

# Archetype Of Hero In Karakalpak Literature (Based On The Heroic Epic “Alpamys”)

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**Abstract:** The Turkic epic incorporates a vast body of oral folk tradition, including tales, myths, and legends that reflect the history, culture, and worldview of the Turkic peoples. This article addresses the issue of the hero archetype in the Karakalpak epic “Alpamys”. In this epic, the hero archetype is embodied through the universal model of the “hero’s journey”. The presence of trickster traits in the protagonist contributes to the complexity and multidimensionality of the image and determines the dual nature of Alpamys.

**Keywords:** Archetype, epic, Alpamys, hero, trickster, motif, duality, sacred world.

**Introduction:** The epic occupies a special place in folklore, preserving the historical memory and spiritual and moral values of the people. In heroic narratives about the past of a nation, real events intertwine with fiction grounded in myth. Mythological images and plots serve to generalize the picture of life and to depict heroic feats in harmonious unity with the world of gods and supernatural beings.

The eternal striving to overcome chaos and to establish order in mythological and folkloric thinking is realized through the archetype of the hero, portrayed as a mighty warrior and protector who has undergone a path of trials and spiritual renewal.

The concept of the archetype was first explored by C. G. Jung. According to Jung, archetypes are innate psychic structures that generate universally meaningful symbolism in dreams, myths, legends, and individual imagination [21]. According to E. M. Meletinsky, archetypes are “primary patterns of images and plots that formed an initial core of the literary language, understood in the broadest sense” [8, p. 10].

The Turkic epic incorporates a vast body of oral folk tradition, including tales, myths, and legends that reflect the history, culture, and worldview of the Turkic peoples. As noted by Zh. Khoshniyazov, the tradition of creating dastans as a form of artistic expression has existed in the cultural and spiritual life of various peoples since ancient times [15, p. 140]. The epic

“Alpamys” is one of the most significant works of the Turkic-speaking peoples. The Karakalpak version of “Alpamys” preserves many elements of ancient archaic tradition while simultaneously exhibiting cultural and ethnic features characteristic of the worldview and 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 and rebirth [17].

To examine the issue of the hero archetype in the Karakalpak heroic epic, we turn to the version of the epic “Alpamys” recorded from the oral performance of Qurbanbay zhyrau.

The protagonist of the epic is Alpamys of the Konyrat (Qoñyrat) clan, the son of a wealthy man from Baysyn. Even before Alpamys was born-and indeed shortly before his conception-his father Baybori proposes to his friend Baysary, who is likewise childless, that they become related by marriage if one of them is blessed with a daughter and the other with a son. As the epic states, “There was no one in Baysyn who could surpass the two of them; in worldly prosperity they both lived without children. After several years, Baybori said:

My friend Baysary, there is a grievance-listen to me:

It seems we shall leave this transient world childless and without trace.

Mountain grasses are sprouting,

The camels of the wealthy are grazing;

If we were to die, my friend,  
Who would become the master  
Of the now ownerless Baysyn?  
For the rest of our lives,  
Let us turn to God with sincere intention.  
If you are granted a son and I a daughter, let us become  
in-laws.

Thereupon, they tied the qargı and fastened the livestock (i.e., performed the ritual of betrothal – U.Zh.), thus becoming in-laws even before the children were born [7, p. 5].

Soon after this, both elderly men become fathers: Baysary is blessed with a daughter, while Baybori has a son. Yu. Chaptykova links the introduction of the motif of miraculous birth from aged parents in the Khakas heroic epic to the motif of cattle raiding and restitution, as well as to the custom of the seizure of individual tribes by autocratic rulers, during which the herds of elderly khans became easy prey. As she notes, "It is precisely during this period that numerous new heroes and characters appear in the alyptyg nymah, along with the motif of childless parents and the motif of miraculous birth. Heroes born at a turning point-when the churt is destroyed and livestock is driven away-immediately possess certain magical abilities (rapid growth, extraordinary strength, the ability to transform, or magical objects). The late-born heir becomes the future defender of his people and possessions (italics ours - U.Zh.)" [16, p. 68].

