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The Typological Structure of Journey and Trial Motifs in the Context of the Hero's Maturation Process in Kazakh Fairy Tales

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Abstract: This study examines the typological structure of journey and trial motifs in Kazakh fairy tales within the context of the hero's maturation process, exploring how these elements reflect individual transformation and cultural identity. The primary material of the research consists of the 75th volume of Babalar sözi and the Kazakh Fairy Tales anthology collected by Seyfullah Yıldırım, focusing on specific narratives such as Kerkula Attı Kendebay, Bayğulan, and Alibek Batır. Adopting a qualitative research design, the study utilizes a text-centered analysis method. The theoretical framework is primarily grounded in Şerif Aktaş's textual analysis approach for oral narratives, while Nurullah Çetin's analytical framework is integrated as a supportive methodological tool to evaluate narrative components like character, space, and time. The findings reveal that journey and trial motifs recur within highly specific typological patterns across the corpus, yet they exhibit significant contextual and functional variations within individual narratives. While some trials involve physical conflicts against supernatural forces, others present complex moral and internal crises, including familial betrayal and isolation. Consequently, the hero's maturation process is identified as a dynamic, multi-layered narrative structure constructed through the mutual interaction of these motifs. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that Kazakh fairy tales function as symbolic models of self-actualization within Kazakh cultural thought rather than serving merely as folkloric artifacts. By organizing these repetitive narrative formulas into structural patterns, the study successfully maps out the traditional coming-of-age journey of the Kazakh heroic figure and contributes a holistic model to Turkic folklore studies.
Keywords: Kazakh fairy tales; journey motif; trial motif; narrative typology; hero's maturation; narrative analysis.

Introduction

Kazakh fairy tales, which hold a prominent position within the oral narrative tradition of the Turkic world, stand out as unique texts characterized by their rich motif structures and multi-layered narrative attributes. While these tales embody epic and mythic elements, they primarily shape their narrative structure around the experiences of the individual, thereby constructing a narrative world centered on the hero's process of transformation. The functionality of the dramatis personae, the frequently indefinite yet highly symbolic spatial designs, and the mythic dimension assumed by the temporal flow elevate Kazakh fairy tales beyond mere folkloric artifacts, rendering them highly conducive to narratological analysis. In Kazakh fairy tales, the narrative plot typically initiates with a deficiency, a threat, or a disruption of equilibrium; this condition establishes a fundamental narrative dynamic that necessitates the hero's departure on a journey. The journey emerges as a symbolic construct that facilitates not only the hero's movement across physical spaces but also their entry into an internal process of transformation. Concurrently, the trial motifs encountered during this process are structured through various narrative situations, such as combating supernatural entities, coping

with adverse conditions, facing deception, experiencing isolation, and confronting mortality. Consequently, journey and trial serve as the primary narrative axes directing the plot and operate as the principal elements determining the hero's maturation process. Rather than focusing on grand historical events, Kazakh fairy tales are distinguished by narrative structures where the individual remains central, unfolding within circumscribed social environments. In this regard, the challenges encountered and the transformations undergone by the hero constitute a narrative space wherein societal values and cultural codes are symbolically reproduced. The experiences acquired and the trials endured by the hero over the course of the journey stand out as determinants of not only their physical prowess but also their intellectual and moral development. The objective of this study is to examine the typological structure of journey and trial motifs in Kazakh fairy tales within the context of the hero's maturation process. To this end, the functions of these motifs within the narrative, their recurrent structural characteristics, and their contributions to the individual transformation of the hero are analyzed. Based on the 75th volume of Babalar sözi and the Kazakh fairy tales compiled by Associate Professor Seyfullah Yıldırım, a text-centered investigation was conducted, and the findings obtained were evaluated within the frameworks of narrative typology and motif analysis. In this context, by revealing the structural and functional characteristics of Kazakh fairy tales, this article aims to contribute significantly to folktale research within the Turkic world.

Materials and methods

This study was conducted within the framework of qualitative research methodologies, grounded in text-centered and comparative analysis. The research material consists of the 75th volume of Babalar sözi and the Kazakh fairy tales compiled and translated into Turkey Turkish by Associate Professor Seyfullah Yıldırım. Due to their rich motif structures and narrative diversity, these texts were examined through a holistic approach.

