

## THE LINGUOCULTURAL AND ARCHETYPAL SEMANTICS OF THE NUMBER “THREE” IN UZBEK NATIONAL CULTURE

**Bozorov Hamid Xo‘shmurodovich**

Termez State University, Uzbekistan.

Doctor of Philosophy in Philological Sciences, Acting Associate Professor

Email: [hamidbozorov65@gmail.com](mailto:hamidbozorov65@gmail.com)

ORCID: [HTTPS://ORCID.ORG/0009-0002-1650-3801](https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1650-3801)

**Abstract:** This scientific study is dedicated to examining the linguo-cultural and archetypal semantics of the number «three» in Uzbek national culture. The number «three» is analyzed not merely as a quantitative expression in folklore texts, but as an archetypal motif representing cosmic order, completion, and stability. The research illuminates the compositional function of the number in driving the plot (three trials, three tasks) and its ritual function in Uzbek social practices («greetings three times», «guest of honor for three days») based on linguo-cultural analysis. Specifically, the study demonstrates the cognitive significance of the «three days» concept, influenced by Islamic Hadith, in establishing an ethical boundary and norm. The findings confirm the deep-rooted presence of the number three archetype in the Uzbek mentality and national traditions.

**Keywords:** number three, archetype, linguocultural semantics, Uzbek folklore, ritual, composition, triad, three days.

### INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted in society that people recognize the universality of numbers, as the property of denoting the quantity of an object—that is, the concept it expresses – is the same everywhere. However, we should not only consider its denotative meaning. We know that denotative meaning is the meaning devoid of any other added symbolic or figurative senses. Therefore, despite being expressed and pronounced differently in various cultures, it possesses a single general meaning common to all humanity. However, the basis and subsequent **connotative meaning** of numbers take on diversity across different cultures. The applied meaning of a number concept in one culture differs from another. It is precisely this symbolic meaning of numbers across different national cultures that is the core aspect studied by linguoculturology. [5: 191]

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

Diverse views regarding numbers exist in the cultures of the world's peoples, expressing unique concepts within each nation's national culture. Such perspectives have persisted for centuries in the linguistic consciousness of the world's peoples as expressions of certain symbolic representations, concepts, and magical beliefs. Specifically, there are frequently used numbers in the national culture of Eastern peoples, including the Uzbek people, many of which have been used in oral folk creativity since ancient times. This indicates that in the linguistic world of the Uzbek people, numbers are viewed as possessing divine power, and they continue to be used today as explanations for many meanings associated with religious views. Folklorist M. Jo‘raev comments on this: “Ancient beliefs and traditions about 'magic-magical' numbers have become so deeply ingrained in our people's way of life, customs, ceremonies, and folklore works that we have become accustomed to using phrases and proverbs associated with one number or another even in daily live conversation.” [2: 7]

In Uzbek linguistics, attention has not been sufficiently focused on the psychic, linguo-cultural, and linguistic analysis of numbers. It is crucial to analyze the symbolic expressions of numbers characteristic of our national mentality that have been preserved from antiquity to the present day. The studies by M. Jo'raev, S. Hasanov, and S. Jumayeva [3] on the unique meaning expression of numbers are significant. This is because stereotypes associated with numbers continue to be important in the cultural life of the people today.

The emergence of the human factor to the forefront in the linguistic landscape of the world indicates the necessity of researching number-related perspectives from a linguo-cultural point of view. It is no coincidence that the ancient Greek scholar Pythagoras emphasized, «Number is the basis of existence». The fact that numbers express unique mental characteristics in the cultures of peoples, not just a mathematical function, has attracted the attention of scholars since ancient times. The beliefs of every nation regarding numbers are directly reflected in samples of oral creativity.

