








ARTICLE

The Motif of the Inheritance of the Younger Son in Folk Tales of the Turkic Peoples: Structure and Symbolism

Gulnazira Muzhigova ¹ , Metin Ekici ² , Eleonora Seisenbiyeva ¹ , Gulzhaukhar Kurebayeva ^{3*} , Nazgul Suranchiyeva ⁴ , Yerlan Alashbayev ⁵ , Gulzhanat Abikhanova ⁵ 

¹ Faculty of Philology, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty 050047, Kazakhstan

² Department of Turkish Folklore Ege University, E. U. Institute For The Study of The Turkic World, Izmir 35100, Bornova, Turkey

³ Faculty of Humanitarian Science, Alikhan Bokeikhan University, Semey 071400, Kazakhstan

⁴ Department of Aviation English, Academy of Civil Aviation, Almaty 44 050039, Kazakhstan

⁵ Department of Turkish Philology, Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Turkestan 161200, Kazakhstan

ABSTRACT

The mutual influence and creative connections between folklore and oral art of the Turkic peoples are a broad problem. One important aspect of this urgent problem is the study of the motive of the inheritance of the younger son in the folk tales of the Turkic peoples. The study of folk tale characters is crucial for elucidating the artistic foundation of this kind of folklore work because different artistic expression techniques are employed in their portrayal. The study's object is folk tales of the Turkic peoples. The subject is the motive of the younger son's inheritance in Turkic folklore, its structure, symbolism, and cultural and social significance. Through structural and symbolic analysis, the study aims to identify the characteristics, cultural significance, and evolution of the motive behind the younger son's inheritance in Turkic folktales. The description and analysis use comparative-typological, structural-semiotic, and historical-cultural textual analysis techniques. The study's findings indicate that even though the younger son usually faces difficult circumstances, his skills, courage, and

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Gulzhaukhar Kurebayeva, Faculty of Humanitarian Science, Alikhan Bokeikhan University, Semey 071400, Kazakhstan;
Email: gkurebaeva@yandex.ru

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 3 February 2025 | Revised: 28 February 2025 | Accepted: 4 March 2025 | Published Online: 19 March 2025
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i3.8640>

CITATION

Muzhigova, G., Ekici, M., Seisenbiyeva, E., et al., 2025. The Motif of the Inheritance of the Younger Son in Folk Tales of the Turkic Peoples: Structure and Symbolism. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 7(3): 1047–1058. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i3.8640>

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by the author(s). Published by Bilingual Publishing Group. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

hard work enable him to succeed. This motive highlights the value of social connections and family ties in traditional society in addition to illuminating the hero's personal traits. The study's findings can be applied to the compilation of Turkic folktale catalogs as well as to additional research on the poetics and style of Turkic folktales.

Keywords: Folklore; Fairy Tale; Inheritance; Motif; Structure; Symbolism; Younger Son

1. Introduction

A folk tale is an integral part of the folklore wealth of any nation. Despite the universality and internationality of its plots, each nation puts its own special life and social philosophy into the fairy tale, conditioned by the established traditional way of life and history^[1, 2]. Therefore, it has its own national plot, and with the commonality of the fairy tale plot, it creates its national version. For this reason, the study of a fairy tale on a specific national basis is important for clarifying the national and interethnic in this type of narrative folklore of any nation^[3]. Studying national fairy tales in comparison with the tales of other nations can help one learn the uniqueness of the fairy tale tradition in general and the national one in particular^[4].

The folk tale, as a complex of texts of oral folklore, consisting of works of different genre types, occupies a prominent place in Turkic folklore^[5]. The issues of studying Turkic folklore constitute a relevant area of current study, since it is in it that national identity is actively manifested, directly related to the main issue for the entire modern Turkic-speaking world—the problem of self-identification^[6]. Literary analysis of fairy tale characters enables us to pinpoint the genre-forming elements of the story and creates opportunities for additional study of the Turkic people's entire folklore process.

Tales about the division of inheritance reveal a special, specific connection with the younger son^[7]. The younger one is deprived when the inheritance or property is divided by the elders. The image of the younger brother is widespread in the fairy tales of the peoples of the world and has always attracted the attention of researchers^[8].

Tales of inheritance reflect a historically specific phenomenon - the struggle between minorate and majorate in the common inheritance law of the people. Majorat was created in the eleventh and thirteenth centuries to prevent the division of land ownership under the feudal laws of England, France, Germany, and other European nations. Such

