнолингвистика және когнитивті тіл білімі бойынша оқу курстарында пайдалануға мүмкіндік береді. Қорытындысында балалар санамағы түркілік мәдени жадта әлемді реттелген жүйе ретінде қабылдататын когнитивтік-мәдени механизм қызметін атқаратыны тұжырымдалады.

Түйін сөздер: санамақ, балалар фольклоры, қыпшақ мұрасы, Иштван Қоңыр Мандоки, түркі дүниетанымы, тілдік репрезентация, этнолингвистика, когнитивтік модель, мифо-ғұрыптық құрылым.

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Языковая репрезентация тюркского мировоззрения в куншагских считалках (на материале исследований Иштвана Конгур Мандоки)

В статье анализируются считалки в детском фольклоре тюркских народов с лингвистической и мировоззренческим аспектами. Цель и научная значимость исследования заключаются в рассмотрении кумано-кыпчакских детских считалок, сохранившихся в регионе Куншаг в Венгрии, в качестве историко-лингвистического источника и в определении их функции как языково-космологической модели. Теоретическая основа исследования опирается на анализ числовых последовательностей и взаимосвязи предметных и акциональных компонентов в текстах. Эти элементы интерпретируются как языковое отражение структуры мира, характерной для тюркского мировоззрения. Научная новизна статьи состоит в том, что считалки Куншагского региона рассматриваются не только как игровая форма или фольклорный текст, но как языково-космологическая микромодель тюркского мировосприятия. В соответствии с этим основными задачами исследования являются описание языковой структуры куманско-кыпчакских считалок, систематизация принципов реконструкции, предложенных Иштваном Конгуром Мандоки, а также определение мировоззренческого значения последовательности число-предмет-действие. Для реализации поставленных задач был использован комплекс историко-сравнительного, этнолингвистического, семиотического и когнитивного методов. Числительные и отдельные лексемы, представленные в куншагских считалках, рассмотренных в трудах Мандоки, сопоставляются с их формами в казахском, карачаево-балкарском, ногайском, кумыкском и добруджа-татарском языках, что позволяет выявить их общую тюркскую основу. В ходе анализа выявлены структурная устойчивость текстов, особенности употребления числительных в форме притяжательности первого лица, а также архаический характер семантически неясных лексем. Практическая значимость исследования заключается в том, что его результаты могут быть использованы в учебных курсах по тюркскому фольклору, этнолингвистике и когнитивной лингвистике. Таким образом, считалки функционируют как когнитивно-культурный механизм, посредством которого мир воспринимается как упорядоченная система в тюркской культурной памяти.

Ключевые слова: считалка, детский фольклор, кыпчакское наследие, Иштван Конгур Мандоки, тюркское мировоззрение, языковая репрезентация, этнолингвистика, когнитивная модель, мифо-ритуальная структура.

Introduction

Children's folklore is an important source of moral education for younger generations; it also plays a key role in developing linguistic competence and transmitting worldview values. In this context,

works of children's oral literature were viewed mainly as educational material, and most studies approached them from an ethnographic point of view. Since these folklore works have not been fully studied as linguistic data in academic discourse, their textual structures and their worldview-related fea-

tures have remained insufficiently explored. In particular, the counting-out rhyme genre was usually interpreted only as a game formula or as a simple cognitive exercise for language practice. Its archaic structural nature and cultural-cognitive functions, however, have received far less attention. Although the counting-out rhymes preserved in the Kunság (Nagykunság) region have been recognized as valuable historical evidence of the Kipchak-Turkic linguistic heritage, there is still a lack of studies that would be specifically focused on analyzing their worldview model.

The relevance of this study is determined by the need of examining children's counting-out rhymes not only as a type of folklore, but also as a way of reflecting the Turkic worldview through language. Indeed, in traditional Turkic culture, numbers are understood not simply as counting categories but as key elements in the ordered and hierarchical organization of the world (Kondybay, 2004).

The stability of numerical sequences in counting rhymes, the repetition of dependent forms, and the recurring formulaic structures in counting-out rhyme texts show that they represent a compact model of world organization. The theoretical significance of this study lies in analyzing the structural model of the Turkic worldview through specific textual material. Its practical significance is connected with providing new data for the historical-linguistic reconstruction of the Kipchak linguistic heritage.

