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Transformation of Folkloric Plots and the Artistic Function of Mythic Motifs in Magzhan Zhumabayuly's Poems of the Tashkent Period

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***Abstract*—This article examines the transformation of folkloric plots and the artistic functions of mythic motifs—including alienation, loneliness, the search for eternal life and an eternal homeland, belief in supernatural forces, and sacred space—in four poems written by Magzhan Zhumabayuly during the Tashkent period (1922-1923): Korkyt, On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes, Batyr Bayan, and Qoilybai's Kobyz. The study combines mythopoetic, hermeneutic, and biographical approaches. Mythopoetic analysis identifies and classifies recurrent motifs; hermeneutic analysis interprets textual meanings, images, and symbolic details; and biographical analysis clarifies the relationship between the poet's Tashkent activities, his engagement with folklore, and the sources of the poems' plots. The analysis compares the poems with their probable folkloric and historical sources and traces changes in plot sequence, character motivation, motif function, symbolism, and psychological representation. The findings show that Zhumabayuly did not reproduce traditional plots verbatim: he preserved their narrative core while reorganizing their composition and intensifying their symbolic, psychological, and sociopolitical meanings. The Tashkent period, during which the poet participated in folklore-related scholarly and publishing activity, therefore provides an important context for understanding the authorial transformation of these plots.**

***Index Terms*—folkloric plot transformation, mythic motif, mythopoetics, Alash literature, Magzhan Zhumabayuly**

I. Introduction

The long poem occupies a special place in the oeuvre of Magzhan Zhumabayuly, a prominent representative of the Alash national liberation movement. He turned to the genre after 1920, when his poetic vision had matured and his creative capacity had reached a high artistic level. He began writing long poems in Kyzylzhar in 1920 and continued in Tashkent and Moscow. The influence of folklore, folkloric plots, artistic devices, and mythic motifs is clearly visible in his ten poems: *Yertegi* (1920), *Korkyt* (1922), *Qoilybai's Kobyz* (1923), *On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes* (1923), *Batyr Bayan* (1923), *Zhusip Khan* (A True Tale) (1924), *The Tale of Qanysh Bai* (1926), *The False Tale* (1926), *The Group of Ninety* (1927), and *Tolgau* (1927).

Folklore strongly shaped Zhumabayuly's poems, which helps explain the frequent appearance of mythic motifs. Kanarbayeva (1995) relates their folkloric basis to social change, while Zhurtbay et al. (2021) emphasize the poet's work in Tashkent, the capital of the Turkestan ASSR, where he taught at the Kazakh Institute of Education and served on education and science commissions in 1922-1923. Tileshov (2023) links the measured use of folkloric techniques to the poet's artistic mastery and distinguishes historical figures (Syzdyk Sultan, Kenesary Khan, Bayan Batyr, and Qoilybai Baksy) from the historical-legendary figure Korkyt. Nurgali (1997) likewise notes that folk legends and historical data were artistically re-created and given a new quality.

Yskakuly (2020) demonstrates that most of the poems were written in a historical-legendary mode, Kanarbayeva (1995) identifies the probable sources of plots based on folkloric material, and Baltogayeva (2015) examines their genre types, historical-plot foundations, and artistic system, classifying the plots as historical, legendary, or literary. These studies consistently address plot, idea, and motif because the central meanings of the poems are often conveyed indirectly through mythic motifs.

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Although the structural, artistic, and folkloric features of Zhumabayuly's poems have been studied comprehensively, the transformation of folkloric plots in the poems of the Tashkent period and the function of mythic motifs in restoring historical memory have not been examined as a distinct research problem.

The aim of this study is to analyze the transformation of folkloric plots and the artistic function of mythic motifs in four poems written during the Tashkent period (1922-1923), a period that occupies a special place in Magzhan Zhumabayuly's creative work. To achieve this aim, the article addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent did Zhumabayuly's Tashkent period influence his creative work, particularly his use of folkloric techniques in the poems?
2. What types of folkloric plots and mythic motifs occur in Zhumabayuly's poems of the Tashkent period?
3. Did the socio-political conditions of the 1920s influence the use of mythic motifs in the poems written in that decade?
4. Were folkloric plots used unchanged in Zhumabayuly's poems?

The Literature Review systematizes the concepts of folklore, myth, and motif, current approaches to mythic motifs, and the methodological foundations of mythopoetic, hermeneutic, and biographical analysis. The Materials and Methods section presents the corpus, methods, and procedure; the Results section examines the four Tashkent-period poems; the Discussion interprets the findings and their significance; and the Conclusion summarizes how the research aim was achieved.

II. Literature Review

The literature review is organized around three interrelated directions: first, the theoretical foundations of folklore, myth, and motif; second, current approaches to the study of mythic motifs in literary texts; and third, the scholarly foundations of the mythopoetic, hermeneutic, and biographical methods employed in this article. This structure integrates theoretical concepts, previous scholarship, and the analytical framework of the study.

