

EQUALITY, PEOPLE-CENTEREDNESS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE WORKS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY KARAKALPAK THINKERS: A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the ideas of equality, people-centeredness, and social justice in the works of nineteenth-century Karakalpak thinkers, focusing on Kunxoja, O'tesh, Ajiniyaz, Berdaq, and O'mar. The study treats their poetic works not merely as literary texts but as sources of social-philosophical reflection on labour, taxation, public authority, human dignity, and the moral responsibilities of officials. A comparative and contextual approach is used to identify both shared concerns and distinctive models of justice. The analysis shows that Kunxoja interprets injustice primarily through the devaluation of labour and the disproportion between work and remuneration; O'tesh connects unpaid labour with both economic oppression and moral disgrace; Ajiniyaz emphasizes impartial judgment, equality of the rich and poor before public authority, and the ethical duties of rulers and judges; Berdaq exposes unequal taxation and coercive collection practices; and O'mar presents truth-telling in the face of official violence as a civic and moral obligation. The article argues that these thinkers conceptualized justice through concrete social relations rather than through abstract doctrine. Their works reveal a normative vision in which labour must be fairly recognized, public power must be accountable, taxation must not become a mechanism of arbitrary domination, and every person's dignity must be respected. In this sense, nineteenth-century Karakalpak intellectual heritage constitutes an important source for reconstructing regional traditions of social thought and popular conceptions of a just society.

Keywords: Karakalpak Thinkers, Social Justice, Equality, People-Centeredness, Labour Justice, Taxation, Human Dignity, Social Philosophy.

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XIX ғасыр қарақалпақ ойшылдары шығармашылығындағы теңдік, халықшылдық және әлеуметтік әділет: әлеуметтік-философиялық талдау

Аңдатпа. Мақалада XIX ғасырдағы қарақалпақ ойшылдары Күнқожа, Өтеш, Әжинияз, Бердақ және Омар шығармаларындағы теңдік, халықшылдық және әлеуметтік әділет идеялары әлеуметтік-философиялық тұрғыдан талданады. Зерттеуде олардың поэзиялық мұрасы тек көркем мәтін ретінде емес, еңбек, салық, билік, адам қадір-қасиеті және лауазымды тұлғалардың моральдық жауапкершілігі туралы қоғамдық ойдың дереккөзі ретінде қарастырылады. Салыстырмалы және тарихи-контекстік талдау ортақ ұстанымдармен қатар әр ойшылдың әділетті түсіндірудегі ерекшелігін анықтауға мүмкіндік береді. Күнқожа еңбек пен оған төленетін ақы арасындағы теңсіздікті, Өтеш еңбек ақысын бермеудің экономикалық және моральдық салдарын, Әжинияз би, қазы және билеушілердің әділдігі мен бай-кедейдің тең қаралуын, Бердақ салық ауыртпалығының әділетсіз бөлінуін, ал Омар лауазымды зорлыққа қарсы шындықты айтудың азаматтық маңызын алға шығарады. Талдау бұл ойшылдардың әділетті абстрактілі қағидадан гөрі нақты әлеуметтік қатынастар арқылы пайымдағанын көрсетеді. Олардың мұрасында еңбекті лайықты бағалау, биліктің халық алдындағы жауапкершілігі, салықтағы әділдік және әр адамның қадір-қасиетін құрметтеу әділетті қоғамның негізгі өлшемдері ретінде көрінеді.

Түйін сөздер: қарақалпақ ойшылдары, әлеуметтік әділет, теңдік, халықшылдық, еңбек әділеті, салық, адам қадір-қасиеті, әлеуметтік философия.