The study is structured upon Professor Şerif Aktaş's method for the textual analysis of narrative-based literature, while Nurullah Çetin's analytical method was utilized as a supportive theoretical framework. In this regard, the selected folktales were initially analyzed within the framework of the fundamental elements of narrative: character (hero), space, and time. During this analytical process, the hero's position, function, and transformation process within the narrative were determined; spatial elements were classified as real, symbolic, and extraordinary spaces; and the temporal element was evaluated within the context of the indefinite, mythic, and predominantly cyclical nature of the tales.

A descriptive analysis method was employed during the decoding process, wherein the gathered data were classified to identify the typological patterns associated with the journey and trial motifs. Recurrent narrative formulas among the tales were evaluated as common structural features, whereas diverging elements were treated as data illustrating the contextual diversity and functional richness of the narratives. Through this methodological approach, the study aims to provide a holistic evaluation by addressing Kazakh fairy tales not merely at the level of individual motifs, but within the broader context of the relationships between narrative structure, the function of motifs, and the hero's maturation process.

Results and their discussion

Research and Findings: Textual Analysis

1. Mentality

Kazakh fairy tales, which emerged within the oral narrative tradition, are shaped within the framework of a specific mentality structure as texts reflecting the historical memory, value system, and world perception of society. The dominant mentality in these tales is based on a dynamic worldview centered on the individual's maturation through struggling against the difficulties they encounter. At the core of the narratives, there is often a state of deficiency, threat, or injustice; the

hero, on the other hand, is constructed as a figure who embarks on a journey to eliminate this situation and transforms by undergoing various trials.

Fairy tales constitute one of the most abundant and widespread genres of folktales. In the Kazakh language, the words efsana and masal are used in connection with fairy tales. One of these words originates from Persian, while the other comes from Arabic. The Persian word efsana expresses the concept of a folktale/fairy tale and is used to designate this genre in general (Abjet, 2008, s. 22-25). Kazakh heroic fairy tales represent a hybrid narrative genre positioned between epic narrative and the fairy tale genre within the Turkic oral cultural tradition, embodying both mythological and realistic elements simultaneously. Such texts should be evaluated not merely as aesthetic narratives, but as cultural texts reflecting the historical memory, value system, and collective consciousness structure of society.

As emphasized by Qasqabasov (2014a, s. 169-175) in his work titled "Қазақтың халық прозасы" (Kazakh Folk Prose), folk prose constitutes the intermediary layer of the transition from mythological thought to aesthetic narrative, and in this context, heroic fairy tales emerge as a transformed version of epic thought. An akin (bard) compiling and combining the songs and poems widespread among the folk regarding a hero's farewell or lament led to the emergence of the first epos (epic) (Avezov, 1997a, s. 10). Similarly, in his study titled Фольклорная проза казахов (Folkloric Prose of Kazakhs) (Qasqabasov, 2014b, s. 24-30), it is stated that heroic fairy tales are structurally based on the "deficiency-journey-struggle-transformation" scheme.

One of the mentality elements that vividly stands out in the analyzed tales is the concept of struggle and resilience. For instance, in the Kendebay tale, the hero encountering and overcoming giants, lions, and various extraordinary beings at a young age reflects the idea that the individual must engage in an active struggle against natural and supernatural forces. Similarly, in the Älibek batır tale, the hero fighting dangerous entities and confronting death to reach his beloved reveals a mentality structure in which individual will and determination come to the forefront (Babalar sözi, 2011, s. 39-265). This demonstrates a significant similarity with the universal heroic motifs found in Thompson's (1958, s. 325-340) Motif-Index of Folk-Literature typological system. Motifs such as the hero's extraordinary birth, the acquisition of magical helpers or tools, fighting malevolent entities, and embarking on an arduous journey are frequently observed in Kazakh heroic fairy tales.

Another striking element in Kazakh heroic fairy tales is the concept of maturation realized through journey and trials. While the hero is initially an ordinary individual, they undergo a transformation due to the challenges encountered during the journey. In the Bayğulan tale, the long and arduous journeys embarked upon by the hero in search of a deer and a scorpion allow him to gain experience despite becoming physically weakened. However, the primary mentality element that draws attention in this tale is that the hero's greatest trial is being betrayed by his own family rather than by the outside world.

The lack of support from the mother and other family members serves as an important indicator of mentality showing that in Kazakh fairy tales, one must struggle not only against external enemies but also against internal and social conflicts (Campbell, 2004, s.295). The binary opposition of good and evil also constitutes a distinct ideological axis in the examined texts. While heroes typically represent positive values such as justice, honesty, and courage, the entities or individuals they encounter are identified with evil, trickery, and oppression. In the Kendebay tale, giants and other extraordinary beings, and in the Älibek batır tale, enemy figures appear as the representatives of this evil. In the Bayğulan tale, however, this opposition assumes a more complex form, demonstrating that evil can manifest within the family. This situation reveals that within the worldview of the tales, moral testing bears not only external but also internal and social dimensions (Babalar sözi, 2011, s. 39-265).