The aim of the study is to examine the Kipchak children's counting-out rhymes preserved in the Kunság region as a unified linguistic and worldview phenomenon. The object of analysis consists of the counting-out rhyme texts recorded in this area, while the subject of the study is their structural-semantic system and its connection with the Turkic worldview. Special attention is paid to the use of numerals in possessive forms, the organizational principles of the *number-object-action* sequence, and the selection formulas that appear at the end of the texts.

The purpose of the article is to show, through an analysis of the textual structure of the Kunság counting-out rhymes, that they reflect a linguistic and cosmological model of the Turkic worldview. To achieve this goal, the study focuses on describing the linguistic features of the rhyme texts, identifying the functions of numerals, analyzing the relationships between structural elements, and clarifying their worldview-related meanings.

The research hypothesis is based on the idea that the *number-object-action-selection* structure found in counting-out rhymes is not a random formulaic system, but a compact representation of an ancient

Turkic cognitive model. This hypothesis is based on the understanding of the world as ordered, cyclical, and hierarchical. Therefore, counting-out rhyme texts are described as linguistic micro-models that preserve and transmit archaic worldview patterns within the playful space of children's culture.

The study applies historical-comparative, ethnolinguistic, and semiotic methods of analysis. The scientific novelty of the article lies in its systematic interpretation of children's counting-out rhymes as linguistic and cosmological micro-models. In addition, the Kipchak counting-out rhymes preserved in the Kunság region are interpreted not only as historical-linguistic evidence, but also as texts that preserve cultural and cognitive structures.

Materials and methods

The main source material for this study consists of the texts of Kipchak children's counting-out rhymes preserved in the Kunság region of Hungary. These texts were collected and introduced into academic circulation by the turkologist István Kongur Mándoky. Although Mándoky analyzed seven versions of the counting-out rhymes, this article focuses on only four of them: two texts recorded in *Kunmadaras* and *Karcag*, and the *Kisújszállás* version.

Each of the texts is based on formulaic structures that consists of approximately 14-20 lines (Molnár, 2012: 139-155). Qualitatively, the materials preserve archaic linguistic features, including possessive inflections, phonetic reductions, and lexemes with obscure meanings or forms that cannot be directly explained in the modern linguistic system. Quantitatively, several textual versions were compared in order to identify their structural stability. Although the overall corpus is not extensive, the repeated formulaic patterns and internal order provide a reliable basis for analysis.

The study addressed the following main questions:

- what structural principles underlie the linguistic organization of the Kunság counting-out rhymes;
- what are the functions of possessive suffixes attached to numerals in the texts;
- does the number-object-action sequence represent merely a poetic device, or does it reflect a deeper model-based system;
- how should lexemes with obscure meanings be interpreted within the text.

While answering these questions, the initial hypothesis was formulated. The Kunság counting-out rhymes are not random game texts – their structure preserves a compact cosmological model character-

istic of the Turkic worldview, which is based on the principle of *number-object-action-selection*.

The research combined historical-comparative, ethnolinguistic, semiotic, interpretive and structural analysis methods and was conducted through several interconnected stages. First, the counting-out rhyme texts were systematized and compared. At this stage formulaic repetition, inter-line correspondence and structural similarities were identified. The next stage carried out a historical-comparative analysis. It was focused on possessive suffixes attached to numerals and phonetic correspondences, which were examined in relation to Kipchak languages parallels (Ligeti, 1986; Golden, 1992). The aim of the analysis was to clarify the Kipchak basis of the Kunság texts. In addition, lexemes with unclear meanings were analyzed not through direct semantic equivalence, but through their position within the text, rhythmic function, and role within the numerical sequence (Molnár, 2012). In this context, it was emphasized that formulaic stability carries greater significance than semantic transparency. At the third stage, an ethnolinguistic and semiotic analyses were conducted. The study examined how object names functioned in traditional culture and identified the worldview-related meaning behind numerical order (Kondybay, 2004; Tylor, 2010). The structure of the counting-out rhymes was interpreted as a sign system and its organizational logic was analyzed at a model-based level.

To date, Kunság counting-out rhymes have mainly been regarded as historical-linguistic material (Mándoky, 1993; Molnár, 2021). However, it can be seen that their internal structure has not been sufficiently analyzed as an integrated worldview system. This study aims to examine these texts not only on a descriptive level, but also from a new interpretative perspective.

