

Methodological approaches to the study of the Kyrgyz Epic

Gulnara Murzakhmedova

Bishkek State University named after Kusein Karasaev,

Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

E-mail: murzakhmedovagulnara@gmail.com

Gulnara Botokanova

Kyrgyz-Chinese Faculty, Bishkek State University named after Kusein Karasaev,

Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

Gulsunkan Zhunushalieva

I.K. Akhunbaev Kyrgyz State Medical Academy,

Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

Abstract

The importance of a comprehensive study of the epic heritage of ethnic groups lies in the fact that the preservation of ethnic identity and distinctive socio-cultural space is more than ever questioned in the process of globalisation, which is accompanied by standardisation and unification of all aspects of society. The purpose of this study is to analyse the works of leading folklorists, philosophers, literary critics, and historians, and critically examine some methodological approaches to the study of heroic epics. Among the methods used during the

research, historical and cultural, structural and functional analysis also should be noted. The paper analyses the works of prominent folklorists, philosophers, literary scholars, and historians who have studied folk art. The results suggest that certain steps have been taken in the study of the epic heritage of the Kyrgyz people. However, despite these achievements, the epic “Manas” is not considered a comprehensive phenomenon by researchers. For a holistic vision of the epic phenomenon, a comprehensive approach is needed, which includes a systematic, hermeneutic, structural-semiotic, ethnomethodology, etc. Each of the considered methods is deterministic, and only through the combined application of methods it is possible to comprehend the content and essential basis of the epic, reconstruct the social environment, lifestyle, nature and essence of human existence, the variety of artefacts, the worldview of the Kyrgyz nomad, recreate and reproduce the historical events of the ethnos. The results indicate that the value of epics is especially great in those conditions when there are no other sources and “evidences” of distant times. Understanding the spiritual and material life of the Kyrgyz people, whose written culture did not exist until the 20th century, is only possible through the discovery and reconstruction of various forms of traditional culture. The practical value of this paper is that it helps comprehend the approaches and methods that can be employed to study Kyrgyz epics and expand knowledge of Kyrgyz culture and literature.

Keywords:

Traditional culture, hermeneutics, semiotics, archetype, collective unconscious, reconstruction.

Introduction

The analysis of the current socio-cultural situation in the context of globalisation, associated with the standardisation and unification of all aspects of society, raises the question of preserving the identity of the cultural space as never before. The object of this study is the Kyrgyz heroic epic “Manas”. The main task of the paper is to give a theoretical substantiation of the axiological aspects of the combined method of studying the Kyrgyz heroic epic. While acknowledging the historical significance of methodological paradigms prevalent in Soviet folklore studies and literary critique, such as typological, comparative-historical, and mythological approaches, there arises an urgent imperative to delineate the advantages of a comprehensive analytical framework tailored to contemporary scholarly exigencies (Saifnazarov and Saifnazarova, 2023; Auanassova

et al., 2018). As interdisciplinary integration gains momentum in modern academia, the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach emerges as a pathway to transcend the limitations inherent in monodisciplinary epic studies. In this light, delving into the epic heritage of the Kyrgyz people, emblematic of their national identity, assumes profound relevance. Folklore, serving as a repository of collective societal consciousness, plays an instrumental role in shaping the national ethos and worldview (Tuyakbaev et al., 2023).

According to M.T. Sadyrov (2022), the study of all the facts related to the formation of Kyrgyz epic creativity, is an important methodological basis of modern literary studies. The origins of Kyrgyz literary studies and the investigation of the literatures of different peoples of the world were formed in several stages. The Kyrgyz trilogy “Manas” is closely connected with folklore and literature. In this sense, the Kyrgyz trilogy “Manas” consists of archaic-mythical, historical-heroic and many other layers of epic art, assimilating subsequent historical events and genres. As a result, literary genres (epic, lyric and drama) emerged within the framework of the folk epic. According to N.Kh. Bekmukhamedova (2021), the study of the genesis and the main historical stages of the epic’s development have led researchers to the opinion that early archaic, mythological and fairy-tale-fantastic, as well as religious “layers”, are not dominant in the complex multi-layered text of a single epic plot. However, they quite clearly reveal their presence, giving the epic a unique mysticism and sacredness with their ancient pagan and religious fiction.

As stated by B.M. Akmatov (2020), that the experience of comparing the epic “Manas” with the epic tales of other people’s indicates the commonality of the functions performed by the Kyrgyz storytellers – manaschi. Linguistic reconstructions and studies of functional, psychological and narrative features of poetry of different peoples have led scientists to an important conclusion about the existence in ancient times of such syncretic images as shaman, poet and storyteller, and their similarity to each other. Shamanism is an important component of Tengrianism. Tengrianism retains a connection with spirits, including ancestral spirits. Manas is the embodiment of such a generic spirit. Another opinion is represented by the famous British historian A.J. Toynbee (1948). The more sophisticated heroic poetry becomes, the more disconnected from history and the realities of real life, the more chances it has to survive. There is no reason to claim that the author of heroic poetry has no idea about the reality of history or about keeping an accurate account of his own time for future generations. Since he does not yet

know how to distinguish fact from fiction, his work cannot be evaluated by the criterion of accuracy. Thus, according to the researcher, the epic has no historical and cognitive value.

