



Interpretation Of The Character Of Parents In The Epics "Alpomish" And "Odysseya"

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Annotation: This article discusses the comparison of patron and helper characters in the epics "Alpomish" and "Odyssey," analyzing the patrons who patronized the characters of Alpomish and Odysseus, and the helper characters depicted alongside them. The role and function of these characters in the work are discussed.

Keywords: "Alpomish," "Odyssey," patron and helper image, Shahimardan pir and Athena, Rajabkhoja eshon, forty chilton, Tovka and Calypso, Qultoy and Eumaeus, Swallow, Karajon, king of the island of Scheria Alcinous, Zeus, Hermes, Aeolus, Tiresias.

It is well known that in folklore works, patron (guardian) figures play a crucial role in revealing the character traits of epic heroes. Such figures accompany the hero from the moment of their birth and take part in all stages of their adventures. They provide guidance to the hero, assist in fulfilling difficult conditions and tasks, help overcome obstacles, and support the retrieval of certain objects or even a fairy from "other realms."¹ Indeed, in the genres of folklore such as fairy tales, legends, and epics, one can frequently encounter various patron figures who aid the protagonist. In particular, within heroic epics belonging to the tradition of folk epos, the patron figure holds significant importance. This is because the patron figure plays a leading role within the "heroic system," which is regarded as a defining criterion of heroic epics². In the epic *Alpomish*, the figures of

¹ Nurmanov F. Xizr obrazi genezisi va uning o'zbek folkloridagi talqini. Filol.fan.dok.diss. - Toshkent, 2007. 103-b.

² Turdimov Sh. O'zbek mifologiyasi va folklori. - Toshkent, 2023. 186-b.



Shohimardon and Rajabkhoja pirs, as well as the chiltons, are regarded as the hero's patrons, while the characters of Qaldirg'och and Qorajon function as auxiliary figures. In this regard, various scholarly opinions have been expressed concerning the issue of patron and auxiliary characters in the epic *Alpomish*.

According to the folklorist scholar Nazar Eshonqul, particular attention is given to the role of the character Qultoy in the epic, including episodes related to Alpomish's assumption of Qultoy's appearance, as well as considerations regarding their identities and personalities. The folklorist Shomirza Turdimov emphasizes that, in order to fully understand the essence of the character Qultoy, it is necessary to compare him with the figure of Soqibulbul from the epic *Go'ro'g'li*, which runs parallel to *Alpomish*. The scholar notes that in Uzbek folklore, the individual responsible for tending the hero's horse typically assumes the role of a patron figure.

Furthermore, he elaborates on the distinctive qualities of Qultoy as depicted in the epic, highlighting his immense strength and power, as well as his ability to gather ninety herds of horses with a single command. Overall, Turdimov concludes that the character of Qultoy embodies the spiritual image of the Boysun-Qo'ng'iro't people. Continuing his reflections on this issue, the folklorist states: "The presence of the handprint of Shohimardon pir on Alpomish's left shoulder, and that of Qultoy on his right shoulder, clearly indicates Qultoy's strength, power, and status. In shamanistic belief, transformation from one being into another signifies rebirth and the attainment of a new status. From this perspective, Alpomish's assumption of Qultoy's appearance demonstrates that he has risen to Qultoy's rank and has become a representative of the invisible (supernatural) world. In folk narratives about Amir Temur, it is explicitly stated that after the death of his spiritual guide, he himself ascended to that very status. The status attained in captivity demonstrates that Alpomish has reached the rank of Qultoy, thereby revealing Qultoy's function and position within the epic." Meanwhile, the folklorist Jabbor Eshonqulov argues that Alpomish's confrontation with Qultoy serves as evidence that Qultoy is not an ordinary character, but rather a patron figure. The scholar emphasizes that Alpomish's



assumption of Qultoy's appearance carries implicit meanings: it signifies that Alpomish attains the status of a figure who has consistently supported him, acquires Qultoy's strength and power, and undergoes spiritual maturation. Based on the views of the two folklorist scholars mentioned above, it can be concluded that the character of Qultoy holds significant importance within the epic. He is portrayed as a patron figure who supports the hero in achieving his goals, and, at a certain stage, the hero himself attains the status of a patron figure, reaching a level of spiritual maturity.