Another significant mentality element dominant in Kazakh fairy tales is the concept of active destiny. Although destiny plays a decisive role in the lives of the heroes, this destiny is not presented as a passive acceptance, but rather as a process shaped through struggle, effort, and volition. For

instance, the hero's return from death in the Älibek batır tale indicates that destiny is perceived as a mutable construct, while the hero's resurrection and subsequent vengeance in the Bayğulan tale demonstrate the efficacy of individual will against fate (Yıldırım, 2019, s. 109-374).

2. Structure

In narrative-based literary texts, structure is formed by the integration of plot, characters, space, and time within a systemic unity (Aktaş, 2013, p. 40). Kazakh heroic fairy tales are situated at the intersection of the epic tradition and the wondrous fairy tale genre; it is observed that this structure is established within a specific order in the examined tales of Kerkula Attı Kendebay, Bayğulan and Alibek Batır. In these texts, rather than a coincidental flow, the plot is shaped around a specific "heroic cycle." This cycle consists of the stages of the hero's birth, the preparation process, the struggle phase, the crisis/defeat, and the final victory (Propp, 2008, p. 112). The legendary heroes of African, American, and Australian tribes were born through one of these ways, and some of these scenes are also found in Kazakh legends and fairy tales. While traveling, a wealthy man finds a dried head. He burns it, wraps its ashes in a cloth, and places it in a chest. While rummaging through the chest, his daughter finds the ashes and tastes them with her tongue. Subsequently, the girl becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son, who later turns out to be highly intelligent. Legends about Genghis Khan also recount that his mother became pregnant with him from sun rays. In the tales of "Er Tostik" and "Alibek Batyr," the hero's mother became pregnant after consuming a specific food item (Qasqabasov, 2014c, pp. 115-116).

The primary element that triggers the plot in the folktales in question is generally the disruption of social order or a state of deficiency. In the tale of Kerkula Attı Kendebay, the emergence of the hero is tied to the necessity of resolving the grievances of the public. Kendebay is introduced into the narrative not merely as an individual hero, but as a figure tasked with ensuring the welfare of society. Similarly, in the Alibek Batır tale, the hero's struggle is not just a pursuit of personal success, but aims to protect the social order against enemies.

The hero's entry into the narrative is often manifested through the courage and strength they display at an early age. In the Kerkula Attı Kendebay tale, the hero growing rapidly and exhibiting extraordinary powers demonstrates his chosenness. Likewise, in the Bayğulan tale, the hero's refusal to abandon the struggle despite the hardships he encounters indicates that he is a figure bound to destiny (Babalar sözi, 2011, pp. 39-265).

In the development of the plot, the hero is seen to undergo various trials. These tests enable his maturation both physically and mentally. In the Alibek Batır tale, the conflicts the hero enters into with enemies are not merely displays of power but also constitute a strategic test. In the Bayğulan tale, on the other hand, the obstacles encountered by the hero appear as stages that test his patience and determination. A prominent element drawing attention in these fairy tales is that the hero encounters a difficult situation and escapes from it through either his own power or helper elements. In the Kerkula Attı Kendebay tale, the hero's horse is not merely a means of transportation, but an important helper figure that guides him and provides support in battle. This situation reveals the strong bond established between the hero and the horse within the narrative (Yıldırım, 2019, pp. 109-374). The plot concludes with the hero defeating his enemies, re-establishing order, and restoring social equilibrium. This resolution demonstrates that the tales exhibit a closed structure, wherein the initially disrupted order is ultimately restored.

a) Characters (Protagonists and Helper Figures)