Among the Karakalpaks, the custom of a preliminary marital agreement is known as aqlay quda bolıw (literally, "betrothal in advance"). A. Bekmuratova describes this custom as follows: "When two women from different families were expecting children, their husbands would reach an agreement in advance that if one gave birth to a daughter and the other to a son, they would marry the children when they grew up" [5, pp. 60-61]. As a pledge gift "qargı baw" presented by the father of the boy to the father of the girl, "a cow or a ram was usually given. This act sealed the future marriage. After that, the girl's father no longer had the right to give his daughter in marriage to another man" [5, p. 61]. While in this case the agreement is made during the mothers' pregnancy, in the episode from the epic "Alpamys" the agreement is concluded by the men even before the child is conceived.

Among the Kazakhs, several forms of betrothal are known, including bel quda (also zhatyr quda, qursaq quda - betrothal agreed upon during pregnancy), besik quda (also qundaq quda - cradle betrothal), esik quda (betrothal arranged after birth), qarsy quda (reciprocal betrothal), and sarysuyek quda (endogamous betrothal

within noble lineages) [6, p. 87; 3; 18]. At the same time, the Kazakh ethnographer B. Kapkyzy mentions a form of advance agreement similar to the Karakalpak aqlay quda bolıw. This practice, known as konıl quda, refers to an agreement between close friends who married at approximately the same time to arrange the marriage of their children in advance, provided that one has a son and the other a daughter [19].

Another Kazakh scholar, A. Toleubaev, writes about the existence among the Kazakhs of a pledge gift equivalent to one head of livestock (sometimes in the form of jewelry), known as qargybaw (literally, "collar"), as well as a similar gift called kholobshi among the Ungun Buryats. As he notes, "this pledge, like the shege shapan, is associated with syndiasmic magic; through this 'collar' the girl is symbolically encircled by her future bridegroom" [14, p. 16]. In the article by A. Bagaev, "The Riding Horse in Wedding Gift Exchange among the Ossetians", it is emphasized that "among the Kazakhs, following the marriage agreement, it was customary to exchange gifts. Among the gifts presented by the groom's side to the bride's father was a steed, euphemistically referred to as qargybaw" [4]. Indeed, the value of the qargybaw "depended on the family's wealth. It could be a horse or something more modest, but in any case sufficiently valuable" [1].

The agreement known as aqlay quda bolıw in the epic "Alpamys" was motivated by the fear of the elderly Baybori and Baysary of dying childless and leaving no descendants, as well as by their concern for the future of their land. The performance of the qargı baw ritual symbolized the seriousness of their intentions and the men's readiness to establish kinship through their children. By entering into this preliminary agreement, Baybori and Baysary hoped that the future marriage of their children would contribute to the preservation of their property and possessions, as well as to the protection of the homeland and the people as a whole.

The motif of concluding an agreement even before the birth of the children refers to a deep level of collective consciousness and to the archetypal idea of a "sacred covenant". The aqlay quda bolıw agreement, as an archetypal model of a sacral union of primordial principles, expresses the idea of a predestined marriage that exists prior to the bodily embodiment of the soul. This form of marriage reflects the mythological conceptions of the Karakalpaks concerning the sacral unity of a couple, since the preliminary agreement-as the embodiment of an archetypal idea of a marital union established before physical birth-symbolically legitimizes a bond between souls that does not yet exist in the material world but already exists within sacral space.