The results of the analysis show that a stable model exists in the counting-out rhyme texts. Numbers function as the structural core; objects represent the linguistic reflection of material reality; actions express dynamic movement; and the final “selection” formula signifies the completion of the structural cycle and the act of establishing boundaries. These conclusions are further discussed in theoretical terms in the following section of the article.

Literature review

The issue of children’s folklore has been examined from different perspectives in Turkic studies and folklore research. However, when analyzing

the nature and direction of scholarly works devoted to the counting-out rhymes, it becomes clear that structural and worldview-oriented approaches in this field are still insufficiently developed. For this reason, in order to justify the focus of the present article it is important to clarify the level of research on this topic.

One of the fundamental studies on the genre system of Kazakh children’s folklore belongs to Sh. Ybyraev. In his work, the scholar provides a detailed analysis of the typology of children’s verbal creativity, the principles of poetic organization, and its social and pedagogical functions (Ybyraev, 2009). Nevertheless, the structure of counting-out rhymes is not examined there as a worldview model. The texts are mostly considered within the framework of genre characteristics.

In analyzing the internal laws of poetic structure, Z. Akhmetov systematizes the theoretical foundations of rhythm, rhyme, and formulaic organization in poetic texts (Akhmetov, 1996). These ideas make it possible to examine counting-out rhymes as poetic structures. At the same time, issues such as numerical ordering and their model-based nature are not given specific attention.

In Western folklore studies, children’s counting-out rhymes have been an object of research for a long time. H. C. Bolton highlights the broad geographical distribution of counting-out rhymes and emphasizes their ancient formulaic nature (Bolton, 2015). However, although his research demonstrates the historical stability and geographical variability of these texts, it does not offer a cultural or cosmological interpretation of their structure.

I. Opie and P. Opie conducted a systematic study of school folklore and proved that semantic obscurity and formulaic repetition are among the key mechanisms through which counting-out rhymes preserve tradition (Opie & Opie, 2000). Their work helps to define a distinct field for the study of children’s folklore. However, it does not offer a comparative analysis across different types of materials.

The works of L. Ligeti, who studied the historical layer of Kipchak languages and Hungarian-Turkic linguistic contacts, are also important for understanding the linguistic basis of the Kunság texts (Ligeti, 1986). He analyzed Turkic elements in the structure of Hungarian language and clarified their historical depth. In addition, the studies of P. B. Golden and I. Vásáry describe the historical role of Kipchak communities in Europe, their cultural influence, and their ethnic traces (Golden, 1992; Vásáry, 2005). Although these works explain the historical

and ethnic background of the Kunság texts, they do not specifically analyze the internal structure of children's counting-out rhymes.

The works of István Kongur Mándoky, who carried out a comprehensive study of the linguistic heritage of the Kunság Cuman-Kipchaks, serve as the main source base for this research (Mándoky, 1993). Using a historical-comparative approach, the scholar examined counting-out rhyme texts recorded in the Kunság region and demonstrated their Kipchak origin. One of the major strengths of his work is that he preserved the texts in their original form without artificial "corrections" or modernization. Later Hungarian studies evaluated the historical and cultural significance of Mándoky's research. However, the interpretation of counting-out rhymes as a worldview-based structure has not been developed at a conceptual level (Molnár, 2012; Haznedaroğlu, 2023; Selmeczi, 2011).

The study of S. Kondybay on Turkic mythological thinking and numerical symbolism provides an important theoretical basis for the present article. In his research he argues that the concept of number is not only a quantitative category, but that it also performs sacred and structural functions (Kondybay, 2004).

More recent studies have approached children's folklore from a cognitive perspective (Tokpayeva, Kuzembayeva, Spulber, 2024). These works highlight the role of children's texts in the process of understanding and conceptualizing the world. However, the Kunság Cuman-Kipchak counting-out rhymes have not been specifically examined in this context.

Although the arguments presented above allow for interpreting counting-out rhymes as worldview models, there is no detailed structural analysis of actual counting-out rhyme texts. In the academic literature, these texts have been addressed from historical, linguistic, and genre-based perspectives. Still, the Kunság variants have not been systematically studied as linguistic and cosmological micro-models of the Turkic worldview. The present research aims to fill this gap and offers an integrated analysis of counting-out rhyme texts through structural, semiotic, and worldview-oriented approaches.