In the examined fairy tales, characters occupy specific positions within the narrative structure in accordance with distinct functions. The protagonists (Kendebay, Bayğulan, Alibek Batır) are exemplars of the batyr (warrior-hero) archetype, representing core values such as courage, strength and justice. These heroes act not merely in pursuit of individual success, but with the explicit aim of ensuring the peace and stability of society. Helper figures—particularly the hero's horse—constitute vital elements of the narrative. In the tale of Kerkula Attı Kendebay, the horse emerges as the hero's greatest supporter and plays a decisive role in his ultimate success. This dynamic demonstrates that

within Kazakh culture, the horse is not merely a mount, but also a profound symbol of intellect and guidance. Conversely, opposing forces generally manifest as enemy figures, tyrannical rulers, or formidable obstacles encountered by the hero. In the Alibek Batır tale, the struggles against these adversaries form the fundamental conflict of the narrative (Babalar sözi, 2011, pp. 39-265). As Sarbassova (2015, p. 238) posits, horse coat colors are an inseparable part of Kazakh national identity and "consciousness," wherein the color of the horse is intrinsically sealed with the destiny of the hero in epics. Furthermore, Zhiyenbayev and Tolebay (2026a, p. 630) state that the image of the horse in Kazakh fairy tales is conceptualized as "the wings of man" (adamnıñ qanatı); as a linguistic reflection of this deep bond, each specific hair tone and shade is matched with a highly specialized terminology. In the mythological worldview of Turkic peoples, Khidr (or Kydyr) is accepted as a saint in human form and a bringer of good fortune (Sağınadinqızı, 2024, p. 111). Within these heroic fairy tales, the archetype of Khidr typically manifests during the resolution process to guide the narrative toward its denouement.

Gender roles—whether viewed as a consequence of biological existence or as temporal, spatial, social, economic, or political learned/taught behaviors—do not remain merely a reality confined within the triangle of the individual, family, and society; they actively permeate literary texts and narratives. Epic and folktale texts, which constitute a significant portion of oral folk creations, serve as vital repositories that harbor these cultural codes within their structural layers (Atasever, 2022, p. 672). In this context, female characters are generally cast either in the roles of the "beautiful girl/sister" who requires protection, or as the omniscient "sorceress kempir" (witch/old woman archetype). Characters such as Akbilek Kız or Naran function as the initiating cause of the plot; the hero takes action specifically to rescue them or to win their hand in marriage. In certain instances, supernatural women, such as peri (fairy) maidens, assume the role of the ultimate savior during the hero's most critical moments of helplessness (Zhiyenbayev & Tolebay, 2026b, p. 110).

Ultimately, the characters are evaluated along two main axes: the courageous/merciful figures and the opposing forces. The merciful and just actions of the heroes are invariably rewarded at the climax of the narrative, whereas malevolent and treacherous characters are systematically punished.

b) The Spatial Element

In these fairy tales, space plays a significant role in the development of the plot. Open spaces come to the forefront as the hero's arena of struggle. The steppe, the road, and distant realms are the domains where the hero remains in constant motion and proves his worth. In the tale of Kerkula Attı Kendebay, the journey embarked upon by the hero represents both his physical and symbolic transformation process. Enclosed or hazardous spaces, on the other hand, serve as the environments where the hero is tested. While the challenging environments encountered in the Bayğulan tale test the hero's endurance, the locations where the enemies reside in the Alibek Batır tale manifest as spaces where the conflict intensifies (Yıldırım, 2019, pp. 109-374).

In Kazakh heroic fairy tales, it is possible to see all reflections of traditions, customs, values, and mores, alongside life experiences within the vast steppe, the influence of geography on topnymic naming processes, the warrior characteristics of Kazakh Turks, and their nomadic lifestyle. In terms of spatial settings, the expansive steppe geography, mountains, forests, deserts, and far-off countries predominate in Kazakh heroic fairy tales. These spaces are not merely physical settings, but also symbolic spheres where the hero is tried (Yorulmaz Kahve, 2022, p. 748). Generally, spaces can be categorized into two main domains: real and extraordinary. This structural diversity demonstrates that the tales draw sustenance simultaneously from both objective social realities and fantastic elements.

c) The Concept of Time

In the examined fairy tales, time is not bound to a specific historical framework. The narratives generally take place in an indefinite past time, which allows the tales to acquire a universal quality. Time varies dynamically according to the significance of events. While the hero's growth process and journeys are conveyed rapidly, the combat scenes are narrated in much greater detail. This structural choice strengthens the action-oriented nature of the narrative. Furthermore, time is

observed to possess a cyclical structure. The initial order, which is disrupted at the beginning, is ultimately restored through the intervention of the hero. This structural pattern is clearly observed in the tales of Kerkula Attı Kendebay, Bayğulan, and Alibek Batır.