conservative foundations of the majorat became the reason for the destruction of the integrity of the family institution, and therefore society began to look for other forms of inheritance of paternal wealth^[9]. Minorat became such a form of inheritance. Minorate (from the Latin minor—lesser), preferential (and sometimes exclusive) inheritance of property by a younger relative. The minorate, as a spontaneous, not yet firmly established order, arose in the depths of the clan system, when there was neither real private property nor firm norms of inheritance^[10]. The younger son became the heir of the father due to a number of reasons: in slash-and-burn agriculture or archaic forms of cattle breeding, the elders leave the father in search of plots for sowing and pasture, and the younger remains with his parents. The younger, by virtue of this, puts more work into the father's farm. In addition, the transfer of inheritance to the younger son was a veiled form of transferring inheritance to the widow and, therefore, represented a compromise with the mother's house. The minorate did not mean any actual advantages for the younger over the older, since the older ones were already independent by the time of the father's death. The minorate corresponded to the spirit of real equality in the primitive communal system. The younger one received mainly a house with a family hearth, and naturally, he performed the memorial rite for his father and everything else connected with the cult of ancestors. Tales of inheritance directly reflect the disintegration of family property (the division of inheritance is the disintegration of a large family) as the victory of the majorat over the minorat^[11].

This custom is still followed today, which states that the youngest son inherits the father's home in order to support the aging parents, preserve family customs, and carry on the family business. The institution of the minorate is the most important and most respected tradition of customary law among the Turkic people. It also indicates that in folk tales the younger son, compared to the elders, was always in a special position—enjoyed a privilege. The younger son is not only the owner of the father's inheritance, clan, and

family traditions but also the successor of the clan and family hearth^[12].

Among the Turkic peoples, the younger son's inheritance theme is especially significant because it is linked to concepts of social hierarchy, family dynamics, and cultural standards. The general framework of fairy tales with this theme frequently consists of traditional components: an older son who typically inherits the most, and a younger son who is in a less favorable position. Social equality, justice, and moral values are linked to the youngest son's image. The youngest son usually finds himself in a difficult situation and overcomes it because of his abilities, courage, and diligence. A fundamental component of the traditional values of the Turkic peoples, this image represents the potential for rebirth, hope, and changing one's destiny^[13].

There are two different kinds of younger brothers in Turkic folktales. In the first, the older brothers are not hostile or hurtful to the younger ones; they are strong and intelligent, and if needed, they assist the younger brother in getting out of trouble, recovering his stolen soul, and reviving him. The second group includes tales where older brothers conflict with their younger brothers. They are cunning and jealous; they try to ruin the younger brother and sometimes even kill him by hurting him in every way they can. The younger brother saves his older brothers from trouble by acting honorably toward them while they are on their way to accomplishing the goal. The image of the younger brother or son depicts the transition from clans to families when the first signs of private property and class inequality emerged. The people idolized the younger son, seeing him as the heir to the clan and the defender of the father's hearth traditions^[14].

Perhaps the younger, less experienced, and subordinate person's status frequently places him in the role of a "fool" or unfortunate individual who ends up winning. Based on his behavior, another kind of younger son seems foolish or unpractical. He lacks a solid understanding of life's rules, and his irrationality and openness are unfathomable^[15, 16].

However, according to fairy tale logic, these qualities are what result in the desired outcome and improve the situation. Because the "fool" is open to fate and refuses to rationalize life in his favor, it is possible that the hero magically receives help from higher powers after putting his trust in their will. In these stories, the younger son—typically the prince—appears not so much as a fool, as his family

perceives him, but rather as a trustworthy individual who ultimately receives more than he could have ever imagined because of his virtues^[17]. According to A. Panchenko, if the fool's (the story's exposition and early episodes) resistance to the world appears to be a struggle between common sense and stupidity, it will become evident as the plot develops that common sense is equivalent to meanness and shallowness and that the foolishness is fictitious^[18].

Interest in this topic is also influenced by the internal requirements of linguistics and cultural studies, which look into the ways that human experience is transmitted verbally. The possibilities of verbal narration as they are presented in Turkic fairy tales or fairy tale discourse require careful consideration because they have their own rhythm, unique characteristics, and profound semantics, and they complement the classically rational worldview. Despite changes in the fairy tale's plot, subject matter, background, and sidelines, the theme of the youngest son's inheritance in Turkic folk tales, as well as their structure and symbolism, continue to be important and highly sought-after phenomena of modern life that need to be studied in a wide socio-cultural context. The origins of the motivations behind the younger son's inheritance in Turkic folktales are the subject of distinct, aspectual developments and research traditions. However, there are not many comprehensive studies that try to pinpoint the precise function of the younger son's inheritance motivations in Turkic folktales. All of this highlights the significance and applicability of the current study. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is the first to be carried out in Kazakhstan. The novelty is that for the first time, a Turkic folk tale is studied in combination with a comprehensive analysis of features, cultural meaning, and the development of the motivation for the inheritance of the younger son through structural and symbolic analysis. The following research questions will be addressed by this study:

RQ1: What are the structural, symbolic, and cultural significance features of the motif of the inheritance of the younger son in Turkic fairy tales, and how has it been transformed in various historical and cultural contexts?

1.1. Research Objectives

The primary objective of the given study is to identify the characteristics, cultural significance, and evolution of the motive behind the younger son's inheritance in Turkic

folktales through structural and symbolic analysis.

