

# Some Remarks On The Typological Formation Of The “Bald” Character

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**Received:** 10 August 2025; **Accepted:** 06 September 2025; **Published:** 08 October 2025

**Abstract:** This article presents some reflections on the specific features of the images corresponding to the “Bald” (Kal) type in Uzbek oral folklore, as well as on the processes of their typological formation. A typological analysis of certain characters appearing in fairy tales and epics has been carried out.

**Keywords:** Type, typological analysis, folklore, fable, fairy tale, genre features, character, image, storytelling, fairy-tale studies.

**Introduction:** A comparative study of fairy-tale characters reveals that heroes belonging to the “Bald” type exist in the oral traditions of many nations, having spread on a wide scale, and that their origins trace back to very early periods. Not only among Turkic people, but also in the oral folklore of numerous other nations across the world, works featuring the image of the bald character are widely attested, as noted by many folklorists. However, there is no comprehensive information regarding the historical period, society, or environment to which the process of typification can be linked. It is well known that the typological analysis of Turkic fairy tales was carried out by V. Eberhard and P. N. Boratav. As a result of their classification work, 378 types were identified in Turkic fairy tales. However, the outlined types have not been studied in a broad scope and were limited merely to the name of the hero. From this perspective, fairy tales formed around the “Bald” type have not been examined typologically either. Although many Uzbek folklorists have expressed interest in this character, no extensive scholarly research has been conducted in this regard. By contrast, in Turkish folklore studies, the uniqueness of the bald image, its antiquity, and the significant functions and important mission it has performed in many genres of oral tradition have prompted considerable scholarly research.

The earliest research on the origin of this type in Turkish folklore was carried out by T. Alangu. Over the

years, he engaged in collecting and publishing numerous tales about the bald character, eventually compiling them in his work “Keloğlan Tales”. Furthermore, at the end of this book, he published his views and reflections on the type in the form of an article. In it, he emphasized the distinctive features of the “bald” hero, stressing that this type appears not only in the fairy-tale genre but also in other genres of oral tradition. He explained this as evidence that the type had lived for many centuries in the people’s language, memory, and collective consciousness.

In oral folklore, no character is created arbitrarily. Each emerges as an embodiment of the people’s aspirations and ideals. The process of typification of a hero or image arises from deeper factors—stronger affection, an evident need, and the social demand for such a character. The precise stage and manner in which the Bald type entered fairy tales or epics remain unclear. Yet its occurrence in folk epics such as “Köroğlu,” “Ashiq Garib,” “Tohir and Zuhra,” and “Navro‘zbek” is significant in tracing its historical roots.

In Uzbek oral folklore as well, images corresponding to the Bald type appear in the Go‘roghli cycle—such as in the epics “Hasankhan” and “Ravshan”—and in epics like “Qunduz and Yulduz,” where they often serve as supporting characters. These may be seen as traces of the early stages of the type’s emergence. From the descriptions and portrayals within the texts, we can clearly identify the distinctive qualities of such figures.

However, this does not yet allow us to definitively conclude whether the character had fully typified. In other words, while the people transformed the bald image into a typical hero, its traces in the epics appear somewhat faint. Nevertheless, the bald hero is embodied as a daring, resourceful, cunning, and even warlike character, which indicates that he had already embodied distinctive traits.

For example: "The city of Chambil had six gates. At each gate there were seven guards. Their leader was called Sattor the Bald. When he struck, he stunned; when he drank, he became intoxicated; when he fought, he was fierce; but when deprived of wine, he was in distress." This description portrays the hero as a type associated with leadership, sincerity, roughness, and a boorish warrior nature. A quatrain attributed to him further exemplifies the verbal qualities typical of the Bald type.

You do not yet know who I am,

If I grow angry, you will not return again,

One blow I strike—you will not rise when fallen,

Without Go'roghli's permission, you shall not enter.

In this excerpt spoken by the character, qualities typical of the Bald type—combativeness, mercilessness, and roughness—are vividly conveyed. We may say that this minor character, who appears in the "Avazkhan" epic within the Go'roghli cycle, has not yet risen to the level of a main hero. Nevertheless, his existence demonstrates that such a figure had already been created in the people's imagination, though it had not yet fully typified. In the "Ravshan" epic, also belonging to the Go'roghli cycle, four bald brothers assist the main hero Hasanxon in rescuing Ravshan. When analyzing the qualities of these four brothers, we can see the characteristics of the Bald type expressed even more distinctly.

