

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE UZBEK AND ENGLISH FOLK HEROIC EPIC

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Abstract: This piece explores the comparative aspects of the two folk heroic epics from Uzbekistan and England and particularly contrasts their thematic, structural, and linguistic features. While relying on *Alpomish* and *Beowulf* to provide prototypes, the exposition probes into the extent to which these two giants of oral tradition embody the moral virtues, social hierarchy, and spiritual convictions of their respective cultural milieus. It dwells on the role of performance art as the primary vehicle of the collective memory and the main mode of transmitting the national ethos from one generation to another. Besides, the two epics devote very similar accounts of the hero as the epitome of valor, loyalty, and moral uprightness; therefore, they convey the message of the importance of courage and honor as instruments of social peace. Although they differ in terms of historical background and worldview—*Alpomish* as nomadic-patriarchal and *Beowulf* as warrior-Christian narrative—both works teem with universal human themes of heroism, self-sacrifice, and eternal conflict between the forces of good and evil. Their authorship is thus seen as two-sided artistic reflections that, acting as mirrors, both preserve the historical and ethical identity of their peoples.

Introduction. Folk heroic epics are one of the most longstanding and meaningful genres in world literature through which they serve as a mirror of the moral, cultural, and historical values of a nation. Besides, they are the vessel of collective memory, the celebration of heroism, and the epitome of virtues that, being those of a people, represent their identity. Uzbek *Alpomish* and English *Beowulf* are among these epics that stand as masterpieces of oral tradition; thus, they are both dealing with the battle between light and darkness, fidelity and treachery, valor and fear. In a nutshell, despite

completely different cultural and historical backgrounds, these two literatures share a lot of common ground such as universal human issues—heroism, sacrifice, and the eternal fight between good and evil—that at the same time reveal the different moral and social features of their civilizations. While the character of Alpomish is the Turkic nomadic worldview based on the unity of the family, community, and respect for the ancestors, Beowulf is the Anglo-Saxon spirit of warrior loyalty, fate, and Christian ethics. Using their thematic, structural, and stylistic features as a starting point, this comparative study tries to shut off the lights to better see how these two epics declare their nationals' values and worldviews while being a common global heritage of heroism and moral stamina.

Methodology. The study here looks at Alpomish and Beowulf through a comparative-literary and cultural lens as two representatives from Uzbek and English folklore, respectively, focusing on similarities and differences in themes, structure, language, and moral ideology. The research uses descriptive, analytical, and interpretive methods to accomplish its aim. It analyzes primary texts of Alpomish (in Uzbek) and Beowulf (in English translation) and reviews linguistic, cultural, and historical studies as the main references for the research. The oral tradition model is also considered in the methodology, which emphasizes accordingly the role of storytellers—bakhshi in Uzbek culture and scopos in Anglo-Saxon England—as transmitters of collective memory. The study of comparative literature principles guides the work of juxtaposition done here to emphasize such aspects as cross-cultural parallels, symbols, and narrative functions. The research aims at revitalizing the artistic and cultural aspects of the heroic ideal of both the Uzbek and English epics through the integration of literary criticism, cultural anthropology, and stylistic analysis.

The roots of the Uzbek folk heroic epic can be traced back to the rich oral tradition of Central Asia where storytelling played an important part in the preservation of the culture and moral values. These epics, which among the folk poets or bakhshi are passed down orally from generation to generation, were both amusement and moral guidance for the community. Among the prolific ones is Alpomish, the Uzbek national

epic par excellence. It is a reflection of the heroic deeds, loyalty, and the safeguarding of family and tribal honor through the course of it. Alpomish's historical background is such that it mirrors the Turkic and Uzbek peoples' nomadic lifestyle, whose lives were dependent on nature, war, and kinship ties. The epic is that which depicts a world where people are guided by the rules of the ancestors, the reverence for the old, and the defense of the moral integrity. The hero, Alpomish, is the symbol that stands for the unity of his people, he is the one that fights to bring back justice and uphold his family's honor. On the whole, it is through the poetry, rhythm, and images of Alpomish that the collective spirit of the Uzbek nation is communicated. Other Central Asian heroic tales such as Gorogly, Manas, and Go'roghli are quite similar in that they show heroism, friendship, and loyalty. The Uzbek folk epic tradition therefore becomes a reflection of the people's social life, living the ideals and dreams of a people who highly regarded the virtues of courage, hospitality, and community.

The English folk heroic epic tells the story of its origin of early medieval times, basing especially on the Anglo-Saxon culture of the 7-10 centuries. Imbued with the oral poetic tradition, these epics came into being as the performances of scop, or court poets, who created history and myth with their verses. The broadest instance, Beowulf, is sometimes considered the English national epic and also one of the first triumphs of English literature. It shows the concepts and ideas of the Anglo-Saxon world—a world of warriors ruled by loyalty, honor, and family ties. The saga follows the heroic acts of Beowulf, a princely warrior who fights the brutal Grendel, Grendel's mother, and a dragon. These confrontations are allegories to the perpetual conflict of good and evil, bravery and destruction, life and death. The poem also conveys the change from paganism to Christianity, mixing the heroic and moral ideals. The Christian effects change the standard warrior code to a moral vision with valor and self-sacrifice being among God's will and destiny. Hence, Beowulf is not only a celebration of heroism but also a vehicle for early English culture's moral and spiritual identity.