Specifically, the study aims to:

- (1) Determine the general structure of these tales based on the motives of the younger son's inheritance.
- (2) Investigate the symbolism of inheritance and the younger son's image in the system of Turkic traditional values.
- (3) Identify common and distinctive features in the plots of Turkic fairy tales.
- (4) Determine how the motive of the younger son's inheritance has changed over time and in the cultural and historical context.

2. Theoretical Framework

Analyzing folk tale motifs and their meaning through folklore studies is a challenging task that requires careful consideration of historical and cultural contexts. The theoretical study of motive is a broad field that is still developing in terms of concepts and approaches. Nevertheless, motive definitions still lack consistency and terminological clarity. Around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the theory of motive started to be actively developed, mostly in the analysis of folktales. The issue then spreads to the creativity of individual authors^[19].

The term "motive" needs a definition when discussing fairy tales because it allows us to identify the archetypes and stereotypes of the national character through the motive's transformation and change across various peoples' fairy tales. A connecting element in the "man—the surrounding world" system is an archetype, which a person can replicate in his imagination, for instance, in a fairy tale. Because the national character has already been absorbed and reflected in folklore and fairy tales, the motive of fairy tales must be analyzed not only as a unit of structural description of a fairy tale but also as a component of national consciousness that first appeared in myth and then "sprouted" in the fairy tales of various peoples. A literary encyclopedic dictionary defines a motif as a consistent, formally significant element of a work of literature^[20].

V. Propp claim that it is an indecomposable part of the text, similar to an object, an image, or a minimal unit of a folklore story. A motif is an important part of a fairy tale's storyline, closely related to mythological motifs and

initiation-type rituals, which are a semantically significant aspect of a fairy tale's plot. A motif lacks the relatively "independent" imagery and aesthetic completeness of other elements of artistic form, but it is more closely tied to the author's inner world^[21].

A motif only gains its artistic meaning and value when its "movement" is specifically analyzed, demonstrating the consistency and uniqueness of its semantic content. The modern understanding of motive does not have a clear theoretical definition, which leads to an expansive use of the term and its blurring. Incorporating elements of symbolization gives the term "motive" a strict definition^[22].

In contrast to the theme, the motive is directly, verbally, and objectively fixed in the work's text. L. Baum's fairy tale "The Land of Oz" is an example of this. For more works, which include and fairy tales, plot motifs are typical. A secret or riddle is central to the storyline of a fairy tale. The archetypal universality of several motifs includes testing, retribution (punishment), and recognition and insight^[23].

Different meanings can be attached to the same motif. The folk family, stepmother, stepfather, half-brothers, and sisters, for instance, are all used in fairy tales in both positive and negative ways. A. Veselovsky considered plots as combinations of motifs. Their relationship was entirely quantitative, and the researcher attributed the high proportion of recurring motifs to the existence of migration and borrowing^[24].

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The comparative-typological method was used to identify common and distinctive features of the motif of the inheritance of the younger son in the tales of different Turkic peoples. The structural-semiotic method was used to analyze the structure of the tales and identify the symbolic meaning of the inheritance and the image of the younger son, which made it possible to consider the tale as a holistic system with a certain symbolism^[25]. The historical-cultural method made it possible to trace the transformation of the motif of the inheritance of the younger son in the context of historical and cultural changes of the Turkic peoples.

The study's material was the fairy tales of the Turkic

peoples. Its primary focus was on Turkic fairy tales with a protagonist who is the youngest son and a plot that involves inheritance, the fight for the throne, or wealth. Specifically, Kazakh fairy tales “Kazakh Khan and Three Sons,” “Er Tostik,” “Kambar Batyr,” Kyrgyz Tales “Togolok uul,” “Black Horse,” “The Wealth of the Poor Son,” “The Eldest, Middle, and Youngest Son,” Uzbek fairy tales “Three Brothers,” “The Wise Younger Brother” and “Wise Testament,” Tatar fairy tales “Altynchech,” “Tulpar and His Horseman,” “Three Sons and a Sorcerer,” Turkmen fairy tales “Test for the Heir,” “Kara-Kuz,” “Batyr-Junior” and “The Stone of

Wealth,” Altai and Tuvan tales include “Three Brothers and the Giant,” “The Poor Younger Son,” and “Sly Heir.” From the perspective of the study’s goals, these stories are the most representative; at the same time, they are the most visually stunning pieces of Turkic-language literature in general as well as the literary tale genre.

3.2. Research Process and Methods

The study is divided into several stages, as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Stages of research.

