

THE EVOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL HERO IN T. KAYIPBERGENOV'S TRILOGY "DASTAN ABOUT THE KARAKALPAKS"

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Annotation:

T. Kayipbergenov's trilogy *Dastan about the Karakalpaks* is organised around a sequential change of protagonist across three generations — Maman-biy, Aydos-biy and Yernazar — each occupying the centre of one of the trilogy's three books. This paper argues that the three heroes do not represent three isolated historical portraits but successive, logically connected stages in the evolution of the collective identity of the Karakalpak people: from a military-political alliance with a stronger power, through collective suffering and displacement, to a deliberate cultural rapprochement. It is concluded that this generational replacement of the hero is the trilogy's principal compositional device for modelling the historical fate of a people as a continuous yet internally dramatic process.

Keywords:

national hero, identity, T. Kayipbergenov, Dastan about the Karakalpaks, Maman-biy, Aydos-biy, Yernazar, Karakalpak literature, comparative literary studies.

One of the central tasks of the broader dissertation project on the concept of identity in the works of T. Kayipbergenov is the analysis of how the author artistically resolves the problem of the national hero — the figure through which the collective fate of a people receives concrete, personified embodiment. The trilogy *Dastan about the Karakalpaks* offers exceptionally rich material for this purpose, since it is structured as a sequential change of hero across three generations: Maman-biy, Aydos-biy and Yernazar occupy, in turn, the centre of the trilogy's three books, and the sheer frequency of their respective mentions in the text (over 400, 1750 and 1400 occurrences) confirms this shift of focus in the most direct, quantifiable way.

Maman-biy: the unifying hero. In the first book of the trilogy, Maman emerges as a hero whose identity is shaped by a political choice: an alliance with Russia undertaken to secure the physical survival of the small Karakalpak people caught between the Khanate of Khiva and a growing imperial power. The hero's posthumous name, Maman-rusky ("Maman the Russian"), is telling: unlike the inherited title "Maman-biy," this name is earned and bestowed by folk memory itself, and it crystallises the ideology of the entire first book — Karakalpak identity is constructed not through isolation but through a selective entry into a stronger, external discourse of power. The trilogy's closing image — the shared grave of Maman-biy and a Russian shipwright, submerged where the fresh and salt waters of the Amu Darya and the Aral Sea meet — fixes this idea at the level of symbol: the merging of the two peoples' fates is literally sunk into permanence, becoming part of an indestructible collective memory.

Aydos-biy: the hero of collective suffering. The second book, *Unhappy* [Неприкаянные], opens after Maman-biy's death, in 1806, and shifts the emphasis from the unifying hero to a hero whose identity is shaped tragically — through persecution by the Khivan authorities, executions,

and displacement. The very title of the book signals a change in the mode of identity: whereas Maman acted as an active subject of historical choice, Aydos-biy and his people become the object of external violence, and national self-awareness crystallises here not through assertion but through the shared experience of injustice. The threefold repetition of the word "unhappy" in the climactic scene of the shepherd Dospan's death is telling: collective identity in this book is built around a shared status as victims rather than around a leader in the earlier sense.

Yernazar: the hero of new understanding. The third book, *Not Understood* [Непонятные], introduces a further turn: its protagonist Yernazar, son of Myrzhyk and nephew of Aydos, acts neither in the logic of military alliance nor in the logic of collective suffering, but in the logic of a deliberate cultural and political rapprochement with Russia as a source of knowledge and protection — the book closes, tellingly, on the image of a house to which "people kept coming and coming" for guidance on all matters connected with Russia. Identity here finally shifts from the military-political to the intellectual-cultural plane: the third hero is no longer a warrior or a victim but a mediator and an educator.

The logic of the evolution: from alliance, through suffering, to knowledge. The comparison of the three heroes reveals not an arbitrary but a coherent developmental vector: Maman-biy (military-political alliance) → Aydos-biy (collective suffering, loss of support) → Yernazar (deliberate cultural rapprochement, the pursuit of knowledge). In miniature, this vector reproduces the broader logic of a postcolonial plot — from pragmatic engagement with a stronger power, through crisis and loss, to a new, now conscious and voluntary, cultural synthesis. This dynamic is further reinforced at the level of naming itself: the honorific, earned name of the first hero gives way to a collective designation of suffering in the second book, and to the absence of any special epithet at all for the third hero — a compressed model of the evolution of the very concept of "national hero," from an individual figure to a function dissolved into the fate of the people.

In conclusion, the analysis of the three books of Dastan about the Karakalpaks demonstrates that T. Kayipbergenov resolves the problem of the national hero not through the creation of a single, monolithic image but through a sequential, psychologically and historically motivated replacement of the hero from generation to generation. This compositional strategy differs fundamentally from the individual, mythopoetic path of the hero in N. Scott Momaday's fiction and provides substantial material for the further comparative-typological analysis of the two writers.

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