

## Role of Epithet in Heroic Epic

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### **Abstract**

*In the article we consider some particularities of epithet usage in epic tales, which were further enhanced at the time of Ancient Turkic peoples and became the traditional means of signing national heroism. The particularities of historical periods in Kazakh heroic tales are studied in accordance with the historical era and traditions of the time.*

**Keywords:** *epithet, history, epos, definition, artistic tools, function, epic.*

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If we focus on how heroic epics of Kazakhs have been researched, most researchers attend to the imagery of the words in an epic. Research of epithet functions is one of the parts in studying the imagery of words in an epic. It is possible to bring up a topic about making general conclusions about epithets appearing when theory of Kazakh literature is considered and different literary works are analyzed; about epithet related proposals and considerations given during analysis of artistic and specific character of our cultural heritage, which are results of these researches. As previously mentioned, we think that the person who laid the foundation for literary work language and different ways to create it was A. Baitursinov. Research mainly indicates three ways of creating the imagery of language:

1. embellishment;
2. allusion;
3. inspiration [1:353].

For embellishment, Baitursinov refers to the following kind of tropes: attributive (epithet, simile, substitution, impact, so on), which are divided in their turn. The author gives a detailed explanation of an epithet: "When we want to divide one thing from others, we want to say in the way to attract attention so to the name of the thing we add a word in order to make it more clear. For example, "Kara (black) Mukan." "Sary (light) Mukan," "Bolys (volost') Mukan.." In order to divide different Mukans one from another and clearly illustrate each of them, we add another word to the name Mukan. So what we call Atymtai Zhomart (generous), Zhirinshe sheshen (eloquent speaker), Kaz dausty (goose-tongued) Kazybek, is used by way of characterizing.

In given examples, the words – black, light, volost', generous, eloquent, goose-tongued – are specially used by way of characterizing. Therefore this kind of attributive epithet serves for attributing or characterizing only. Besides, there are some attributes used for embellishment. If at the beginning such attribute is used just for emphasizing, it develops into an attribute for embellishment purpose. Currently, we say Kysyl (red in terms of eloquent) language, altai (attractive – with magnificent fur with granite color) fox, ak (white) falcon, mainly to make the phrase sound more beautiful. Hence it follows that Baitursinov knew well about features of attributives of early the period, especially aspects of their further usage in literature. He specified that epithet characteristics are constantly repeated upon ancient sources.

Also Zhumaliyev K. confirmed and specified in the conclusion in his work – Theory of Literature – that by constant epithet, most researchers mean conventional epithets as being assigned to anything. For example, "Red banner,," "Red army,," "Spangled colours,," and so on [2:108]. Along with the work dedicated to the theory of literature, he explains that the words which are mostly epithets become so because of adjectives and verb forms (participle, adverbial participle) [2:108-109]. Noted that along with constant epithets the complex epithets are often used in Kazakh poetry, Zhumaliyev K. dwelled on ways they were created to consider them in more detail in examples of Abai's poems which he overtly focused on [2:110]. One of the main conclusions which early were not exactly specified, however seriously evaluated and proved, is related to epithet; we will try to understand the ways they were learned and known among a wide range of our literary devices. One of the research is a work of academician Akhmetov Z. His serious statements related to literary illustration and imagery of language of our cultural heritage are sustained by science and quoted in studies where characteristics of poetic language in artistic works are specified. In Z. Akhmetov's works where the complexity of Kazakh poem structure has been noted, such an epithet-related opinion is given; it is known that in folk poetry (oral culture of any nation we would take as an example) constant epithets with any defined notion (aidyn – mirrow lake, askar – unapproachable mountain) often appeared. This is not a stochastic phenomenon. There were many kinds of imagery words, pretty verbal constructions in terms of quantity in folk poetry as well as in written literature; however, they have been used much more often. It is stated that in folk poems and songs, the imagery words hold a firm place, where patterns are selected, truly best as verbal embellishment in poetic language. Therefore it is necessary to understand such ways of word-picture as epithet, simile, metaphor, personification, symbol and collocation, embellishment; so it is essential to be aware of characteristics of nation language and verbal ornament of the folk poetry" [3.30] Such purposes to understand and to sense literary art were always in the agenda. It is obvious that folk art requires special attention. As the epithets in heroic epics we are interested in are generally reviewed in studies without special attention to the details, we consider to study in detail specifics of attributes and to draw attention to their functions in epic. There now is an opinion of academician Kabdolov who noted that "literary language – is not just a language, it is artistic language, hence fair words." Remember: "It is worth mentioning that attributive i.e., epithet (from Greek epitheton – attributed, added) is an imagery word which specifies significant characteristics, subject and phenomena. Without epithets, it is even complicated to define what you want to say and make specific an illustrated thing" [4:226]. Therefore, in theoretical works conclusions concerning epithets bump into this. In literary works there are opportunities to make epithets to color illustrated world and to make them effective. Generalizing the above mentioned opinions concerning attributives, we point out the following kinds of epithet. The first group is constant epithets, regularly used with any defined notions which are artistically formed in people's perception and became a tradition in consequence of habitual usage. The second group – formed as the result of observation and diligent studying phenomenon specifics and subject – defines epithets or complex epithets. The result of the abovementioned conclusions is clear what kind of epithets belong to this group. From research scientists' works we see that in research papers about Kazakh heroic epic, epithets overall are emphasized, which are used in terms of combat gear of batyrs, their look, tulpar – a war horse-friend, girlfriend, so on. In the first volume of a voluminous collection of books, "History of Kazakh literature" in section concerned heroic epic, M. Gabdullin, T. Sydykov, A. Konyratbayev, O. Nurmagambetov, Sh. Ibrayev, and others analyzed patterns and made some conclusions related to reasons why attributives were permanently used. We believe that one of the most specific issue in epic which needs to be

