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FOLKLORE-TYPOLOGICAL FEATURES OF THE HERO–RIVAL RELATIONSHIP IN THE EPICS “GILGAMESH” AND “RAMAYANA”

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Abstract. *This article examines the hero–rival relationship in the epics “Gilgamesh” and “Ramayana” from a folklore-typological perspective. The emergence of the rival within the epic plot, the causes of conflict with the hero, the development of opposition, its relationship with epic space, and the rival’s narrative function are comparatively analyzed. The transformation of Enkidu from rival into companion, Humbaba as a mythological guardian of alien space, and Ravana as an aggressive ruler-rival are identified as distinct models. The study argues that the hero–rival relationship can be examined through the triad “opposition – trial – transformation,” which reveals deeper typological regularities of epic plot.*

Keywords: *heroic epic, folklore typology, plot, motif, epic hero, rival, antagonist, conflict, epic space, Gilgamesh, Ramayana.*

“GILGAMISH” VA “RAMAYANA” DOSTONLARIDA QAHRAMON-RAQIB MUNOSABATINING FOLKLOR-TIPOLOGIK XUSUSIYATLARI

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada “Gilgamesh” va “Ramayana” dostonlaridagi qahramon va raqib munosabatlari folklor-tipologik nuqtayi nazardan tadqiq etiladi. Epik syujetda raqibning paydo bo‘lishi, qahramon bilan o‘zaro ziddiyatning kelib chiqish sabablari, qarama-qarshilikning rivojlanishi, uning epik makon bilan munosabati hamda raqibning narrativ funksiyasi qiyosiy tahlil qilinadi. Enkiduning raqibdan yo‘ldoshga aylanishi, Humbabaning o‘zga makonning mifologik qo‘riqchisi ekanligi hamda Ravananing tajovuzkor hukmdor-raqib sifatidagi holati alohida modellar sifatida ajratib ko‘rsatiladi. Tadqiqotda qahramon va raqib munosabatlarini epik syujetning chuqurroq tipologik qonuniyatlarini ochib beruvchi “qarama-qarshilik – sinov – transformatsiya” uchligi orqali o‘rganish mumkinligi ta’kidlanadi.*

Kalit so‘zlar: *qahramonlik eposi, folklor tipologiyasi, syujet, motiv, epik qahramon, raqib, antagonist, ziddiyat, epik makon, Gilgamesh, Ramayana.*

ФОЛЬКЛОРНО-ТИПОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ОТНОШЕНИЙ ГЕРОЙ–СОПЕРНИК В ЭПОСАХ «ГИЛЬГАМЕШ» И «РАМАЯНА»

Аннотация. *В данной статье с фольклорно-типологической точки зрения рассматриваются отношения между героем и соперником в эпосах “Гильгамеш” и “Рамаяна”. Проводится сравнительный анализ появления соперника в эпическом сюжете, причин конфликта с героем, развития оппозиции, её связи с эпическим пространством и повествовательной функции соперника. Трансформация Энкиду из соперника в спутника, Хумбаба как мифологический страж чужого пространства и Равана как агрессивный правитель-соперник выделяются в качестве самостоятельных моделей. В исследовании утверждается, что отношения между героем и соперником можно рассматривать через триаду «оппозиция — испытание — трансформация», раскрывающую более глубокие типологические закономерности эпического сюжета.*

Ключевые слова: *героический эпос, фольклорная типология, сюжет, мотив, эпический герой, соперник, антагонист, конфликт, эпическое пространство, Гильгамеш, Рамаяна.*

Introduction. Although the central hero occupies the leading position in the system of characters of heroic epic, the hero’s epic identity becomes fully visible only in relation to other figures, especially the forces that oppose him. The rival does not merely create an obstacle in the hero’s path; the rival generates plot conflict, initiates narrative movement, and tests the hero’s strength, courage, and determination. Therefore, the hero and the rival should be examined not as two isolated and morally opposed characters, but as interdependent components of the mechanism that sets the epic plot in motion.

Literature review. A folklore character cannot be adequately described solely through name, outward appearance, or positive and negative qualities. V. Ya. Propp drew attention to the fact that characters may change while the functions they perform display a certain stability. In comparative analysis, he regarded the identification of constituent elements and the examination of their relations to one another and to the whole plot as a fundamental methodological principle [1; p. 28]. This principle is also productive for the study of rivals in heroic epic, because names, origins, appearances, and modes of representation may differ while the narrative function of opposing the hero remains comparable.

Propp also showed that a character entering a folklore narrative may, under different plot conditions, function as a villain, helper, or donor. Thus, a character should not be confined in advance to a fixed "positive" or "negative" category; what matters is whom the character opposes and what function is performed at a particular stage of the plot. This observation is especially useful for interpreting Enkidu, who first appears as a counterforce to Gilgamesh and later becomes his closest companion.

E. M. Meletinsky broadens the methodological basis of the problem within the study of heroic epic. Discussing the work of V. M. Zhirmunsky and V. Ya. Propp, he emphasizes the importance of historical-typological comparison for identifying regularities in the formation of heroic epic, including comparison between epic traditions of unrelated peoples belonging to different stages of development [2; p. 15]. This provides an important theoretical basis for a typological comparison of "Gilgamesh" and "Ramayana," despite their historical, geographical, and cultural distance.

Meletinsky also regards combat with monsters as one of the important forms of archaic epic plot. In his discussion of Propp, he notes that pre-state heroic traditions characteristically include monster combat and heroic marriage, while some mythological "masters" of particular realms later develop into hostile monsters confronted by the hero [2; p. 17]. This suggests that early epic rivals often possess a mythological nature, although later epic development also produces human rivals, foreign warriors, rulers, suitors, and figures who disturb the internal social order.