Stage	Description
Preparatory	Definition of the problem and formulation of the research question. Collection and systematization of scientific literature on Turkic folklore, fairy tale motifs, and the theory of mythology. The selection and choice of a collection of Turkic fairy tale texts that feature the theme of the younger son’s inheritance.
Data Collection	Analysis of texts of folk tales: Study of tales of various Turkic peoples. Identification of plots related to the motif of the younger son and inheritance. Systematization of data: Classification of tales by type (for example, magic, everyday and other tales). Identification of key elements: plot structure, functions of characters, symbolism of inheritance. Collection of ethnographic and cultural data for a deeper understanding of the social context.
Analytical	Structural-semiotic analysis: Studying the structure of fairy tales and analyzing the symbolism of inheritance and the role of the youngest son in the system of traditional values. In order to identify similarities and differences, comparative-typological analysis examines the themes and plots of fairy tales from various Turkic peoples. Contextual analysis: Examining how the theme of the youngest son’s inheritance has changed over time in relation to historical and cultural developments.
Interpretation	Summarizing the results of the analysis and formulating conclusions about the symbolic and structural meaning of the motive. Interpretation of the role of the inheritance of the younger son as a reflection of the worldview of the Turkic peoples.

4. Results

Table 2 summarizes key elements identified in the study of Turkic folk tales, focusing on the motif of the younger son and inheritance.

The recurring narrative structure highlights common inheritance disputes, tests of worthiness, and supernatural aid. Character functions reinforce traditional values, with the younger son embodying virtues such as wisdom and perseverance, while antagonists represent obstacles to rightful

succession. The symbolism of inheritance—land, magical objects, or divine approval—reflects deeper cultural beliefs about leadership and legitimacy. These tales offer insights into the historical and social dynamics of Turkic societies, emphasizing the role of merit over birthright.

The results of the structural-semiotic analysis, which included analyzing the structure of fairy tales, analyzing inheritance symbolism, and analyzing the youngest son’s position within the conventional values system, are shown in **Table 3**.

Table 2. Key Findings from the analysis of Turkic folk tales on inheritance.

Category	Findings
Identified motif	Younger son and inheritance
Classification of tales	Magic tales, Everyday tales, Other types
Plot structure	Common narrative patterns involving inheritance disputes, tests of worthiness, supernatural aid, etc.

Table 2. *Cont.*

Category	Findings
Functions of characters	Hero (younger son), Antagonist (older siblings, external forces), Helper (magical beings, wise elders), Guardian (father, ruler)
Symbolism of inheritance	Land, throne, magical objects, wisdom, divine approval
Ethnographic and cultural context	Inheritance traditions, family hierarchy, social values, role of younger sons in society

Table 3. Structural-semiotic analysis of Turkic folk tales.

Category	Findings
Narrative structure	Linear progression with a clear beginning (inheritance conflict), middle (trials and challenges), and resolution (justified succession). Often follows Propp's fairy tale functions.
Character roles	Younger son as the hero; older siblings or external forces as antagonists; magical beings or wise elders as helpers; father or ruler as the guardian/judge of inheritance.
Classification of tales	Magic tales, everyday tales, other types.
Symbolism of inheritance	Inheritance as a symbol of legitimacy, wisdom, and divine approval. Objects such as a throne, magical items, or land represent authority and moral worth.
Functions of characters	Hero (younger son), Antagonist (older siblings, external forces), Helper (magical beings, wise elders), Guardian (father, ruler).
Trials and challenges	The hero undergoes tests of strength, intelligence, and virtue, proving his worthiness beyond mere birthright. Supernatural assistance often plays a role.
Semiotic elements	Use of symbolic numbers (3 brothers, 7 trials), magical transformations, and heroic journeys signifying personal growth and destiny.
Traditional values reflected	Merit over birth order, justice, the idea that true leadership is earned rather than inherited. Respect for wisdom, perseverance, and divine fate.

The structural-semiotic analysis of Turkic folk tales highlights a universal narrative pattern where the youngest son, despite being underestimated, ultimately earns his inheritance through trials and moral superiority. Symbolic elements, such as magical assistance and numerical motifs, reinforce themes of destiny and justice. These tales emphasize the importance

of merit, wisdom, and rightful succession within traditional Turkic values, where inheritance is not just material but also a symbol of social legitimacy and personal growth.

Table 4 presents the comparative-typological analysis that looks at the themes and plots of fairy tales from different Turkic peoples in order to find similarities and differences.

Table 4. Comparative-typological analysis of Turkic folk tales.

Category	Similarities	Differences
Motif of the younger son	The younger son is often underestimated but ultimately proves his worth and claims his rightful inheritance.	In Kazakh and Kyrgyz tales, he often succeeds through wisdom and bravery, while in Turkmen and Uzbek tales, supernatural aid plays a more dominant role.
Inheritance theme	Inheritance symbolizes leadership, justice, and divine approval rather than just material wealth.	The nature of inheritance varies: in Kazakh and Kyrgyz tales, it is often land or a throne; in Tatar tales, it can be wisdom or magical objects.
Narrative structure	Follows a common three-part structure: (1) conflict over inheritance, (2) trials/tests, (3) resolution with the younger son's victory.	The number and nature of trials differ—Uzbek tales emphasize intelligence-based tasks, while Turkmen tales often involve journeys and adventures.
Character functions	The younger son (hero), older siblings (antagonists), magical beings or elders (helpers), and father or ruler (guardian/judge).	Some tales, especially in Tatar folklore, feature a mother figure as a key influencer, while Kyrgyz tales emphasize the role of divine intervention.