3. Theme

Thematically, Kazakh fairy tales draw attention as narratives shaped around the hero's journey and the trial stages encountered during this journey. In the examined tales of Kerkula Attı Kendebay, Bayğulan, and Alibek Batır, although the themes develop through different events at the surface structure, they converge in a shared semantic world that determines the hero's maturation process at the deep structure. In this context, the prominent primary themes in these fairy tales are journey, trial, individual transformation (maturation), struggle, and the binary opposition of good and evil. These themes are not merely elements that shape the plot, but are also fundamental building blocks that determine the hero's internal development (Campbell, 2004, p. 295).

The most prominent theme in the tales is the hero's journey. Beyond being a physical movement, the journey represents a step taken by the hero into the unknown and the very beginning of the transformation process. In the Kerkula Attı Kendebay tale, the hero's departure demonstrates that he exits the childhood stage and enters a process of proving himself. The hardships encountered during this journey test not only his physical strength but also his will and determination. Similarly, in the Alibek Batır tale, the path embarked upon by the hero to fight enemies appears as a mandatory stage of individual development. Another fundamental element directly linked to the theme of the journey is the motif of the trial (test). The hero undergoes different types of tests throughout the way. These tests bear intellectual and moral dimensions as much as physical ones. In the Bayğulan tale, the obstacles and hardships encountered by the hero stand out as crucial stages that test his patience and endurance. During this process, the hero confronts not only the external world but also his own internal fears and limitations. In this respect, the theme of trial (Table 1) serves as a foundational stage that prepares the internal transformation of the hero.

Table 1. Comparison of Thematic Elements in the Examined Kazakh Fairy Tales

Tale Name	Purpose and Nature of the Journey	Type of Trial and Struggle	Good-Evil Binary Opposition	Outcome of the Maturation Process
Kerkula Attı Kendebay	Stepping into the unknown and proving oneself by emerging from the childhood phase.	A struggle against supernatural entities and enemies, testing physical strength, will, and determination.	While the hero represents justice and righteousness, the enemies he encounters symbolize evil and forces that disrupt order.	Transformation from an inexperienced individual into a strong, conscious, responsible, and ideal hero.
Bayğulan	A long and arduous quest process that is physically weakening yet experience-building.	Obstacles requiring patience, endurance, and resilience rather than direct warfare; confronting one's own fears and	A complex moral dimension where evil can stem not only from the external world but also from within the family through	Internal maturity and resilience achieved on the basis of patience and determination by not giving up in the face of hardships.

		limitations.	betrayal.	
Alibek Batır	A mandatory stage of individual development embarked upon to fight enemies and restore the disrupted order.	Confronting isolation, helplessness, and mortality, in addition to physical and strategic wars waged against enemies.	Physical warfare simultaneously serving as a moral test; the rewarding of goodness and the defeat of evil.	Transformation into a figure who not only is a good warrior but also restores the disrupted balance and establishes order.

The trial process in Kazakh fairy tales directly culminates in the maturation of the hero. The hero, who is initially inexperienced or has not yet proven himself, transforms into the ideal heroic archetype through the journey and trials. In Kerkula Attı Kendebay, the hero's transition into a strong, conscious, and responsible individual at the end of the process—in stark contrast to his initial state—serves as a clear manifestation of this theme. Similarly, the transformation of Alibek Batır as a result of his struggles, evolving from a mere warrior into an order-establishing figure, demonstrates the completion of the maturation process (Propp, 2008, p. 112). Another prominent theme in the tales is struggle. However, this struggle does not solely consist of wars waged against the enemy. The hero frequently confronts conditions such as isolation, uncertainty, and helplessness. While the battles with enemies in the Alibek Batır tale exemplify physical struggle, the adversities encountered in Bayğulan manifest as tests that demand patience and resilience. This situation demonstrates that the struggle possesses a multi-layered structure (Yıldırım, 2019, pp. 109-374). One of the fundamental determinants of the thematic structure is the binary opposition of good and evil. While the hero typically embodies justice and righteousness, the opposing forces are constructed as elements that disrupt order. The hero's struggle against enemies in the tales of Kerkula Attı Kendebay and Alibek Batır is a clear reflection of this antithesis. This conflict is not merely a physical war, but also functions as a moral test. The eventual defeat of evil and the rewarding of goodness at the conclusion of the tales reinforce the didactic dimension of the narrative.