Zh.M. Borbodoev (2021) suggests that on the basis of a comparative analysis of paradigms and research approaches in the study of ethnic processes in Kyrgyzstan, an important role assigned to the nation-forming Kyrgyz ethnic group has been revealed. A.N. Sydykov (2016) investigated the functional and semantic features of the lexeme based on the epic “Manas”, the author claims that four colours stand out in the colour circle, with the exception of white and black – these are red, yellow, green, and blue. Each of these colour areas consists of many shades that smoothly merge into one another. And in each language, names are given to the colour or shade that are practically necessary for native speakers of this language. This means that the composition of the system of adjectives of colour is mainly determined by extralinguistic factors. T.Sh. Ryskulova (2021), who analysed the same topic as the mentioned author in her study of Kyrgyz epics, considers punctuation as a vivid means of expression in language. Due to their figurative and metaphorical nature, they can more reliably convey symbolic meaning. She found that this is especially true for sentence expressions containing the black and white components. This word is semantically central in most of the idioms identified in the text of the “Epic of Manas”. The instinct of the cycle is created in a certain contextual setting, in which the linguistic originality and national specificity of the idiomatic unit are revealed (Karalaev, 2010; Homer. Iliad., 2023; Zakirova et al., 2023).

The main purpose of the study is to determine the features of the methodology of a comprehensive study of the Kyrgyz heroic epic as one of the modern paradigms of study in epic studies. Also, in the course of the study, firstly, the method of hermeneutics as a tool for analysing the epic, and, secondly, the semiotic method of study were considered. Historical and cultural, structural and functional analysis were used to achieve the set goals and objectives.

Hermeneutics, as an approach to literary and cultural analysis, offers a nuanced lens through which to interpret texts, narratives, and cultural phenomena. Rooted in the tradition of interpretation, hermeneutics seeks to uncover layers of meaning embedded within texts and cultural artifacts, recognizing the dynamic interplay between text and interpreter, as well as the socio-historical context in which they are situated (Kongyratbay and Kongyratbay, 2013; Tazhitova et al., 2022). The article underscores the dynamic nature of hermeneutic interpretation, highlighting the interplay between the interpreter and the text, as well as the socio-historical

context in which they are situated. This recognition of the hermeneutic circle – the continual movement between the whole and its parts – underscores the iterative nature of interpretation, wherein scholars gain insight into the meaning of individual elements by considering them within the broader context of the epic, and vice versa. In addition to hermeneutics, the approach of semiotics plays a crucial role in the study outlined in the provided text, particularly concerning the analysis of the Kyrgyz heroic epic. One key aspect of semiotic analysis is the recognition of the signifier and the signified – the physical form of the sign (such as a word or image) and the concept or idea it represents. By analyzing the relationship between signifiers and their signifieds within the "Manas" epic, gains insight into the cultural meanings and associations attached to different elements of the narrative.

Revelations of the heroic epic: New horizons of research

At present, it can be noted that the Manas scholars in the 20th century have achieved undoubted success in determining the problems of the epic “Manas”, in studying the content, variants, genesis, poetics, creativity and biography of storytellers. There is another pattern, the more the epic is investigated, the more the range of new problems of its research is revealed. It is necessary not only to read the epic anew, but also to understand and interpret the immanent layers encrypted in the texts of the epic; to study the psychological aspect of storytelling; to reveal the meaning of the essence and existence of epics; to search for socio-cultural and natural determinants of epics, their origins and archetypes that determine their functioning and development (Bakker, 2019; Sabirzyanova et al., 2022).

Currently, this problem needs to be studied, since in methodological terms it is interdisciplinary, being at the junction of many sciences, such as history, folklore studies, literary studies, cultural studies, linguistics, philosophy, ethnography, sociology, etc. To investigate the essence of the heroic epic, some scientists advocate a completely new area in folklore studies, and this direction is gaining momentum. This is due to the fact that folklore, including epic heritage, has long been regarded as the art of words, and in the ethnic direction it is studied as a folk memory, an echo of history, an ethnic resource. The need to study the heroic epic as a national resource is explained by the growth of the historical consciousness of individual peoples, including the need for modern science (Bakhtin, 2020). In this sense, the epic is one of the main sources of the study of history, everyday life, economic activity, traditions and customs, traditional knowledge, religious beliefs, ethical and aesthetic ideals of the people (Kalkman, 2020). Up to the 20th century,

mythoepos remained in fact the main source of information for Kyrgyz nomads about nature, about society, about their place in the world, about their attitude to the world. The value of epics is especially great in those conditions when there are no other sources besides them, “evidence” of distant times. Epics in the life of a nomad performed ideological, cognitive functions, at the same time they were a regulator of moral, political, legal, family and household relations of traditional society (Kongyratbay, 2020; Yermentayeva et al., 2018).

The study of diverse forms of culture makes it possible for the researcher to recreate, reconstruct the nature of the social consciousness of the epoch, to better understand the peculiarity of the social environment, material and spiritual culture, the worldview of the people, allows to identify the specifics of the functioning of certain forms of traditional culture, to determine its role in social life. Epic poetry is a good example of a socio-anthropological worldview in which artistic, mythological, and religious elements are presented together. However, this is an artistic and mythological rather than a religious and mythological worldview. For people and demigods (heroes) are at the centre of the epic, and the gods are the periphery, accomplices of the human drama, and their interests are intertwined with the interests of people (Koldoshev and Bozhonov, 2020). The opposite perspective, denying the historical aspect of the epic, was presented by Aristotle, who warned against the search for truth in the fantastic world of epic images. He pointed out that the epic, as a genre of literature, does not necessarily have to reflect real historical events. He believed that the main purpose of an epic story is to create a convincing and unique form of art that can attract attention and captivate the listener.