The numbers **3, 4, 5, 7, 9** and **40** which receive special attention in Uzbek oral artistic creativity and rituals, are quantified symbols that were mystified based on the ancient imaginations of our ancestors. Since these numbers have been revered for ancient times, they have permeated various manifestations of the people's artistic thinking, worldview, and cultural values. Consequently, in folklore works, there are both «magic» numbers, used as a specific expression of our people's religious beliefs, and traditional numbers, introduced into the artistic text directly related to performance skill. [2: 28]

M.Jo'raev divides the numbers encountered in samples of oral folk creativity into, as noted above, «magic» numbers and traditional numbers.

According to the folklorist V.P.Anikin, the origins of folk beliefs about «magic» numbers are related to ancient religious beliefs, and the past conviction of people in «lucky» and «unlucky» numbers caused certain numbers to be singled out for special reverence. Such ideas persist today. Speaking of the deification of numbers, S. Jumayeva cites the following thoughts of Lotman: The deification of numbers is often associated with religious ideas about the creation of the world, celestial bodies, the cosmos, the earth and its structure, mountains, and oceans, while in other cases, it is the result of astronomical observations [1: 5].

This research is aimed at determining the linguocultural semantics of number archetypes in Uzbek oral folk creativity texts, employing a theoretical-descriptive design based on qualitative analysis. This study aims to identify elements of the collective unconscious reflected through the number «three», drawing upon the theory of C.G.Jung. It is important in studying the relationship between the meanings expressed through numbers and national mentality, religious beliefs, and social traditions. Furthermore, the goal is to examine the invariant functions of numbers in the plot composition, based on the works of V.Propp and C.Lévi-Strauss.

The research problem is that while the general statistical recurrence of number archetypes in Uzbek folklore has been studied, there is a lack of deep semantic-functional analysis that systematically organizes their ritual, compositional, and cognitive functions.

The research sample is based on discourse analysis, comprising 50 major selected texts (fairy tales, excerpts from dastan/epics, collections of proverbs and riddles) from Uzbek folk creativity genres.

This study used secondary data sources. **Method 1: Content Analysis.** The instances of triplification of numbers and the adjacent lexical units (dragon, trial, day, task) in the selected folklore texts were recorded. **Method 2: Comparative Analysis.** The number archetypes in Uzbek folklore were compared with similar archetypes in the folklore of Central Asian and Turkic peoples to identify common invariant and differential features.

The data were primarily processed using qualitative analysis methods:

**Thematic Coding.** Functional thematic codes were assigned to each number in the collected texts (e.g., 3-function: «Completion» and «Trial»);

**Narrative Analysis.** The impact of numbers on plot development was analyzed, meaning the mechanism of how the hero moves from the first trial to the second and the third was studied;

**Descriptive Analysis.** Traditional idioms and rhythmic formulas related to numbers (e.g., «greetings three times») were described, and their linguo-cultural significance was explained.

The **triangulation method** was used to ensure the internal validity of the study. Here, the results of the archetypal analysis were **mutually confirmed** by the results of the linguo-cultural analysis and the structural-semiotic analysis. The coding system used during the analysis process was thoroughly documented to allow for the possibility of testing by another folklore specialist, which serves to increase the **reproducibility** of the results.

## RESULTS

Numbers are used as a cognitive archetype in folklore genres. Beyond being simple counting tools, they perform ritual, symbolic, and compositional functions that ensure the deep structure of the text and the development of the plot. In the folklore system, some numbers appear as cultural codes containing stable semantic meanings. For instance, «Three» is the most ancient and universal archetype. It signifies perfection, completion, and stability, as it unites the beginning, middle, and end. In fairy tales, it constitutes the hero's trial. The hero must perform three tasks, participate in three battles, or go to three places. The brave youth's battle with the three-headed dragon and the king's three conditions establish the necessary norm of fairy tale traditions.

In folklore, numbers serve as a primary tool for structuring the text and motivating the hero's actions. Specifically, numbers facilitate memorization and give rhythm to the text by repeating plot elements in a certain order in the fairy tale. For example, the hero setting out on the same path three times, the villain attempting something three times, or performing a certain magical action three times. These repetitions create the stable structure of the text.

