

Typology of Karakalpak and Kazakh Legends

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the typology of Karakalpak and Kazakh dialects, with a focus on analyzing the legend (oral epic narratives) related to the legendary figure Korkyt ata. It highlights the comparative study of Karakalpak oral literature with the folklore of other ethnic groups and underscores the significance of cross-cultural influences in shaping various narratives and genres. The article utilizes diverse theoretical perspectives, viewpoints, and comparative analyses to discern temporal and regional distinctions within these narratives.

From a typological standpoint, the folklore genres within Karakalpak culture exhibit a rich tapestry of commonalities and divergences when compared to the folklore of other Central Asian communities. These distinctions encompass elements such as style, content, and unique characteristics, thus contributing to a nuanced understanding of the cultural diversity in oral traditions.

While some folklore genres may be shared among the Karakalpak people and their neighbors, including Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen, significant variations exist, which serve to enrich the cultural mosaic of the region.

In conclusion, as a scientist R. Berdibaev suggests, “the purpose of comparative-historical research extends beyond merely identifying shared facts; it also involves uncovering underlying structural patterns and processes”.¹

In the realm of epic narratives, the application of abstract thinking plays a significant role, particularly in the categorization or organization of legend (oral epic narratives). Principles of amplification and idealization are commonly employed. However, it should be noted that not all epics conform to a single character even within the same genre.

Typological patterns of well-established narrative structures are evident within epic narratives. These include typological themes, typological characters, typological plots, transformative elements within epic content, and variations in the grandiosity or individuality of epics. The typification of characters often takes inspiration from prototypes, allowing for the use of similar narratives for different characters. Characters can be found typified even within collective characters. Typified characters may possess both unique and unremarkable traits, and hyperbole

¹ Typology of Kazakh Folklore. Introduction. R. Berdibaev. Almaty: Gylym, 1981. p. 3

is often employed within typological characters. Typological characters emphasize collective characteristics over individuality. Moreover, these typified characters may extend their presence into specific historical typological contexts or contextual arrangements based on circumstances, creating a network of interconnected narratives.

The legends surrounding Korkyt Ata are prevalent among Turkic-speaking communities, uniting the Karakalpak and Kazakh peoples with a shared narrative tradition. These narratives are historical, cultural, and even genetically intertwined, showcasing their commonality. Korkyt Ata legends exhibit typological features that resonate across different historical and cultural backgrounds.

The legends surrounding "Korkyt Ata" provide valuable insights into the profound folk beliefs and imaginative narratives that have captured the collective consciousness. The historical hero Korkyt Ata, known for his mastery of the kobyz (a traditional Kazakh instrument), is a figure of great significance.

Korkyt Ata's legends depict a narrative where he fearlessly confronts death, and his musical talent carries a deep symbolism. People regarded him as the pinnacle of wisdom and turned to him for guidance in overcoming the fear of death. Folklore beautifully portrays the idea that Korkyt Ata faced death with courage and even challenged it to a game. He would not yield to death easily but rather engaged in a contest. In the end, Korkyt Ata managed to defeat death by playing his kobyz and summoning ethereal melodies that encapsulated the essence of life.

This remarkable feat of Korkyt Ata is symbolized by the phrase, "Wherever you go, remember Korkyt,"² which has become deeply ingrained in our culture, serving as a reminder of life's resilience and the human spirit's triumph over adversity. These narratives are imbued with shamanistic and animistic elements, further underscoring the symbolic significance of Korkyt Ata's struggle with death.

In these narratives, Korkyt Ata's encounter with a group of men who would ask,

- ✓ "What is that?"
- ✓ "Korkyt's grave" they answered

When he heard about that each time, Korkyt is initially afraid and hides, but upon hearing the question, he plays his kobyz, and the magnificent melodies he produces resonate with all living creatures. Ultimately, Korkyt Ata's unique musical prowess and his ability to transform life into a harmonious composition serve as a testament to the human spirit's resilience and the beauty of existence.

Korkyt Ata's kobyz, with its healing and life-affirming melodies, becomes a symbol of eternal life, and the legend emphasizes that he would not succumb to death. Instead, he would use the power of his music to inspire and uplift others, demonstrating that the human spirit can transcend mortality. Thus, Korkyt Ata's legacy lives on, reminding us of our capacity to overcome the fear of death through the transformative power of art and music.³

Korkyt Ata's significance extends beyond Kazakh folklore; it resonates with universal themes. Through the legends of Korkyt Ata, the timeless struggle between life and death is vividly depicted, intertwining with the rich tapestry of folk beliefs.