A. Theoretical Foundations of the Concepts of Folklore, Myth, and Motif

The review focuses on studies of folkloric plot transformation and mythic motifs. Folklore is understood as a syncretic, multifunctional, multivariant, and evolving system of verbal art governed by its own plot structure, character system, and poetics (Rakysh, 2020, p. 223). Myth is defined as a prose narrative that explains the origin of the world, the earth, humankind, and the characteristics of living beings (Rakysh, 2020, p. 147). Motif denotes a generalized form of semantically related events and plot lines within a narrative tradition (Tamarchenko, 2008, p. 130). A mythic motif is therefore a motif connected with myth and manifested at different textual levels, from a mythonym to a mythic plot (Raznitsyna, 2016).

A. N. Veselovsky regarded the motif as a simple narrative unit, a semantically integral structure that cannot be further divided, and argued that a specific action or event lies at its core, making it the initial element of a mythological or folkloric plot (Silantev, 2004). V. Propp's analysis of the fairy tale demonstrated that motifs are divisible in practice, whereas E. M. Meletinsky identified affinities among the concepts of image, motif, and archetype (Kasen & Baitanasova, 2024).

B. Current Directions in the Study of Mythic Motifs

A review of studies analyzing mythic motifs in literary works reveals several shared tendencies.

Table 1
Review of Studies on Mythic Motifs

Author(s)	Article / study title	Research method	Motifs considered
Zh. A. Aimukhambet, M. N. Mirazova, B. A. Rakhmetova (Aimukhambet et al., 2025)	The Sacred Motif in Magzhan Zhumabayuly's Poems	Analysis, synthesis, mythopoetic analysis	Sacredness, sacred place, sacred person
A. T. Kasen, K. M. Baitanasova (Kasen & Baitanasova, 2024)	The Function of Mythic Motifs in the Text (Based on M. Magauin's story Kipchak Beauty)	Structural analysis, motif analysis, mythopoetic analysis, comparative method	Transformation, balbal statue, alter ego, bifurcation
Zh. E. Baltogayeva (Baltogayeva, 2015)	Genre and Artistic Features of Magzhan Zhumabayuly's Poems	Genre-based and structural-poetic analysis	Disillusionment with life, alienation
S. E. Mussabekova, Zh. A. Aimukhambet (Mussabekova & Aimukhambet, 2024)	The Use of the Motif of Meeting Mythical Characters in a Literary Work	Synthesis, analysis, comparative, historical-typological, genetic, image-associative, and structural methods	Meeting with mythological characters
A. A. Maulenov, A. I. Mamyrov (Maulenov & Mamyrov, 2024)	Archetypal Symbols of Neo-mythological Motifs in A. Altai's Novel Tuazhat	Archetypal and neo-mythological textual analysis	Neo-mythological motifs

The studies presented in Table 1 reveal three main directions in the analysis of mythic motifs: mythopoetic and symbolic interpretation; structural explanation of motif functions within a text; and examination of the relationship between authorial poetics and historical-cultural context. Together, these directions provide the theoretical basis for analyzing the transformation of folkloric plots and the artistic function of mythic motifs in Zhumabayuly's poems of the Tashkent period.

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C. Scholarly and Methodological Foundations of Mythopoetic, Hermeneutic, and Biographical Methods

This subsection clarifies the theoretical foundations of the methods used in the study. Rather than describing the practical analytical procedure, it explains the scholarly traditions underlying these methods and their application in international and Kazakhstani research.

Mythopoetic Analysis

Mythopoetic analysis identifies mythic motifs, examines them historically, and reveals national codes and sacred concepts within Kazakh cultural cognition. Lutsak and Vivcharyk (2025) demonstrate how traditional mythological plots and images can be interpreted and transformed in literary texts, while Kobakhidze (2022) discusses the tension between conscious authorial uses of myth and the expectation that mythic motifs emerge unconsciously.

Among Kazakhstani scholars, Aimukhambet (2016), Kokbas et al. (2020), Yeldos and Almaskhanqyzy (2026), and Kasen and Baitanasova (2024) have used mythopoetic analysis to identify motifs, distinguish their functions, and interpret symbolic and metaphorical meanings. The method is especially valuable for revealing the mystical, symbolic, and metaphorical dimensions of literary myth (Aimukhambet, 2016).

Hermeneutic Analysis

Hermeneutic analysis is used to interpret textual meaning and the relationship between the image system and folkloric sources. Kanzunnudin et al. (2026) apply hermeneutics to contemporary Indonesian poetry rich in connotation and symbolism. Karimnia and Hosseini Fard (2021) compare 23 translations of Rumi's Masnavi through a hermeneutic model and emphasize the principle of wholeness, showing how individual parts shape the interpretation of the whole.

Among Kazakhstani scholars, Yessembekov (2012) examines the theoretical foundations of hermeneutics in textual analysis, while Paltore et al. (2025) demonstrate its application in literary interpretation.

Biographical Analysis

The biographical method is used to examine one of the most productive periods in the author's life and creative work—the Tashkent period—and to clarify the sources from which mythic motifs, plots, and ideas were drawn.

Aytekin and Oznurhan (2025), for example, interpret pessimism in the poetry of Ibrahim Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini in relation to the author's life.

Radyshevskyj and Matorina (2025) show that biographical analysis treats the writer's temporal and spatial context, experience, and personality as factors shaping creativity and that the method has diversified in contemporary literary studies. Among the approaches they describe, the classical historical-biographical approach is most relevant here because it explains the relationship between life and creative work through historical context, biographical facts, and social circumstances. Cáseda Teresa (2024) similarly demonstrates how biographical events can become literary material.