4. Linguistic Features

The language of Kazakh fairy tales exhibits a formulaic and repetition-based structure that reflects the defining characteristics of the oral narrative tradition. In the examined tales of Kerkula Attı Kendebay, Bayğulan, and Alibek Batır, the language is constructed with a simple, direct, and listener-oriented delivery, particularly emphasizing the hero's journey and the trial stages encountered throughout this process. In this context, language functions not merely as a medium of narration, but as a structural element that renders the hero's maturation process visible. The lexicon utilized in the language of the tales is heavily concentrated along the axis of journey, struggle, and trial. Expressions such as "setting out on a journey," "traveling to distant realms," "overcoming obstacles," and "encountering the enemy" stand out as linguistic formulas that reflect the hero's internal transformation as much as his physical movement. The constant state of motion of the hero in the Kerkula Attı Kendebay tale increases the density of verbs in the language, which imparts a dynamic structure to the narrative. Similarly, the density of words pertaining to warfare and struggle in the Alibek Batır tale makes the hero's trial process distinct at the linguistic level. The language of the fairy tales is simple and written in a tongue that anyone can understand; being anonymous, they reflect the literary identity of the folk (Ashimova, 2020, p. 35). Idioms within the tales are crucial linguistic elements that reify the challenges faced by the hero and his attitude toward these difficulties. Idiomatic expressions such as "risking one's life," "fighting to the death," and "not

turning back from one's path" emphasize the determination displayed by the hero while undergoing trials. In the Bayğulan tale, the hero's refusal to surrender to the obstacles he encounters is reinforced through such idiomatic expressions. These idioms not only enrich the narration but also make the hero's maturation process linguistically observable. Formulaic expressions and formal delivery patterns demonstrate the structural dependence of the tales on the oral performance tradition. The tales generally open with a timeless introduction such as "Once upon a time..." and the hero's departure on a journey is expressed through specific formulas. Repetitive expressions at the moments when the hero confronts trials determine the rhythm of the narrative. For instance, the repetition of similar word formulas in scenes where the hero engages in an arduous struggle both enhances the dramatic effect and keeps the listener's attention active (Çetin, 2009, p. 265). Expressions functioning as proverbs and counsel in the examined tales acquire meaning particularly during the hero's trial process. Sayings such as "he who patient wins" or "a brave man reveals himself on a difficult day" emphasize that the hardships encountered by the hero serve as vehicles of maturation. Such expressions are frequently conveyed through elderly, wise, or guiding characters and assist the hero in finding the true path. This phenomenon demonstrates that language simultaneously carries an educational and orienting function. Another remarkable element in the language of the tales is the density of vocabulary related to horses and travel. In the Kerkula Attı Kendebay tale, the horse is not merely a narrative element but a symbol that is constantly repeated in the language and integrated with the hero's identity. The speed, strength, and loyalty of the horse are frequently expressed through similes and repetitions. This dynamic ensures that the hero's journey process is reinforced linguistically as well. Repetitions and rhythmic delivery occupy a significant place in the language of the tales. The hero's power, the magnitude of the obstacles he encounters, or the difficulty of the journey are emphasized through the repetition of similar expressions. These repetitions intensify especially during moments of trial. While the repetitions used in the narration of combat scenes in the Alibek Batır tale render the hero's struggle more evocative, the sequential listing of hardships in the Bayğulan tale creates a rhythmic structure that brings the hero's endurance to the forefront.

5. Narrative Style

In terms of narrative characteristics, Kazakh fairy tales display a structure in which epic and fairy-tale elements are intertwined, bearing the traces of the oral narrative tradition. In the examined tales of Kerkula Atlı Kendebay, Bayğulan, and Alibek Batır, the narration (Table 2) is built upon a dynamic composition that explicitly centers on the hero's journey and the trial stages encountered during this process. In this context, the narrative style exhibits a line of development that follows the hero's process of overcoming difficulties step by step.

Table 2. Narrative Characteristics and Functions in Kazakh Fairy Tales

Narrative Characteristic	**Function and Impact**	**Sample Tale / Situation**
Dynamic Composition and Journey Axis	Determines the rhythm of the narrative and reflects the hero's physical journey in parallel with his internal transformation.	*Kerkula Atlı Kendebay* (the departure and successive trials), *Alibek Batır* (continuous motion provided through distinct struggle scenes).
Dramatic and Escalating Narration	Heightens the tension during trial scenes, details the events, and progressively renders the hero's development visible.	*Bayğulan* (the construction of each new obstacle to be more difficult than the preceding one).
Hyperbolic and Fantastic Style	Combines realistic and extraordinary elements to elevate the hero to an epic	*Kerkula Atlı Kendebay* (the exaggerated presentation of the hero's extraordinary strength and the

	dimension as an idealized figure.	speed of his horse).
Repetitive and Rhythmic Structure	Imparts a rhythm aligned with the oral tradition, helping the listener to visualize the events in their mind and follow them with ease.	*Alibek Batır* (similar formulas in combat scenes), *Bayğulan* (the sequential listing of obstacles).
Didactic (Educational) Perspective	Exalts social values and indirectly conveys the message that difficulties are necessary for the development of the individual.	General (The praising of the hero and the glorification of his achievements, while opposing forces are presented negatively).