Равенство, народолюбие и социальная справедливость в творчестве каракалпакских мыслителей XIX века: социально-философский анализ

Аннотация. В статье проводится социально-философский анализ идей равенства, народолюбия и социальной справедливости в творчестве каракалпакских мыслителей XIX века — Кунходжи, Оташа, Ажини-

язы, Бердаха и Омара. Их поэтическое наследие рассматривается не только как художественный материал, но и как источник общественной рефлексии о труде, налогообложении, власти, человеческом достоинстве и нравственной ответственности должностных лиц. Сравнительный и историко-контекстуальный подход позволяет выявить как общность их критики социальной несправедливости, так и различия в понимании ее механизмов. Кунходжа акцентирует несоответствие между трудом и вознаграждением, Отеш связывает невыплату заработанного с экономическим угнетением и нравственным позором, Ажинияз подчеркивает беспристрастность суда и равное отношение к богатым и бедным, Бердах критикует несправедливое распределение налогового бремени и насильственные формы взыскания, а Омар утверждает нравственную и гражданскую обязанность говорить правду перед лицом чиновничьего произвола. Исследование показывает, что справедливость в их произведениях осмысливается через конкретные общественные отношения. Достойная оценка труда, ответственность власти перед народом, справедливость налогообложения и уважение человеческого достоинства образуют нормативное ядро представлений о справедливом обществе.

Ключевые слова: каракалпакские мыслители, социальная справедливость, равенство, народолюбие, справедливость труда, налогообложение, человеческое достоинство, социальная философия.

Introduction

The social thought of nineteenth-century Karakalpak intellectuals developed within a historical environment marked by agrarian dependence, unequal access to resources, differentiated social status, taxation, and the practical authority of local officials. In such a setting, questions of justice were not detached philosophical abstractions. They were encountered in everyday relations between the wealthy and the poor, employers and dependent workers, taxpayers and collectors, judges and petitioners, rulers and subjects. The works of Karakalpak thinkers therefore provide a valuable intellectual record of how social inequality was perceived, morally evaluated, and criticized from within the cultural world of the period.

The central problem addressed in this article is how equality, people-centeredness, and social justice were conceptualized in the works of Kunxoja Ibrayim o'g'li, O'tesh, Ajiniyaz, Berdaq, and O'mar. The article proceeds from the premise that their writings should not be reduced to descriptions of hardship. Their social significance lies in the normative judgments embedded in those descriptions. When a poet condemns the failure to pay a worker, criticizes unequal taxation, demands impartiality from a judge, or exposes the arbitrary conduct of an official, the text simultaneously identifies a social wrong and proposes a standard by which social relations ought to be assessed.

People-centeredness in this intellectual tradition is more demanding than sympathy for ordinary people. It involves defending the interests of working people, articulating their grievances in public language, criticizing the arbitrary conduct of officials, and affirming the population's claim to a more just social order. This orientation is particularly visible in the way the thinkers connect material conditions with

human dignity. Poverty, unpaid labour, excessive taxation, or unequal treatment are not presented solely as economic difficulties. They are interpreted as situations in which the social value of a person is diminished and the moral legitimacy of power is called into question.

The relevance of such an analysis is twofold. First, it helps reconstruct a regional history of social-philosophical thought through primary literary materials and historically grounded interpretations. Second, it clarifies the conceptual diversity within nineteenth-century Karakalpak criticism of injustice. The thinkers considered here share a concern for the people, but they do not simply repeat one another. Kunxoja foregrounds labour and remuneration. O'tesh gives special weight to moral shame and the recognition of the worker's rights. Ajiniyaz examines the ethical obligations of judges and rulers and the demand for equal treatment. Berdaq concentrates on taxation, social privilege, and coercion. O'mar stresses the moral necessity of speaking the truth when official power becomes violent or arbitrary.

This comparative perspective constitutes the article's main analytical contribution. Instead of treating "social justice" as a single undifferentiated theme, the study reconstructs several interconnected dimensions: labour justice, equality before authority, fiscal justice, official accountability, public moral judgment, and human dignity. The result is a more precise account of how a just social order was imagined in nineteenth-century Karakalpak thought.

