

Omarbekova, Gulnara and Erik Aasland. *Contemporary Kazakh Proverb Research: Digital, Cognitive, Literary, and Ecological Approaches*. New York: Peter Lang, 2023. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xviii+236 pp. \$35.95 (softcover). \$35.95 (eBook). ISBN 978-1-4331-9588-4 (softcover). ISBN 978-1-4331-9590-7 (eBook).

This interesting, edited volume provides a valuable and timely addition to the field of paremiology. It demonstrates how Kazakh proverbs continue to evolve and maintain their cultural significance in the context of modern digital and ecological realities. The volume brings together interdisciplinary perspectives bridging Kazakh scholarship with broader international debates in folklore, discourse studies, and cognitive linguistics.

The book is divided into two main parts. The first part presents the current state of proverb studies in Kazakhstan, highlighting key challenges and opportunities. These chapters analyze the impact of globalization and technological advancements on the transmission dynamics and functional roles of proverbs within Kazakh culture. A significant element is an in-depth description of the Kazakh Proverb Corpus and its functional capacities, as this demonstrates how modern digital corpora can preserve the cultural heritage of a given people.

The second part of the volume focuses on the creative and transformative use of proverbs in literary, humorous, and media discourses. Several chapters examine the phenomenon of anti-proverbs and other modified proverbial expressions that challenge, subvert, or playfully reinterpret traditional meanings. Through analysis of proverb usage in contemporary fiction, digital media, and comparative contexts, contributors demonstrate how these expressions remain culturally vibrant, reflecting shifting social values and the dynamics of modern communication. This section underscores the adaptability of proverbs and their continued relevance as tools of commentary, critique, and cultural reflection.

The book successfully combines historical approaches with modern sociolinguistic methods, placing proverbs within the broader context of discourse, cultural knowledge, and linguistic identity. All these studies demonstrate the importance of the linguistic worldview of the Kazakh people, in which proverbs act as living guardians of their history, culture, and linguistic and social development.

A distinctive strength of the collection is its attention to empirical research. Fieldwork among students and senior scholars reveals not only how knowledge of traditional proverbs is maintained but also how new forms—such as anti-proverbs—are emerging to comment on contemporary realities. The volume introduces the term “anti-proverb” in the context of Kazakh folklore, applying it for the first time to modified Kazakh sayings. As noted by Aisulu Yessimkhanova in her chapter “The Language Ecology of Contemporary Kazakh Proverbs,” anti-proverbs in the Kazakh context are newly adapted versions of well-known traditional proverbs, modified in form or meaning to reflect modern realities, including humor, irony, and social commentary. By introducing this concept into Kazakh paremiological studies, Yessimkhanova highlights how proverb usage

evolves in response to shifting cultural and communicative norms, positioning anti-proverbs as dynamic expressions within contemporary discourse. This marks a significant shift in local paremiological analysis, aligning Kazakh studies with broader international trends in the transformation of proverbs. These anti-proverbs illustrate how linguistic creativity interacts with changing cultural and technological contexts, demonstrating that proverbs are both resilient and flexible.

Chapters addressing gendered representations and the role of proverbs in Soviet and post-Soviet literature add an important historical and critical dimension. By tracing how writers such as M. Auezov integrated proverbs into their works, the book shows how proverbial language has served as a tool for both cultural continuity and subtle social critique.

Another valuable dimension of the volume is its engagement with ecological discourse, both linguistically and culturally. Chapter 8, "The Language Ecology of Contemporary Kazakh Proverbs," authored by Aisulu Yessimkhanova, describes proverbs as "living, mobile organisms" that absorb and reflect the realities of modern life, thereby contributing to the linguistic ecology of contemporary Kazakh (184). This perspective highlights how proverbs evolve in form and function through abbreviation, re-composition, or lexical substitution, adapting to new communicative contexts. At the same time, Yessimkhanova identifies indicators of an ecological crisis within the lingua-cultural system. Younger speakers reportedly use fewer proverbs, struggle to interpret their meanings, and exhibit a narrowing of proverbial knowledge, all of which suggest a weakening of intergenerational transmission (188-189). In this context, the study of proverbs is positioned not merely as a linguistic endeavor, but as a vital cultural practice aimed at preserving intangible national heritage. The ecological approach is further expanded through discussions of linguistic hybridity and the influence of modern technology, which simultaneously challenge and revitalize traditional forms. As such, the volume effectively argues for the role of proverbs as indicators of cultural sustainability, resilience, and evolving national identity.

A notable aspect of this volume is its focus on the pedagogical potential of proverbs in contemporary education. Several chapters discuss how the revitalization of Kazakh proverbs through digital corpora can support bilingual education and heritage language learning, particularly among younger generations who may otherwise be disconnected from this rich oral tradition. By illustrating concrete ways in which proverbial knowledge can be integrated into curricula and teaching materials, the volume offers valuable insights for educators working not only in Kazakhstan but also in other contexts where local folklore faces challenges from globalized media and shifting cultural values. Additionally, the focus on anti-proverbs provides students with new perspectives to explore when studying language play, irony, and cultural commentary. This demonstrates that proverbs are not only teaching tools but also flexible language tools that can adapt to new social situations.

The collection is comprehensive, but some chapters are primarily descriptive and could have benefited from a more in-depth engagement with comparative

international scholarship. The book remains valuable as a bridge between Kazakh paremiology and broader global discussions about language and folklore.

Contemporary Kazakh Proverb Research is indispensable reading for scholars of folklore, linguistic anthropology, discourse analysis, and Central Asian studies. It will also prove valuable for educators exploring the role of traditional knowledge in bilingual and digital pedagogical settings, as well as for readers who want to understand all aspects of this culture. In this sense, the book does not merely document a fading cultural form; it actively contributes to sustaining and reimagining its place in modern discourse and education.

This methodologically organized volume shows us that Kazakh proverbs, far from being empty vessels in which to pour ancient wisdom, are dynamic cultural entities that both mold and mirror social reality. In highlighting tradition and change, flagging the traditional ground and the new turns in proverbial speech, the editors and authors of this volume help us remember that proverbial speech remains an essential tool for understanding how communities navigate transforming landscapes. This book deserves a place in any serious study of the relationship between folklore, language, and cultural resilience in the twenty-first century.

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