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## A Study Of Versions Of The Epic “Alpamish”

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the Kazakh and Karakalpak versions of the most famous Uzbek folklore epic “Alpamish”, and discusses their similarities and differences. Several hypotheses regarding the names of the regions where the epic takes place are analyzed.

### Keywords:

epic, bakhshi, performance, variant, version, comparative study, translation.

**Introduction.** So far, only one version of the Alpamish saga has been discussed, which was written down by Fazil Yoldash. The version of the epic “Alpamish” sung by bakhshi is one of the many popular Uzbek versions of the epic. Tora Mirzaev studied and compared these options in detail, listed 28 bakhshi where the epic was recorded.

**Literature review.** Although there is considerable diversity among these variants, there is no doubt that they are similar in plot structure, sequence of motifs, as well as style and storytelling techniques, and that they belong to each other. It is useful to group this group as the “Uzbek version” of the Alpamish epic, and to group the Uzbek Alpamish epics into one group. In the same way, the Karakalpak versions of the epic can be classified as the “Karakalpak version” and the Kazakh versions as the “Kazakh version” [1].

**Research Methodology.** It is known that this saga consists of two parts, in the first part

the event of the heroine’s marriage to Barchin takes place, and in the next part, the separation of this couple and their reunion after the separation is described. While the first part is based on a widespread motif called “The Bride’s Victory”, the second part of the epic is based on what folklore studies call “The Husband’s Return” or “The Hero’s Return to His Homeland”.

**Analysis and results.** In a detailed study of the Alpamish epic, V.M.Zhirmunsky emphasizes that the comparison and classification of different versions of the epic helps to understand both the place and the time of the spread of the variants. If we analyze closely, the Uzbek, Karakalpak, and Kazakh languages are so close to each other that they can be grouped into one higher group, which Zhirmunsky called the “Kungrad version”. Compared to other versions and variants of the Alpamish epic, the “Kungrad Version” stands out in that the events are set in the world of

nomadic Turks, specifically the Kungrad or Kunirat tribe, whose people, according to various texts, live in the land of Baysun and wage war against the Kalmyks. The Fazil Yuldash version begins with the following words: *"In the past, sixteen clans were known as Dobonbii in Kungirat people"* [2;5].

*Burīngi ʻtken zamanda,  
din musulman amanda,  
Žideli Baysin žerinde  
Qonirat degen elinde,  
Baybōri degen bolipti.*

*In the past tense,  
The Muslim religion is safe  
In the land of the brave boy,  
In the name of call,  
There lived a world called Boybori.*

(The translation is ours – D.K.)

The same thing exists in the Karakalpak language: the first lines of the version written by Niyaz ugli Ogiz Jirov begin as follows:

*Erte degi äyyem zamanda,  
ol zamanniñ qädiminde,  
Žiydeli Baysin xalqında,  
Qonirat degen el edi,  
urıwı edi ırğaqlı.*

(Bayniyazov, Ayımbetov 1981: 9)

*In the past,  
In the most ancient time in the world,  
In the land of the mighty Baisin,  
There was a people called Kungrad,  
Their lineage was Irgaq.*

(The translation is ours – D.K.)

As Irgaqli noted, the Alpamish belong to the Jigali, one of the two tribal divisions of the Kungrat. The largest number of Kungrats among the Uzbeks, according to the 1924 population census, was found in the Boysun-Darya valley in the Surkhandarya region of southern Uzbekistan.

According to Zhirmunsky, the Alpomysh epic originated from the Kungrat tribe of Uzbeks, known among Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Karakalpaks. According to historical sources, at the time of Mukhammad Shaibani Khan at the beginning of the 16th century, this tribe had not yet migrated to the Baysun-Darya valley, but was located around Termez on the border of

present-day Afghanistan. This means that the "Kungrad version" of the epic must have appeared after it moved north, towards Baysun, that is, before the 16th century [3]. On the other hand, H.Zarif, while suggesting that the epic originated from the Kungrats, calls Baysun a city on the shores of the Aral Sea [4; 6-25]. According to H.Zarif, groups of Uzbek kungrats have been found in Khorezm, and indeed, according to ancient tradition, the grave of Barchin can be found on the lower banks of the Syrdarya River. Abul Ghazi, in his genealogy of the Turkmens, "Shajarai Tarakima", mentions that for many years in the 17th century, the Oghuz were ruled by seven daughters, one of

whom was named Barchin-Salor. She was the daughter of Karmyshbay and married Mamishbek. "His grave is widely known on the banks of the Syrdarya and among the people." Undoubtedly, Barchin-Salor – Barchin and Mamishbek – Alp-mamish ("hero Mamish"), or the assimilation of the initial letter through / m / in Mamish, Alp-pamish – Alp-amish; the hero of the Altai version of the epic is still called "Alip-Manash" with the initial / m /. Zarifov believes that the "Kungirat version" was formed in the south of the Aral Sea before the invasion of the Mongols in the south of Dashti Kipchak, that is, before 1200 [5].

Although there is no definitive source for the period of creation of the "Kungirat version", it cannot be denied that the events of the Alpomish saga were known to the Turkic peoples of Central Asia before the migration of the Oghuz from the Dashti Kipchak west to Iran and eventually to Motherland. Otherwise, the similarity between the "Story about Bamsi Bayrek" in the "Book of Dada Korkut" and the Central Asian versions of the "Alpamish" epic seems to suggest that it entered Central Asia through Anatolia in the Middle Ages. The sources between the "Kungrat" and "Oguz" versions are indeed so close that there is no doubt that they reflect the developments of the same event [6; 59-87].

Although the story of Alpamish is also found among the Altaians, the plots, style, and structure of Altai epic poetry, and in particular the place of shamanism in Altai legends, distinguish the Central Asian Turks in Turkey from the Turks of Azerbaijan. Altai oral epic poetry is much closer to the Tuvinian, Yakut, and other East Siberian (Khakass, Shor, etc.) traditions of epic poetry than to that of the Kazakhs or Uzbeks. This is not to say that there is no common heritage shared with all Turkic traditions. Parallelism, alliteration, formulaic diction, the mixture of poetry and prose, the style of performance, and the early close relationship between singer and shaman are all part of this heritage. On the other hand, there is a certain uniformity in the "central traditions" of Turkic oral epic poetry, especially in their concept of heroism, which is undoubtedly a

reflection of their nomadic past (and in some cases present) peoples who have reached the steppes and mountains of Central Asia. While emphasizing a certain unity of these "central traditions" one should not forget their diversity. **Conclusion/Recommendations.** Considering the differences between the versions of the epic "Alpamish", it becomes clear that the Uzbek version of the epic appears to be the only form in Central Asia in which the practice of performing or memorizing the oral epic "without reference to the text" is practiced.

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