



A Axiological And Lexical Analysis Of The “Family” Concept In Turkish Culture

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Abstract: This article analyzes the central role of the family (aile) concept in Turkish culture, its formation, inherent cultural values, and its expression within the lexical sphere of the Turkish language. The study highlights the family's recognition as the most important cultural value in Turkish society, detailing the relationships between family members, particularly respect for elders and the role of children. Furthermore, the semantics of Turkish words such as “evlilik” (marriage) and “ev” (home), as well as the customs and lexical representations associated with the process of establishing a family (“kız isteme”, “söz kesimi”, “düğün”), are investigated. The analysis, based on Turkish proverbs and written sources, illuminates the family's historical role in the structure of the state, ancient Turkic society, and contemporary family dynamics.

Keywords: Turkish culture, family concept, evlilik, cultural values, lexical analysis, Turkish proverbs, customs.

Introduction: Values constitute the positive qualities, characteristics, and principles adopted by a people to guide their best way of life. Cultural values, in turn, are the complex set of beliefs, customs, languages, and relationships of a society, embodying and manifesting its cultural heritage. Although sharing universal human and social aspects, cultural values exhibit unique characteristics across different societies, primarily due to variations in the importance placed on material and non-material wealth.

In Turkish culture, the family (aile) is considered the most critical cultural value (Evason, 2019). This value mandates showing respect to elders, caring for parents, and maintaining strong, regular contact with all family members (silayi rahm), as well as readily providing

financial and spiritual support to close relatives. Historically, the structure of the Turkish family was not strictly patriarchal, unlike in ancient Greek or Slavic societies; the mother also holds a position of high respect and honor (Gömeç, 2015).

The aim of this article is to analytically investigate the axiological essence of the family concept, its expression at the lexical level, and the main traditions constituting the family institution within Turkish culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on the institution of family and cultural values are central topics within Turkish sociology and anthropology. The theoretical foundation of this article is comprised of fundamental works that have investigated the historical, lexical, and ritualistic aspects of the Turkish family.

1. Values and Cultural Context: Evason (2019) emphasizes that the family is the most important value in Turkish culture, manifested through practices such as respect for elders and maintaining strong bonds with relatives (*silayi rahm*). In his work, Gömeç (2015) provides an overview of the Turkish family, noting the high status of maternal authority (even though some sources refer to it as matriarchal) and discusses the possibility of linking this status to the female wolf figure in ancient legends.

2. The Lexical Basis of the Family Concept: The Turkish Language Institution's dictionary (TDK, 2011) indicates the polysemy of the word "ev" (house/home), which signifies residence, dwelling, and figuratively, family. This reflects the deep connection between the concept of family and physical space (the home). The verb "evlenmek" (to marry) expresses the idea that establishing a family is synonymous with building a new, independent spatial unit. Furthermore, ancient Turkic sources (Orkhon inscriptions) show the earliest lexical expression of the family in the context of nomadic life through the word "eb" (dwelling, tent).

3. Family Rituals and Traditions: Researchers such as Mandaloğlu (2022) and Ataman (1992) have studied the main stages of Turkish family formation: *kız isteme* (seeking the girl's hand), *söz kesme* (agreement), and *düğün* (wedding). These sources describe how the girl's house is referred to as a house of *demur* (*Kız evi, naz evi*) and how the engagement process involves respected community members. The mention of intermediaries (*sawçı, yorıgçı, arkuçı*) in Kaşgarlı Mahmud's *Divānu Luğātī't-Turk* (1992) attests to the ancient roots of these ceremonies.

4. Lineage and Proverbs: The issue of lineage (*nasl-nasab*) has been of crucial importance in marriage.

Altinboyev (2021), analyzing Turkish folk proverbs, argues that expressions like *Al görmüşün kızını...* (Take the daughter of the one who has seen [life]) or *Domuzdan toklu doğmaz* (A lamb is not born from a pig) reinforce the focus on the purity of lineage and the family's social standing when choosing a spouse. These proverbs confirm the principle of "Like calls to like" (*Davul dengine çalar*).

5. Social Structure and Dynamics: Gömeç (2015) lists the terms (*oğuş, urug, bod, bodun, il*) used in the Göktürk inscriptions to denote social life, indicating that the family (*oğuş*) was the foundation of the state structure. Kağıtçıbaşı (1991) proposed analyzing the Turkish family using a framework of horizontal (husband-wife) and vertical (inter-generational) relations. This approach illuminates the changing roles in vertical relationships, such as the expectation for children (especially sons) to provide financial and moral support to their elderly parents.

The existing literature shows that the Turkish family values have deep historical roots in ancient Turkic society, are lexically intertwined with the concept of home/space, and are strengthened through rituals. However, as Kağıtçıbaşı (1991) suggests, further analysis of the structural changes in the family (from extended to nuclear family types) resulting from urbanization and industrialization remains a timely topic.

METHODS

The following methodological approaches were employed in this research:

Comparative-Historical Analysis: To study the evolution of the family concept from ancient Turkic sources (Orkhon inscriptions, *Divānu Luğātī't-Turk*) to modern Turkish culture.