Among Kazakhstani scholars, Yelkey (2025) analyzes the Kyzylzhar period of Khayretdin Bolganbaev, a contemporary of Magzhan Zhumabayuly, while Kamisheva and Baimakhanova (2024) examine the ideas of Naguib Mahfouz's novel Children of Gebelawi through the author's biography.

Aimukhambet's (2016) monograph Myth. Mythology. Mythopoetics is treated as a key source for analyzing the transformation of folkloric plots and the artistic function of mythic motifs in Zhumabayuly's four poems.

Thus, the Literature Review presents the theoretical and scholarly foundations of the methods, whereas the Materials and Methods section focuses on the research corpus, the methods as applied, and the analytical procedure.

III. Materials and Methods

This section presents the research design in three blocks: research materials, methods and tools, and research procedure. This division distinguishes the corpus, analytical approaches, and sequence of analysis, bringing the methodological section into line with the structure of an international research article.

A. Research Materials

Four poems from the Tashkent period were selected for analysis. Although ten poems by Zhumabayuly are currently known and some studies question whether one or two fully satisfy the generic features of the long poem (Yskakuly, 2020), this study retains them within the genre because they are conventionally presented as poems in scholarship. Examination of their writing and publication histories showed that four texts belong to the Tashkent period. This attribution rests on two criteria: correspondence with Zhumabayuly's residence in Tashkent, the capital of the Turkestan ASSR, in 1922-1923; and publication in newspapers, journals, or books associated with the Turkestan press.

Table 2
Poems Written by Magzhan Zhumabayuly During the Tashkent Period

Poem title	Year of publication	Publication	Period of writing
Korkyt	1922	*Sholpan* journal, Nos. 2, 3	Tashkent
On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes	1923	Poems collection, Tashkent edition	Tashkent
Qoilybai's Kobyz	1923	Poems collection, Tashkent edition	Tashkent
Batyr Bayan	1923	*Sholpan* journal, Nos. 4-5, 6-7-8	Tashkent

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The poem Yertegi, although published in 1922 in the Tilshi newspaper of the Zhetysu Regional Committee of the Turkestan ASSR, is excluded from this group because available evidence indicates that it had appeared earlier in the Aqmola provincial newspaper Bostandyq Tuy, although the text has not been located. It is therefore assigned to the Kyzylzhar period. The four selected poems first appeared in Sholpan, a Turkestan journal, or in the poet's Tashkent collection. In this article, Turkestan publications refers to newspapers, journals, and books issued within the Turkestan ASSR in 1918-1924, particularly in Tashkent.

The object of the study is therefore Zhumabayuly's four Tashkent-period poems, in which folkloric plot transformation and mythic motifs are especially prominent. The texts were taken from the second volume of the 2023 academic complete edition of Zhumabayuly's works, which includes the original poems and their Cyrillic transcriptions (Zhumabayuly, 2023b).

This corpus defines the chronological and textual boundaries of the study: the analysis is limited to four poems written during the Tashkent period and connected with its publishing environment. Accordingly, the article considers not Zhumabayuly's poems in general but the artistic function of folkloric plots and mythic motifs specifically in works from 1922-1923.

B. Methods and Tools

The study employs mythopoetic, hermeneutic, and biographical analysis. Because the theoretical foundations of these methods are presented in the Literature Review, this section specifies how each method is applied to the article's corpus.

TABLE 3
FUNCTIONS OF THE METHODS AND TOOLS USED IN THE STUDY

Method / tool	Purpose of application	Specific function in the article
Mythopoetic analysis	To identify mythic motifs, mythic-legendary plots, sacred space, supernatural force, the search for eternal life, the search for an eternal homeland, alienation, and loneliness in the poems.	Applied to classify motifs in *Korkyt*, *On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes*, *Qoilybai's Kobyz*, and *Batyr Bayan*, to identify recurrent motifs, and to explain the authorial transformation of folkloric plots.
Hermeneutic analysis	To interpret the implicit meaning of the poem texts, the system of images, symbolic details, and historical-cultural allusions.	Used to reveal the artistic function of the images of *Korkyt*, Kenesary, Qoilybai, and Bayan, as well as the textual meanings of symbolic images such as *aruak*, *kobyz*, Burabay, and Altai.
Biographical method	To connect the author's life, his activity during the Tashkent period, his relation to folklore studies, and the influence of the historical-social environment with textual analysis.	Applied to explain factors that influenced the folkloric plots of the poems through Zhumabayuly's work at the Kazakh Institute of Education, his folklore-collecting activity with A. Divaev, the collection *Tartu*, and Turkestan publications.
Comparative systematization and tabulation	To compare conclusions from previous studies with the authorial version proposed in the article and to present the findings concisely.	Enabled the comparison of B. Kanarbayeva's proposed source versions with the article's interpretation and the tabular systematization of the probable sources of the main plots, plot types, and recurrent motifs in the poems.

Table 3 shows that the methods function complementarily: mythopoetic analysis identifies motifs, hermeneutic analysis reveals their artistic meanings, and biographical analysis explains the connection among these motifs, the Tashkent period, and the poet's folklore-related activities. Comparative systematization enables the findings to be compared with previous scholarship and presented in tabular form.