The article uses the poems and historical-literary sources listed in the bibliography as its evidentiary base. Kunxoja's biography and creative context are approached through Babash Ismailov's study [1]. The analysis of "Cho'ponlar" relies on the published collection of Kunxoja's selected poems [2] and on A. Pirnazarov's discussion of creative methods and

historical context [3]. Ajiniyaz's "Nasiyat" and related works are considered through published editions of his writings [4; 5]. Historical information on taxation is drawn from a history textbook that summarizes the forms of taxation and obligations of the period [6]. The interpretation of Berdaq's social significance also draws on the literary-critical collection devoted to his legacy [7]. Within these limits, the article does not claim to reconstruct every institution of nineteenth-century Karakalpak society. Its purpose is narrower: to identify the normative social ideas that emerge when these texts are read comparatively.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative social-philosophical methodology combining contextual interpretation, comparative analysis, and conceptual reconstruction. The unit of analysis is not an isolated poetic image but the relationship between a textual judgment and the social practice to which that judgment refers. Thus, references to a shepherd's unpaid or underpaid work are read in relation to labour dependence; appeals to a judge are examined as statements about impartiality and equality; descriptions of taxation are interpreted as judgments about the distribution of social burdens; and criticism of officials is treated as an argument about accountability and the ethical limits of power.

The contextual method is used to prevent the retrospective imposition of contemporary political or legal terminology on nineteenth-century texts. Concepts such as "right," "equality," "justice," and "responsibility" are therefore reconstructed from the moral and social relationships represented in the works themselves. Where the source material provides historical clarification, it is used to explain the social meaning of titles, labour relations, and fiscal practices. For example, the discussion of Kunxoja's reference to "otaliq" is interpreted through historical information concerning the status of that office and its connection with the poet's period [1].

Comparative analysis is applied across the works of five thinkers. The comparison is organized around recurring questions: What form of injustice is identified? Who is represented as vulnerable? What conduct is condemned? What standard of fairness is implied? Who bears responsibility for restoring justice? This procedure makes it possible to distinguish

a shared people-centered orientation from thinker-specific emphases. Finally, conceptual reconstruction synthesizes these observations into six analytical categories: labour justice, recognition of human dignity, equality before public authority, fiscal justice, accountability of officials, and civic truth-telling. The study remains text-centered and interpretive; it does not present quantitative claims about the frequency of themes across the complete corpus of each author.

Main part

Labour, Remuneration, and Human Dignity in Kunxoja and O'tesh

Kunxoja Ibrayim o'g'li (1799–1880) is one of the writers whose works reflect the moral and social life of the Karakalpak people. His social criticism is important because it connects everyday labour with a broader question: under what conditions can a social relation be called just? In "Jarimadim," the poet's well-known reference to an "otaliq" has been linked in the scholarly literature to Oraz otaliq, a figure whose official activity corresponds chronologically to Kunxoja's lifetime [1, p. 166]. This historical clarification matters because it shows that the poet's criticism was not detached from concrete relations of authority.

The labour question becomes especially explicit in "Cho'ponlar." To interpret this work adequately, it is necessary to recall the agrarian and pastoral context of the nineteenth century. Land, livestock, and water were central resources, while a shepherd could depend on a wealthy livestock owner for subsistence. The work portrays shepherds who endured difficult conditions while receiving extremely limited compensation. The image of a shepherd working for three years for the equivalent of a single kid is preserved in the published collection of Kunxoja's poems [2, p. 27]. The point of the image is not merely that the work was hard. Its philosophical force comes from the disproportion between the labour performed and the reward received.

This disproportion allows us to identify a principle of labour justice in Kunxoja's social thought. Labour creates a moral claim to recognition. When the worker's effort is indispensable to the wealth of another person but the worker receives an insignificant return, the economic relation becomes a relation of so-

cial devaluation. The worker is treated as if his time, endurance, and contribution have little worth. The injustice is therefore simultaneously material and moral. The inadequacy of payment expresses an inadequacy of recognition.