understood, is abnormal function of epithets in the clear, majestic, and bright way how batyr's heroism, horse character, weapon features, beauty of sweetheart are sung. During a comparison study of epithets concerning colour, we have shown a specific character of epic songs. The reason is that the epics fully set in the language and were formed through ritual songs which revived during their evolution because the descriptive words being within the songs had the same meaning of particular things. The same regularity is observed with attributes. For example, "white" colour is a criteria of perfect beauty; if "red" and "white" colours are associated with the notion "beauty," "pleasing view" so the symbolic function of "black colour" is clear. It serves for characterizing abomination and greyness, malignity, and villainy, obstinacy, and riot.

At the time K. Zhumaliyev wrote about the fact proved that in Kazakh oral literature with illustrating things and people, story-tellers used epithet "white" in epics for the purpose of embellishing the thing and person they liked and highly appreciating them [2:201]. In Old Turkic monuments, special emphasis lied on white colour. In monuments "Kultegin" and "Tonykok," there are many lines with epithet "white" that made many to wonder in Turkic world [6:2]. In epic songs "Kultegin" and "Tonykok" (VIII) there are many examples like "white stallion," "white horse," "white silver," etc. – are good proof of that. Beyond any doubt, the Kazakh nation understands "the white" as a holy colour, the most selected and it became a tradition to use it in this way. Such notions as "white mother," "white young girl," "white child," "white cradle," "white milk," "white tablecloth," "white (in the sense of pure) desires, character," "white (in the sense of pure) soul," etc were popularly formed as the most holy and valuable notions. The deep root - is that this sense is formed because of purity and brightness of intentions. The ritual songs as "Lullaby," "Nauryz songs," "Hunting songs," "Zhar-Zhar," "Betashar (wedding songs)," etc. have initiated a tradition to characterize things by repeating the colour "white" many times, so through them colour "white" came into heroic epic. Also in researches it is said that they were specifically used in famous improvisation-songs.

One of the epithets used by akin-story-tellers is also white: "Have groomed his white fur," "Whitest marble pearl" (Asan kaigy), "white sail," "white paper," "white picturesque mountain," "white flecked horse," "white saiga" (Shalkiiz), "My white and picturesque orda," "located my people" (Kaztugan), "have put white elbow into head," "being whitened dawning morning," "White Ural," "white axe," "white spear," "white curtain" (Dospambet), "beautiful bay with white hoof" (Er Shoban), "In the water there is a white stone-brick" (Bukhar), "whitish face" (Shal akin). Most of epithet mentioned here are in heroic epic. Therefore we could come to the following conclusions:

1. The system for finding main traditional features of an epic is seen from artistic tools, where colour-grade is established and became one of defined and developed combinations.
2. "White" colour appeared in large numbers both in Kazakh songs and in kindred Turkic nations. In Kazakh ritual songs and heroic epics, "White" is defined as pure only and plays discrete role in creation of appealing image.
3. The opportunity to give illustrated event an lively attraction, to create an effect of being touched, using "white" colour, arises because of creative skill and high poetic senses.

