



HERO'S TRICKSTER QUALITIES IN KARAKALPAK LITERATURE (based on the Heroic Epic "Alpamys")

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Abstract

The epic occupies a special place in folklore, preserving the historical memory and the spiritual and moral values of the people. In the heroic narrative about the nation's past, real events intertwine with fictional elements rooted in myth. Mythological images and motifs serve to generalize the picture of life and to depict the heroes' deeds in harmonious unity with the world of gods and supernatural beings.

Introduction

The epic holds a distinctive place within folklore, safeguarding the historical memory as well as the spiritual and moral values of the people. In heroic narratives about a nation's past, actual historical events intertwine with fictional constructs grounded in myth. Mythological images and motifs function to synthesize the broader picture of life and to portray heroic deeds in a harmonious unity with the world of deities and supernatural beings.

The concept of the archetype was first examined by C. G. Jung. According to Jung, archetypes are innate psychic structures that generate the universally significant symbolism found in dreams, myths, legends, and individual imagination [6].

According to E. M. Meletinsky, archetypes are "primary schemes of images and plots that constitute an initial reservoir of the literary language, understood in the broadest sense" [1, p. 10].

The epic "Alpamys" is one of the oldest and most significant works of the Turkic-speaking peoples. As noted by Zh. Khoshniyazov, the tradition of creating dastans as a form of art has existed in the cultural and spiritual life of various peoples since ancient times [3, p. 140]. The Karakalpak version of "Alpamys" preserves many elements of ancient archaic layers, while at the same time exhibiting cultural and ethnic features characteristic of the worldview and self-perception of the Karakalpak people. In this epic the hero archetype is embodied through the prism of J. Campbell's universal model of the "hero's journey": birth – trial – death – rebirth [4]. To examine the hero's trickster qualities in Karakalpak Literature we turn to the version of the epic "Alpamys" recorded from the oral performance of Kurbanbay zhyrau.

It is well known that epic heroes sometimes commit actions or behave in ways that evoke mixed or ambivalent feelings. Such behavior is attributed to the trickster archetype. A trickster (from the English trickster — deceiver, sly one) is an archetype in mythology, folklore, and religion — a "demonically comic double of the culture hero, endowed with the traits of a rogue or prankster", a deity, spirit, human, or anthropomorphic animal that engages in transgressive actions or, at the very least, does not conform to common behavioral norms [5].

E. M. Meletinsky notes that “the hero archetype has from the very beginning been closely connected with the archetype of the anti-hero, which is often combined with the hero in a single figure. The most ancient, or rather highly archaic, culture heroes are frequently attributed with trickster-like cunning, and these actions are not always performed with benevolent or creative intentions” [1, p. 38].

B. Sengleyev’s article “Traits of the Trickster in the Image of Mazan Batyr (Based on Kalmyk Folklore)” is devoted to analyzing trickster behavior in the figure of Mazan Batyr, a hero of Kalmyk historical folklore and legendary prose. The hero’s ability to achieve victory through cleverness and the skill to mislead the enemy is interpreted by the author as a manifestation of trickster qualities. The article identifies the most common stratagems employed by the hero and highlights parallels between these examples of trickster behavior and episodes found in various epic traditions [2, p. 346].

Alpamys is also not devoid of trickster qualities. This is reflected in the following:

1. He possesses the ability to transform or disguise himself: this is evident in episodes where the hero, having dressed in the clothing of the servant Kultay, becomes unrecognizable.
2. Alpamys is resourceful, acting with intelligence and cunning: he manages to survive in a deserted place without suffering from hunger, as the shepherd of Tayshakhan, Ashim-kal (Ashim the Bald), throws him one sheep at a time into the dungeon. When no sheep remain, the hero advises the shepherd on how to obtain flatbread. When that option is also exhausted, Alpamys asks him to bring a parengi pyshaq (literally, “French knife”). With this knife, he carves a shyngkobyz from the sheep’s ribs, an instrument with a bewitching sound. He then instructs Ashim where to go and what to do. Through the shepherd’s assistance, Alpamys succeeds in attracting Tayshakhan’s daughter Arzayim, and with her help, he is able to escape from the dungeon.

Alpamys refuses Karazhan, who attempts to free his sworn brother from the dungeon. This is explained by the fact that one day Karazhan might later remind Alpamys of his role in the escape from the underground prison.

- 3) A humorous episode involves a group of women who travel to the city where a toy (wedding feast) is being held: Alpamys, disguised as Kultay, volunteers to help eighteen women carry their bundles. Along the way, he runs ahead, eats the flatbreads inside the bundles, and replaces them with cow dung. After returning the bundles, Alpamys disappears.

Later, two of the women, unable to jump across a jap (irrigation ditch), fall into the water, causing the cow dung in their bundles to dissolve. In this way, Alpamys’s mischief is revealed, although all the women assume that the trickster was none other than Kultay himself.

- 4) To achieve what he desires, Alpamys often resorts to cunning stratagems. He asks his mother to prepare kuurmash (fried wheat), and when she brings him the roasted wheat, he grabs her hand together with the kuurmash and squeezes it until she, unable to endure the heat, reveals the secret of his betrothed.

In another episode, Alpamys persuades Ashim-kal, who approaches the dungeon in search of his missing castrated goat, to throw sheep from Tayshakhan’s own flock into the dungeon. He promises Ashim that, in return for this service, he will arrange for him to marry the khan’s daughter, Arzayim.

Thus, Alpamys employs cunning and ingenuity in order to: 1) enter the enemy’s camp unrecognized; 2) prevent encroachments on his heroic honor; 3) avoid death from starvation;

4) find a path to liberation; 5) amuse himself at the expense of unsuspecting women on their way to the toy (wedding feast).

While B. Sengleyev notes that Mazan's tricks are never directed against "his own", which, in his view, indicates that the hero's role as a "protector" and even "champion" of the Kalmyks prevails over his trickster nature [2, p. 346], in the episode where Alpamys forces his mother to reveal the truth about his bride, the hero's stratagem is indeed directed at someone from his own circle – that is, at "one of his own".

Thus, the Karakalpak epic "Alpamys" is structured according to the universal model of the "hero's journey": birth – trial – death – rebirth. The archetype of hero in "Alpamys" is embodied in accordance with the epic traditions of the Turkic peoples while reflecting the cultural and ethnic characteristics of the Karakalpak people. The presence of trickster traits in his image enhances its complexity and multidimensionality and underscores the dual nature of Alpamys.

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