Historical-literary discussion also notes the presence of different forms of hired labour and the fact that wealthy livestock owners could employ several shepherds who moved with the animals in search of suitable pasture [3, pp. 26–27]. This context strengthens the interpretation of “Cho’ponlar” as a critique of a structural relationship rather than an isolated personal complaint. The shepherd is a representative figure. Through him, the poem exposes a social arrangement in which those who perform exhausting work remain dependent and poorly rewarded, while the benefits of their labour accumulate elsewhere.

The social-philosophical significance of Kunxoja’s position lies in the standard implicit in the criticism. Justice requires a meaningful correspondence between contribution and compensation. This does not amount to a fully formulated economic theory, and it would be methodologically incorrect to attribute one to the poet. Yet the normative direction is clear: work should not be appropriated while the worker’s needs and dignity are ignored. In this sense, labour justice becomes one of the foundations of people-centeredness.

O’tesh develops a related concern in “Sharmanda,” but the emphasis shifts from disproportionate remuneration to the moral meaning of withholding what is owed. The demand “Haqini bergil” — give him what is due — has several layers. At the most immediate level, it concerns material payment for completed work. At a second level, it recognizes the worker as a person whose claim cannot be erased simply because another person possesses greater wealth or status. At a third level, failure to pay becomes a violation of moral norms.

This third dimension is essential to the title “Sharmanda.” In the logic of the work, injustice does not remain a private economic transaction. It is exposed to the moral judgment of the community. The person who benefits from another’s labour but refuses to provide the due compensation is not only economically unjust; such conduct is shameful. Public moral evaluation therefore functions as a form of social control. The community’s judgment marks the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable conduct.

Kunxoja and O’tesh can consequently be read together while preserving an important distinction. Kunxoja’s most powerful image emphasizes the measurable imbalance between work and reward. O’tesh emphasizes the normative status of the worker’s claim and the moral disgrace attached to violating it. Both positions defend the labouring person, but they approach justice from different angles. One begins with proportionality; the other with obligation and moral accountability.

Their shared people-centeredness also reveals a broader understanding of human dignity. Dignity is not presented as a philosophical definition separated from social life. It appears when a person’s labour is recognized, when an earned claim is honored, and when wealth does not authorize one individual to disregard another. This concrete form of dignity is important because it anchors social justice in everyday relationships. A just society is not judged only by the character of its rulers or institutions. It is also judged by what happens when one person works for another.

The two thinkers therefore transform ordinary labour relations into a field of ethical evaluation. The shepherd, worker, or dependent labourer becomes a test of the moral quality of society. If the most vulnerable person can work for years without proportionate compensation, then the problem is not merely personal misfortune. It indicates a social order in which economic dependence permits the devaluation of human effort. The poetic critique gives that experience public visibility and, by doing so, converts suffering into a claim for justice.

Ajiniyaz: Equality Before Authority and the Ethics of Office

In Ajiniyaz’s works, the concept of justice is closely connected with the concrete organization of social authority. His criticism is directed not only toward external threats or general hardship but also toward inequality within society and the conduct of local officeholders. Works such as “Ko’ring,” “O’tarsang,” “Kerak,” “Onalar,” and “Kerekti” contain critical representations of judges, biys, rais, ataliqs, and other figures of authority. The central issue is not the mere existence of office. It is the moral use or misuse of office.

“Nasiyat” provides a particularly clear basis for reconstructing this position. The work addresses representatives of different social roles

and reminds them that status carries an ethical obligation. A judge, ruler, or wealthy person is not evaluated simply by rank. The legitimacy of social position depends on the responsible performance of duties toward others. In this sense, dignity and responsibility are linked: a person's social standing does not exempt him from moral standards but increases the importance of fulfilling them.

