

SYMBOLS OF HEROISM IN THE LITERATURE OF THE PEOPLES OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD

Shodieva Madina Nuralievna

Teacher of the Department of Chinese Philology, Faculty of Oriental Languages,
Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages
E-mail: madinashodieva74@gmail.com Tel: 93 349 90 61

Li Xiaoyi 李晓一

Specialist of Central Asian Cooperation, International Exchange and Cooperation
Department, Shenyang Normal University
E-mail: lixiaoyi1120@126.com Tel: 0086-24-86574288

Abstract

The article presents the specific features of the heroic image in the literature of the peoples of the Great Silk Road, mainly expressed through such qualities as courage, patriotism, intelligence, loyalty and struggle for justice. A comparative analysis is made of Alpomish in the epic poem "Alpomish" and Sun Ukun in the novel "Journey to the West".

Keywords: Great Silk Road, hero, people, legendary, justice, epic and legendary powers, culture.

INTRODUCTION

The Great Silk Road served as a crucial route connecting Eastern and Western cultures, fostering mutual influence and exchange in the literature of the peoples along its path. The epics and legends formed within this cultural framework share standard features in shaping heroic images, reflecting the values of different nations. This article analyses the artistic characteristics of the heroic figures in the epic "Alpomish" and the Chinese literary work "Journey to the West."

In the Silk Road nation's literature, heroic figures possess unique characteristics, primarily expressed through courage, patriotism, intelligence, loyalty, and the pursuit of justice. A comparative analysis of Alpomish from "Alpomish" and Sun Wukong from "Journey to the West" reveals different aspects of heroism. The following examines their key characteristics:

1. Courage and Devotion of the Heroes

Courage is an essential trait of a heroic figure. Heroes risk their lives to protect the interests of their homeland and people.

- In "Alpomish," the protagonist is depicted as a brave warrior. His sense of patriotic duty and loyalty to his family and people is vividly expressed throughout the epic. He demonstrates courage by travelling long distances to defend his land from enemies.

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- In "Journey to the West," Sun Wukong's bravery is intertwined with intelligence. He faces numerous dangers but never abandons his mission. Each of his actions is tied to overcoming trials and obstacles.
2. **Maturity Through Trials**
In the epics of the Silk Road nations, heroes must undergo trials to prove their strength, bravery, and intelligence.
 - Alpomish faces conspiracies and enmity and endures imprisonment but ultimately triumphs through his perseverance.
 - Sun Wukong, punished by Buddha, attains true heroism through wisdom and patience.
 - This motif plays a significant role in the hero's growth process (a bildungsroman element).
 3. **The Presence of Magical and Supernatural Powers**
Many heroic epics feature protagonists who possess magical powers or divine assistance.
 - Alpomish's epic identity suggests divine protection. For example, despite years of captivity, he remains strong and resilient.
 - Sun Wukong is inherently endowed with magical powers, including flying, transforming, and summoning storms.
 - Both characters transcend human limitations, embodying the ideal heroic figure.
 4. **Loyalty to the Nation and People**
One of the most crucial traits of heroism is unwavering loyalty to one's homeland and people.
 - Alpomish fights to protect his homeland and family.
 - Initially self-centred, Sun Wukong later attains spiritual enlightenment by serving Tang Sanzang.
 - Both heroes fulfil their missions by ultimately serving their people's or humanity's interests.
 5. **Epic and Allegorical Representation of the Hero**
Heroes are often depicted as allegorical or ideal figures.
 - Alpomish is the ideal hero of the Uzbek people, symbolising bravery, loyalty, and justice.
 - Sun Wukong represents the transformation of the human spirit and the pursuit of perfection within the Chinese worldview.
 - Both works employ strong artistic techniques to portray their heroes:
 - **Metaphor** – used to depict the hero's strength and abilities.
 - **Hyperbole** – exaggerates their supernatural courage and power in a humorous or epic style.

6. Struggle for Justice

Both heroes fight for justice throughout their journeys.

- Alpomish battles for his people's freedom.
- Initially rebellious, Sun Wukong later realises the importance of justice and morality.
- Both strive to restore stability in their respective societies.

7. Determination to Achieve Their Goals

Both heroes' perseverance and unwavering commitment to their goals despite hardships are key virtues.

- Alpomish fights for his beloved Barchin liberates his land from enemies and strives to uphold the pride of his people.
- In "Journey to the West," Sun Wukong embarks on a journey to obtain sacred scriptures, symbolising his path to spiritual and physical enlightenment.

8. Possession of Epic and Legendary Powers

Heroes in the literature of the Silk Road nations often possess abilities that surpass human limitations.

- Alpomish is an epic warrior who defeats enemies and endures extreme physical trials, such as surviving seven years in captivity.
- Sun Wukong wields magical powers, allowing him to transcend physical boundaries by flying on clouds and travelling vast distances with his staff.

9. Friendship and Loyalty

Heroes serve not only themselves but also remain loyal to their homeland, people, and friends.

- Alpomish values his friendships and listens to the advice of his closest allies, who remain loyal to him throughout the epic.
- Sun Wukong initially resists authority, but over time, he learns to cooperate with his companions (Tang Sanzang, Zhu Bajie), ultimately valuing friendship and teamwork in their quest for sacred scriptures.

10. Battle Against Enemies and Upholding Justice

The protagonists must fight against evil forces in every heroic epic or novel.

- Alpomish fights physically and strategically against his enemies, restoring justice and overcoming adversaries such as the Kalmyks and Taychho.
- Sun Wukong battles demons, dragons, and other supernatural beings. These conflicts demonstrate his commitment to truth and justice.

11. Endurance of Physical and Spiritual Trials

Heroes must endure hardships to achieve their goals.

- In "Alpomish," the protagonist survives seven years of imprisonment, undergoing severe trials. However, he overcomes them with patience and determination, ultimately returning to his homeland.
- In "Journey to the West," Sun Wukong is repeatedly punished due to his rebellious nature, but these trials make him stronger and help him fulfil his mission.

12. Symbolic Meaning of the Heroes

Each hero represents the ideal human virtues of their respective culture.

- Alpomish embodies national heroism, symbolising courage, loyalty, and patriotism. He is ready to do anything to protect his people's pride and homeland.
- Sun Wukong is a symbolic hero of Chinese philosophy and Buddhism, representing spiritual growth and self-mastery.

In conclusion, the fundamental characteristics of heroism in the literature of the Silk Road nations include bravery, trials leading to maturity, the involvement of magical and supernatural forces, loyalty to the people and homeland, epic and allegorical representation, the struggle for justice, devotion, justice-seeking, epic strength, and perseverance. In "Alpomish," these concepts are portrayed through national epic traditions, emphasising military courage and patriotism. Meanwhile, "Journey to the West" depicts heroism through spiritual growth and self-transcendence. While these two heroes have distinct differences, their artistic qualities highlight the cultural exchange along the Great Silk Road.

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