The eldest of the four, Aynoq the Bald, embodies the trait of laziness—a feature typical of the bald character found in many tales such as "The Lazy Bald," "The Bald Who Learned a Craft," and "Nosir the Bald." In the epic, Aynoq is described as a "loaf-eating wrestler," but his wrestling prowess in battle was equal to a thousand men. The next brother, Jaynoq, also represents qualities associated with the type: clownishness, the ability to resolve conflicts through humor and jest, and even a willingness to lie in pursuit of his goal. In many tales, the bald character's use of lies—sometimes for good, sometimes for personal gain—is a recurring trait, as seen in stories such as "The Bald Who Married the King's Daughter," "Forty Lies in Three," "The Bald and the King," "Kal G'idi," and "Nosir the Bald and the Cunning Surxi."

The third brother, Ersak, is described as a master

archer, while the fourth, Tersak, is portrayed as highly perceptive, able to recognize a steed's breed merely from its bones. Such traits of marksmanship and keen discernment also appear in fairy tales featuring the bald hero—for example, in "Sinchi the Bald," where the protagonist embodies the same perceptive qualities as Tersak. However, in epics they generally appear as supporting figures rather than main heroes.

Folklorist Sh. Turdimov, in analyzing Hasanxon's gradual rise to the status of a main hero, specifically notes that, like the bald brothers, the Hasans initially appeared as auxiliary figures, participating only at certain points in the plot. He emphasizes that over time, characters such as Hasan Yakdasta, Hasan Ko'lbar, and Hasan Chopson gradually developed into independent heroes. Thus, every character created by the people has, over the centuries, been repeatedly refined and artistically polished.

Since fairy tales are recognized as among the earliest examples of humanity's artistic thought, determining the precise historical moment or exact dates of the emergence of their characters is an immensely difficult task. The older the tale, the more clearly we see that its characters embody layers of thought and culture from various stages of human history. The tales about the Bald type also preserve a bouquet of mythological motifs. Even the motif of assuming the guise of a bald man, which appears in many tales, attests to the antiquity of this figure.

In his "Turkish Mythology," Bahaddin Ögel emphasizes that in northern Turkic tales and epics, ordinary heroes and warriors would sometimes assume the guise of a bald man before embarking on great battles or tasks, thereby gaining divine power. Numerous legends suggest that the practice of adopting the bald guise was also used during the era of the Turkic Khagans. When confronted with injustice in their efforts to establish order and discipline, the Khagans drew upon sacred powers bestowed by Tengri. They would alter their outward appearance—becoming bald, that is, completely shaven. In this way, they exposed social transgressions, punished wrongdoers, and then returned to their original forms. At that time, transformation of appearance was regarded as a sign of divinity; only those who had attained the highest spiritual rank could assume another form.

Such episodes appear not only in folk legends but also in epics. In the tale of Shah Ismail, after being cast into a well and escaping, he takes on the guise of a bald man and becomes the apprentice of a miller. Similarly, in other epics, heroes in captivity disguise themselves after regaining freedom, which reflects the ancient Turkic worldview. These beliefs are symbolically

represented in epics: in many tales, heroes cover their heads with intestines or pieces of hide to change appearance and then secretly wage battle against the enemy. In quests for fortune, heroes sometimes abandon their homes or palaces and temporarily assume the bald guise.

Here we must ask: why specifically the bald guise? The answer lies in the fact that throughout the tale the hero acts in accordance with qualities characteristic of the Bald type. His reliance on resourcefulness, quiet strategies, and humor rather than noise or open confrontation demonstrates that the type had long since been typified. Its consistent representation across different peoples and ethnic groups underscores its universal recognition.

The emergence and preservation of such characters in tales are directly connected with the worldview, historical development, and political and religious ideologies of the people. Over time, certain features attributed to these characters may be renewed or modified, but this does not mean that an entirely new figure appears. Rather, the existing type continues to be refined and enriched across generations.

Certain aspects of the character may become refined and acquire an ideological meaning over time. Nevertheless, elements of a particular historical period do not entirely disappear; rather, they may gradually turn into obscure or enigmatic expressions. At the same time, some traits in the character's actions that were significant for a given era play an important role. For example, in one period, a hero may be elevated for his physical strength and wrestling prowess, while in another period it may be his intelligence, resourcefulness, and rational conduct in challenging situations that place him in the position of a central figure.

Our bald hero, too, appears as a supporting character in certain eras, but in later times gradually becomes a principal figure. This is especially evident in the fairy-tale genre.

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