C. Research Procedure

The research consisted of three stages. In the first stage, theoretical and biographical information concerning the author's life and creative work, the Tashkent period, folkloric plots, folkloric techniques, and mythic motifs was collected and analyzed. The literature review then systematized the principal scholarly positions on myth, motif, mythopoetics, hermeneutics, and the biographical method.

In the second stage, the types and probable sources of folkloric plots in the poems were identified. The texts in the 2023 academic complete edition served as the main corpus; the poems' dates of composition, first places of publication, and connections with the Tashkent period were compared, and the exclusion of Yertegi from the corpus was justified separately.

In the third stage, mythic motifs were analyzed and recurrent motifs were identified. Each poem was examined in a separate subsection, with attention to the artistic function and authorial transformation of motifs and to their relationship with historical memory and the sociopolitical situation. The findings were then summarized in tables according to plot type, source comparison, and recurrent motif.

This procedure answers the research questions sequentially: first, it establishes the boundaries of the corpus; second, it examines the nature and probable sources of the folkloric plots; and third, it interprets the artistic function of mythic motifs and the mechanisms of authorial transformation.

IV. RESULTS

Eleukenov (2008) calls Zhumabayuly's Tashkent period (1922-1923) a time of surging inspiration, whereas Zhurtbay et al. (2021) describe it as difficult and tense. Tashkent was the capital of the Turkestan ASSR from 1918 to 1924 (Kabyldinov, 2020).

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Drawing on archival documents, Zhanguttin (2016) confirms that Zhumabayuly taught at the Kazakh Institute of Education in Tashkent and participated in the education and science commissions of the People's Commissariat of Education of the Turkestan ASSR, as well as in the activities of the Talap cultural and educational organization.

In the Science and Education Commission, he collected oral literature together with the ethnographer A. Divaev. In the May 10, 1923 issue of the Tashkent newspaper Aq Zhol, they published the thirty-part Program for Collecting Literature Preserved in Oral Tradition and Other Materials Depicting the Life and Customs of the Kazakh-Kyrgyz People, calling for the collection of folklore materials (Zhumabayuly, 2023c). The program was signed by M. Zhumabayuly as Acting Head of the Turkestan Kazakh-Kyrgyz Education Commission and by A. Divaev as a commission member (Zhumabayuly, 2023c, p. 424).

For the fortieth anniversary of A. Divaev's scholarly activity, Zhumabayuly selected and published the scholar's collected materials in *Tartu* (*Offering*) (Zhumabayuly, 2024). In 1922-1923, he also published folklore-related articles in Tashkent, including *Akan Seri*, *Bazar Zhyrau*, *Kyrgyz Oral Literature*, *Zheti Batyr*, and *From the Narratives of Sholpankul Qazhy*. In *Bazar Zhyrau*, he argues that written literature must be based on oral literature, a view reflected in his poetry (Zhumabayuly, 2023c, p. 405). Thus, his folklore-related activity in Tashkent supports the hypothesis that it influenced his active use of folkloric plots in the poems of that period.

TABLE 4
FOLKLORIC PLOTS IN MAGZHAN ZHUMABAYULY'S POEMS OF THE TASHKENT PERIOD

Poem title	**Plot type**	**Main plot underlying the poem**
Korkyt	Mythic-legendary	*Korkyt*'s search for eternal life
On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes	Mythic-legendary	Communication with *aruak*
Qoilybai's Kobyz	Mythic-legendary	Entering the *kobyz* in a horse race
Batyr Bayan	Historical-legendary	*Batyr Bayan* killing his brother Noyan and the Kalmyk girl and setting out for war

Because the main characters in Zhumabayuly's poems are historical or historical-legendary figures who lived in different periods, the plot types are not uniform. The poet also transformed traditional mythic plot lines.

After examining Kanarbayeva's (1995) discussion of the earlier versions of the plots underlying Zhumabayuly's poems, this study proposes an alternative interpretation for the Tashkent-period works.

TABLE 5
COMPARISONS CONCERNING THE SOURCES OF THE MAIN FOLKLORIC PLOTS UNDERLYING THE POEMS WRITTEN BY MAGZHAN ZHUMABAYULY DURING THE TASHKENT PERIOD

Poem title	**Source of the main plot underlying the poem according to B. Kanarbayeva, *The Folkloric Aspects of Magzhan's Creative Work***	**Interpretation proposed in this study**
Korkyt	1. Works of Sh. Ualikhanov 2. Kazakh legends 3. Influence of Bazar Zhyrau and A. Divaev	The traditional plot is structurally transformed through relocation, altered motivation, and a different direction of travel; alternatively, the poem may draw on another circulating version of the legend.
On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes	1. The legend of Kenesary Cave 2. Nysanbai Zhyrau's Kenesary-Naurezbai epic	The poem combines legends associated with Kenesary's Cave and the folkloric motif of communication with aruak. Because the protagonist is a historical figure from a later period, this synthesis is best understood as a reworked authorial myth.
Qoilybai's Kobyz	1. Works of A. Margulan 2. The legend Baksy in the collection *Tartu* 3. The Baksy Saryny motif in S. Seifullin's works 4. Works of Sh. Ualikhanov	Although Ualikhanov's *Tengri* contains corresponding information, the Baksy legend in *Tartu* (Zhumabayuly, 2024) presents the same race episode. Priority is therefore given to Tartu because Zhumabayuly compiled the collection *and the* legend explicitly describes Qoilybai's kobyz entering a horse race.
Batyr Bayan	Works of Sh. Ualikhanov	Although *Batyr Bayan* is mentioned in Ualikhanov's works, the specific fratricide plot developed in the poem is not found there, and historical legends do not identify Bayan's brother. The poem therefore represents either an extensive authorial reconstruction or the transformation of another, as yet unidentified, legendary version.