Homer, a great master of art, illustrated this idea with his works, in which he consciously introduced elements of fiction and fables. He showed that historical authenticity is not the main goal of the epic, but rather the creation of a colourful and fascinating form of narrative that was able to capture the imagination of listeners and convey deep emotional and philosophical ideas (Singh, 2022). Thus, even when realising the fantastic nature of epic images, they still have a strong influence on readers and listeners, enriching their aesthetic and emotional experience. Instead of pursuing historical authenticity, the epic strives to create its own unique reality, which has its own laws and semantic depths. Due to the lack of time of action (exact dates) of various events reflected in the epic, the study of the epic in the historical aspect is certainly difficult. In this regard, an opinion has been formed in science, according to which the epic has no historical information, and in general, the epic is mainly of artistic value (Maravela and Bär, 2022).

In the methodology of studying epics, one of the main approaches is the use of the hermeneutic method. The hermeneutic method is necessary when there is a problem of interpretation, understanding of sign systems contained in texts. This method, dating back to the German thinker F. Schleiermacher, then improved by V. Dilthey and G. Gadamer, is one of the main methods of understanding and interpreting the text of epics. On the one hand, this method will allow reconstructing the ideas embedded in the text, and on the other, to link and integrate the original meaning of the text into the modern situation. A number of scientists believe that the hermeneutic method of studying the epic is not only the optimisation of the research methodology, but also echoes historical and ethnic processes. This suggests that it is necessary to treat the heroic epic as a national memory, a story told by the people themselves. According to this method, it is the text that is the main object of analysis (Tayyab and Jamshaid, 2022).

The epistemological aspect of hermeneutics as a specific method of cognitive activity shows that the main idea in it is not only the understanding and interpretation of certain facts and knowledge by the researcher, free from subjective arbitrariness, but also the creative search for the connection of the studied phenomena with each other and with other phenomena, the existence of which is recognised on the basis of already available data. In this sense, it can be noted that interpretation, understanding is only possible if another relevant fact or knowledge is attached to the existing knowledge, facts. For example, in the epic “Manas” there is such a medicinal plant as “мээр чөп” (Table 1).

Table 1. The mention of the phrase “meer chep” in the epic “Manas”

Original	Translation
<p>Атка берер мээр чөп, Каран күн башка түшкөндө Кереги мунун тиет деп... Бармактайын чайнаса Адамдын мээрин кандырган, Беш талын катып чайнатса, Тулпардын суусун кандырган.</p>	<p>You shall give the horse a meer chep, If a rainy day comes, Having said that all this will come in handy. If a person chews a little He will taste bliss, If he stealthily gives the horse To chew five stalks,</p>

	Then the steed will quench its thirst.
--	---

Source: S. Karalaev (2010).

In the dictionary of the Kyrgyz language, this plant is defined as a herb found in fairy tales, used to fight fatigue. In another dictionary, “meer chep” is translated as “love herb”. According to scientists, “meer chep” is a ginseng – a perennial herbaceous plant growing in Northeastern China, North Korea, and preparations from this plant are used as increasing immunity and giving strength to the body. From the excerpt it can be seen that this plant was used by the ancestors before and during battles, as increasing the efficiency of not only a person, but also a horse. Based on the text of the epic, it can be deduced that the ancient Kyrgyz knew the healing effect of ginseng – “meer chep”. And on the other hand, from the passage it can be assumed that the Kyrgyz nomads may have received these medicinal herbs from merchants-caravaners who passed along the Silk Road.

In the epic, there is the use of the surgical instrument “ТИНТҮҮР” (Table 2).

Table 2. The mention of the word “tintuur” in the epic “Manas”

Original	Translation
Сом жеринде ок бар – деп, ТИНТҮҮР менен коштуп	Saying there’s a bullet in the thigh, Cut with a tintuur (scalpel)

Source: S. Karalaev (2010).

In the dictionary, “tintuur” is defined as a lancet. Based on the text of the epic, it can be seen that the nomads also had such a surgical instrument as “аштар” (Table 3).

Table 2. The mention of the word “ashtar” in the epic “Manas”

Original	Translation
Сом этине калды – деп, Чыкпай туруп алды – деп, Аштар алып колуна, Тилип жаткан андан көп.	Saying that there was a bullet left in the thigh, Saying – it does not come out,

<p>Токтогон окту аштарлап Тилип аткан андан көп.</p>	<p>They take ashtar (scalpel) in their hands, They make incisions. There are also those who Take out a stuck bullet with ashtar.</p>
--	--

Source: S. Karalaev (2010).