Lexical-Semantic Analysis: To analyze the etymology, semantic layers (literal, figurative), and function in phraseology of key Turkish words related to the family concept, such as *evlilik, ev, and bark*.

Cultural-Anthropological Approach: To evaluate the customs, rituals, and proverbs associated with the process of establishing a family (*kız isteme, söz kesimi, düğün*) from the perspective of cultural values.

Source Analysis: To synthesize and scientifically ground data drawn from Turkish language dictionaries (TDK), scholarly monographs (Gömeç, 2015; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1991), articles (Mandaloğlu, 2022), and folk proverbs (sources Metin Yurtbaşı, Ömer Asım Aksoy).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Lexical Expression of the Family Concept

The family concept in the Turkish language is intrinsically linked to the word "ev" (house/home).

Ev (House/Home): In Old Turkic, it meant eb ("dwelling, tent"). Today, it carries four main meanings: 1) a structure built for a single family; 2) residence, household; 3) figuratively the concept of family (e.g., Evine bağlı bir adam - A man devoted to his family); 4) archaic meaning lineage or ancestry.

Evlilik (Marriage): A derived word from "ev" (ev+li+lik), signifying the process of establishing a family. The verb "evlenmek" (to marry) denotes leaving the parental home to establish a new, independent family unit.

Ev bark: A compound word meaning both house and property, as well as family and children. The fact that

the word bark independently meant "temple" or "worship house" in the Orkhon inscriptions suggests that the family home was historically perceived as a sacred space.

Oğuş: The smallest unit of the social structure in ancient Turkic society (family). This term confirms that the family was the fundamental nucleus of the state's structure (il).

2. Axiological Stages of Family Formation

Establishing a family (evlilik) in Turkish culture is marked by a series of traditional rituals, underscoring their social importance:

Stage	Turkish Term	Meaning and Axiological Significance
1.	Kız isteme (Seeking the Girl's Hand)	Asking for the girl's hand in marriage from her parents or close relatives. Both the girl's and her parents' consent were required. The proverb Kız evi, naz evi (The girl's house is a house of demur) reflects the formality of this stage. Intermediaries (savcı, yorıgçı, arkuçı) helped establish kinship ties (Kaşgarlı Mahmud).
2.	Söz kesimi/Nişan (Agreement / Engagement)	The formal agreement between the families, similar to "breaking bread" in Uzbek culture. This küçük düğün (small wedding) formalizes the status of the couple as nişanlı/adaklı (engaged).
3.	Nikah / Düğün (Wedding)	The officialization of the union. Wedding celebrations traditionally lasted up to three days. Customs like tying a red sash around the bride's waist and her entering the groom's house backwards symbolize the wish for her to stay in the family forever. Proverbs like Nikahta keramet var (There is grace/blessing in marriage) encourage marriage.

3. Marriage and Lineage (Nasl-Nasab)

In Turkish culture, special attention is paid to lineage when choosing a spouse, based on the principle of "Like calls to like" (Davul dengine çalar). Proverbs convey this idea: a "good" lineage is referenced through the father, while a "corrupted" lineage is referenced through the mother (Atı atasıyla, katırı anasıyla).

Furthermore, the groom's ability to financially provide for the family was historically proven through the

payment of kalın (bride-price), a custom known since the Hun and Göktürk periods (Eröz & Güler, 1998). The bride's dowry, or çeyiz, is also a significant tradition, reflected in proverbs such as Kız beşikte çeyiz sandıkta (The girl in the cradle, the dowry in the chest).

4. Interpersonal Relations within the Family

Family relations in Turkish culture are often studied along horizontal (husband-wife) and vertical (inter-generational) axes (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1991).

Vertical Relations (Inter-Generational): The son is

considered the support of the parents in their old age. He is expected to provide financial support to his father, and particularly his mother. This expectation stems from the traditional family structure where the woman was often financially dependent on her husband.

Celibacy: While celibacy is occasionally praised in proverbs (Bekarlık sultanlıktır - Bachelorhood is sultanhood), the majority of proverbs encourage marriage (Varsa eşin rahattır başın - If you have a spouse, your mind is at ease), as celibacy was not fully valued socially.

CONCLUSION

The family concept in Turkish culture is not just a social unit but the very foundation of national and state identity. It formed the basis of social structures, from the smallest oğuş to the largest il (state).

Key Conclusions:

Central Value: Family is the core value in Turkish culture, reinforced by principles of respect for elders and mutual assistance.

Lexical Connection: The family concept is lexically tied to the unit "ev" (home), with "evlilik" (house-withness) expressing the inseparable link between family and residence.

Importance of Rituals: The ceremonies of family formation (kız isteme, söz kesimi, düğün) are of official and sacred importance, embodying values of lineage, compatibility, and the couple's new role in society.

Historical Dynamics: While women held equal rights in ancient Turkic society, male authority grew following the adoption of Islam. Nevertheless, a shift toward smaller nuclear families is observed in contemporary Turkey.

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