Here is the academic-level English translation of the provided text, using precise folkloric and philological terminology while maintaining the original citations: The narration in fairy tales typically begins with a state of deficiency or a problem, which functions as the primary element that impels the hero to take action. In the tale of Kerkula Atlı Kendebay, the emergence and departure of the hero form the starting point of the narrative; this movement concurrently marks the first step of his maturation process. From this point onward, the narration presents the trials encountered by the hero within a successive order (Çetin, 2009, p. 263). One of the most remarkable features of the narrative style is its journey-oriented progression. The hero's transition from one space to another determines the rhythm of the narrative. In the Alibek Batır tale, the journey embarked upon by the hero to confront his enemies is conveyed by enriching it with various combat scenes. During this process, rather than a static structure, the narration exhibits a flow in constant motion. This dynamism reflects the hero's internal transformation in parallel with his physical journey (Campbell, 2004, p. 295). The trial scenes constitute the most intensive and dramatic sections of the narrative. In these parts, the pace of the narration quickens, the tension heightens, and the events are conveyed in a more detailed manner. In the Bayğulan tale, the difficulties encountered by the hero are presented progressively, creating a crescendo effect in the narration. Each new obstacle is constructed to be more challenging than the previous one, rendering the hero's development visible. Thus, the narration becomes not merely a tool that relays events, but an element that structures the hero's maturation process. Regarding the oldest genres told by the Kazakh folk among wondrous fairy tales, it is necessary to first mention the wondrous folktales about the "hunter-marksman." The hunter here is not the hunter-marksman found in the recently formed "realistic fairy tales"; he is a hunter-marksman operating within a world of imagination (Avezov, 1997b, p. 80). Narration in Kazakh fairy tales is enriched by the concurrent use of realistic elements and extraordinary components. The entities the hero encounters during his journey, the events he experiences, and the achievements he secures are often presented in a hyperbolic and fantastic language. In the Kerkula Atlı Kendebay tale, the hero's strength, the speed of his horse, and the obstacles he faces are elevated to an epic dimension through hyperbolic narration. This style ensures that the hero is presented as an idealized figure, distinct from an ordinary individual. The style of heroic fairy tales is also defined by its own distinct characteristics. A slow-paced narration is dominant here, carrying a certain epic breath. The hero's struggle against the enemy is narrated enthusiastically. These features and themes—such as heroism and marriage, battling the enemy, and struggling against supernatural entities—bring heroic fairy tales significantly closer to the heroic epic. The hero archetype in the heroic epic, along with the valor and courage in his character, has undoubtedly developed on the foundation of heroic fairy tales. This genre of folk prose is one of the most vital sources, one of many springs, of the heroic epic—that is, the epic genre (Qasqabasov & Aymuhambet, 2024, p. 152). Another important technical element used in the narration is the repetitive and rhythmic structure. Particularly, the repetition of

similar events encountered during the hero's journey allows the narration to acquire a rhythm aligned with the oral tradition. The transmission of combat scenes through similar formulas in the Alibek Batır tale, or the sequential listing of obstacles in the Bayğulan tale, serve as examples of this rhythmic structure. These repetitions assist the listener in following the narrative more easily and visualizing the events in their mind. While the narrator relays the events like an objective observer, they simultaneously possess a perspective that exalts social values. While the achievements of the hero are praised, opposing forces are presented in a negative manner. This dynamic strengthens the didactic dimension of the narrative. The hero successfully emerging from every trial conveys an indirect message to the listener: hardships are necessary stages for the development of the individual. The structural and thematic analysis of Kerkula Attı Kendebay, Bayğulan and Alibek Batır demonstrates that Kazakh heroic fairy tales function as highly sophisticated narrative frameworks rather than simple oral entertainment. The core finding of this study reveals that the "deficiency-journey-struggle-transformation" cycle identified by Qasqabasov (2014b) does not merely propel the linear advancement of the plot; instead, it serves as a profound psychological and cultural template for individual self-actualization within Kazakh cultural thought. By aligning these narratives with modern narratological frameworks, this paper bridges traditional Turkic folklore studies and international monomyth theories.