These passages confirm the idea that Kyrgyz nomads also used surgical instruments in folk medicine, which indicates knowledge of human anatomy. Interpreting the text of the epic “Manas”, it is possible to recreate traditional knowledge not only in folk medicine, but also to reconstruct ethnobotanical, ethno-livestock, ethnoecological, and other knowledge. The key here is the use of the basic hermeneutic principle of the “hermeneutic circle”, which is based on the dialectic of parts; in order to understand the whole, it is necessary to understand individual parts, but in order to understand individual parts, one must already have an idea of the meaning of the whole, the essence of which is reduced to the internal connection of some knowledge and phenomena with others taken as a whole. Thus, the hermeneutic method is one of the significant methods that reveal the content-essential foundations of the epic heritage. It is due to the interpretation of the text that the researcher can reveal and reconstruct the level and nature of human cognitive activity of the past, social ties and relationships, the ethno-social structure of society and, in general, human existence. The hermeneutical method is closely related to the information method, which is a kind of way of accumulating, storing and transmitting unique information. Each sample of folklore carries certain information about certain historical and socio-cultural phenomena and processes. Information can be encoded in various rituals, customs, traditions, ethical and etiquette norms of behaviour, symbols and patterns of works of applied art. For example, the epic contains valuable information about the precious jewelry “келеңкер чачпак”, with which young women and teenagers decorated their long braids (Table 4).

Table 4. The mention of the phrase “kelenker chachpak” in the epic “Manas”

Original	Translation
----------	-------------

Келеңкер чачпак кең соору, Келбети нурдун кызылдай, Узун бойлуу жал-жал көз.	With ornaments in braids, wide-hipped, With a beautiful ruddy face, A tall, statuesque beauty.
--	---

Source: S. Karalaev (2010).

The writing lost by the Kyrgyz may have been subsequently replaced by patterns and ornaments on carpets, since it is possible to make quite meaningful sentences based on them. Unique information is carried by mythoepical works, in which all the diversity of human, social, and natural existence is immanently present: lifestyle, way of thinking, value system, worldview, biological diversity, traditional knowledge in various fields of human activity, etc. In the epic “Manas” the lexeme “жамандык” (evil) is closely connected with the ethical remembrance of the people about the war as a social negative phenomenon. In the memory of the people, “zhamandyk” is associated with “кара түн” (black night), with “кыйноо” (torment), with “кордук” (humiliation) and other epithets containing a deep tragic meaning (Table 5).

Table 5. The mention of the word “korduk” in the epic “Manas”

Original	Translation
Бул өңдөнгөн кордукту, Мендесине бербе деп, Көөдөнгө батпай көп санаа Талоон көргөн кайран журт, Көзүнүн жашы он талаа.	Such unbearable humiliation Don't let anyone experience it. He keeps a lot of sadness in his soul, The poor people plundered by the enemy, Sheds tears in three streams.

Source: S. Karalaev (2010).

It can be concluded that the effectiveness of the information method in the study of epics is relevant, especially in the absence of written sources. The structural and semiotic method is of great importance in the methodology of traditional cultural research. Texts from chronologically older layers are introduced into culture and interact with its modern mechanisms, generating images of the historical past, which are transmitted by culture into the past and influence the dialogue with the present as equal participants. The diverse forms of culture of traditional

society: housing, rituals, customs, household items, regulating everyday life, fulfilled a deep symbolic meaning. The semiotic method has the ability to recreate historical realities and events of the past. The semiotic approach is based on the assumption that culture is expressed in terms of symbols and signs and that by studying the sign systems of different cultures, it is possible to extract certain knowledge in order to discover their deep meanings. Analysing the text of the epic, where historical events are clothed in various iconic, symbolic forms, it is possible to reconstruct individual fragments of the past, features of social existence, recreate a holistic picture of the world and elements of nomad culture (Table 6).

Table 6. The mention of the word “tunduk” in the epic “Manas”

Original	Translation
<p>Укуругуң шиш болор, Унуткусуз иш болор, Туурдугуң ичмек кылынып, Туташкан журтуң кырылып, Үзүгүң болуп токулга, Үшкүрүп карап олтурба. Түндүгүң менен чай кайнап, Жүрбөгүң шондо көз жайнап.</p>	<p>When the pole turns into a pin, Your work will become inconspicuous, When the tuurduk that covers your yurt, Will turn into a saddlecloth, And your people will all perish, When uzuk that hugs your yurt, Will become a cape for the saddle, Don't sit, idling and sighing heavily. When they burn the tunduk of your yurt, And tea will be boiled on its fire, Don't walk around with your eyes bulging (from fear).</p>

Source: S. Karalaev (2010).

From these lines it can be seen that “tunduk” – one of the main elements of the yurt, the central part of the dome in the form of a wooden circle – served as a symbol of well-being, happiness, unity and prosperity of the family, clan, tribe and the whole people. In this regard, it is no