Ajiniyaz's appeal that the judge should stand equally toward "the rich, the poor, and the bek-sultan" is especially significant [4, p. 60]. The statement formulates a practical criterion of justice: social status must not predetermine judgment. The rich and poor, ordinary subjects and members of the ruling stratum, should be treated without partiality. The philosophical importance of the passage lies in its rejection of status-based justice. If the judge adjusts his decision according to wealth, influence, or rank, law-like authority becomes an instrument of hierarchy rather than a means of fairness.

The demand for impartiality also establishes a limit on the power of office. A judge is not morally free to favor the socially powerful. The office exists within a normative framework, and the person occupying it is answerable to standards that transcend personal preference or patronage. This is an important form of accountability. It does not yet amount to a modern institutional theory of judicial independence, but it clearly expresses the idea that public authority should be constrained by fairness.

"Nasiyat" extends the same reasoning to the ruler. A just ruler should not remove an honest judge arbitrarily, should not oppress the population, and should listen to experienced advice. Justice therefore depends on a chain of ethical conduct: the judge must be impartial, the ruler must protect rather than undermine impartiality, and public peace depends on the responsible exercise of both roles. The text thus imagines social order as morally interdependent. Injustice at the top can corrupt institutions below, while integrity in office can protect ordinary people from arbitrary harm.

This perspective is developed further in "Kerekti." The line conveying that "many are hoping for equality" [5, p. 86] shifts the discussion from the personal virtue of an official to a collective social expectation. Equality is no longer only a rule for how a judge should treat

two parties. It becomes an aspiration shared among people who experience injustice. The concept acquires a broader social meaning: a better life requires not simply a benevolent individual but a social condition in which unequal and arbitrary treatment is reduced.

The emergence of collective hope is philosophically important. It suggests that justice is not only imposed from above by a good ruler or judge. It can also be articulated from below as a moral expectation of the community. The people are not passive recipients of justice. Their experience of unequal treatment generates a standard against which authority is assessed. In this respect, people-centeredness and equality converge.

Ajiniyaz's contribution to the social-philosophical vocabulary of the period can therefore be described through three connected ideas. First, office entails moral responsibility. Second, justice requires equal and impartial treatment across differences of wealth and status. Third, equality can become a collective social aspiration when existing institutions fail to meet that standard. These ideas distinguish his approach from the labour-centered critique found in Kunxoja and O'tesh while remaining part of the same broader moral defense of ordinary people.

The significance of this approach is also visible in what it rejects. Ajiniyaz opposes the transformation of authority into a private resource for the privileged. When a judge favors the wealthy, or when a ruler tolerates oppression, public office ceases to serve a common social function. It becomes an extension of hierarchy. The poet's criticism thus contains an implicit theory of legitimate authority: power is justified only when exercised with impartiality, restraint, and concern for the population.

For social philosophy, this is a crucial shift from individual morality to institutional morality. The issue is not merely whether an official is personally good or bad. The question is whether the role itself is performed according to standards that protect people from arbitrary domination. Ajiniyaz's poetry thereby provides a bridge between ethical criticism and reflection on social institutions.

Taxation, Social Burden, and Accountability in Berdaq and O'mar

Taxation constitutes another major field in which nineteenth-century Karakalpak thinkers

examined the meaning of justice. Historical sources summarized in the literature indicate that Karakalpaks, like other subjects of the Khiva Khanate, paid taxes and performed obligations. These included a land tax identified as *solg'ut*, the *ushr* associated with religious beneficiaries, and, during wartime, a tax referred to as *qozon puli* [6, p. 77]. The philosophical significance of taxation, however, cannot be reduced to the existence of particular fiscal categories. The crucial question is how burdens were distributed, how they were collected, and what these practices meant for people with different levels of wealth and power.

In a difficult social and economic environment, increasing or unevenly distributed fiscal burdens could deepen the vulnerability of working people. The act of collection itself could also become a site of coercion. For this reason, taxation appears in literary thought as a test of the relationship between authority and the population. A tax system may be formally established, but its moral evaluation depends on whether it respects proportionality, avoids arbitrary privilege, and limits violence in collection.