These comparisons demonstrate that, in composing his poems, the author did not use folkloric plots in ready-made form. Instead, he preserved their narrative core, developed them through his imagination, and enriched them artistically. In Korkyt, the folkloric plot undergoes substantive structural transformation. Korkyt's birthplace is presented not as the Syr Darya region, as in Kazakh legends, but as Altai; his reflections on death are not prompted by a dream; and his journey begins in the East. Through these changes, the author reorganizes the composition of the traditional plot.

Qoilybai's Kobyz is a condensed adaptation of an episode from the legend Baksy, presented in verse in Tartu, a collection compiled by M. Zhumabayuly (2024). In Baksy, Qoilybai voluntarily enters his kobyz in the race, whereas in the poem he does so at the request of warriors and wealthy men. In On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes, the common folkloric motif of communication with ancestral spirits is combined with legends about Kenesary's Cave, thereby producing an authorial myth. In Batyr Bayan, although the central action of the legend about the warrior is retained, the author expands the plot through psychological characterization in order to reveal the characters' inner states and intensify the dramatic conflict.

Thus, the folkloric plots in M. Zhumabayuly's Tashkent-period poems underwent both structural and stylistic

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transformation. Structurally, the sequence of events, the functions of motifs, and the motivations for the characters' actions were altered. Stylistically, symbolic meanings were deepened, psychological representation was intensified, and authorial interpretation became predominant. In other words, a principal mythopoetic strategy identified by Lutsak and Vivcharyk (2025)—the interpretation and transformation of traditional mythological plots and images—is clearly manifested in Zhumabayuly's poems. The poet's primary purpose was not to reproduce folkloric plots verbatim but to reveal the realities of his own period. Mythologism therefore enabled him to express ideas about the sociopolitical circumstances of the 1920s indirectly, through implication and allusion (Aimukhambet, 2016).

At the level of individual texts, transformation occurs through four principal operations: relocation and reorientation in Korkyt (the Syr Darya region is replaced by Altai, and a dream-induced journey becomes a conscious eastward departure); motivational change in Qoilybai's Kobyz (voluntary participation in the race becomes participation at the request of warriors and wealthy men); synthesis of independent legendary materials in On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes (communication with aruak is combined with traditions about Kenesary's Cave); and psychological expansion in Batyr Bayan (a concise legendary action is developed through interior reflection, affect, remorse, and tragic conflict). These operations show that transformation affects not only content but also narrative causality, compositional order, and focalization.

The analysis of Zhumabayuly's four Tashkent-period poems revealed a set of mythic motifs. According to their mode of presentation and artistic function, these motifs can be grouped as follows:

1. Alienation, loneliness, the search for eternal life, and the search for an eternal homeland, found in *Korkyt, On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes*, and *Batyr Bayan*.
2. Belief in supernatural forces, sacred space, heroism, and national unity, found in *On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes*, *Qoilybai's Kobyz*, and *Batyr Bayan*.

Because several motifs occur within a single poem, the following subsections are organized by poem and explain the characters' social roles, relationships with their historical periods, and symbolic functions.

A. Motifs in Korkyt

Korkyt draws on the legend of Korkyt Ata, the seeker of a sacred, deathless place, and develops the motifs of alienation and loneliness. Kondybai (2018) interprets Korkyt's search for an immortal place in relation to the Kazakh idea of the primordial center: wherever he travels, he encounters a grave and ultimately returns to his own central homeland after crossing the four directions of the steppe. The solitary nature of this journey links the legend to the philosophical category of loneliness, a category that remained insufficiently explored in Kazakh literary studies partly because it was long constrained by ideological interpretations.

The restriction of individual will and freedom under the Soviet system deepened alienation in multiple spheres of society. The closure of consciousness led to alienation from one's foundational identity—from the self, national roots, history, and customs—and contributed to growing social contradictions (Zharylgapov, 2009, p. 65).

In comparative terms, the link to modernism should be understood as a functional analogy rather than as evidence of direct influence. Modernist representations of alienation typically foreground a fractured self, estrangement from social reality, and the collapse of stable meaning; in Kazakh mythopoetics, solitude is mediated through sacred geography, encounters with ancestral spirits, and a journey toward self-knowledge. Both traditions dramatize a crisis of belonging, but they do so through different cultural codes and narrative mechanisms (Zharylgapov, 2009; Smagulova, 2006).

From a psychological point of view, loneliness is a multidimensional concept defined by five dimensions:

- spiritual weakness;
- thoughtlessness;
- isolation;
- renunciation of everything;
- absence of limits.

