

**UDC 811.512.122'373.49**

**TOTEMISM AND SUGGESTION IN THE WORDS OF OBITUARIES AND  
CONDOLENCES**

**D. A. Alkebaeva**

**Almaty, Kazakhstan**

**Zh. D. Esimova**

**Almaty, Kazakhstan**

**B. N. Akshalova**

**Almaty, Kazakhstan**

(Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan)

Death is one of the hardest realities in life that everyone has to accept sooner or later. As a human being we have to express our sympathy with a person who has experienced pain, grief or misfortune, so that he might get out of this sorrow very soon and take responsibilities of the family. Kazakh people knew the concrete power of magic words from the ancient time. Knowing the power of the words, they used it widely in practices like obituaries, condolences.

**Key words:** taboo, obituary, totem, folklore

**УДК 811.512.122'373.49**

**A449**

**Д. А. Алкебаева**

**Алматы, Қазақстан**

**Ж. Д. Есимова**

**Алматы, Қазақстан**

**Б. Н. Акшалова**

**Алматы, Қазақстан**

## **ТОТЕМИЗМ И ВНУШЕНИЕ В СЛОВАХ СОБОЛЕЗНОВАНИЙ И НЕКРОЛОГАХ**

Смерть – одна из самых трудных реальностей жизни, которую рано или поздно должен принять каждый человек. Нам приходится выражать сочувствие тем, кто пережил горе, так, чтобы этот человек смог поскорее выйти из своего угнетенного состояния и вернуться к жизни. С древних времен казахи знали конкретную силу магических слов. Зная силу слова, они широко использовали ее на практике, например, в соболезнованиях и некрологах.

**Ключевые слова:** табу, некролог, тотем, фольклор.

### **1. Introduction**

Taboo is a system of prohibition which is based on a faith of evading some certain signs and omens. Prohibitions and taboos can be described as follows: they are a wide spread rule among all nations, represent a branch of traditional customs, and are stemmed from different faiths and believes. It is a series of conceptions, views and understandings of the relations between the surrounding world and the human beings.

Taboo is an educative requirement based on national traditions and customs. We can find sample prohibitions dating from very ancient time. Avoiding the badness, respecting the world, adoring the sources of life and utensils advocate the humanistic knowledge and fight against wrong behaviors.

According to the religious-philosophical understanding of the world, saying out the prohibited words can raise the dangers meant by these words [Zelenin, 1929,p.7].

In the phenomenon of ephemia, by different mythological believes, avoiding telling the names of people, animals has a quite particular position. One of these kinds of phenomena – to avoid telling a dead person's name right away – is also found in obituaries and condolences. *For example, in old time, there was an Akyn*

*(poet) named Buralky, whose son died when he was ruling the country. Before long a respected old man, Rahmet's son Musalim died, too. Akyn Buralky in his obituary notice to Rahmet said, "Rahmet, how are you? You are in a valley where I once have also been."*

### **1.1 Magic powers and prohibitions**

Believes in magic powers and prohibitions still exist in the cultures of different nations.

Totemism is a belief that there exists a certain kinship between the members of human beings, and certain animals, plants or lifeless things. The belief of the prehistoric tribes that there was a certain kinship between them and some natural beings or phenomena can be considered as totemistic believes. By totemistic believes animals, plants, materials and some other natural objects are considered as the blessing owners or ancestors of the clans, tribes, or an individual person. There are some words in Kazakh language which are related to totemistic believes: crown, wolf, deer, doe, duck, swan, Oisylkara (cattle), Kambar (horse), Zenggi (camel), Shekshek (goat), Shopan (sheep), dragon, snake and so on. An interesting fact about a group of this kind of totemistic words — names of animals and birds – is that they are used in obituaries and condolences.

### **1.2 Widely spread obituaries and condolences**

For example, some obituary notices widely spread among Kazakh people use the names of animals and birds mentioned above. Zhandosuly Keldibek used the names of birds like swan, bustard when he was telling Shynggys the obituary notice of Shokan Ualikhan:

No clan has immortal saint

No family has ever living maid

No man's wife lives for ever

Elder brothers die in every district

Younger brothers end up in all regions

All men's fathers are dying

All mothers are going to the other world

Swan left to its lake far away  
Bustard flew desert the other day  
The God had given you a brilliant  
The owner took it away  
Your dear son Shokan  
To our eternal home went away

Zhandos uly Keldibek informed Shynggys about the death of Shokan in this way  
[Матыжанов, 2005, p.25].

The classic examples of precious tradition of obituaries and condolences, which have a particular importance in rich hoard of Domestic folklore, were spread orally among people, so the contents of the thoughts had great effect on people's mind and were remembered spontaneously. The obituaries and condolences about death have a particular linguistic effect on the hearers. The emphatically transferred subtle, vivid and exemplary thoughts do not only live in our mind but also are developed with their newly notified meanings, this, in its own way, proves our belief and faith to these valuable thoughts. It is clear that telling the sorrowful obituaries and condolences requires great speech skills. The ultimate goal of speech skills is to convince the people, as said the great scholar F. Chesterfield, the speech skill effects the belief and faith in a particular way.

The speech skill's characteristics of convincing or even making other people concentrate heart and soul is studied in suggestive linguistics. "Suggestism" derives from a Latin word, meaning "convince". There are two definitions for suggestism in linguistics: 1) effecting the readers' thoughts, emotions and feelings by vivid combinations of rhythmic sounds in individual theme of poetry, 2) convincing [Смағұлова, 2007, p.85].