In addition, the chiltons depicted in the epic also function as patron figures of the leading hero. In folklore, the image of the chiltons is interpreted as benevolent beings who bestow goodness upon people and act as assistants to the figure of Khizr, protecting human souls from evil forces.”³ Indeed, in epic narratives, the figures of the chiltons primarily serve to unite the souls of the protagonists within dreams. Through this, they foreshadow the eventual convergence of the heroes' destinies. In particular, in the epic *Alpomish*, the chiltons unite the souls of Alpomish and Barchin in their dreams, thereby indicating that Alpomish's path will ultimately intersect with that of Barchin. Furthermore, the moderator invites leading scholars to express their views on one of the significant characters in the epic—Qaldirg'och. Specifically, questions are raised regarding the symbolic meaning behind Qaldirg'och's discovery of the letter, her role in awakening her brother Alpomish from a state of inertia (the hero's passivity), her assistance in the selection of a horse, and, in general, the overall mission and function of the character of Qaldirg'och within the epic. Professor Shomirza Turdimov notes that the mission of Qaldirg'och in the epic essentially intersects with that of Qultoy, emphasizing that both characters belong to a shared symbolic realm. At the same time, he highlights the social dimensions of Qaldirg'och's role, pointing out that she is Alpomish's sister and Yodgor's aunt, thereby underscoring her connection to familial and societal structures. The folklorist further emphasizes that the character's mission is already implied in her name, and he discusses Qaldirg'och's place among messenger symbols, particularly in relation to her discovery of the letter. The scholar also draws attention to the *tumor* (mark)

³ Turdimov Sh. O'zbek mifologiyasi va folklori. - Toshkent, 2023. 49-b.



placed on the horse by Qaldirg‘och, emphasizing that through this, she embodies the collective blessing of the entire community. According to him, Qultoy and Qaldirg‘och are extraordinary individuals who perceive truths that remain unnoticed by other characters. For instance, Qaldirg‘och recognizes that the horse chosen by Alpomish is a horse even before Alpomish himself realizes it. He further emphasizes that among us there exist individuals who remind us of each character in the epic, and that the figures within the epic represent a composite of all societal layers. Professor Jabbor Eshonqulov interprets the character of Qaldirg‘och as an auxiliary (supporting) hero. According to the scholar, in folklore, even if the main hero is not actively engaged, the actions of their patron or supporting figures indicate the hero’s active presence in the narrative. In the Fozil Yo‘ldosh o‘g‘li version of the epic, the character of Qaldirg‘och is developed in a highly comprehensive manner. Within the course of the epic’s events, the assistance provided by this supporting figure is manifested in several key actions: discovering the letter, urging her brother to rescue Barchin, sending him to Qultoy, selecting the horse, revealing that the horse is a divine horse, saddling the horse, and accompanying Alpomish on his journey. These deeds exemplify the integral role of Qaldirg‘och as a supporting character. Based on the views discussed above, it becomes clear that the character of Qaldirg‘och appears in all versions of the epic and occupies a significant place within the narrative; without her, the epic would be incomplete. In our view, Qaldirg‘och should be considered not as a patron figure, but as an auxiliary hero. This is because an auxiliary hero, in many instances, can guide the leading hero and provide assistance, yet cannot attain the same status as a patron figure. A patron figure, in contrast, leads the principal hero out of difficult situations and enables the hero to reach an equivalent rank or status.

In the epics *Alpomish* and *The Odyssey*, the leading heroes are supported by patron figures who accompany them during difficult and testing moments, as well as by close associates such as relatives and servants, and, in certain episodes, by personified symbols. These characters have distinctive analogues within the respective epics. The first scholar to address this comparison was



V.M.Zhirmunsky.⁴ On this basis, the Uzbek scholar Jabbor Eshonqul has conducted a special study, emphasizing the close similarity between the characters of Qultoy and the swineherd Evmeus, as well as the “wedding contest” motif in both epics. The scholar argues that Elizar, the leader of the slaves in the story of the Prophet Ibrahim, and Qultoy belong to the same symbolic and cultural sphere.⁵ Indeed, Alpomish’s servant Qultoy and Odysseus’s swineherd Eumaeus occupy a distinct and significant place within the plots of their respective epics. When examining these two characters, it becomes evident that Qultoy appears throughout both parts of the *Alpomish* epic, whereas Eumaeus emerges only in the later episodes of the Greek epic. It is known that the horse-tender Qultoy, acting initially under Boybori’s orders, seeks to prevent Hakimbek from returning from the campaign to Qalmoq. He shows strong resistance to Alpomish, refusing to provide him with a horse from his herd. In the first part of the epic, one characteristic of Qultoy’s personality is his ability to summon others with a mere command, referred to as the “poisonous desert” power. At the same time, he is physically strong and somewhat coarse in manner. He follows the orders of his master, Boybori, as instructed. Qultoy strikes Alpomish, scolds him, and does not allow him near. The young hero lacks the strength to confront him. Qultoy achieves his goal the first time, but on the second occasion, he is overcome by Alpomish, who has been inflamed by Qaldirg‘och’s reproaches and scoldings, and Alpomish completely halts his resistance. He is portrayed as a fatherly and caring figure toward Alpomish. When Alpomish returns from the land of the Qalmogs, he encounters Qultoy while lamenting, “With sorrow, I have been separated from my child,” and through this meeting, he comes to trust Qultoy’s loyalty and reliability. Alpomish introduces himself to Qultoy, yet the elderly servant does not recognize him—this initial lack of recognition is due to the previous appearance of individuals claiming, “I am Alpomish” (S.O.). Only after Alpomish shows Qultoy the handprint on his right shoulder does Qultoy acknowledge him. Father and son are thus reunited. Qultoy informs Alpomish about the weddings of Ultontoz and Barchin. Alpomish enters the wedding in the guise of the horse-tender Qultoy and participates in the archery contest. After

⁴ Жирмунский В.М. Избранные труды. – Ленинград: «Наука», 1974.