Drawing on the example of such betrothal in the epic "Alpamys", we may argue that, in the Karakalpak mythological worldview, souls originate from another, sacral realm; human destiny (more precisely, the path of the soul in the real world) can be "programmed" before birth; and marital pairs—that is, the union of the Masculine and Feminine principles—are formed within the sacral space of spirits. Thus, the aqlay quda bolıw agreement reflects Karakalpak mythological notions that, first, the union of the couple exists from the very beginning in sacral space, and second, that marriage in the human world realizes this primordial union. The ritual accompanied by the pledge gift (qarǵı baw) and the tying of livestock symbolizes the fixation of this primordial bond, signifying the incorporation of the future couple into the cosmic order.

In this way, the epic "Alpamys" emphasizes the special value of the hero—his uniqueness, which lies in his vocation to preserve the existing world order and in his connection with the sacral realm.

E. S. Novik argues that "a detailed description of the hero's miraculous birth may be regarded as a transfer to the beginning of the narrative of such an important compositional element as the 'acquisition of a miraculous means', which usually follows the 'preliminary misfortune' and the hero's trial by the donor; moreover, a number of folktales featuring such a miraculously born hero may not contain the element of the 'acquisition of a miraculous means' at all, as it is already inherent in the very characterization of the miraculous heroic figure" [10].

As we can see, the motif of the hero's miraculous birth from aged parents in the epic "Alpamys" lays the foundation for an epic narrative about a hero endowed with a connection to another, sacral realm. This underscores the dual-sacral and collective-nature of the batyr figure, as well as his mission, which includes the restoration of justice and the unification and protection of the people. At the same time, the events unfold with the participation of mythological and anthropomorphic characters. As A. S. Alshevskaya notes, M. I. Mushinsky, in his article "A Masterpiece of Belarusian Literary Art", devoted to "Tales of Life" by Ya. Kolas, emphasizes that a distinctive feature of this work is the coexistence of "two opposing, antagonistic principles—the fairy-tale and the real." It should be noted that in the collection the fairy-tale principle is associated with an anthropomorphic plane of content, while the real principle corresponds to a realistic plane of representation [2, p. 71].

Thus, the motif of miraculous birth in the epic "Alpamys" precedes and anticipates the narrative of the hero's subsequent destiny. The episode of the

preliminary agreement within the plot creates the prerequisites for the motif of the obstructed marriage, in which the epic hero is called upon to struggle for what has been predestined. At the same time, the hero's characteristics are revealed gradually: at the beginning of the narrative he grows like an ordinary child, while the epic time of his maturation is measured by the sacred period of seven years:

"When (Baysary) said to Baybori: 'Kinsman, arrange the toy, ' the latter was a very stingy man; in summer he would say, 'I will arrange it in autumn,' and when autumn came he would say, 'I will arrange it in summer,' thus deceiving [him] for seven years. When the children reached the age of seven, they played and began to gain awareness (of themselves and the surrounding world)" [7, p. 5].

"Alpamys, in the land of Baysyn, reached the age of fourteen (that is, twice seven – U. Zh.), was filled with strength like that of a nar camel, came of age, and became a jigit" [7, p. 15].

In addition, Alpamys's single combat with Karazhan ends in victory after seven days, when:

"On the seventh day,

Exactly at noon,

At the very beginning of the great road,

He cast down into a ravine,

Like a serke brought as a sacrificial offering,

The stubborn (Karazhan)" [7, p. 27].

On the seventh day of Alpamys's journey, undertaken to liberate the parents of Gulparshyn in the land of Tayshakhan, his ancestor Zhayılǵan appeared to him in a dream and reproached the batyr for having set out on his journey without turning to Allah or invoking the pirs. Therefore:

"If you act with arrogance—there is punishment for that,  
Punishment awaits you ahead.

If you are humble—success will follow,

And then there will be success.

You have incurred guilt before us for seven years;

You will sit in the dungeon for seven years.

When seven years have passed,

You will be released, my child.

When seven years are fulfilled,

Having been cleansed of your sin,

You will emerge from the dungeon unharmed,

Having taken revenge upon the Kalmak,

And then, my son, you will return" [7, p. 48].