coincidence that the ancient Kyrgyz nomad identified “tunduk” with “cornucopia”: “ТҮНДҮКТӨН куюлуп тургандай” (wealth pouring out like a cornucopia). For a nomad “tunduk” was a sacred element of the dwelling, as it connected it with a ternary model: Sky – Tenir – Deity. The verbal connotation of “Түндүгүн түшкүр” (“May the tunduk of your yurt collapses” or “May you have nothing! May you go broke!”) had a tremendous emotional and expressive colour and had a much stronger impact on the nomad. This curse was perceived as a kind of force exerting its negative influence on the next generation, so it was the most terrible curse, symbolising: misfortune, destruction, decline, and death. The phrase: “Түндүгүн бийик болсун” (“May your tunduk be strong and high!”) had a positive meaning, as it corresponded to the wish of prosperity to the nomad, blessed the entire family for a prosperous life. The “коломто” had a high semiotic status – a hearth with a cooking pot located in the centre of the yurt. “Kolomto”, fulfilling a utilitarian meaning, at the same time acted as a symbol of the unity of the family, clan, tribe. In the system of etiquette norms, there was a taboo – “коломтону аттаба” (do not step over the hearth) – you cannot desecrate a sacred place – a symbol of the well-being of the family. And when they were dissatisfied with the act, the words “казаның отко түшкүр” were considered a terrible curse (may your cauldron fail or may the cauldron fall on the fire). An example from the epic. Each component of traditional culture, performing a certain function, at the same time had a symbolic meaning, that is, the “world of things” and the “world of signs” are in syncretic unity. In other words, the yurt as a sacred space of a nomad performed not only a utilitarian function, but also was a symbol of a gracious and happy life, had a semiotic status. Thus, the structural and semiotic method is aimed at ensuring that in the process of studying traditional culture, the scientist identified symbolic elements inherent in this culture and could reconstruct not only the worldview, but also understand the nature and essence of man’s nomadic way of being and make theoretical generalizations (Wielecki, 2021). The arguments about the study of the epic “Manas” resonate with the art of manaschi, since they are the creators, keepers and popularisers of precious lines of the epic and the connecting thread of many generations (Jacobi, 1959). Presumably, the nature of manaschi’s storytelling skill is revealed by the concept of cultural archetypes of the Swiss culturologist and psychoanalyst C.G. Jung, who postulated the idea that in addition to the personal unconscious, there is a deeper layer in the human psyche – the collective unconscious. It is there, according to the scientist, that cultural archetypes exist immanently. In fact, archetypes represent the content of the unconscious, which changes as it

becomes aware and undergoes changes under the influence of the individual's consciousness when it comes to the surface. Moreover, researchers claim that archetypes are true in their essence and serve a specific purpose, since, speaking about the content of the collective unconscious, they deal with the most ancient or, better to say, primitive types, that is, universal images that have existed since time immemorial (Richard, 2021).

In the epic poem "Manas" there are episodes where the main character Manas meets Khizra, forty chiltans. They tell Manas about Islam and tell him to go the way of God. Khizra and forty chiltans help Manas in various difficult situations. This motif is found in almost all versions of the epic poem "Manas". Archetypes, as the very first ideas about the world, are expressed in myths, fairy tales, dreams, symbolic images, form creative thinking, fantasy and are the basis of the "eternal" themes of world culture. According to C.G. Jung, archetypes influence human feelings, actions, and way of thinking. This is a kind of collective experience in the structure of the psyche and is inherited. To understand the unconscious in the tells of manaschi, it is necessary to consider this problem through the prism of the teachings of C.G. Jung. Unfortunately, in modern Manas studies, the nature of storytelling skill, its psychological state was not considered through the concept of C.G. Jung. Kyrgyz manaschi, according to an ancient belief familiar to many peoples, explained the creative inspiration of storytellers with divine inspiration. Each manaschi improviser testified that he was told to sing by Manas himself, who appeared in a dream accompanied by 40 conductors. It was a kind of transcendental phenomenon based on the miraculous gift of prophecy, which was caused by inspiration from heaven (Wattelier-Bricout, 2021).

Thus, extrapolating the Jungian approach about the "collective unconscious", about the archetypes that influence the work of the manaschi storytellers, it is possible to identify a perspective in the study of modern post-Nomadic culture, to find out the origins of the psychological determinants of the phenomenon of storytelling and to answer the question – what is the role of the archetype in the continuity of culture. Of great importance in the methodology of studying the epic and storytelling skills is ethnomethodology, founded by the American sociologist G. Garfinkel. This method assumes that when studying social objects, it is necessary for the researcher to "get used to" the environment under study, which allows supplementing the observation results with the idea of understanding them. Thus, this approach is characterised by interpretive procedures, hidden, unconscious and unreflected mechanisms of social

communication between people (Saadanbekova, 2021). Here understanding is an interconnected process, that is, understanding as the basis of interaction connects both the subject (researcher) and the object of cognition (the narrator of the epic). The researcher, studying manaschi (storytellers), not only records the results of observation, but also complements the process of understanding. That is, there is an ontologisation of the meanings of not only words, but also actions, and other forms of social being of the narrator. Due to the systematic approach, which requires considering any phenomenon, process as a developing system, passing through separate stages, stages in its development, where elements have close interrelations and relationships, when studying epics, it is possible to link disparate elements of knowledge into a single whole. A systematic approach will allow reconstructing and recreating the worldview of ancient man, connecting the historical chain of events.

Axiological considerations play a significant role in the study of the Kyrgyz heroic epic "Manas," as highlighted in the provided text. Axiology, the branch of philosophy concerned with values and ethics, provides a framework for understanding the underlying moral, ethical, and aesthetic principles embedded within the epic narrative. By examining the axiological values inherent in the epic, researchers aim to uncover the moral, political, legal, familial, and societal norms that govern traditional Kyrgyz society. These values not only shape the behavior and interactions of characters within the narrative but also reflect the broader cultural ethos of the Kyrgyz people. Moreover, the study of axiological values provides a means of understanding the ethical dilemmas, moral conflicts, and aesthetic ideals portrayed in the epic. Through the analysis of these values, scholars can elucidate the underlying themes, messages, and symbolism present in the text, thereby enriching their interpretation and understanding of "Manas."