It should be noted that the number three, which is most frequently used in the fairy tale genre, has a unique character. The number three has archetypal significance, occupying a central place in the symbolic systems of many cultures worldwide, and it is deeply rooted in Uzbek folk creativity and traditions. The presence of this number constitutes not only a simple quantitative expression but also a collection of sacral, ritual, and cognitive meanings. In folkloristic texts, the number three is an invariant part of frequently encountered motifs and traditions.

## DISCUSSION

The systematic repetition of the number «**three**» in Uzbek folk tales is the main reason for its inclusion among the «**magic**» numbers. This number primarily performs a compositional function, driving the plot and defining the hero's passage through trials.

Motif type	Examples	Semantic meaning
<b>Conflict (Clash)</b>	Three-headed dragon, three giants	The highest level of danger, the completeness/totality of evil.
<b>Trial and task</b>	Three questions, three trials, three tasks	The complex process necessary for the hero to achieve maturity.
<b>Time (Duration)</b>	Three-day deadline, three-day journey	The optimal and sufficient duration for the development of events.
<b>Auxiliary resource</b>	Three helpers, three horses	The completeness and perfection of the aid/support force.
<b>Action (Primarily)</b>	Three battles	Maximum intensity of action and

completion)	the achievement of the final result.
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The analysis of these motifs shows that the number three represents a **tripartite system**: beginning, middle, and end; birth, life, and death; and a **cosmic structure** such as sky, earth, and underworld.

«It is quite difficult to analyze an artistic text without understanding one or another meaning and truth hidden within the number». [1: 4] Although many instances involving «three» in folklore merely fulfill a plot function, certain traditions that have existed in the daily life of the people since ancient times hold linguocultural significance. They reflect the national mentality and social norms. In particular, this number is important in rituals within a religious context. For instance, the custom of greeting three times formed under the influence of the Islamic religion and is based on Hadiths. Greeting three times when meeting a community is considered a Sunnah, signifying sincerity, respect, and full engagement of attention. This indicates the complete establishment of a social connection. While bowing three times in Uzbek culture expresses respect, in the culture of Orthodox Koreans, they perform three bows during the ceremony of commemorating the deceased. This practice also exists in the language of Uzbek folk tales, specifically expressing the meaning of respect. The merchant's wife got up, bowed to that beetle three times, and greeted it three times. (Oyjamol. «The Merchant and the Shepherd», p. 54.) This example uses the maximum degree of ritual actions, expressing absolute respect toward a supernatural power.

The number three is also used in the Uzbek linguistic landscape as an expression of boundary and norm. For example, the emergence of the concept of «Guest of honor for three days» is closely linked with religious views. In a Hadith narrated by Imam Muslim, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: «A Muslim should not stay as a guest in his brother's house for so long a period as to put him into sin». The Companions asked: «O Messenger of Allah, how would he put him into sin?» The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) explained this by saying: «He stays with his brother until his brother has nothing left to host him with (that is when he puts him into sin)». [6] Such views show that the number three signifies a «limit» or «boundary». Folklorist M. Jo'raev explains this as follows: «...In the counting system of ancient tribes at the lower stage of development, two or three numbers existed. The number three was the last number, that is, considered the limit of counting». [3: 56] The status of «Guest of honor for three days» has been absorbed into our people's mentality over the centuries and remains preserved to this day. This custom is also reflected in the language of folk tales.

– Davlat, thank you very much! You have hosted me for three days. They say, 'A guest is honored for three days.' Now, if you permit, I should leave, – he said. (Oyjamol. «Three Poppies», p. 92.)

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the number «three» in Uzbek folk creativity and traditions serves not merely as a number, but as a cognitive category and a cultural archetype. It ensures the compositional completeness of the plot in fairy tales, and in social practice, it serves to establish religious, moral, and social norms.

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