In comparative literary criticism, this issue has been studied in connection with the broader problems of modernist poetics. Researchers of F. Kafka's work have observed that the stylistic texture typical of modernist writers often foregrounds the representation of a person's estrangement from the living environment and the world.

In Kazakh mythology, the motif of loneliness is associated not simply with isolation from the world but with self-knowledge. Mythic narratives portray the worlds of shamans, wandering dervishes, demons, and ancestral spirits, while the mysteries of sacred places—gravesites, flowing water, ancient dwellings, and mountains—are represented in close connection with solitude. The image of loneliness in Kazakh cultural consciousness can therefore be compared with existential loneliness in modernist literature without treating the two traditions as identical.

Existentialism—from the Latin existentia, meaning “existence”—developed as a major philosophical and literary current in the aftermath of the First World War, placing the human condition at the center of inquiry. Whereas existential loneliness in modernist literature is often characterized by fragmentation, alienation from the world, and destabilization of the inner self, loneliness in Kazakh mythic narratives is frequently mediated through cosmogonic imagination, contact with the mysterious forces of nature, sacred places, and dream symbolism. The comparison therefore concerns a shared problem—the individual's relation to self and world—rather than an identical philosophical genealogy.

This distinction allows the analysis to move from a broad comparative framework to the culturally specific forms of alienation identified in Kazakh literary scholarship.

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G. G. Marquez's novel One Hundred Years of Solitude likewise presents loneliness and alienation from one's environment as profound philosophical dimensions of human consciousness. In Kazakh literary scholarship, the concept of loneliness and the motif of alienation originate in folkloric works and have been artistically represented in accordance with the social and political conditions of different periods.

Smagulova (2006, p. 22) distinguishes two forms of alienation relevant to the poems: self-alienation, represented in On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes and Batyr Bayan, and alienation from society, represented in Korkyt.

In *Korkyt*, the hero's withdrawal from his people under the burden of sorrowful thought is depicted as follows:

Since he first became aware, one thought settled in *Korkyt*;
Unchanging, he drank poison each day with that thought;
Ruled by thought, he turned away from home and people;
The crowd gossiped about him and called him mad. (Zhumabayuly, 2023b, p. 6)

Korkyt functions on three levels in the poem: first, as a folkloric figure seeking eternal life; second, as a romantic personality experiencing loneliness and alienation; and third, as a symbol of poetic existence. These levels converge in the symbolic connection between the *kobyz* and the poet's heart at the end of the poem.

Alongside alienation and loneliness, *Korkyt* develops the motif of the search for eternal life. Through the question "What is life?", the poet presents Korkyt as a legendary figure who senses social injustice, reflects on the future of the land and nation, and seeks the meaning of immortality. The poem locates spiritual crisis both within the individual and in the tragic space of existence.

Aimukhambet (2016, p. 34) argues that *Korkyt*'s journey in search of eternal life reveals the poet's restless being, anxious about the fate of Alash and unable to fit into his environment. The conclusion of the poem supports this interpretation by stating that all poets of humankind received a blessing from *Korkyt*.

As noted above, Zhumabayuly identifies Altai as *Korkyt*'s birthplace. In the poet's work, Altai functions as a prominent motif of sacred space. Its sacred status is connected with its place in national cognition as an ancestral homeland and primordial center (Aimukhambet et al., 2025).

Altai occupies a special place in Zhumabayuly's poetic vocabulary. In *Kazakh Language*, he writes, "The lofty Altai, the golden mother, is forgotten; heroes and khans, exalted souls, are forgotten!" (Zhumabayuly, 2023a, p. 89), calling upon his readers not to forget Altai. Zhumabayuly thus activates the mental and symbolic meanings of Altai and the Kazakh people's longing for this sacred land. Nevertheless, Kazakh legends usually locate Korkyt in the Syr region.

B. Motifs in On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes

In *On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes*, the image of Kenesary Khan conveys the people's sorrow under colonial oppression through the mythic motif of the search for an eternal homeland.

Opening his eyes, Kene found himself on the ground.
From that moment, Kenekem set out and went away;
He took with him the young tiger Nauryzbai;
To lead Alash out and make it a nation,
He fell upon the Russians like a hungry wolf;
Joining hands with Uisin, Dulat, and Kyrgyz,
He considered establishing relations with China. (Zhumabayuly, 2023b, p. 66)

The author connects Kenesary's journey toward an eternal homeland with the image of *aruak* ("ancestral spirit").

After he seemed slightly alarmed,
Kenekem invoked the *aruak*.
No sooner had he uttered *aruak*,
Than he saw a white-haired old man before him. (Zhumabayuly, 2023b, pp. 64-65)

The old man who appears in the cave as *aruak* guides Kenesary. In *Tengri*, Ualikhanov (2013, p. 80) defines *aruak* as the ancestral spirit invoked in difficult moments for support and protection. This definition confirms the figure's positive role in Kazakh cultural understanding as a sacred force that protects and sustains the human spirit.

Within the poem, *aruak* appears not as a threatening apparition but as *a* sacred guide who directs K*enesary and link*s his political mission to ancestral memory. Zhumabayuly therefore uses the motif to authorize the hero's journey spiritually while also foreshadowing *it*s tragic limits.