The structural execution of the hero's journey in the examined texts aligns significantly with Joseph Campbell's (2004) conceptualization of the monomyth. The progression from an initial state of social or familial deficiency to the ultimate restoration of cosmic and social balance reinforces Vladimir Propp's (2008) structural morphology, confirming that Kazakh heroic tales operate within a closed, highly regulated cyclic system. However, a critical divergence observed in the corpus—particularly in the tale of Bayğulan—challenges the conventional expectation of purely externalized heroic conflicts. While Kendebay and Alibek Batır confront localized and supernatural adversaries to secure societal welfare, Bayğulan internalizes the trial motif by centering the crisis on familial betrayal and moral isolation. This structural variance suggests that the traditional Kazakh coming-of-age narrative model accommodates complex socio-psychological realities, signaling that a hero's maturation is contingent upon overcoming both external physical perils and internal, domestic fractures.

Linguistically, the dense utilization of a highly specialized lexicon surrounding horse culture and geography highlights how the Kazakh language reifies abstract psychological transformation into tangible, spatial realities. The semantic richness of horse coat colors and the conceptualization of the horse as "the wings of man" (adamnıñ qanatı), as documented by Sarbassova (2015) and Zhiyenbayev and Tolebay (2026a), prove that the helper figure is structurally inseparable from the hero's identity. The rhythmic repetitions and formulaic openings ("Once upon a time...") do not merely indicate oral structural reliance as Çetin (2009) suggests; they create an immersive, ritualistic narrative space where cultural codes, gender expectations, and ethical values are systematically transmitted to the audience. Furthermore, the integration of mythic and saintly archetypes, such as Khidr (Kydyr), during resolution phases demonstrates the hybrid nature of Kazakh folk prose, acting as a transitional layer between archaic mythic thought and formalized epic aesthetics. The strictly enforced binary opposition of good and evil observed across all three texts underscores the deeply didactic function of the narrator, who balances an objective delivery with an underlying socio-educational mission to reinforce tribal cohesion, justice, and resilience. Ultimately, this discussion establishes that the typological structure of journey and trial motifs in Kazakh fairy tales offers a multi-layered, functional model of maturation, illustrating how historical memory and collective consciousness are preserved through stylized linguistic and narrative choices.

Conclusion

As a result of this study, it has been determined that the examined fairy tales of Kerkula Atlı Kendebay, Bayğulan, and Alibek Batır are significant narratives within the Kazakh oral storytelling

tradition that reflect the process of maturation through the motifs of the hero's journey and trials. The primary findings of the research demonstrate that the plot in these texts possesses a multi-layered structure, reflecting not only a struggle that takes place in the external world but concurrently the internal transformation and development of the hero. The plot in these fairy tales typically initiates with a state of deficiency or threat and is shaped around the journey embarked upon by the hero to eliminate this condition. Through the various trials encountered by the hero, this journey transforms into a process that enables his maturation both physically and mentally. In this context, the motifs of journey and trial emerge not merely as elements that advance the narrative progression, but as fundamental structural components that make it possible for the hero to evolve into an ideal individual.

When evaluated from a structural perspective, it is observed that the elements of character, space, and time are functionally constructed to support the hero's maturation process. Throughout the journey, the hero encounters diverse tests in different spaces, while time exhibits a flexible structure that intensifies this process and heightens the dramatic effect. Thus, all components of the narrative converge within a holistic system centered on the transformation of the hero. In terms of linguistic and narrative characteristics, the tales effectively project the hero's journey and trial processes through formulaic expressions, repetitions, and a rhythmic structure unique to the oral narrative tradition. The linguistic and narrative elements, which intensify particularly during scenes of struggle and testing, render the challenges encountered by the hero distinct, while the process of overcoming these adversities enhances the dramatic power of the narrative. Thematically, elements such as journey, trial, struggle, and the binary opposition of good and evil stand out as the primary building blocks that explicate the hero's maturation process. During this process, the hero does not merely defeat his enemies; by transcending his own limitations, he also becomes a more conscious, powerful, and responsible individual. In this respect, the fairy tales establish a robust relationship between individual development and the restoration of social order. Conclusively, the examined Kazakh fairy tales can be evaluated as narratives shaped around the hero's journey and trial processes, presenting these stages as a model of maturation. These narratives are of profound importance not merely as folkloric products, but as symbolic texts reflecting the process of self-actualization of the individual within Kazakh cultural thought.

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