Achievements in the study of the Kyrgyz epic: analysis and interpretation

A systematic approach to the study of the Kyrgyz epic opens up new horizons for understanding and analysing this great work. It allows for considering the epic as a developing system passing through various stages and stages, where each element has close interrelations and relationships with others (Bruley, 2019). By applying a systematic approach, it is possible to combine disparate elements of knowledge about the Kyrgyz epic into a single whole. This approach allows for gradually reconstructing and recreating the worldview of ancient men, to understand

their ideas about the world, gods, heroes, and events. Analysing the results of a study conducted using a systematic approach, it is possible to trace the historical chain of events that shaped the Kyrgyz epic. One can see how the epic reflects the cultural, social, and historical aspects of the development of the Kyrgyz people. One of the key points in analysing the results is to determine the relationships between the elements of the epic. For example, it is possible to identify which events led to the appearance of a particular hero, which motives influenced the development of the plot and which values and ideals can be traced in the text of the epic.

M. Sheila and M. Simat (2023) used a qualitative research method of text analysis to investigate female characters in the “Iliad” and find out whether they are trivial, marginalised, and stereotypical. This study used an analysis of the characters of Beum and Sire, based on three main elements: concrete details, action and conflict, speech and thought. Millet’s theory was also used, which confirms the existence of trivialisation, marginalisation, and stereotyping in texts written by men. The study described above did not study these social aspects of literature. Although the study by M. Sheila confirms Millet’s statement about the trivialisation, marginalisation, and stereotyping of female characters in the “Iliad”, the results of this study are important for further analysis of the representation of women in literature and understanding of socio-cultural aspects related to the role and status of women in society.

K. Mackowiak (2020) analysed the methodological concept of “traditional referentiality”, which is preferred by researchers such as Foley, Graziosi or Haubold, the authors advocate the need to go beyond the text in order to see how the epic finds meaning in interaction with its audience. In order to understand poetic creativity, the authors put the importance of context and performance in its proper place. However, the purpose of their research is not to reconstruct the Theban cycle according to Homer. “Rivalry” is the key word of this book: it is about showing how the Theban cycle could serve as the basis for the development of the Trojan cycle, and this idea should be shown within the framework of competition and dynamic traditions. Consequently, such an approach is of interest not only for a philologist or researcher, but also for a historian who is attentive to the dynamic processes structuring the emergence of cities and identities in the archaic period. The author used methods and approaches that were not considered in the study described in this paper. This opens up new perspectives for the study and understanding of the epic and its interaction with the context and audience.

B. Norovnyam (2020) in his latest paper discussed various aspects of the female image in the Mongolian heroic epic. He notes that in this epic, a woman appears in three images: the heroine, the spouse of the hero, and a negative woman. One of the stand-out images is a female companion of the hero's life, who has divine abilities. These abilities include prophecy, healing of the dead, transformation techniques, and the role of the goddess of light, which connects her function with the shaman. A woman with all these abilities becomes the spouse and assistant of a male hero, contributing to his true heroism. The appearance of the female hero also contains features indicating similarities with the male hero. Physical strength, archery, wrestling, and horse riding are part of the female hero's abilities. In addition to positive images, the negative woman in the Mongolian heroic epic also has special abilities and can have the appearance of an attractive female or an ugly witch. The conflict between the hero and the woman is analysed as a struggle for power between a man and a woman in the process of transition from a matriarchal society to a male society. However, it should be noted that this author's article does not consider the methodology of studying the epic. This leaves an opportunity for further research that can shed light on the processes associated with female images in the Mongolian heroic epic and their interaction with other aspects of this epic.

K.A. Tolkun et al. (2021) investigated the concepts of Khizra and forty chiltans in the epic poem "Manas". This great epic of the Kyrgyz people contains symbols related to various epochs and concepts of Islam that require separate study. Many of the words and terms used in "Manas" appeared due to the spread of Islam among the Kyrgyz. Ancient works often contain words that are incomprehensible to most people, including archaisms and neologisms. Various methods were used to conduct the study, including the analysis of the variants of the epic proposed by S. Karalaev (2010). The concepts and meanings of words related to Islam were analysed in detail. The study also highlights the motifs present in various versions of the epic poem "Manas", as well as topics related to the miraculous birth of Manas and his heroic deeds. The analysis by the authors allows for a deeper understanding of the content and symbolism of "Manas" and reveal the role of Islam in this epic. The study also helps to see the connection between the plot composition of various versions of the poem and the motives associated with heroic deeds and the miraculous birth of Manas. This further enriches the understanding and interpretation of the national epic and its cultural significance for the Kyrgyz people.