Korkyt Ata, the historical hero who mastered the kobyz, is depicted as a symbol of wisdom and resilience. He is a figure who faced the specter of death with unwavering courage and even challenged it to a game. The phrase "Wherever you go, remember Korkyt" lingers in our culture, serving as a testament to the indomitable human spirit. These narratives are replete with

² A. Pakhratdinov. Meaningful Tales and Folk Legends. Nukus, 'Karakalpakstan', 1989. p. 53-b.

³ Karakalpak proverbs, aphorisms, and idioms, 47-b

shamanistic and animistic elements, underscoring the profound symbolism of Korkyt Ata's confrontation with death.

In these stories, Korkyt Ata's interaction with people asking, "Where is Korkyt?" upon their return from various journeys reveals the essence of his character. Despite initial fear, he would summon his kobyz, and his music resonated with all living beings. Korkyt Ata's triumph over death is symbolized by his statement, "**If death comes, let it be only art that dies,**" as he played his kobyz by the banks of the Syr Darya River, signifying the transformative power of art and music.

Korkyt Ata's refusal to yield to death is a recurring theme, and he is portrayed as challenging death for a period. Having wandered aimlessly day and night, the restless Korkyt finally settles down for a while. Then, from the water, a mysterious creature emerges looks like a snake, capturing Korkyt.⁴ However, he ultimately relents, allowing death to take its course. Yet, his victory lies in the legacy of his music and the enduring belief that art can conquer mortality. These narratives offer profound insights into the folklore and animistic beliefs that were central to our culture. Furthermore, Korkyt Ata's kobyz takes on a role of great significance, as it symbolizes eternal life and resilience in the face of death. The kobyz is more than just an instrument; it represents the power of music to transcend mortality and inspire others. Korkyt Ata's legacy reminds us of the enduring human spirit and the ability of art and music to transform our understanding of life and death.

Korkyt Ata's legends in folklore embody a convergence of Islamic faith with pre-existing religious beliefs such as shamanism, animism, and fetishism. However, the narrative of Korkyt Ata in the book "My Grandfather Korkyt" is notably imbued with Islamic elements, marking the influence of Islam on the folkloric narrative.⁵ In contrast to the syncretic approach seen in the writers' works, Arab influences had not yet reached Central Asia before the 9th and 10th centuries, making it possible that Korkyt's name became associated with Islamic elements during this time. It's crucial to acknowledge that the gradual assimilation of Islamic beliefs among Aral nomadic tribes during these periods remains an essential historical context.

The portrayal of Korkyt Ata, the kobyz, and the motif of overcoming death in these legends illustrates the aesthetic demands of historical epics. The assessment that "Korkyt's legends in folklore lack concrete details" is valid, but these narratives within their time provided an epiphany genre that allowed for substantial transformations (transmutations). Other types of folklore could have also incorporated additional details about historical figures, which enriched the epics and imbued them with historical accuracy.⁶

The recurring use of historical figures' names in various folkloric contexts provided an additional layer of meaning to these narratives. The expansion of these narratives, with added details, created a more comprehensive depiction of the character (individual). The transformation of epics through continued storytelling and the use of epic conventions contributed to this narrative complexity.

The interaction between true stories and fictional elements in these epic narratives, as well as the gradual introduction of epic elements and dramatic effects, resulted in a hidden context. The classification of folklore, including the terms *memorat* and *fabulat*, is often used in intercultural folkloric studies.⁷

A true narrative serves to draw attention to historical events while, in the context of a folk narrative, every imaginative element of the epic is added to the narrative's central core, creating

⁴ The content of the legend was obtained from the internet

⁵ Ayimbetov K. Folk customs, Nukus, 'Karakalpakstan,' 1988, p. 73.

⁶ Kaskabasov, A.S. Kazakh Non-Fairy Tale Prose, p. 165

⁷ Chistov, K.V. On the Principles of Classifying Genres in Oral Folk Prose. Moscow, 1964, pp. 1-3

an intricate tapestry in the narrative's hidden context.

During my speech, I would like to emphasize the significance of understanding our national ideology and its programs for the development of our country. Recognizing our identity, respecting our national values, and aligning our actions with the spiritual heritage that has been passed down to us will help us to enrich our cultural traditions and adhere to the principles set forth in our national agenda. To achieve this, it is crucial to educate ourselves with a particular focus on intellectual development and knowledge acquisition, as these are essential components of this process.

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