Table 4. *Cont.*

Category	Similarities	Differences
Symbolism	Magical objects, land, or wisdom as metaphors for rightful rule and destiny.	In some traditions (e.g., Uzbek and Tatar), the younger son receives a magical artifact, while in Kazakh and Kyrgyz tales, the inheritance is often tangible (land, power).
Social and cultural values	Meritocracy over primogeniture, perseverance, intelligence, and justice.	Tatar and Uzbek tales place a stronger emphasis on cunning and diplomacy, while Kazakh and Kyrgyz tales highlight physical endurance and bravery.

The comparative-typological analysis of Turkic folk tales shows strong thematic unity across different cultures, particularly in the motif of the younger son proving his worth. However, variations exist in the nature of inheritance, character roles, and trial types, reflecting regional social values. Uzbek and Tatar tales place more emphasis on intelligence and strategic thinking than Kazakh and Kyrgyz tales do on bravery and leadership. Different cultures have different

levels of magical elements, and some depend more on supernatural assistance than others. All things considered, these stories serve to emphasize that inheritance is not merely a natural right but rather must be earned via discernment, bravery, and tenacity.

The findings of a contextual analysis are shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5. A contextual examination of the younger son's legacy in Turkic folktales.

Time Period	Historical & Cultural Context	Representation of the Youngest Son & Inheritance
Pre-Islamic era (before 8th century)	Nomadic tribal societies, shamanistic beliefs, warrior culture	Frequently portrayed as a hunter or warrior, the younger son demonstrates his value through bravery and perseverance. Land, leadership, and divine selection are all linked to inheritance.
Islamic influence (8th–15th centuries)	Islamization of Turkic peoples, rise of khanates and emirates	Moral and religious themes are present in inheritance stories. In addition to his strength, the younger son must demonstrate his intelligence and religiosity. The inheritance represents God's favor and justice.
Medieval & Early modern period (15th–19th centuries)	Expansion of trade, establishment of centralized states, feudalism	There are both diplomatic and intellectual obstacles in the younger son's path. Inheritance can broaden through knowledge, magical relics, or a symbolic place in society.
Soviet era (20th century)	Collectivization, decline of feudal inheritance, promotion of equality	Collective ideals take precedence over traditional inheritance motives. The youngest son is recognized as a "People's Hero," not because of his birth but because of his commitment and public service.
Modern & Contemporary period (21st century)	National revival, globalization, reinterpretation of folk heritage	Although the younger son is still the primary character, the inheritance is now symbolic and stands for national identity, education, or personal accomplishment rather than financial gain.

Stories about the youngest son and inheritance from the Turkic peoples emphasize important cultural values like wisdom, justice, and honor. Despite the motifs' similarities, each tradition has its own interpretation of them: in some, the protagonist triumphs via guile, in others, through integrity and fortitude, and in still others, with the aid of magic and the elements.

Table 6 presents the main similarities and differences in their plots, images of characters, and the meaning of inheritance.

In traditional Turkic storytelling, fairy tales often follow a tripartite structure where the youngest son, initially seen

as weak or unworthy, embarks on a journey. His trials—often involving supernatural aid, wisdom, or bravery—lead to his eventual success. This structure reinforces the folkloric pattern of the "righteous underdog" prevailing against the odds. The younger son embodies renewal, transformation, and divine favor. Unlike his elder brothers, who represent conventional authority, he symbolizes adaptability, moral purity, and destiny's chosen figure. This motif aligns with the Turkic belief in the reversal of fortune, where power is not inherited through primogeniture but earned through merit. In early Turkic societies, leadership was often merit-based rather than hereditary, making the youngest son's rise a re-

flection of real-world social mobility. As Islam spread, the motif integrated religious elements, emphasizing divine will in bestowing power on the seemingly weakest. The theme was reinterpreted to align with socialist ideals, portraying

the younger son as a figure of collective struggle rather than divine selection. This motif continues to evolve, reflecting broader societal shifts while retaining its core message of justice, perseverance, and destiny.

Table 6. The main similarities and differences in their plots, images of characters, and the meaning of inheritance.