Results and discussion

Textological and reconstructive significance of the Kunság counting-out rhymes. In the works of István Kongur Mándoky, the Kipchak children's counting-out rhymes preserved in the Kunság re-

gion are treated not simply as game texts, but as archaic linguistic material that makes historical-linguistic reconstruction possible. The scholar's special attention to this genre was not accidental. Children's folklore, including counting-out rhymes, is not dependent on written tradition. As a result, such texts remained relatively isolated from later literary standardization and official cultural influence (Mándoky, 1993, p. 74-79). This feature of oral tradition makes the Kunság counting-out rhymes especially valuable for textual analysis.

The most important textual feature of the Kunság counting-out rhymes is that, although they do not convey fully coherent semantic meaning according to the logic of the modern Hungarian language, they remain structurally stable and internally consistent. Individual words may still have independent meanings in Hungarian, yet within the text as a whole, they fail to form a logically connected narrative. Mándoky interprets this phenomenon not as a random phonetic chain, but as the preservation of elements genetically related to the Kipchak linguistic layer (Ligeti, 1986, p. 52-55; Mándoky, 1993). This interpretation helps to clarify the historical foundation of the Kunság materials.

In his research, Mándoky compares the Kunság counting-out rhymes with Kazakh, Karachay-Balkar, Nogai, and Dobruja Tatar texts. As a result, he identifies systematic similarities in numerical sequences, morphological patterns, and phonetic structures. Particularly significant are numerals with first-person possessive suffixes (*bérem*, *ékem*, and *öcsém*), which preserve an archaic grammatical model characteristic of the Kipchak languages (Molnár, 2012, p. 139-155). These forms demonstrate clear phonetic and structural parallels with their equivalents in modern Kazakh (*bir*, *eki*, *üç*), Nogai (*bir*, *eki*, *üç*), Tatar (*ber*, *ike*, *öç*), and Karachay-Balkar (*bir*, *eki*, *üç*). Such correspondences point to a shared historical-linguistic origin. At the same time, the lexeme *torsuq*, recorded in Mándoky's material, is preserved with similar meanings across several Turkic languages, including Bashkir (*turbiq*), Tatar (*tursiq*), Nogai (*torsiq*), Kazakh (*torsiq*), and Kyrgyz (*torsuq*). This demonstrates that certain lexical elements in the counting-out rhymes were widely preserved across the Turkic linguistic space (Molnár, 2012: 154-155). On this basis, the counting-out rhymes may be understood not only as a rhythmic structure, but also as a shared cognitive and ritual models. The importance of these forms extends beyond grammar alone. They also function as relational categories that express the connection

between the subject and the surrounding world. Similar models can be found in Kazakh counting-out rhymes through patterns such as “bırimbir, ekimeki”, which indicates the broad distribution of this structure among Turkic peoples (Ybyraev, 2009, p. 201-204).

During the reconstruction process, Mándoky followed the principle of scientific caution as a guiding approach. In cases where the meanings of certain lexemes could not be fully clarified, he avoided proposing definitive semantic interpretations and instead presented only possible versions (Mándoky, 1993, p. 101-104). This approach prevented the forced adaptation of the texts to modern linguistic norms and helped to preserve their historical authenticity.

So, instead of being understood only as grammatical features, the forms found in the counting-out rhymes should be also understood as elements of poetic structure. Z. Akhmetov emphasizes that rhythm, repetition, and formulaic organization in poetic texts ensure structural integrity more than rhyme itself (Akhmetov, 1996). From this perspective, the repeated use of possessive suffixes in counting-out rhymes should be seen not only as a historical trace, but also as a manifestation of poetic regularity.

Hungarian scholars who have studied the ethnic memory and cultural continuity of the Kunság Cuman-Kipchaks likewise regard the counting rhymes as evidence of cultural continuity. In the works of L. Selmeczi, these texts are described as part of historical memory and ethnocultural interaction (Selmeczi, 2011).