The study by W.J. Hall et al. (2022) considers adaptations of themes and archetypes of the Homeric epic in the tragedy of the 5th century. It was concluded that the reaction of tragedy to heroism reflects how any form of art reacts to its earlier traditions, preserving what is still relevant, changing what is no longer so, and developing a springboard for creating something, what resonates with a new audience. The authors used the methodology of literary analysis and comparative research, they only consider the adaptations of themes and archetypes of the Homeric epic in the tragedy of the 5th century, the opposition of individualism and monarchism present in Homeric narratives, and contrasts them with the democratic states of Athenian culture. The authors have concluded that the reaction of tragedy to heroism reflects the evolution of art and its relation to previous traditions. The authors point to the preservation of relevant elements, the change of those that have lost their significance, and the development of new forms and ideas that can appeal to a new audience. In the study conducted above, this methodology was not used, but the approach is interesting, although it is inferior in terms of the depth of the results.

In summary, it can be stated that each of the methods is important and deserves more attention, since each of them considers different aspects of studying the epic and contributes to understanding its meaning and role in culture and literature.

The section provides insights into the axiological aspect of studying the Kyrgyz epic, particularly emphasizing the systematic approach employed in its analysis and interpretation. The systematic approach allows scholars to view the epic as a dynamic system that evolves through various stages, with each element intricately interconnected with others. By applying this approach, researchers can integrate disparate elements of knowledge about the Kyrgyz epic into a cohesive whole. This facilitates the gradual reconstruction of the worldview of ancient people, shedding light on their perceptions of the world, deities, heroes, and events. Moreover, the systematic approach enables scholars to trace the historical chain of events depicted in the epic, illustrating how it reflects the cultural, social, and historical aspects of Kyrgyz development. Through the analysis of relationships between epic elements, researchers can discern the factors influencing the appearance of heroes, the development of plot, and the propagation of values and ideals within the text. Additionally, the section mentions various qualitative research methods employed in the analysis of other epics, such as the "Iliad" and the Mongolian heroic epic. These studies explore the representation of female characters and the evolution of cultural and societal norms reflected in the narratives. While these studies may not explicitly focus on axiological

considerations, they contribute to a broader understanding of the ethical and moral dimensions of epic literature. Furthermore, the text discusses the role of Islam in the Kyrgyz epic "Manas," highlighting the symbolism and concepts related to various epochs and Islamic teachings. Through detailed analysis, researchers aim to uncover the underlying values and cultural significance embedded within the epic, enriching the understanding of its moral and ethical dimensions. Overall, the text underscores the importance of axiological considerations in the study of epic literature, emphasizing the need to explore the moral, ethical, and aesthetic values inherent in these narratives. By employing systematic approaches and qualitative research methods, scholars can deepen their understanding of epic texts and their cultural significance, contributing to a broader discourse on values and ethics in literature and society.

Conclusions

The research presented offers valuable insights into the multifaceted analysis and interpretation of epic literature, particularly focusing on the Kyrgyz epic "Manas" and other renowned epics such as the "Iliad" and the Mongolian heroic epic. Through various methodologies including systematic approaches and qualitative research methods, it was delved into the intricate layers of these narratives, uncovering their historical, cultural, and ethical dimensions. One of the key findings of the research is the significance of employing a systematic approach in the analysis of the Kyrgyz epic. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the epic as a dynamic system, revealing its evolution through different stages and its interconnected elements. By tracing the historical chain of events depicted in the epic, researchers illuminate its reflection of Kyrgyz culture, societal norms, and historical developments.

The research highlights the importance of axiological considerations in studying epic literature. Through detailed analysis, it was uncovered the moral, ethical, and aesthetic values embedded within these narratives, shedding light on the cultural significance of epic texts. From exploring the representation of female characters to examining the role of Islam in the Kyrgyz epic, researchers deepen their understanding of the ethical and societal implications conveyed through these literary works. Moreover, the research underscores the relevance of qualitative research methods in analyzing epic literature. By employing methods such as text analysis and comparative research, scholars elucidate the portrayal of gender roles, cultural norms, and

religious influences within epic narratives. These studies contribute to a broader discourse on values and ethics in literature and society, enriching our understanding of human experience and cultural heritage.

The findings of this study emphasise the need to continue research in this area using an integrated approach. This will allow for more fully revealing and understanding the epic heritage of the Kyrgyz people, its historical and cultural significance, and preserving and passing on this wealth to future generations.

References

- Akmatov, B.M. (2020). The heroic epic of Manas and Mukhtar Auezov's role in its popularization, *Humanitarian Vector*, 15 (5), p. 70-79.
- Auanassova, A.M, Nurpeisov, E.K, Auanassova, K.M, Karasayev, G.M., and Zhumagulov, B.S. (2018). Soviet power and Hidden policy of neocolonialism and totalitarianism, *Astra Salvensis*, 6 (1), p. 223-237.
- Bakhtin, M. (2020). Epic and novel: Toward a methodology for the study of the novel, in: *Modern Genre Theory* (pp. 69-82). London: Routledge.
- Bakker, H. T. (2019). Some methodological considerations with respect to the critical edition of Puranic literature, in: *Holy Ground: Where Art and Text Meet* (pp. 175-184). Leiden: Brill.
- Bekmukhamedova, N.Kh. (2021). *Epos "Manas": Problems of oneirotopics and visionotopics (Structure, functions, symbolism)*. Bishkek: Ch. Aitmatov Institute of Language and Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic.
- Borbodoev, Zh.M. (2021). *Formation of ethno-national identity in the Kyrgyz Republic: Theoretical and methodological analysis*. Bishkek: Kyrgyz National University named after J. Balasagyn.
- Bruley, J. (2019). *The epic of Manas: Historical, heritage and ethnographic study*. <https://www.theses.fr/2019LILUA027>
- Hall, W.J, Alistair, N., and Stephen, L. (2022). *The hero's role in the polis: The evolution of Homeric iconography and literary archetypes in classical tragedy*. Durham: Durham University.