Berdaq's poem "*Soliq*" is especially important in this respect. The work presents taxation not as a technical administrative matter but as a problem connected with human fate, dignity, and social equality. Through the collection of taxes, broader structures of society become visible: differences between rich and poor, the conversion of status into privilege, the vulnerability of those without influence, and the ethical responsibility of those who exercise power.

The critical target is therefore not simply "tax" as such. Berdaq's concern is the injustice that arises when fiscal obligations are determined or imposed unequally, when collection becomes coercive, or when social privilege shields some groups while burdens fall heavily on others. This distinction is analytically important. It allows us to describe Berdaq's position as a form of fiscal justice rather than as a rejection of every public obligation.

The literary-critical tradition has emphasized the social importance of Berdaq's works for the awakening of the consciousness of working people and has described "*Soliq*" as a courageous expression of truth about the past and a defense of the oppressed [7, p. 13]. Without extending that claim beyond the evidence available here, it is clear that the poem transforms a fiscal practice into a moral prob-

lem. Taxation becomes unjust when it is disconnected from equal treatment and when the method of collection humiliates or harms those least able to resist.

This approach broadens the meaning of equality. Equality is not only equality before a judge. It also concerns the distribution of collective burdens. If wealth and status systematically reduce the obligations of the powerful while the poor face heavier demands, then social hierarchy is reproduced through fiscal mechanisms. Berdaq's criticism reveals how administrative procedures can become instruments of inequality even when they are presented as ordinary obligations.

O'mar's "*Aytmasam bo'lmas*" develops the theme from another direction. The work exposes the suffering caused by taxation and the violence of tax collectors, but its title adds a distinctive ethical dimension. "I cannot remain without saying it" expresses an inability to remain silent before injustice. Truth-telling becomes an obligation. The poet's role is therefore not limited to observing social suffering; it includes making injustice speakable in public.

This position introduces civic courage into the concept of social justice. When authority or its agents act violently, silence can allow injustice to remain socially invisible. The act of naming abuse is itself a moral response. O'mar's people-centeredness is consequently expressed through representation: the pain of working people is articulated in a form that challenges the normalization of arbitrary conduct.

The work also links this truth-telling to the equal worth of persons. The suffering of an ordinary taxpayer matters because every person possesses dignity. Life, labour, and honor should not become disposable simply because an individual lacks status. The criticism of tax collectors is thus inseparable from a broader humanistic claim: public authority must recognize the humanity of those subject to it.

Taxation appears elsewhere in the poetic corpus as well, including Kunxoja's "*Kun qayda*," Ajiniyaz's "*Kerak*," and O'tesh's "*Bo'lar*." The recurrence of fiscal themes across different authors indicates the importance of taxation as a lived social issue in the period. Within the limits of the present source base, this recurrence can be interpreted as evidence that taxation provided a shared language through which economic inequality, official irresponsibility, humiliation, and popular aspirations for a fairer life could be discussed.

Berdaq and O'mar nevertheless make different contributions. Berdaq directs attention toward the distribution and enforcement of fiscal burdens, thereby foregrounding the structure of inequality. O'mar foregrounds the ethical responsibility to expose coercion and defend those who suffer from it. In one case, the central question is how social burdens are allocated. In the other, the central question is what a morally responsible voice should do when authority violates human dignity.

Together, these perspectives show that fiscal justice has both institutional and communicative dimensions. Institutions must distribute obligations fairly and restrain coercion. Intellectual and public voices must also be capable of naming injustice when those restraints fail. A just society therefore requires not only fair procedures but also moral criticism.

Discussion: A Comparative Model of Social Justice

The comparative analysis demonstrates that nineteenth-century Karakalpak thinkers developed a shared people-centered critique without reducing justice to a single principle. Their works can be organized around several mutually reinforcing dimensions. This structure helps clarify both the unity and diversity of the intellectual tradition.