In international scholarship, the tradition of treating children's counting-out rhymes as an independent genre has been established relatively early. G. Bolton examined their geographical distribution and formulaic stability, noting that such texts preserve strong structural integrity despite their semantic obscurity (Bolton, 2015). This observation supports the main arguments of the present study regarding the Kunság materials. In this context, semantic obscurity in counting-out rhymes should not be viewed as a deficiency. On the contrary, it may be interpreted as a sign of archaic structure. A similar idea can be found in the works of Tylor. In his anthropological and mythological studies, he argues that the primary function of words in ancient texts is not always to convey logical meaning, but rather to preserve structural order (Tylor, 2010). The semantically obscure words in the Kunság texts appear to fulfill precisely this formulaic function.

In modern Kazakh folklore studies, there are several works devoted to the evolution of children's oral literature. M. Baltymova, for example, describes the mechanisms through which children's creativity adapts to social environments and historical change, demonstrating that traditional formulaic structures can remain stable over long periods of time (Baltymova, 2024). The structural conservatism of the Kunság counting-out rhymes corresponds closely to this principle.

According to the results of this study, Kunság counting-out rhymes have a two-level significance. First, they preserve the archaic layer of the Kipchak language and simultaneously function as a structural model. Most importantly, the broad comparative material presented by Mándoky allows the Kunság counting-out rhymes to be considered a direct legacy of the Kipchaks in Europe (Vásáry, 2005; Molnár, 2021). For this reason, the counting-out rhyme materials reconstructed by Mándoky can be regarded as a reliable empirical source base for further linguistic and cosmological interpretation.

Children's counting-out rhymes as a linguistic representation of the Turkic worldview. The Kipchak children's counting-out rhymes preserved in the Kunság region can be viewed not only as historical-linguistic evidence, but also as reflection of a broader worldview. Such an approach allows the materials collected by Mándoky to be interpreted on a deeper theoretical level. The meaning of these counting-out rhyme genre lies not simply in individual words, but in their overall structure and in the model-based information conveyed through that structure. The main feature of counting-out rhymes is the strict order of the numerical sequence, where each number is consistently linked with specific objects and actions in a layered and organized way.

In the texts reconstructed by Mándoky, numerals are often used in the first-person possessive forms (*bérem, ékem, öcsém*). Although the grammatical and textual importance of this feature has already been discussed, its interpretation from the worldview perspective reveals the central role of counting-out rhyme's structure more clearly. In this context, numbers do not function as abstract units of calculation, instead, they appear as structural categories that define the relationship between the subject and the surrounding world. In other words, numbers become a way of organizing reality and a measure of existence that “belongs” to the individual (Mándoky, 1993, p. 98-102). On this basis, the structure of the counting-out rhyme may be described as a micro-cosmological model.

In the traditional Turkic worldview, the universe is understood as an integrated system which is governed by a specific order. In this system, numbers serve as key markers of harmony, balance, and cyclical movement. Counting-out rhymes introduce this universal principle to children in a simple playful and accessible form. Ethnolinguistic studies also note that such cognitive mechanisms belong to the oldest layers of children's folklore (Kondybay, 2004, p. 55-58; Ybyraev, 2009, p. 201-204).

The analysis of the structural stability of the Kunság counting-out rhymes demonstrates the importance of their formulaic organization. The preservation of numerical order, the repeated function of each element, and the way the text ultimately arrives at a final "selection" formula are not simply matters of word order. This type of organization corresponds to the structural models commonly found in folkloric texts. In his study of folktales as systems of functions V. Propp demonstrated that narrative elements are governed mainly by structural sequence rather than by their individual content (Propp, 1968). From this perspective, the number-action-selection pattern observed in the Kunság counting-out rhymes should be understood not as free improvisation, but as a stable structural model.

Propp also argues that the position of functional units within a text remains stable regardless of semantic change (Propp, 1968). This idea corresponds closely to the stable placement of semantically obscure lexemes in the Kunság versions. It means that certain words may become unclear over time, yet their position within the text remains unchanged. Such stability once again demonstrates that it is not the individual semantics of a word that matters most, but its structural function within the overall composition.

The symbolic nature of counting-out rhymes may also be interpreted through A. Dundes's concept of folklore as a cultural code. He argues that elements which seem "meaningless" in folklore texts often reflect the deeper layers of collective cultural consciousness (Dundes, 1980). From this perspective, the phonetic reductions and semantic obscurities found in the Kunság counting-out rhymes should not be seen as meaningless remnants that are lacking logical information. Rather, they should be viewed as preserved forms of an archaic structure.