The poem also develops the motifs of sacred space and transformation. By describing Kokshetau and Burabay as unmatched landscapes capable of relieving inner sorrow, the poet prepares the reader to perceive the setting as sacred:

No land in Arqa equals Burabay;
No other place stirs thought in such a way.
If you do not see Lake Burabay and Kokshetau,
The sorrow in your breast will not depart. (Zhumabayuly, 2023b, p. 63)

The sacred cave is significant because Burabay is associated with Abylai Khan's white horde and Kenesary's ancestral memory. The scene of communication with aruak is therefore rooted in both historical and symbolic geography.

In this sacred space, the aruak bids farewell to Kenesary and says:
If you die without reaching your purpose,
At that moment I shall turn to stone here.

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Waiting for another hero like you to be born in Alash,
I shall remain on the hill, sunk as stone,
after which he gives his blessing and disappears. (Zhumabayuly, 2023b, p. 66)

Kenesary's death is represented through transformation: when the lion dies in Alatau, the old man at Oqzhetpes turns to stone. The aruak's petrification expresses the author's longing for historical leaders and suggests that society awaits another Kenesary. The cliff, silence, and stillness also intensify loneliness and reveal the spiritual bond between human beings and nature.

C. Motifs in Qoilybai's Kobyz

In *Qoilybai's Kobyz*, the author again turns to the mysterious nature of the *kobyz* ("Kazakh bowed string instrument"). The instrument also appears in Korkyt, creating an intertextual link between the two poems. The *kobyz* functions as a mystical and sacred instrument that connects the living and the dead, communicates with Tengri and *aruak*, and summons spirits (Tokzhanov, 2025, p. 11).

Qoilybai, a powerful *baksy* ("shaman/diviner") and a disciple of Korkyt, enters his *kobyz* in a race. The episode echoes the ancient belief that the instrument could serve as the baksy's vehicle between visible and invisible worlds (Kondybai, 2018).

In *Qoilybai's Kobyz*, the character moves through the spatial and temporal dimensions of a mysterious world by means of supernatural power. Belief in supernatural forces is represented through Qoilybai's shamanic art and extraordinary abilities. In *Tengri*, Ualikhanov (2013, p. 82) defines a *baksy* as a Kazakh seer or diviner who predicts the future and speaks in the name of a spirit.

Ualikhanov's explanation suggests that baksy figures are associated in Kazakh cultural cognition with beneficial magical power. Kaskabasov (2015) likewise distinguishes between good and bad, beneficial and harmful magic, while Koch (1999) defines magic as knowledge and control of the spiritual world through otherworldly forces or mystical rites and distinguishes white from black magic.

In Kazakh literature, the *baksy* is frequently portrayed as a figure who predicts the future, foresees misfortune, and warns the community. Such figures interpret symbols and signs in answering people's questions. As cited by Aimukhambet (2016), A. Divaev describes *baksy* figures as people capable of establishing contact with a powerful spirit and commanding it.

In *Spirits or Ongons*, Ualikhanov (2013, p. 99) examines *aruak*, *baksy*, and shamanism in Kazakh religious belief and notes that *baksy* is a common Turkic term: among Kazakhs it denotes a shaman, in Mongolian a teacher, among Uighurs *bakhshi*, and among Turkmens a poet. He also identifies Qoilybai as a *baksy* figure in Kazakh cultural memory.

D. Motifs in Batyr Bayan

The poem frames Bayan's inner experience through the psychology of affect. Hegel (1977, p. 118) distinguishes feelings tied to the individual's immediate situation—such as anger, revenge, jealousy, shame, and regret—from feelings connected with universal values such as law, conscience, custom, religion, beauty, and truth. In Batyr Bayan, Bayan kills Noyan and the Kalmyk girl under the pressure of anger, revenge, jealousy, and honor. The act torments him, leads to self-alienation and loneliness, and ultimately drives him to defend the nation and land. The motif therefore reveals Bayan's inner contradiction, personal tragedy, and isolation from society.

Although Bayan tries to convince himself that his action was justified, grief over his brother's death plunges him into profound spiritual rather than physical loneliness.

Through inner monologue and psychological reflection, the poet reveals Bayan's suffering. Although he is respected as a courageous warrior, no one can share his grief or fully understand his inner state. He therefore remains lonely even within the community, an artistic device that intensifies the poem's tragic pathos.

The motif of loneliness also shapes Bayan's departure for the final battle. Having lost the meaning of life, he meets death heroically; his apparently solitary charge becomes a symbol of spiritual isolation. Loneliness thus reveals his inner tragedy, human suffering, and fatal destiny.

Sacred space is also represented through Burabay. The lines "No land in Arqa equals Burabay" and "Burabay is the island of Arqa, the beloved land" identify it not merely as a landscape but as a site of ancestral sovereignty and collective memory. Its sacred status is reinforced by associations with the white horde of Alash and Abylai Khan's rule (Aimukhambet et al., 2025).

Overall, the analysis confirms that the four Tashkent-period poems contain both poem-specific and recurrent mythic motifs.