The first dimension is labour justice. Kunxoja's shepherd embodies the problem of disproportion between effort and compensation. O'tesh sharpens the same issue by presenting payment as something that is due to the worker and by attaching moral shame to its denial. Labour justice therefore includes both proportionality and obligation. A person's work cannot be treated merely as a resource for another person's benefit; it generates a claim to recognition.

The second dimension is human dignity. Across the texts, dignity is not formulated as an abstract metaphysical category. It is socially enacted. A person's dignity is respected when his labour is valued, his earned claim is honored, his poverty does not make him inferior before a judge, and his lack of status does not expose him to arbitrary fiscal violence. Conversely, dignity is violated when economic or political superiority becomes a license to disregard the personhood of another.

The third dimension is equality before authority. Ajiniyaz provides the clearest articula-

tion of this principle. The judge should not distinguish between rich and poor in a way that prejudices judgment. This standard challenges the conversion of social hierarchy into juridical hierarchy. The philosophical implication is that legitimate authority must possess a degree of moral independence from wealth and status.

The fourth dimension is fiscal justice. Berdaq's criticism reveals that the fairness of a social order can be evaluated through the way it distributes compulsory burdens. Taxation becomes unjust when privilege protects the powerful, when obligations are imposed disproportionately, or when collection relies on humiliation and force. Fiscal justice thus connects material distribution with the moral character of administration.

The fifth dimension is official accountability. Ajiniyaz, Berdaq, and O'mar all address this question in different ways. Judges and rulers must act according to the responsibilities of their offices. Tax collectors must not convert administrative authority into arbitrary violence. The existence of an office does not legitimize every act performed through it. Power remains subject to moral evaluation.

The sixth dimension is civic truth-telling. O'mar's refusal to remain silent introduces a distinct but essential element. Social injustice can persist when it is normalized, hidden, or treated as inevitable. The poet who articulates the grievances of ordinary people performs a public moral function. Literature becomes a space in which power is judged and suffering is translated into a claim that others can recognize.

These dimensions also show why the category of people-centeredness is useful. It does not mean that all five thinkers propose identical social programs. Rather, it describes a common orientation in which the experiences of working and vulnerable people become the standpoint from which social relations are evaluated. The shepherd's reward, the worker's unpaid claim, the poor person before a judge, the taxpayer facing a collector, and the ordinary person subjected to official coercion all function as tests of justice.

At the same time, the analysis should avoid anachronism. It would be misleading to equate these poetic positions directly with contemporary theories of distributive justice, human rights, constitutionalism, or democratic accountability. The texts emerged in a different conceptual and institutional world. Their sig-

nificance lies precisely in the fact that norms of fairness were articulated through locally meaningful social roles and conflicts. The appropriate scholarly task is not to modernize the thinkers but to reconstruct the normative logic present in their own works.

From this perspective, the intellectual heritage examined here can be understood as a form of practical social philosophy. It begins with concrete experiences and moves toward general standards. An underpaid shepherd raises the question of fair remuneration. An unpaid worker raises the question of obligation. A biased judge raises the question of equality. An oppressive collector raises the question of fiscal legitimacy. A silent public sphere raises the question of moral courage. The philosophical content emerges through this movement from lived conflict to normative judgment.

Another important result is the connection between justice and social responsibility. Responsibility is distributed across different actors. Wealthy employers bear responsibility toward workers. Judges bear responsibility toward parties regardless of status. Rulers bear responsibility for the conduct and independence of officials. Tax collectors bear responsibility for how obligations are enforced. Intellectuals and poets bear responsibility for articulating truth when injustice becomes socially destructive. Justice is therefore relational: it depends on how people use the power, wealth, status, or voice available to them.