Dundes further describes folklore as an unconscious mechanism for regulating collective experience (Dundes, 1980). In this regard, the "selection" formula found in counting-out rhymes can be understood not only as part of a children's game, but also

as a simplified ritual model for establishing social boundaries. The act of "choosing out" in the game completes the structural cycle and temporarily defines the center and periphery within the group. This function suggests that counting-out rhymes also possess a social regulatory role.

The structural model of the Kunság counting-out rhymes corresponds both to the principle of functional sequence described by V. Propp and to the cultural-semiotic interpretation proposed by A. Dundes. Within this model, number functions as the structural core, object serves as cultural representation, the action – as a dynamic stage, and the selection formula acts as a transitional boundary. This sequence ensures not just the poetic organization of the text, but also its worldview coherence and internal unity.

From a worldview perspective, the relationship between numbers and objects in these counting-out rhymes is connected with core elements of nomadic culture. Words such as the cradle, felt, bone, file, whetstone, and leather flask, which frequently appear in the texts, reflect the world familiar to a child through everyday experience. These lexical units are not selected randomly. They function as culturally symbolic elements that reflect not only material reality, but also social and ritual meanings (Ligeti, 1986; Kondybay, 2004).

The semantically obscure lexemes found in the counting-out rhymes, including forms such as *űszők* and *szenneg*, should also be understood as part of this model. Traditional linguistics may classify them simply as "unintelligible" elements. However, from the perspective of worldview and semiotic analysis, such lexemes preserve the magical and formulaic integrity of the text. In early cultural traditions, the primary function of language was not simply to transmit the information, but to preserve the structural order and sacred balance (Tylor, 2010; Opie & Opie, 2000).

The elements such as "selection," "elimination," and "expulsion" that appear in the final sections of the counting rhymes form another important stage of the micro-cosmological model. Once the numerical sequence comes to an end, one participant is temporarily removed from the "center," symbolizing an act of boundary-making. This phenomenon is connected with symbolic forms of selection, separation, and transition found in ancient ritual practices. Although these actions appear in children's games in a simplified and playful form, their deeper worldview structure remains preserved (Tokpayeva, Kuzembayeva, Spulber, 2024).

According to the interpretation proposed in this study, the sequence of number–object–action in the counting-out rhymes is not based solely on phonetic harmony. Rather, it reflects the functional hierarchy characteristic of the nomadic worldview. The sequence begins with objects related to everyday life and gradually shifts toward elements with greater symbolic or structural meaning. This process represents a linguistic model through which the child perceives the world not as chaos, but as an ordered system that develops step by step. In this way, the Kunság counting-out rhyme may be described as the following linguistic-cosmological micro-model:

Number – the structural core that organizes the world;

Object – the symbol of material and cultural existence;

Action – the expression of time and movement;

Selection/elimination – the act of boundary-making and transition.

This model may be understood as a linguistic form of the Turkic concept of the “ordered world,” adapted to children’s consciousness. For this reason, children’s counting-out rhymes should not be seen just as playful texts. They function as complex cognitive and worldview-related mechanisms that transmit cultural memory from one generation to the next. The counting-out rhyme materials reconstructed by Mándoky make it possible to support this interpretation through concrete linguistic evidence.

The full texts of the Kunság Cuman-Kipchak counting-out rhymes used in the present analysis are provided in the appendix (Appendix 1). Through concrete linguistic material, these texts clearly demonstrate the role of children’s counting-out rhymes as linguistic and cosmological micro-models of the Turkic worldview. Several features support this conclusion. First, numerals within the structure of counting-out rhyme appear in a fixed sequence. They are often expressed in possessive forms, reflecting a worldview in which the world is understood through its relationships to the individual. Second, the object-related components that accompany the numerals represent key elements of nomadic everyday culture. Together they form a condensed model of material existence. Third, the formulas expressing action and movement symbolize the passage of time, dynamic change, and cyclical order. Finally, the “selection” or “elimination” formulas that conclude the rhymes indicate both the completion of the structural cycle and the establishment of social and ritual boundaries. The combination of all these elements within a single text demonstrates that the

counting-out rhyme genre is not a random phonetic game. Rather, it functions as a cognitive and worldview-based micro-model that introduces children to the perception of the world as an ordered and structured system.