S. Yu. Neklyudov identifies fourteen principal plot-

thematic blocks in epic narrative:

1. Celestial prologue.
2. Miraculous conception.
3. The specific status of the hero's parents (prolonged childlessness, old age, poverty, marginalization, etc.).
4. Incestuous origin of the hero.
5. A specific family situation (for example, various types of relationships between nephew and uncle).
6. Miraculous birth.
7. Feast in honor of the newborn.
8. Naming (often associated with the endowment of the hero).
9. Extraordinary qualities of the future hero.
10. Playful or mock retinue.
11. Upbringing in a foreign land.
12. Unusual games and pranks of the hero as a child.
13. Departure from home.
14. A specific plot situation in which the process of maturation is interrupted [9, p. 120].

In the epic "Alpamys", the following models related to the childhood of the epic hero can be identified:

1. The specific status of the hero's parents: prolonged childlessness, old age, and the threat of plunder of their lands and property in the event of their death;
2. A specific family situation in which the future parents had заранее planned the marriage of their children and carried out the ritual of "preliminary betrothal" (aqalay quda bolw);
3. The miraculous conception of the hero;
4. The birth of the hero;
5. A feast held in honor of the newborn children of Baybori and Baysary, with the feast celebrating the birth of Baybori's firstborn being delayed due to his stinginess;
6. Unusual games and pranks of the adolescent hero: at the age of fourteen, Alpamys begins to flirt with girls from his aul, whose mother reproaches him for the fact that he should instead "win" his bride, who lives in distant lands;
7. A specific plot situation in which the process of maturation is interrupted: news of the distant bride prompts Alpamys to set out in search of her;
8. Departure from home.

Overall, the main plot structure of "Alpamys" incorporates the following cycles:

1. The origin of the hero and his mission;
2. The hero's trial and journey;
3. The journey to obtain the bride;
4. The second journey to the land of Tayshakhan and captivity (symbolic death);
5. Return as rebirth and the restoration of harmony.

An essential component of the hero archetype is the presence of obstacles and their overcoming. In the epic "Alpamys", this is represented by the journey to a

distant bride and participation in duels and competitions, all of which appear as a struggle against numerous enemies, in which the hero seems to confront the world as a whole.

Alpamys's departure marks the beginning of his spiritual path and the process of self-definition. The hero leaves his native land and enters a space of uncertainty, where he encounters the forces of chaos and hostility. Here, the archetypal structure of the "monomyth," as described by J. Campbell, becomes evident [17].

Alpamys set out on his first heroic campaign at the age of fourteen, and the motif of "departure from home" may be interpreted as a metaphor of initiation. This moment symbolizes the beginning of the hero's adult life, since "the final situation of epic childhood, which directly precedes the heroic feat, is the departure from home. Depending on the specific tradition, it may be associated with various reasons: the desire to find one's father or family, hunting activities, the fulfillment of an important task, as well as matrimonial aspirations (primarily in archaic epic)" [13, p. 107]. Indeed, in the epic "Alpamys" the "heroic journey finds its resolution in two directions: first, the hero's journey in search of a bride, and second, the hero's journey undertaken to free the parents of his bride from captivity and to take revenge on their enemies" [15, p. 139].

As we can observe, both of Alpamys's journeys are motivated by the defense of heroic honor. The same notion of honor can also explain the hero's actions in two controversial episodes: his squeezing of his mother's hand holding hot quwirmash (roasted wheat) and the killing of the old woman, the wife of Kultay's brother. In the first case, Alpamys's relatives concealed from him the fact that he had a betrothed bride. Driven by anger provoked by the sharp-tongued remarks addressed to him by the old woman-the mother of the girls with whom he had been flirting – Alpamys forces his mother, through physical pressure, to reveal the secret about Gulparsbyn.