This relational character also explains the strong moral vocabulary of the works. Shame, duty, fairness, oppression, and truth are not decorative themes. They are mechanisms for evaluating social conduct. The poets do not separate social structure from moral agency. Structural inequality is experienced through the acts of persons who underpay, refuse payment, judge partially, collect violently, or ignore suffering. Yet individual conduct is also shaped by positions of wealth and office. The texts therefore move between personal morality and social structure rather than choosing only one level of explanation.

A further implication concerns the relationship between equality and difference. The thinkers do not deny that people occupy different roles. There are judges, rulers, wealthy livestock owners, workers, taxpayers, and officials. The demand for equality is not a demand that these roles disappear. Instead, it is a demand that differences in role not become

a justification for arbitrary domination. The judge may hold office, but he must treat rich and poor impartially. The wealthy person may own livestock, but the shepherd's labour still creates a legitimate claim. The collector may possess authority, but that authority does not justify humiliation. Equality therefore functions as a moral limit on hierarchy.

The social-philosophical model that emerges can be summarized as follows: a just society recognizes labour, protects dignity, constrains status-based privilege, distributes burdens fairly, requires accountability from authority, and preserves the moral possibility of criticizing injustice. None of the examined thinkers states this model in systematic philosophical terminology. It is reconstructed from the converging normative judgments found in their works. This reconstruction is useful because it shows that the intellectual history of social justice in the region is not confined to formal philosophical treatises. It is also present in poetry as a mode of public reasoning.

The source base of the present study imposes limits. The analysis relies on selected published works and a small body of historical and literary scholarship. It does not establish the complete chronology of every poem, compare all manuscript variants, or reconstruct the full administrative history of each office and tax. Nor does it claim that the five thinkers exhaust nineteenth-century Karakalpak social thought. These limitations should guide future research toward broader textual corpora, archival evidence, manuscript comparison, and more systematic study of the reception of these ideas.

Even with these limitations, the comparative reading produces a clear result. The works are united by the conviction that social relations can and should be morally judged from the standpoint of those who bear their costs. This is the deepest meaning of their people-centeredness. The ordinary person is not merely an object of pity. He becomes a bearer of legitimate claims: to fair payment, equal treatment, restrained authority, a bearable social burden, and respect for dignity.

Conclusion

The social-philosophical analysis of nineteenth-century Karakalpak thinkers shows that equality, people-centeredness, and justice were formed in response to concrete contradictions of social life. The devaluation of la-

bour, failure to provide due compensation, unequal taxation, arbitrary conduct by officials, status-based partiality, and humiliation of ordinary people constitute the principal forms of injustice identified in the examined works.

Kunxoja develops a powerful critique of labour relations by exposing the disproportion between difficult work and inadequate reward. O'tesh adds the idea that withholding what is due to a worker is not only an economic wrong but also a moral disgrace subject to public judgment. Ajiniyaz connects justice with the ethical responsibilities of judges and rulers and articulates the requirement that rich and poor be treated impartially. Berdaq reveals the moral and social consequences of unequal fiscal burdens and coercive tax collection. O'mar presents the public articulation of injustice as a moral and civic duty.

Taken together, these positions form a coherent but internally differentiated vision of a just society. Justice requires the fair recognition of labour, respect for human dignity, equality before authority, restraint in the exercise of office, fairness in the distribution of social burdens, and accountability to the people. Equality does not erase social roles; it limits the ability of wealth, rank, or office to become a justification for arbitrary domination.

The study also demonstrates the value of literary works as sources for social philosophy. In the examined texts, philosophical reasoning is embedded in concrete images, social roles, and conflicts. The normative idea becomes visible through the judgment of lived relations. For this reason, the intellectual heritage of nineteenth-century Karakalpak thinkers remains an important source for reconstructing regional traditions of reflection on social justice.

Further research should broaden the corpus, compare different editions and manuscript traditions where available, and connect poetic criticism more closely with archival evi-

dence on labour, taxation, judicial practice, and local administration. Such work would allow a more detailed reconstruction of the relationship between literary expression, social experience, and the historical development of Karakalpak philosophical thought.

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