⁵ Турдимов Ш. Этнос ва эпос. – Тошкент: “O‘zbekiston”, 2011. 76-77 б.



Alpomish wins the competition, it is Qultoy who announces his arrival to the people. In *The Odyssey*, the scene of Odysseus's return to his homeland remains largely concealed and is not revealed as openly as in *Alpomish*. The loyal servant Eumaeus is unaware of the ruler's arrival. At this point, it can be noted that, unlike Qultoy, Eumaeus does not possess a sharp tongue or coarse manners, nor is he particularly strong physically. By nature, Eumaeus is calm and moderate in character. He warmly receives Odysseus as a host at his hut, located outside the city. No matter how humble or weak the guest may be, he offers hospitality and provides a place in his home. He shows respect to the old beggar. In the epic, he recognizes his master, Odysseus, and surmises that the man beside the old beggar could also be his master. Yet this also reflects the respect he continues to hold for his own master and that he has not forgotten him. He speaks to Odysseus, in disguise, about himself and his past. Nevertheless, Odysseus does not reveal his identity to his loyal servant. Through this interaction, he reassesses the servant's character and gains full confidence in his continued loyalty. Eumaeus's devotion and genuine humanity are revealed in his expressions of sorrow and concern over the suitors who are destroying Odysseus's property.

Another point of comparison between the epics *Alpomish* and *The Odyssey* is found in the characters who provide a certain degree of assistance to the heroes: Tovka in *Alpomish* and Circe (Calypso) in *The Odyssey*. According to the folklorist Shomirza Turdimov, there is a notable similarity between the figures of Circe and Tovka. In the grandfather's narrative of *Alpomish*, Tovka, Surkhayl, and the Qalmog heroic male figures are depicted as inhabitants of the underworld. The depiction of the *alps* residing in a cave clearly reflects these imaginative concepts.⁶

In the epic, Tovka, the daughter of the Qalmog king, is portrayed as an independent and decisive young woman—trusting yet somewhat naive—who acts according to her own judgment. She does not question or inquire about Alpomish's identity or the reason for his imprisonment; instead, without informing her father or the Qalmog officials, she takes measures to rescue him. She secretly digs a passage from her home to the prison to save the hero. Her

⁶ Турдимов Ш. Этнос ва эпос. – Тошкент: "O'zbekiston", 2011. 76-77 б.



actions are motivated by the promise Alpomish made to her, and, trusting in his word, she inadvertently falls in love with him. In contrast, Kaykubod is depicted as loving the queen. In summary, the episode involving the trio of Alpomish, Tovka, and Kaykubod in the epic is imbued with romantic elements. The development of events ultimately concludes with Tovka marrying Kaykubod, in which Alpomish's influence and assistance play a significant role. Overall, the character of Tovka also displays a certain fickleness. After Alpomish emerges from prison and devastates the entire Qalmog state, he seeks to fulfill the promise he made to Kaykubod: according to this promise, he was to give Tovka, who had helped him escape from the prison, to Kaykubod. When Alpomish invites Tovka to the palace, she initially feels hurt by his refusals. However, upon seeing the newly crowned and adorned ruler Kaykubod, her opinion changes instantly. She agrees to marry the ruler who has taken her father's place.

In the epic, Alpomish's prudence and strategic foresight are evident in his elevation of the shepherd Kaykubod to the throne of the Qalmog state. In public, Alpomish presents himself with deference toward Kaykubod, which fosters trust and goodwill among the people toward the new ruler.

In *The Odyssey*, Circe (or Calypso) is described mythologically as the daughter of Atlas and the ruler of the island of Ogygia. A point of similarity with Tovka is her inclination toward emotion and love, as well as her status as a royal figure. Circe falls in love with the stranded and helpless Odysseus, keeping him in captivity. Having endured many hardships, Odysseus is unable to free himself from her. He can only gain his release with the assistance of the gods. This is already indicated in the first song of the epic, where a conversation among the deities takes place.