In the second episode, Alpamys, disguised, comes as a guest to the house of Kultay's brother. The hostess serves him shawle (a porridge made of rice with meat and carrots), and he asks for more. When Alpamys asks for an additional portion for the third time, the quarrelsome old woman strikes him with a ladle. Unable to tolerate this affront, Alpamys takes the ladle from her and strikes her in the chest. The force of the batyr's blow is such that the old woman falls dead on the spot.

These two episodes resonate with scenes from the Koroglu cycle: "Koroglu's exploits in Istanbul appear somewhat clumsy and even caricature-like. He



consumes an enormous amount of pilaf, to the horror of an old woman who had hoped to enjoy the leftovers; he beheads a treacherous faqih and brings down a wall to conceal the corpse; he amuses himself by frightening a craftsman who sold him a saz but did not immediately recognize his customer; and he humbly endures all the blows inflicted by Nigara's court ladies, finding ever new strength to sing of his love" [11, p. 146].

Taking into account the characteristic features of the hero archetype, which include a set of stable mythological and epic motifs, we observe that the image of the hero in the Karakalpak epic "Alpamys" is realized through such motifs as the hero's miraculous birth; a helper-horse; captivity followed by liberation after seven years; a faithful wife to whom the hero is betrothed even before conception; the support and patronage of higher powers in times of adversity (Allah; spirits (pirs) – Qawis-Qiyas, Qızır Baba, Házreti Áliy and Házreti Dawit as patrons of the jigir; Zhayılğan as the patron of the Qonırat clan; and Zhılqışı Ata as the patron of the hero's horse); a loyal sworn brother (the so-called qiyametlik dos – "a friend until the Apocalypse"); as well as extraordinary, almost supernatural strength and valor.

Additional elements of the epic structure of "Alpamys" include motifs of competition – both physical and verbal (the so-called aytıs). These encompass the single combat between Alpamys and Karazhan, the aytıs between Alpamys and Karazhan, and the aytıs between Alpamys and Gulpارشyn, among others. Such elements reinforce the image of the hero as a comprehensively gifted figure who embodies the ideals of courage, wisdom, and the spiritual strength of the people.

It is noteworthy that epic heroes sometimes perform actions and deeds that evoke ambiguous reactions. The trickster (from English trickster – deceiver, rogue) is an archetype in mythology, folklore, and religion – a "demonic-comic double of the cultural hero, endowed with traits of a trickster and a prankster" – a deity, spirit, human, or anthropomorphic animal that commits transgressive acts or, at the very least, does not adhere to generally accepted norms of behavior [20]. E. M. Meletinsky notes that "from the very beginning, the hero archetype is most closely connected with the archetype of the antihero, which is often combined with the hero in a single figure. The most ancient or rather, highly archaic-cultural heroes are frequently attributed with trickster-like cunning, not always exercised for benevolent or constructive purposes" [8, p. 38].

Alpamys employs wit and cunning for several purposes: 1. To enter the enemy camp unrecognized; 2. To

prevent encroachments upon heroic honor; 3. To avoid death by starvation; 4. To find a path to liberation; 5. To amuse himself at the expense of unsuspecting women on their way to a toy (wedding feast).

While B. Sengileev notes that Mazan's stratagems are never directed against "his own people," which indicates that his role as a "protector" and even a "champion" of the Kalmyks prevails over his trickster aspect [12, p. 346], in the episode where Alpamys forces his mother to reveal the truth about his betrothed, the hero's ruse is directed against a person close to him – that is, against "his own." These trickster qualities of Alpamys's image create an effect of duality in the listener's (or reader's) perception of the hero's nature.

Thus, the Karakalpak epic "Alpamys" is structured according to the universal model of "departure - trial - return". The hero archetype in "Alpamys" is embodied in accordance with the epic tradition of the Turkic peoples, while taking into account the cultural and ethnic characteristics of the Karakalpak people. The presence of trickster traits in the hero's image enhances its complexity and multidimensionality and determines the dual nature of Alpamys.

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