- Homer. *Iliad*. (2023). <https://www.ukrlib.com.ua/world/printit.php?tid=529>
- Jacobi, J. (1959). *Complex/archetype/symbol in the psychology of C.G. Jung*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kalkman, J.P. (2020). Sensemaking in crisis situations: Drawing insights from epic war novels, *European Management Journal*, 38 (5), p. 698-707.
- Karalaev, S. (2010). *Heroic epic*. Bishkek: Turar.
- Koldoshev, M.K., and Bozhonov, Z.S. (2020). The peculiarity of the Kyrgyz people's democracy in the course of the choosing Manas as a Khan, *Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 17 (7), p. 5699-5703.
- Kongyratbay, T., and Kongyratbay, K. (2013). Hermeneutical aspects of kazakh heroic epic study, *Middle East Journal of Scientific Research*, 18 (9), p. 1330-1334.
- Kongyratbay, T.A. (2020). To the methodology of studying the ethnic nature of the heroic epic (historiographic aspects), *Bulletin of the North-Eastern Federal University named after M.K. Ammosov: Epic Studies Series*, 1, p. 5-23.
- Mackowiak, K. (2020). *Homer's Thebes: epic rivalries and the appropriation of mythical pasts*. Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies.
- Maravela, A., and Bär, S. (2022). Narrative, narratology and intertextuality: New perspectives on Greek epic from Homer to Nonnus, *Norwegian Journal of Greek and Latin Studies*, 93 (1), p. 1-11.
- Norovnyam, B. (2020). A character of a woman shown in Mongolian heroic epic, *KISS*, 60, p. 31-51.
- Richard, C. (2021). Pity in the Argonautics of Valerius Flaccus. Study and methodological remarks, *Archivi Delle Emozioni*, 2 (1), p. 59-73.
- Ryskulova, T.Sh. (2021). *Semantics and symbolism of color designations kara (black) and ak (white) in the epic "Manas"*. Bishkek: Kyrgyz National University named after J. Balasagyn.
- Saadambekova, Ch. (2021). Game as a phenomenon in Kyrgyz family traditions, *Wisdom*, 2 (18), p. 85-95.
- Sabirzyanova, D.R, Kizirbekkyzy, K.B, Sayfulina, F.S., and Socialkyzy, O.M. (2022). The Duality of the Mask Archetype in Works of Art, *Res Militaris*, 12 (3), p. 921-927.

- Sadyrov, M.T. (2022). Place of the trilogy “Manas” in the Kyrgyz epic, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic*, 2, p. 159-165.
- Saifnazarov, I., and Saifnazarova, F. (2023). Experience in addressing the gender issue in post-Soviet countries, *Social and Legal Studios*, 6 (3), p. 152-161.
- Sheila, M., and Simat, M. (2023). The women in the Iliad, *An Online Journal of Pedagogy*, 1 (2), p. 98-108.
- Singh, N. (2022). Manas: The socio-cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz people, in: *Cultural Histories of Central Asia* (pp. 93-101). London: Routledge.
- Sydykov, A.N. (2016). Functional and semantic features of a lexeme “ak-white” (on material of the epos “Manas”), *Problems of Modern Science and Education*, 4, p. 36-41.
- Tayyab, A., and Jamshaid, K. (2022). Persian Dastan and Greek epic traditions, in: *Transcultural Humanities in South Asia* (pp. 33-44). London: Routledge.
- Tazhitova, G, Kurmanayeva, D, Kalkeeva, K, Sagimbayeva, J., and Kassymbekova, N. (2022). Local Materials as a Means of Improving Motivation to EFL Learning in Kazakhstan Universities, *Education Sciences*, 12 (9), p. 604.
- Tolkun, K.A, Kalya, O.K., and Nurjan, K.S. (2021). Analysis of the concepts of Khizra, the forty chiltanas in the epic poem “Manas”, *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 5 (4), p. 1-11.
- Toynbee, A.J. (1948). *Civilization on trial*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tuyakbaev, G, Taiman, S., and Botabayeva, Z. (2023). Motives common to turkic people in kazakh toponymic legends*, *Milli Folklor*, 138, p. 144-153.
- Wattelier-Bricout, A. (2021). Overview of literature classical Sanskrit, *ILARA*, 4, p. 2-36.
- Wielecki, K.M. (2021). The spirit that permeates the human soul: anthropology, national epic, and nation-building in Kyrgyzstan, *Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*, 2, p. 99-131.
- Yermentayeva, A.R, Baizhumanova, B.S, Mandykayeva, A.R, Nagymzhanova, K.M, Ayupova, G.T, Mamanova, A.S., and Kokorayeva, A.K. (2018). Peculiarities of professional identity in teachers, *Espacios*, 39 (29).
- Zakirova, A, Maigeldiyeva, S., and Tuyakbayev, G. (2023). Linguacultural and cognitive aspects of teaching the language of Kazakh legends, *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14788047231221109>