Criterion	Kazakh Tales	Kyrgyz Tales	Turkmen Tales	Tatar Tales	Altai and Tuvan Tales	Uzbek Tales
Main motive	Trials before receiving an inheritance	Victory of the mind over force	Struggle for inheritance, proof of dignity	Riddles and cunning in obtaining an inheritance	Magical items and help from spirits	Magical powers, connection with nature
Image of the younger Son	Modest, but strong in spirit	Cunning, resourceful	Protector of the people, honest	Solves complex problems, deceives enemies	Receives help from spirits and nature	Gains power through magic
Role of the older Brothers	Greedy and envious, they they want to deceive	Fools who lose their own inheritance	Evil and greedy, trying to eliminate the younger	Often losers lose because of greed	Can be both enemies and allies	Not always evil, but less wise
Magical helpers	Magic horses, spirits of ancestors	Wise elders, advisers	Magical creatures, spirits	Magical animals, elders	Magical artifacts, natural spirits	Spirits of nature, totemic powers
Type of inheritance	Throne, khanate	Wealth, cattle	Throne, power, sacred objects	Gold, magic items	Forces of nature, magical artifacts	Magical power, connection with spirits
Main idea	The inheritance goes to the worthy	Cunning is more important than force	Honesty and protection of the people are more important than wealth	Intelligence and cunning help defeat enemies	The heir must be chosen by the spirits	A person gains power through nature

5. Discussion

The role of the younger son in succession is a common theme in the tales of various Turkic peoples. This motif reflects historical facts, moral teachings nourished by oral tradition, and broader socio-cultural values. In the tales, the younger son is usually a victim, devalued by his older brothers or society at large. However, he proves himself to be the rightful heir through intelligence, courage, humility, or the grace of God. This style of storytelling recalls earlier customs in some Turkic societies, in which virtue, wisdom, or divine will be established instead of the succession or succession of elders^[26]. The division of tales into magical, domestic, and other categories shows that the theme of succession is present in many storytelling traditions. In fairy tales, the younger son is often depicted as believing in the idea that fate or a higher power is testing his claims. The uniqueness and colorfulness of the younger son's personality, his ability to overcome difficult situations and sacrifice

himself for the sake of high ideals attract attention. At the same time, he is aware of the full extent of the responsibility that he imposes on himself^[27, 28]. As a literary character, the hero can be endowed with superhuman qualities and incredible strength, express heroic traits recognized by the era, and being an actor in historical time, represent a force capable of controlling the process of that time. It should also be emphasized that ideas about the younger son are conditioned by the context of a specific culture and historical era. The semantics of heroism depends on the features of the cultural system that forms general ideas about heroic deeds and behavior, which reflect the attitude of society to the human personality and behavior. This process seems to be very complex. On the one hand, it is characterized by the presence of internal causes, spontaneity and spontaneity. On the other hand, it is also declarative. In this case, we have the right to talk about the conscious programming of a certain paradigm of the heroic by society. Turkic folk tales often feature a confrontation between older and younger broth-

ers^[29]. In which the younger son is portrayed by the narrator in the most unsightly light and does nothing in any difficult situation, but only complains and is entirely dependent on the help of magical powers, which solve all his problems for him. This passivity, inherent in the fairytale hero, is an artistic hyperbole—the embodiment of his connection with magical powers, brought to an absolute degree. The fairy tale, therefore, aestheticizes the most colorful images of the mythological worldview. The first such image is the direct presence of supernatural forces in the real world, regulating the laws of nature and exerting a decisive influence on the behavior of animals and society^[30]. The second image consists of the most miraculous help of these supernatural forces to the hero. The passive younger brother always receives this miraculous help, while his rivals, the older brothers, relying on their own strength, fail. The hero's connection with supernatural powers, which has arisen for some unknown reason, is the source of his success, for which he makes no effort. In the modern view, it is completely unclear for what merits the magical helpers have loved the hero so much. But in fact, the solution to the disposition of the magical helpers is not particularly hidden. Turkic fairy tales emphasize not the kindness, strength or intelligence of the hero, but the respect for parents. Each family has its own, more or less long, line of ancestors^[2]. In the mythological worldview of the Turks, there are strong ideas that the dead do not go anywhere after death and continue to maintain contact with the world of the living and their living relatives, that they have superhuman strength, exert a great influence on earthly affairs, can protect from danger, help in the war, protect from misfortunes, and bring good luck. The younger brother in the tale is depicted as being under the protection of his own or more distant mythical or totemic benevolent ancestors. He ensured their favor by observing established taboos, performing appropriate rites and ceremonies, and making timely sacrifices. At the same time, the tale sharply contrasts the attitude of the younger son to his father—the attitude of the older sons, who openly neglect the fulfillment of their responsibilities in relation to their parents and ancestors. Thus, violating social norms and bringing trouble not only on themselves, but also on their fellow tribesmen. Since ancestors, angry at the neglect, without much consideration, can deprive all descendants of favor and not just the guilty ones^[31]. That is why violators of