Another point of comparison (and contrast) between Tovka and Calypso lies in their nature as either a human or a mythological being. Calypso is a mythological figure, yet she embodies qualities characteristic of humans. In contrast, Tovka is the daughter of a ruler and does not possess any supernatural or angelic traits. Both characters, however, play a significant role in the heroes' journey motif. In the epic *Alpomish*, Tovka's emotions and inner experiences are vividly portrayed, as observed through her dialogues with Kaykubod and Alpomish. Thus, while in *The Odyssey* Calypso reveals Odysseus's vulnerable side—his subjugation



during captivity—in *Alpomish*, Tovka’s character highlights Alpomish’s actions in breaking free from imprisonment.

The character of Qorajon in the epic also represents an auxiliary hero. The assistance he provides to Alpomish is distinguished by its significance and surpasses that of other characters. This is because Qorajon’s displays of heroism—despite initially belonging to the opposing side—are evident in several key episodes: firstly, in his simultaneous dream alongside Alpomish and Barchin; secondly, in his decision to establish a bond of friendship with Alpomish and act as his envoy in proposing marriage to Barchin; and finally, in his participation in the imposed trials on behalf of Alpomish. Most importantly, and reflecting the complexity of this character, is his struggle against his own kin on behalf of Alpomish. As noted, “Qorajon is a man of the frontier. His allegiance is alien to that of his own mother and brothers—a hero caught between two fires. The eighty-nine champions of the Kalmyks, along with their ruler, seek to take Barchin. Qorajon, however, insists that Barchin should depart with Alpomish. He assists Alpomish, and eventually he himself becomes a migrant to Boysun–Qo‘ng‘irot.”⁷ As noted above, the folklorist Jabbor Eshonqulov emphasizes that even when the central hero does not act directly, the activities of his patron or auxiliary figures indicate that the hero remains functionally active. In this regard, Qorajon’s participation in horse races and wrestling contests on behalf of Alpomish likewise signifies the latter’s agency. From these considerations, it becomes evident that the figure of Qorajon in the epic serves as an auxiliary hero, functioning as a supportive character who facilitates the achievement of the protagonist’s goals.

In the Greek epic *Odyssey*, the interpretation of patron or supportive figures assisting the hero is also prominently presented. These include, primarily, the gods (deities), Odysseus’s close companions, and noble individuals who render him assistance—most notably, the attendants of King Alcinous of the island of Scheria. Within the epic, the portrayal of gods and goddesses occupies a central position.

⁷ Turdimov Sh. O‘zbek mifologiyasi va folklori. - Toshkent, 2023. 207-b.



The deities depicted in the narrative can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of those who bestow benevolence upon the hero and consistently support him; among them are the goddess Athena, as well as Zeus, Aeolus, and Hermes. Among them, the principal deities include Athena, Zeus, Hermes, Calypso, and others. In the poem, the most active deity is undoubtedly Athena. According to Greek mythology, Athena is regarded as the patron goddess of cities. Throughout the epic, she is portrayed as the protector and benefactor of Odysseus and his family. All of Odysseus's heroic deeds, as well as his eventual return to his homeland after a long and arduous journey, are accomplished with Athena's assistance. In the epic, various epithets and descriptive attributes are applied to characterize her. Likewise, let us consider Hermes, the messenger of Zeus. He conveys to Calypso the divine decree regarding Odysseus's return to his homeland. Hermes also provides Odysseus with a magical herb that neutralizes the enchantments of the cunning sorceress Circe, who had transformed his companions into swine. As a result, after consuming the enchanted potion, Odysseus does not assume an animal form but instead retains his human nature.

The second group consists of deities and divine figures who mislead the hero and create obstacles in his path. This is exemplified by Poseidon, Calypso, Helios, and, at times, even Zeus.

In conclusion, the "hero system", which constitutes a fundamental criterion of Turkic heroic epics, including the Uzbek epic *Alpomish*, cannot be conceived without the presence of patron and auxiliary figures. This feature is likewise observable in the product of ancient literature, the *Odyssey*. In *Alpomish*, figures such as Shohimardon pir, the chiltans, and Qultoy are depicted as patron figures, while Qaldirg'och and Qorajon function as auxiliary heroes. In the *Odyssey*, the goddess Athena, Eumaeus, and other characters are interpreted as patron and supportive figures assisting Odysseus. Both epics ultimately serve to exalt the ideal of heroism. From the above analysis, it becomes evident that patron and auxiliary figures play a crucial role in early heroic epics. From a young age, the hero directly receives the guidance, counsel, and upbringing of his patrons and remains under their constant protection. The patron figure occupies a significant place in the life of the hero, providing assistance in moments of difficulty and



guiding him toward the attainment of his destined status. Although auxiliary figures do not elevate the hero to a higher rank in the same decisive manner as patron figures, they nonetheless fulfill an important function by offering support, moral encouragement, and reinforcement, thereby sustaining the hero throughout his journey.

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