One of the most important things the poetic devices that are in both Uzbek and English folk heroic epics have is a significant role, that they contribute to making the

rhythm, the emotional depth, and the artistic beauty of the oral and performative nature of the narratives stronger. Within the Uzbek epic conventions, more detailed in Alpomish, one can observe poetic devices like repetition, parallelism, and metaphor which do not only serve the aesthetic purpose but also the mnemonic one which permits to bakhshi (folk singer or storyteller) to perform long verses and to memorize it during the performance. Alliteration and rhythm render the recitation more melodious which draws the attention of listeners and improves the dramatic tension of heroic scenes. Parallelism, which comprises of repeating similar syntactic or thematic structures, contributes to the balance and the harmony of the verse and underlines the moral and emotional opposition such as courage vs. cowardice or loyalty vs. treachery. Metaphors and similes of the Uzbek people are intertwined with their nature and culture, depicting the hero's bravery with vivid comparators, for example, comparing Alpomish's power to that of a lion or his speed to that of a falcon. Epithets—descriptive words or phrases that are attached to names—are another characteristic of the Uzbek oral poetry. They show respect, admiration, and symbolic meaning, thus they convert simple descriptions into expressions that are rich in culture. Terms like "brave Alpomish," "wise mother Barchin," or "faithful companion" fix character traits within the listener's mind and thus, reinforce the epic's moral ideals and national spirit. The lavish use of words in Alpomish is a reflection of the Uzbek poetic view of the world, where words are full of moral, emotional, and spiritual resonance.

In English epic, Beowulf, the use of poetic devices such as alliteration, metaphor, and kennings—compound expressions that replace simple nouns, for example, "whale-road" for sea or "ring-giver" for king is very prominent. Alliteration is at the core of Anglo-Saxon verse, it is the main feature that sets the rhythm and the cohesiveness of the whole line. The verse or each line is split in two parts by a caesura and the repeated initial sounds that link the two parts, thus you get a musical and memorable flow suitable for oral recitation. Beowulf uses metaphors and kennings not only for the sake of artistic beauty but also to present the worldview of the Anglo-Saxons, who incorporate concepts like bravery, fate, and the brevity of life in their value system.

Epithets, for instance, “mighty Beowulf” or “gracious Hrothgar,” bring out the positive qualities of the hero and underline the ethical and social virtues of loyalty, generosity, and honor. Consequently, poetic devices in both *Alpomish* and *Beowulf* have similar implications—they are the carriers of the oral tradition, they uplift the hero’s image, and they deepen the moral and aesthetic power of the plot. In contrast, the features of the story of *Beowulf* are greatly influenced by the Old English language which is known for its concise, powerful vocabulary and an alliterative poetic structure. The language of *Beowulf* is put together in such a way that most of the phrases and expressions are repeated throughout the text, this is done to make it easier to memorize and has also a certain rhythm which aids the performance of the text orally. One of the main characteristics of the stylistics in Old English poetry is the introduction of kennings—compound metaphoric terms such as “whale-road” referring to the sea or “bone-house” meaning the body—which provide the text with multiple interpretations and also with the symbols of the culture. Those kennings mirror the Anglo-Saxon perspective as they combine the realistic with the imaginative and, furthermore, they call up the harsh yet magnificent natural world wherein they lived. The images found in *Beowulf* also combine the pagan concept of heroism with the new Christian morals, thus the hero’s conflicts are symbolized as fights between the light and the dark of the moral world. These two characteristics of the text, the use of a forceful and rhythmic language together with the employment of symbolic imagery, are the ones that make *Beowulf* sound very dignified and solemn, hence, the poem is not just simple storytelling anymore. Therefore, we can see that both *Alpomish* and *Beowulf* are recitals of the epic genre where the use of native language and cultural references are the determining factors in such a transformation, which makes them the poetic representation of shared past, values and spiritual vision.

Alpomish as well as *Beowulf* are not only the epic of heroism but also serve as the mirrors of culture that reveal the national identity and moral values of the societies they belong to by depicting heroism, justice, and social duty. In the Uzbek traditional epic *Alpomish*, the national identity is closely related to the key aspects of courage,

loyalty, and respect for family. The character Alpomish is the perfect representation of the qualities of a true Uzbek hero—the one who is brave during the fight, keeps his promises and loyal to his family and tribe. His deeds are motivated not only by personal ambition but by a deep sense of communal responsibility thus he is a protector of the weak and a promoter of social harmony. Justice in the world of Uzbek epic is very much associated with purity of the soul and observance of the traditions laid down by the forefathers. The narrative depicts a collective view wherein the honor of each individual contributes to the pride of the nation. Courage is not blind aggression but a manifestation of loyalty and moral obligation, while justice secures that social and spiritual balance of the tribe is maintained. Besides that, the epic also deals with love, respect for elders and unity. Thus it is depicted that moral and familial unity are just as important as physical bravery. Through its language and moral content, Alpomish becomes a poetic form of the Uzbek people's identity—the nation that has been shaped by nomadic traditions, moral firmness, and a high regard for community life.