the cult of ancestors in the public imagination have received a negative reputation as egoists, caring exclusively about their personal interests to the detriment of the public. The direct artistic expression of the process of disintegration of family property in the form of the struggle between minorate and majorate is represented by tales about the division of inheritance between brothers. This theme always entails the idealization of the younger one. The older brothers, when dividing the inheritance, deprive, offend, and deprive the younger one. The older brothers are the complete opposite of the younger. They are portrayed as active and energetic, thrifty and homely, pursuing personal gain, including not always by honest methods. To understand this outcome, it is necessary to understand the origins of this confrontation, which are hidden in numerous traces of the minorate and the cult of ancestors in Turkic folklore. Family in Turkic customary law is a family in the strictest sense of the word, a marital union and a union of parents and children. Moreover, each married son builds a separate house. Inheritance law has a characteristic distinctive principle - all sons are called to simultaneous inheritance, who divide the inherited property into equal shares. With the exception of the parental yard, which is indivisibly included in the next share of the paternal property to the youngest son^[32]. This exception was due to the fact that older children naturally grew up, got married and acquired their own houses. While the youngest child remained with the parents. And since the older brothers already had their own houses, the younger one had to be equalized in property status. At the same time, the youngest son performed the necessary memorial rites, supported his mother and unmarried sisters and often had to help his older brothers. Under the dominance of the tribal system, no mutual grievances between family members were expected. But as family ties weakened, disputes over the division of inheritance spread. The destruction of family unity was negatively perceived by public opinion, which defended the principle of equality and justice. Generating in society the idea of selfish older brothers seeking to seize the majority of the family property, even if all brothers received equal shares during the division, and a deprived younger brother who remained faithful to moral standards, family traditions, caring for parents and relatives^[33]. Tales about brothers depict the disintegration of a large family (clan) as the disintegration of a small family. In tales, this process

appears as an unfair division of inheritance between brothers. The motif of tales about a younger brother, as a rule, includes rivalry and struggle between brothers, depicting the unfair treatment of the elders to the younger, up to attempts to get rid of the hero, and rewarding the innocently offended, disadvantaged younger brother with the magical powers of the tale. At first, the younger brother's poverty served as the foundation for his idealization. The inheritance stories, which accurately depict the breakdown of a large family, make this very evident.

6. Conclusions

The analysis of the motif of the inheritance of the younger son in the folk tales of the Turkic peoples reveals its deep structural, symbolic, and cultural significance. The younger son's position as the primary inheritor, despite initial adversity, reflects the traditional values of perseverance, moral strength, and the importance of social ties. His journey, often marked by trials and hardships, symbolizes personal growth and the reaffirmation of communal ideals. From a structural perspective, the recurrence of this motif across different Turkic folk traditions suggests its integral role in the narrative framework of oral storytelling. The younger son's success is typically achieved through his wit, resilience, and adherence to ethical principles, reinforcing societal norms that reward effort and virtue over mere birthright. This aspect aligns with broader Turkic cultural values, where merit and personal qualities hold significance in determining one's fate. Symbolically, the younger son's inheritance serves as an allegory for renewal, transformation, and the redistribution of social roles within the family and the wider community. It also reflects historical socio-economic conditions, where younger sons often sought their fortunes through bravery, resourcefulness, and strategic alliances. The study contributes to the understanding of Turkic folklore by highlighting the dynamic interplay between individual agency and collective cultural expectations. These findings have practical applications in the classification of Turkic folktales, as well as in further research on the narrative poetics, structural patterns, and symbolic elements within Turkic oral traditions. Future research could expand on this motif by examining its variations across different Turkic-speaking regions and its connections with broader

Eurasian folklore traditions.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, G.M. and M.E.; methodology, E.S.; software, G.K.; validation, N.S., Y.A.; formal analysis, G.A.; investigation, G.M.; resources, M.E.; data curation, E.S.; writing—original draft preparation, G.K.; writing—review and editing, N.S.; visualization, Y.A.; supervision, G.A.; project administration, G.M.; funding acquisition, E.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This work received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Bascom, W.R., 1954. Four functions of folklore. *The Journal of American Folklore*. 67(266), 333–349. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/536411>
- [2] Dewan, P., 2016. Perennially popular: The appeal of classic fairy tales for children. *Children and Libraries*. 14(2), 27–31. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5860/cal.14n2.27>
- [3] Stern, S., 1977. Ethnic folklore and the folklore of ethnicity. *Western Folklore*. 36(1), 7–32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1498212>
- [4] Diaz-Faes, A.M., Murteira, C.S.R., Ruskov, M., 2023. Explicit references to social values in fairy tales: A