The results of the analysis not only highlight the linguistic importance of the Kunság counting-out rhymes but also justify their value as cultural and cognitive phenomena that preserves a structural model of the Turkic worldview. The research shows that the Kipchak children’s counting-out rhymes preserved in the Kunság region are far more than simple folklore game texts. Their structure and internal logic reveal a systematic worldview model. A comprehensive analysis of the texts collected and reconstructed by István Kongur Mándoky through historical-comparative, ethnolinguistic, and semi-otic approaches shows that this genre is not a random linguistic phenomenon, but a stable carrier of archaic worldview information.

One of the main conclusions of the study is that the use of numerals in the first-person possessive suffixes (*bérem, ékem, öcsém*, etc.) reflect an archaic grammatical pattern characteristic of the Kipchak-Turkic languages. These forms transform numbers from abstract counting categories into markers of the relationship between the subject and the world. The preservation of such linguistic structures demonstrates the historical depth of the counting-out rhyme genre and its connection to the broader Kipchak-Turkic cultural sphere.

The second key finding of the study is that the relationship between numbers and objects in the structure of the counting-out rhymes follows specific functional patterns. The object-related components that accompany each number reflect elements of nomadic everyday culture. Besides, they recreate the world familiar to the child through daily experience. These object names do not only represent material reality but also carry cultural and symbolic meanings. In this way, the counting-out rhyme functions as a condensed cognitive model of how the world is perceived and organized.

The third important conclusion is that the semantically obscure lexemes found in the counting-out rhymes should not be interpreted as linguistic deficiencies. Instead, they represent structural features characteristic of archaic texts. Such elements serve not to clarify logical meaning, but to preserve the rhythmic, formulaic, and sequential integrity of the text. This phenomenon further demonstrates the mythological and symbolic nature of the counting-out rhyme genre.

The fourth result is related to the worldview role of action-based components within the structure of the counting-out rhymes. Formulas that express movement and action operate together with the numerical sequence to represent the passage of time, cyclical movement, and processes of transition. The “selection” or “elimination” elements that appear at the end of the rhymes indicate both the completion of the structural cycle and the act of establishing boundaries. Although these components survive in children’s games in a simplified form, they preserve traces of an older ritual model at a deeper structural level.

Bringing the research results together, children’s counting-out rhymes can be scientifically defined as linguistic and cosmological micro-models of the Turkic worldview. In this model, number functions as the structural core organizing the world; object symbolizes material and cultural existence; action represents time and movement; while selection or elimination serves as an act of transition and boundary-making. Such a structure highlights the significance of counting-out rhyme not only as folkloric texts, but also as a cultural and cognitive phenomenon.

The findings also provide linguistic support for reconstructions proposed by István Kongur Mándoky. A comparison between the Kipchak counting-out rhymes of the Kunság region and similar genre forms among Kazakh and other Kipchak peoples demonstrates their shared structural core. Most importantly, these texts represent stable elements of Turkic cultural memory. On this basis, children’s counting-out rhymes may be regarded as one of the most conservative genres within the Turkic languages. They preserve their structure over long historical periods with relatively little change.

Conclusion

The present study has shown that the Kipchak children’s counting-out rhymes preserved in the Kunság region are not merely playful folklore texts. From the perspective of structure and internal logic, they represent a complex cultural phenomenon that reflects a worldview system common to Turkic peoples. The formulaic stability of the genre, the preservation of numerical sequences, and the systematic relationship between object-related and action-related components indicate that the counting-out rhymes did not emerge in recent cultural developments – they are grounded in deep historical and archetypal foundations.

The Kunság counting-out rhymes collected and reconstructed by István Kongur Mándoky belong to the rare and valuable examples of Kipchak-Turkic linguistic heritage preserved in Hungary. The analysis revealed that the structural core of these texts is shared with counting-out rhymes among Kazakh, Karachay-Balkar, Nogai, and other Kipchak peoples. This demonstrates the existence of a shared foundation across the broader Turkic cultural area. The use of numerals in first-person possessive forms, the preservation of semantically obscure lexemes, and the formulaic organization of the texts all provide concrete linguistic evidence of the archaic nature of the counting rhyme genre.