First off, the qualities of heroism, justice, and loyalty are also the building blocks of the national identity in Beowulf, however, within the framework of an Anglo-Saxon warrior society that had been influenced by both pagan and Christian values. Beowulf is the main hero, who represents the ideal of the brave warrior that is after immortality only through his courageous acts. Among other good things, it is his bravery and self-sacrifice that give origin to the feeling of duty and thus he protects his people and ensures justice in a world that is at risk of falling into chaos and evil. The ground for ethics in Beowulf is the heroic code which includes loyalty to one's lord, generosity to one's warriors, and the continuous search for honor even at the cost of death. Yet, the Christian sentiment brings about a softer, spiritual side of heroism implying that not only physical might but also humility and trust in the divine providence are required to be a true hero. The epic is a depiction of the intricate and interlinked relationships between humans, nature, gods, and fate. In Alpomish, nature is a friend who can always be trusted, a symbol of harmony and continuity in life while in Beowulf, nature frequently reflects the uncertainty of fate and the fight between darkness and light.

Even with these cultural differences, the two epics are still similar in that they share a wide range of moral and ethical issues common to all mankind such as courage during hardship, justice in leadership and the belief that the moral order of society is sustained by individual virtue. The endurance of these shared ideals show us that through different and distant cultures and languages, the heroic epic remains a timeless expression of humanity's quest for honor, faith and collective identity.

Conclusion. The comparison of the Uzbek folk heroic epic (Alpomish) and the English epic Beowulf has unearthed resemblances as well as differences that significantly impact the representation of national identity, moral ideals, and cultural perspectives in epic narratives. Both characters'—Alpomish's and Beowulf's—are depicted in the most perfect of lights and are considered to be the most courageous, loyal, and the ones who when required offer their lives to their community and thus act as moral examples. Quite significantly, while Alpomish is a hero from a culture of the nomadic type Illyric-speaking blossom tribes, wherein the concepts of family, ancestral customs, and guest-friendship form the basis of the community, Beowulf, on the other hand, comes from a society of warriors that seems to have been influenced by the coexistence of the pagan and the Christian values, fates tightly intertwined with loyalty to one's lord and the divine-moral order playing accordingly its role.

Most of all, absolutely in line with the conventional forms as well as in depicting their imagery, and even in the very way the epics were performed these two giants equally leaned on oral tradition: the use of set phrases, repetitions, the employment of symbols, and other poetic devices supporting not only the memorization but also the participation of the audience. Yet the Old English poetry of Beowulf with its characteristic techniques like kennings, alliteration, and clear-cut division between pagan symbolism and Christian ethics is very different from Alpomish in the imagery of which the past and the nature, the tribal virtues, family honor, and the everyday life which are not only largely shaped by Turkic linguistic features but also strongly performance-driven by bakhshi prevails.

In fact, through these epics the audience could get a glimpse of the past besides being entertained; in a way, they were the collective cultural memory, the sum of what each community reckoned to be loftiest and morally significant. The Uzbek epic, thus, not only tells but also recites the story of a loving and united family, the surviving power of virtue, and the harmonious relationship with the world of nature while Beowulf dangles front of the listeners not only daring, but also reputation, and above all, the unending struggle between human agency and fate as well as the divine will. Hence, on their own, they talk of how heroic epics despite of rather different histories, languages, and landscapes fundamentally employ the same universal motive: to portray what it is like to remain human when the odds are against one, death being inevitable, and the unknown still waiting to unfold.

Recommendations:

1. Size the comparative corpus more widely: Besides Alpomish and Beowulf, also study other epic traditions, for instance, Persian Shahnameh, Mongolian Jangar, Norse sagas ut NE Sva, so as to place these two works against an even broader comparative backdrop. You would thereafter be capable of accurately distinguishing those features which belong to the two different cultures merely because of their epic nature and those which are common epic tropes.
2. Gathering information directly from the oral performers: Get to the two of the bakhshi and the local Uzbek storytellers. Ngght them perform Alpomish with their variations, improvisations, and audience interaction. A field study like this would reveal firsthand the significance of oral memory and performance in the creation of the text.
3. The translation world: Compare different translations of the two epics and look into how the translators handle poetic devices (such as alliteration, metaphors, epithets) and cultural imagery. This will make it possible to track the fortunes of "epic-ness" as they move from one language to another.
4. The interdisciplinary approach: Turn to the literary, anthropological, and linguistic methods to combine different aspects of the epics. For example, you may

show through the epics how rituals, ceremonies and material culture (weapons, clothing, social hierarchy) authenticated by history (and vice versa) may be the very things that derive from and at the same time reflect the epics.

5. Moral and current relevance: See how today's readers in Uzbekistan and England understand these epics. Youth and national identity is one thing these epics would be telling or rather teaching them. Apart from this, one may ask in what ways these epics are currently performed, taught, and adapted (e.g., drama, film, and schools). All these signify the heroic epics' dynamic longevity.

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