Another problem is that definitions containing "black" color are commonly used in heroic epic in contrast to the "white" color. If you look closely, black color is mostly used to characterize resentment and grief, filth and evil, bad manners. For example, definitions like black snake, black road, black spear, black div, Karzhan, Karaman, black sheep, with a black face, black face, etc. will never be reconciled with definitions like pure soul, pure thoughts, white (pure) heart, nobility and generosity. In the epic "Kobylandy Batyr" performed by Muryn Sengirbayev occurring expressions like "yurts made of black felt," "to eat meat of a black sheep" give rise to fear of the listeners, cause distrust and suspicion. Result of the struggle for justice requires a fair conclusion. That is probably why the narrator, after guiding through many difficulties, comes to the pedestal of the heroic victory. It is caused by a desire to answer people's dream and raise their spirits. Thus, the narrator finds the way of distinction positive and negative characters and reaches people's attention by his life-affirming art [7:32]. Constantly comparing the characters in the course of events, at culmination point he leads the hero to the victory and finally brings him to achieve his goals. According to people's understanding, the answer saying "day of separation black and white is not far," "we'll see, who is white and who is black" was finally verified. Everyone understands that the images of the Black Witch met by Alpamys, Karazhan, Ultan with black foot, or the image of Karaman given in comparison with Kobylandy, in "Kambar Batyr" div Karaman with his motto "beat and get out," in "Er Targyn" images of khans like Khanzada with his black thoughts, are direct confirmation of this. All this is related to the epic protagonists. Sphere of use of "black" color extends to portrait characteristics, where we can see its ability to create attractive images as well: "When eyebrows were black, hair were long," "she has black eyes, arched black eyebrows," "black hair like black velvet," etc. These are examples of positive use of "black" color. Nevertheless, talking about social problems in heroic epics or about danger impending over the protagonist, the images bearing this danger are usually characterized by "black" color, and their evil actions have been exposed by the final. In short, "black" color in epic works in its positive characteristic has a symbolic meaning; in the analysis of the epic hero it has the opposite meaning. On the

cognitive side, it is demonstrating its ability to convey deep meaning of ancestral concepts, people's beliefs and ideals. People gradually developed the concept of "black" color and skillfully used its ugly and attractive sides.

Use of "blue (green)" color in the epic has its own specifics. In understanding of the Kazakhs, the "green" color was most commonly transferred through epithet "blue." "Green leaf," "green stitched patches," "green fields," "green grass:" the color used in all these examples is not green, but the objects are defined by color "blue." This feature has been explained not by the inability to reproduce color accurately, but by traditional understanding. Clearly seeing the color of green grass on the ground, akyn-storytellers used in their songs expressions like "blue grass," which confirms tradition formed in ancient times. It has been proved also by the following expressions: "blue-speckled meadows," "blue fly," "blue heron," "a place with soft blue grass," "blue mountain," etc. In order to describe, embellish a horse saddled by batyrs, "blue" color was used especially often. Obviously, "blue mottled stallion," "blue horse five years old," "blue roan," "blue colt," "blue mottled mare," "blue star-shaped," "blue colt of the fourth year," "blue stallion," "blue mottled horse," "blue horse," "blue spotted horse," "blue horse with a star," "blue horse of a knight," and other use of colors is one way to emphasize the thoroughbred horses, to fully characterize winged horse called tulpar. Also one of the ways to convey angry, resentful mood of the batyr is to appeal to "blue" color. For example, "blue wolf," "blue camel," "blue peri," "like a blue eagle," "blue falcon," etc. "Blue" color plays an important role in the characterization of equipment, weapons of batyr in the epic. Such combinations as "blue helmet," "blue lance," "blue spear," "blue sword," etc. deserve mention.

Expressions containing colors "red" and "yellow" can be used as an example of traditional use of permanent epithets. Most commonly colors "red" and "yellow" are used to describe fights of batyrs, their beloved ones, and clothes of beautiful girls. They correspond to the characteristics of the young beloved girl, symbolizing saffron youth.