The analysis of the *number – object – action – selection* sequence made it possible to clarify the worldview-related function of counting-out rhymes. Number appears as the structural principle that organizes the world; object is a symbol of material and cultural existence; and action is the linguistic representation of time and movement. The final elements of selection or elimination mark the completion of the structural cycle and the establishment of social and ritual boundaries. The fact that all these elements form a coherent system within a single text allows to interpret children’s counting-out rhymes as linguistic and cosmological micro-models of the Turkic worldview.

The phenomenon of semantic obscurity identified during the research should not be treated as a weakness of the texts. On the contrary, it is an important feature that reflects their ancient worldview nature. The presence of such lexemes points to the preservation of ritual modes of thinking which is characteristic of early cultures and demonstrates that the primary function of words in counting-out rhymes is not the transmission of logical meaning, but the maintenance of structural order and rhythmic unity.

The long-term preservation of counting-out rhymes among children’s highlights their cultural significance. Because children’s folklore is relatively independent from the influence of official culture and written literary tradition, this sphere became one of the main environments in which archaic linguistic structures and worldview models could be transmitted from generation to generation. For this reason, the Kunság Kipchak counting-out rhymes should be regarded as important carriers of Turkic cultural memory. The texts presented in the appendix provide concrete linguistic evidence that children’s counting-out rhymes function as linguistic and cosmological micro-models that reflect the Turkic worldview.

In conclusion, children's counting-out rhymes should be examined not only within the framework of folklore studies, but also as cultural and cognitive codes that reflect the structural model of the Turkic worldview. Such an approach offers new directions for research in Turkic studies, especially in the fields of ethnolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and cultural semiotics. In this sense, Kipchak counting-out rhymes deserve to be treated as significant sources for reconstructing the ancient Turkic worldview alongside written historical monuments.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

Sh.T. Kudyarova analyzed the materials from a scholarly perspective, developed the theoretical framework of the study, and edited the article. A.A. Rakhymbay collected, systematized, and analyzed the research materials. B.K. Rakhymbay conducted the research, processed the data, and developed the conceptual framework of the study.

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APPENDIX A

Kipchak children's counting-out rhymes preserved in the Kunság (Nagykunság) region

This appendix presents selected texts of Kipchak children's counting-out rhymes preserved in the Kunság region of Hungary, that were collected and published by István Kongur Mándoky. These rhymes are used as the primary research material of the article and serve to ground the conducted historical-linguistic and worldview-oriented analyses in concrete linguistic data.

Counting-out rhyme 1 (Kunmadaras version)

bérem belő
ékem égő
öcsém üszök
kertem tücsök
becsém becsek
államhasad
csettemcsetteg
szegzemszenne
tozomtorcog
hónomhagya
gyűrűmkapta
alcsík
balcsík
szencsík

In this counting rhyme, the numerical sequence is expressed through first-person possessive forms (*bér-em*, *ék-em*), while semantically obscure lexemes (*üszök*, *csetteg*, and *szenneg*) are also present. This indicates the preservation of an archaic structural layer within the text.

Counting-out rhyme 2 (Karcagversion)

bírem bellő
Íkem ígő
ecsém eszi
töruinteszi
bessembessi
átaláta
sétrecsétre
szegreszerre
tózomtorcog
kónyikacski
csupatapsi
se nemnagy
se nemkicsi
temenjki

The final line formula *temenjki* functions as a game-based interpretive device and can be understood as a linguistic realization of the ritual act of “elimination” or “removal”.

Counting-out rhyme 3 (Karcagcollected version)

bérembellő
ékémelő
esteeszünk
haleszveszünk
télreteszünk
államállá

gyettemgyette
szeggemszenne
tobozdoboz
kunomkaska
győrilaska
erepésterepés
kazantebénkardalés

In this version, the systematic use of object names (*doboz*, *győri*, *kazan*) highlights the cultural-symbolic nature of the number-object-action sequence in the counting-out rhyme's structure.

Counting-out rhyme 4 (Kisújszállásversion)

berrem berrő
ekkem eggő
iccsemizzeg
kertemtőzeg
beskembesket
attalássuk
csetémcsette
szeggelszelen
togzatorcag
kullonmasta
gyérentapcsa
tenemiccmenemicc
tekimicc

The structural core of the counting-out rhyme is preserved in this version as well. This demonstrates that even in condensed form, the genre continues to function as a worldview-related model.

Note. Source: Adapted from Molnár (2012, pp. 139–155).

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