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TABLE 6
PRINCIPAL AND RECURRENT MOTIFS IN ZHUMABAYULY'S FOUR POEMS

Poem title	Recurrent motifs
Korkyt	Alienation, loneliness, sacred space, search for eternal life
On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes	Alienation, loneliness, sacred space, search for an eternal homeland, ancestral spirit, transformation
Qoilybai's Kobyz	Belief in supernatural forces, sacred instrument, alienation (implicit), blessing
Batyr Bayan	Self-alienation, loneliness, sacred space, heroism, national unity

Alienation from society and from the self is most explicit in *Korkyt* and *Batyr Bayan*. Their protagonists, burdened by thought, inner anguish, and sociopolitical conflict, become estranged from their communities and from themselves. The poet connects their loneliness with nature through symbolic images of the mountains and stones of Kokshetau and Altai, as well as water, forest, wind, and fire.

In *Qoilybai's Kobyz* and *On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes*, alienation appears more implicitly. At the end of *Qoilybai's Kobyz*, the speaker says:

> O God, as if in the play of an *albasty*,
> Why have You placed me in this accursed age?
> If only I could turn this crooked age to ash,
> If I received a blessing from Baganaly Qoilybai (Zhumabayuly, 2023b, p. 62),

thereby rejecting his own society through the epithets "accursed age" and "crooked age." In *On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes*, the speaker says:

> Kene is gone, and there is no younger brother to follow in his footsteps;
> Alas, sorrow poisons my heart (Zhumabayuly, 2023b, p. 67),
> expressing estrangement from the present through longing for the past.

In these poems, the ritual of *bata beru* ("giving a blessing") has particular importance. *Bata* is a rich and morally significant form of magical folklore (Rakysh, 2020, p. 41), but it functions differently in each poem. In *On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes*, Kenesary receives a blessing from *aruak* yet is defeated; the blessing therefore symbolizes spiritual support rather than a force capable of changing fate. In *Qoilybai's Kobyz*, the lyrical speaker dreams of receiving Qoilybai Baksy's blessing in order to overcome his age, making *bata* a cultic and magical motif that connects historical memory with national consciousness.

V. DISCUSSION

This study analyzed the transformation of folkloric plots and the artistic function of mythic motifs in Magzhan Zhumabayuly's Tashkent-period poems and examined how the poet's activities during that period shaped his use of folklore.

The findings show that folkloric plots served as an important means of expressing the poet's position and emotional state. The novelty of the study lies in foregrounding the Tashkent period as a distinct biographical and publishing context. Zhumabayuly's work in education, folklore collection, and Turkestan publishing brought him into direct contact with oral-traditional materials, while mythic motifs enabled him to encode contemporary tensions indirectly.

The findings extend the conclusions of Tileshov (2023), Kanarbayeva (1995), Yskakuly (2020), and Baltogayeva (2015). In particular, combining biographical evidence from the Tashkent period with mythopoetic and hermeneutic analysis offers a new account of how source material was reorganized within the poems.

The results contribute to the study of prominent representatives of Alash literature in the first quarter of the twentieth century. In this context, folkloric plots and mythic motifs became important artistic means through which Kazakh poets and writers represented the condition of society.

The analytical framework used here may also inform studies of recurrent folkloric motifs and patterns in other works of Alash literature, offering a broader perspective on the relationship between oral tradition and written Kazakh literature.

The article provides an analytical foundation for systematizing the transformation of folkloric plots and the artistic function of mythic motifs in Zhumabayuly's Tashkent-period poems. Future research may extend the inquiry through decolonial, comparative, and reception-oriented approaches.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study answered the research questions formulated in relation to its main aim and reached the following conclusions.

The Tashkent period had a major influence on the poet's creative work, especially on his use of folkloric plots and mythic motifs. Although brief, the period produced several of his major poems. The experience gained in Tashkent also influenced later works such as *Zhusip Khan*, *The Tale of Qanysh Bai*, and *The False Tale*.

Zhumabayuly's Tashkent-period poems contain mythic-legendary plots such as *Korkyt*'s search for eternal life, communication with *aruak*, and the *entry of a baksy*'s *kobyz* in a horse race, as well as the historical-legendary plot of *Batyr Bayan*'s killing of his brother Noyan and the Kalmyk girl before departing for war. Because precise historical

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evidence for the latter episode has not been established, its treatment in the poem is best understood as a substantial authorial expansion of legendary material. The poems also develop alienation, loneliness, the search for eternal life and an eternal homeland, belief in supernatural forces, and sacred space.

The motifs of alienation and loneliness in Zhumabayuly's poems of the 1920s are closely connected with sociopolitical conditions. To characterize his age, the poet uses epithets such as “crooked age” and “accursed age.” In Korkyt, On the Cliffs of Oqzhetpes, and Qoilybai's Kobyz, traditional plots are transformed through changes in setting, motivation, sequence, and motif function, whereas Batyr Bayan represents the most extensive authorial reconstruction.

Overall, the study shows that the relationship between poem and source is not a binary choice between unchanged borrowing and complete invention. Zhumabayuly retains recognizable folkloric cores but reshapes narrative causality, composition, characterization, symbolism, and psychological depth. Parallel versions of myths and legends may underlie three of the poems, while Qoilybai's Kobyz can be linked most directly to the Baksy legend in Tartu. The transformation of folklore is therefore the central artistic mechanism through which the poet connects historical memory with the sociopolitical experience of the 1920s.

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