Use of the epithet "light-gray" is traditional in the heroic epic. This color has been used variously in the epic. Use of the epithet "light-gray" in poetry of akyn-storytellers is an ancient tradition. According to the ancient belief of Kazakh people, in the event of a great victory, that brought joy to all people, a light-gray horse was cut for the large celebration, a light-gray sheep with a white mark on his forehead was killed on the altar; when two tribes or two settlements came to an agreement, in this case they sacrificed a light-gray horse as a gesture of reconciliation. In the folk songs, in epics, tales, and legends, batyrs leading the troops or that were deemed to be the bearer of good and grace Kadyr Ilyas ride a light-gray horse, wear light-gray clothes [5:26]. Also, if a person in a dream sees the dead with friendly faces dressed in light or light-gray clothes, it means they will be righteous; if he sees living people dressed in light-gray clothes, it means they will meet the good. Examples, as mentioned earlier, can be found in songs of Kultegin and Tonykok. The fact that light-gray color gives information about the past of people and there is continuity in today's heritage in this regard, says about the strength of traditions, we understand that it is the basis of the sanctity of national dignity. One aspect of this is shown in the heroic epic by definitions like light-gray morning, light-gray spotted horse, young (light-gray) male, light-gray horse, light-gray sheep, gray (light-gray) horse, light-gray tree, light-gray rope, light-gray bull, etc. All of them are characterized by the color of honour; they are specifically included in the epic in order to embellish four kinds of cattle especially beloved by people. Definitions related to gray color that causes feelings of fear and disgust, used too often and giving strength to events, have found its permanent place in the heroic epic as well. Frequent constant repetition, apparently, is also associated with this. For example, "gray arrow," "gray snake," "gray cloud," "gray sky" are all examples of power rising to view drabness, ugliness, abominations. There are cases when epithets are formed outside of the color palette, used constantly in combination; beauty and visual appeal cannot be conveyed without such a definition. Examples of the mentioned above are as follows: "Sir," "Chingizid," "Sultan," "good fellow," "young warrior," "predator," "clever," "courageous," "falcon," "lion," "tiger," "whitish face," "beauty," etc.

Thus, in conclusion, we should point out that epithets were one of the art methods of akyn-storytellers, who skillfully and reasonably used a variety of colors to express phenomena of life in the heroic epic. Their functions were specialized in course of their use.

1. The names of colors in the epic can characterize particular objects and abstract concepts. In terms of content, they obtain wonderful meanings and get symbolic character. It can be demonstrated in general by means of the following classification:

White: chainmail, marble, milk, beard, teeth, intentions, face, hand, tablecloth, horde, blessing, flag, blanket, face, heart, panar, sparrow, sheep, colt, snow, tulpar (winged horse), paddle, oil, falcon, bone, curtain, body, spear, sword, armor, gun, diamond, etc.

Black: earth, sky, heart, soul, gun, horse, night, face, mountain, stone, camel, power, rock, Kazakh, Albasty (demonic creature), insidious, tulpar (winged horse), sheep, wolf, eagle, bird, road, foot, spear, lamb, hill, sea, Kalmyk, camel, etc.

Red: blood, stone, face, mountain, sea, grapes, silk, spear, language, coals, fox, medicine, sun, blanket, etc.

Blue (green): wolf, colt of the second year, colt of the fourth year, colt, mare, horse, meadow, back, sky, a

piece of cloth of the colored patches, donkey, dove, horse, camel, forks, heron, woolen cloth, hill, peak, araba, chekmen, carriage, covered carriage, fly, etc.

Yellow: morning, water, gold, river, honey, kumys, camel, etc.

Gray: arrow, snake, cloud;

Light-gray: man, horse, rope, sheep, mare, stallion.

Many of these epithets can be found in epics of kindred people as well. Therefore, these are definitions fully demonstrating traditional features of epic works.

2. Definitions in the heroic epic have traditional common features. The main result of the common features can be seen from the repetitions, also as the image of a batyr riding the winged horse. Expressions conveying common features like "thin waist," "black eyes," "white throat," "bright image," "arched eyebrow," etc. are used by creating the image of hero's beloved one. More precisely, we clearly see features that are typical not for one beauty only but common to all beloved ones, that occur here due to the repetitions.
3. The epithets related to colors "black," "gray" in the epic mostly expose the negative heroes, revealing all their vile, perfidious, treacherous actions.
4. The epithets occurring in the heroic epic also can be found in ritual songs. In this regard, first of all, we mention features creating an attractive color appearance of four kinds of cattle and predatory animals.
5. There are many examples of epithets in the heritage of akyn-storytellers, particularly in heroic epics that have arisen as an example of folk tradition.

To summarize, we note as an indisputable fact that epithets as one of the artistic tools in the epic did not arise out of nowhere but resulted from wonderful craftsmanship based on the example of traditional poetics.

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