Convincing is a psychological phenomenon. Although the great scholar Shokan Ualikhan didn't give a term for 'suggestion', he described the following example what the people's believes and faiths were like: a man believing in magic power got a belt on his neck and went around the house where his ill son was lying and said, 'let the devil come for you get me'. The belt indicated the middle world. People believed

that there were people living in heaven, and they tied the belt up to their head; we lived in middle of the world and there were people living under the world who tied their belt to their feet. Thus the number three got a sacred and magic meaning.

The term “suggestion” has been studied only recently. In light of this, we can only mention several works devoted to it.

All nations in the world perceive the world on the basis of their national world views, and different believes. The concept of suggestion has a particular connection with culture. It came into use for a certain goal and was used to realize some certain activities. Then suggestion could be found in skills of Abyz (prehistoric religious leader, learned person), folk doctors, and witches. Suggestion was used alongside with such activities as lighting up candles, going round the bonfire, witching, telling prayers, worshiping etc. which belong to witchcraft, treatment.

In suggestive linguistics, effecting and influencing are of great importance. Scholar N. Ualiev, in clarifying the mutual effect of the words which is common to all texts, distinguished two types of suggestion: persuading and convincing [Уәлиев, 2007, p.246]. Sorrowful obituaries and condolences noting that death is natural and unpredictable require great creativity and speech skill. Obituaries are short but comprise the following three phases and led people to persuasion and belief.

For example let’s consider the following text of obituaries, and while dividing it into several phases we can find the great effect of suggestion.

The first phase – stating period

Keeping the old tradition, in telling the obituaries of Bogenbai batyr to Ablai Khan, Umbetai zhyrau (consultant and learned person beside Khan) in the first place informed about the hard days of the Khan and then about the good days, triumphal wars and praised the heroic deeds of the batyrs in the wars.

The second phase – convincing period

After this, he reminded that all people were mortal. At last the zhyrau said that he was an obituary teller and was going to inform that one of the great batyrs of the Khan had passed away. He informed about the sorrowful news in the following words:

Hey Ablai, Ablai  
Listen to me again, please  
Older than you several years  
As great as those mountains  
Confident of you in early days  
Close friend of you nowadays  
In his early eighties  
The death came with pains  
And took the batyr Bogenbai

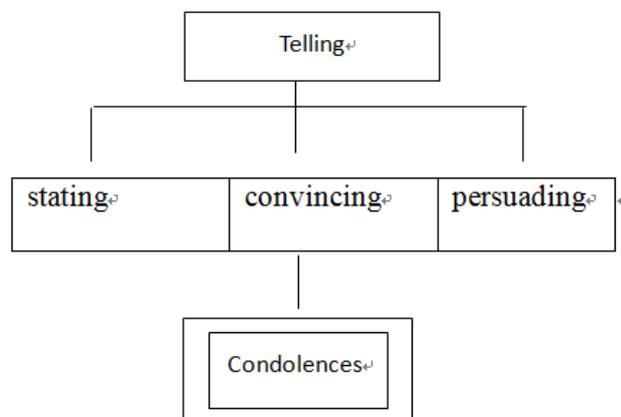
The third phase – persuading

Now the teller of the sorrowful news began to condole the listener and to persuade him to be firm.

Listen to me, stop crying  
Pain never takes great man  
Coward cries the day long

The obituary ends up with a fine wish that people can have a fortunate, peaceful life.

So, short obituaries and condolences comprise following steps and by stating gradually lead the listeners to belief and convince.



Suggestion has a great effect on people's thoughts, emotions, feelings, characters and behaviors. Convincing, persuading by words, or in other words suggestion is

used in a variety of household occasions, such as in condolences, in presenting Bata ( a bless and wish from elder generations), fortune-telling, treating illness, swaying the cradle, and so on.

There are some words and phrases in obituaries and condolences which affect the psyche of the listeners to some extent. For instance, in this traditional condolence,

The hooves of the steed

Worn out on the rock

Grow again on the bog

Let two other men be sound

Let the unavailable go

Do not cry for that never come back around.

Or, “it is unwise to die after that has died, the others should go on living well. Be firm as a rock” - people try to condole the listeners.

The words here: “Let the unavailable go”, “it is unwise to die after that has died” affect the psyche of the listeners.

The contents of these words also affect the behavior of the listeners in any way. Because, firstly, the obituary tellers are usually trusted and respected people, so people will listen to them heart and soul; secondly, the tellers’ words are sacred and the tellers themselves are also special persons; then, the told words have supernatural power, because they remind the listeners that everything will be alright, this world is changing all the time, and convince people, let people become self-confident; at last, Kazakh people treasured the speech skill very much.

Believes in the magic power of the words (driving the devil of illness, incantation, ill looking, bringing bad fortune, opening the way to good luck, etc. ) can be found among major portion of the world nations. Kazakh people knew the concrete power of magic words from the ancient time. Knowing the power of the words, they used it widely in practices like obituaries, condolences.

In religious worships and in communications, some sacred words and sacred texts (chapters from Koran) were believed to have magic power. For instance, after long time of mourning, the chapters from Koran were read as condolences.

**References:**

1. Zelenin D.K. Tabu slov u narodov Vostochnoj Evropy i Severnoj Azii // Muzeja antropologii i jetnografii. T.8. L., 1929.-151 str.
2. Матыжанов К. Сөзбен сомдалған құлпытас: жоқтау // Ақиқат журналы, 2005. –№2
3. Смағұлова Г. Көркем мәтін лингвистикасы. – Алматы: Триумф «Т», 2007. – 152бет.
4. Уәлиев Н. Қазақ сөз мәдениетінің теориялық негіздері. Фил. ғ.д ғылыми дәрежесін алу үшін дайындаған диссертация. – Алматы, 2007 .– 336 бет.