- comparison between three European cultures. In Proceedings of the The Joint 3rd International Conference on Natural Language Processing for Digital Humanities & 8th International Workshop on Computational Linguistics for Uralic Languages, Tokyo, Japan, 1–3 December 2023. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2402.05034>
- [5] Kölbaeva, M., Saticioğlu, H., 2024. Tradition of Minstrelsy in Turkic Peoples. *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*. (62), 285–298. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21563/sutad.1538412>
- [6] Sadigli, P., 2024. The Cult of Tree in the Culture of the Turkic Peoples. *Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi*. 11 (2), 1280–1288. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46868/atdd.2024.744>
- [7] Avtandil, A., 2021. Tree cult in the mythology of the Turkic and Slavic peoples. *East European Scientific Journal*. 2(6 (70)), 34–36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31618/ESSA.2782-1994.2021.1.70.75>
- [8] Sousa, L., Silva, A.R., Santos, L., et al., 2010. The family inheritance process: motivations and patterns of interaction. *European Journal of Ageing*. 7, 5–15. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-010-0139-3>
- [9] Brewer, D., 2002. *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales. A Companion to the Fairy Tale*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. pp. 15–38. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781846150470.002>
- [10] Macknight, E.C., 2018. Divisions of inheritance. In *Nobility and patrimony in modern France*. Manchester University Press: Manchester, UK. pp. 51–76. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526120526.00009>
- [11] Youmans, N.W., 2015. *Virtus, Vita, Votum: early minorite conceptions of obedience from francis to bonaventure*. Saxon State and University Library Dresden: Dresden, Germany.
- [12] Marian, C.G., 2019. Literature on inheritance: A summary of what can be learnt. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History of Ideas*. 8(15), 1–14.
- [13] Çün, B., 2024. “Three-Quarters of an Hour to Consume Everything”: Dorian Gray and Commodified Aesthetics. *Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi*. 22, 148–166. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46250/kulturder.1496580>
- [14] Golden, P.B., 1992. *An introduction to the history of the Turkic peoples*. Harrassowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, Germany. pp. 127–36.
- [15] Knapp, K.N., 2004. Reverent caring: The parent-son relationship in early medieval tales of filial offspring. In *Filial piety in Chinese thought and history*. Routledge: London, UK. pp. 44–70.
- [16] Pecková, K., 2024. Roles of Siblings in Folktales. *American & British Studies Annual*. 17, 132–149. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46585/absa.2024.17.2582>
- [17] Cai, M., 1993. Folks, friends and foes: Relationships between humans and animals in some Eastern and Western folktales. *Children’s Literature in Education*. 24(2), 73–83. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01131333>
- [18] Bottigheimer, R.B., 1989. Fairy Tales, Folk Narrative Research and History. *Social History*. 14(3), 343–357. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4285792>
- [19] Jones, S.S., 1995. *The Fairy Tale*, 1st ed. Routledge: London, UK. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203820889>
- [20] Abrahams, R.D., 1968. Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore. *The Journal of American Folklore*. 81(320), 143–158. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/537664>
- [21] Sithole, A.M., 2019. *A Comparative Study of Implicit Characterisation Between Short Stories and Folktales*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa): Johannesburg, South Africa.
- [22] Propp, V.J., 1958. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Indiana University: Bloomington, IN, USA. Available from: https://monoskop.org/images/f/f3/Propp_Vladimir_Morphology_of_the_Folktale_2nd_ed.pdf (cited 10 November 2024).
- [23] Oson, A., 2024. Role of Symbolism in Reader Understanding and Interpretation in Nigeria. *American Journal of Literature Studies*. 3(1), 1–11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47672/ajls.2022>
- [24] Nikolajeva, M., 2003. Fairy tale and fantasy: From archaic to postmodern. *Marvels & Tales*. 17(1), 138–156. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41389904>
- [25] Murphy, T.P., Murphy, T.P., 2015. *From Veselovskian Motif to Proppian Function. The Fairytale and Plot Structure*. Springer Publishing: New York, NY, USA. pp. 29–33. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137547088_4
- [26] Dybiec-Gajer, J., 2023. Boys’ Friendship or Something More? Re-Examining Janusz Korczak’s King Matt the First and Its English Translations. studies in comparative literature. *Navigating Children’s Literature through Controversy*. Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands. p. 115. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004683297_010
- [27] Kraskowska, E., Zatora, A., 2022. The Culture-Forming Potential of Family Narratives. *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich The Problems of Literary Genres*. 65(2), 7–25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26485/ZRL/2022/65.2/1>
- [28] Shaygozova, Z., 2024. Mythological images in embroidery of turkic peoples (to the statement of the research problem). *Central Asian Journal of Art Studies*. 9(2), 74–94 . DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47940/cajas.v9i2.889>
- [29] Tran, Q.N.B., 2010. The Social Contract and Symbolic Structure in Three Vietnamese Tales of the “Last Born”. *Asian ethnology*. 69(2), 293–310.
- [30] O’Connor, P., 1989. Images and motifs in children’s fairy tales. *Educational Studies*. 15(2), 129–144. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305569890150204>
- [31] Nodelman, P., 1990. *The Hidden Meaning and the Inner Tale: Deconstruction and the Interpretation of*

- Fairy Tales. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*. 15(3), 143–148. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/chq.0.0858>
- [32] Kovačević, T.R., 2024. The influence of fairytales on the development of preschool children. *Baština*. 34(62). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/713696665>
- [33] Danilewitz, D., 1991. Once upon a time..... The meaning and importance of fairy tales. *Early Child Development and Care*. 75(1), 87–98. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0300443910750104>