Research methodology. The study employs comparative-typological, historical-typological, and functional analysis. The hero–rival relationship is examined according to the cause of conflict, the rival's position in the plot, spatial relations between hero and rival, the form of confrontation, the participation of helpers, and the result of the conflict. The theoretical framework draws on Propp's concept of character functions, Meletinsky's historical-typological approach to heroic epic, and S. Yu. Neklyudov's observations on recurring epic motifs.

In this study, an epic rival is understood as a character or force that opposes the principal hero's purpose, complicates the hero's movement, tests heroic qualities, and actively participates in the emergence and development of plot conflict. Such a definition makes it possible to study the rival not merely as a negative character but as a functional element through which the hero's epic status is disclosed.

Analysis of the results. In "Gilgamesh," the first distinctive form of the hero–rival relationship emerges through Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Enkidu does not enter the plot as an absolute enemy whose sole purpose is to destroy the hero. Rather, he appears as an equal counterforce capable of balancing Gilgamesh's excessive power. The people of Uruk explicitly recognize him as a worthy, almost divine rival to Gilgamesh [3; p. 19]. His function as rival becomes concrete when he blocks Gilgamesh's way and forces the hero into direct physical confrontation.

Gilgamish ko'rdi shunda yovvoyi bir odamni,
Jingalak, hayvonsifat yollar beliga tushgan.
Keldi, tik turdi qarab raqibiga yuzma-yuz.
Uchrashishgandi ular biroz kengish yo'lakda,
Enkidu to'sib qo'ydi eshikni oyoq bilan,
Imkon bermayotgandi Gilgamish chiqmog'i chun.
Kalla soldi ikkovlon pishqirgan ho'kiz misol,
Dahlizlar o'pirildi, zirilladi devorlar. [3; 19-b.]

Blocking the way carries a meaning broader than a simple physical action. Until this point Gilgamesh has existed in Uruk without an equal capable of limiting his movement. Enkidu's appearance introduces such a force and places Gilgamesh's absolute superiority under trial. The rival's function here is not to eliminate the hero, but to impose a boundary upon unrestricted power and to confront it with an equivalent strength. This confirms the usefulness of examining epic characters through the functions they perform at particular stages of the narrative.

The principal peculiarity of the Gilgamesh–Enkidu relationship is that rivalry is not permanent. Once confrontation has fulfilled its narrative purpose, the relationship moves into a new phase. Enkidu becomes companion, friend, and helper, accompanying Gilgamesh on the expedition against Humbaba [3; p. 28]. The

sequence may therefore be expressed as follows: emergence of an equal force → confrontation → trial of strength → mutual recognition → end of rivalry → companionship. The rival is not destroyed; the rival's narrative function is transformed.

The Humbaba episode presents a fundamentally different structure. The conflict does not arise within the hero's familiar social space. Gilgamesh himself leaves that space and moves toward a distant, unknown, and dangerous realm guarded by Humbaba. The sequence hero → journey → alien space → guardian of space → confrontation becomes the organizing structure of this episode. Humbaba is therefore not an invading enemy; conflict begins because the hero crosses into the rival's guarded domain [3; p. 34].

From this perspective, Humbaba may be interpreted as a mythological-spatial rival. His antagonistic status is inseparable from the territory he guards. This corresponds to archaic epic patterns in which the hero encounters mythological forces associated with dangerous or alien space [2; p. 17]. Importantly, however, Humbaba should not be reduced to a simple embodiment of evil. From the perspective of his own space, he is a guardian. After defeat he offers submission and assistance, which further complicates the moral structure of the opposition [3; p. 42].

The killing of Humbaba does not close the narrative consequences of the conflict. In the later council of the gods, the deaths of Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven become part of the grounds for the decision that Enkidu must die. Thus, victory over a rival may terminate one conflict while simultaneously generating another. The Humbaba model can therefore be represented as: departure from one's own space → entry into alien space → confrontation with its guardian → supernatural assistance → submission of the rival → destruction of the rival → consequences extending into a later plot phase.

In "Ramayana," the Rama–Ravana conflict presents another form of the hero–rival relationship. Ravana differs from both Enkidu and Humbaba because he first violates the hero's familial world by abducting Sita and then becomes the ruler of the alien space to which the hero must travel. The conflict therefore begins not with a direct duel but with an assault upon familial unity. Sita rejects Ravana's advances and affirms her loyalty to Rama [4; p. 60]. Ravana subsequently removes her to his own realm, transforming the personal violation into the principal motive for Rama's movement toward Lanka.

S. Yu. Neklyudov includes the abduction and recovery of a wife among recurring typological situations of heroic epic, alongside heroic marriage, monster combat, and siege motifs [5; p. 18]. In "Ramayana," Sita's abduction is not an isolated episode; it becomes the cause that reorganizes the subsequent plot and compels the hero to undertake a new course of action.

Ravana's connection with Lanka is equally important. Humbaba is a guardian of alien space, whereas Ravana is its ruler. Lanka is represented as a fortified epic realm with walls, palaces, gates, guards, and military power. The spatial direction of conflict therefore differs significantly in the two cases. With Humbaba, the hero's entry into alien space initiates confrontation; with Ravana, the rival first violates the hero's world, after which the hero is compelled to enter the rival's space.

The two structures may be summarized as follows. Gilgamesh–Humbaba: initiative of the hero → journey into alien space → confrontation with the guardian → defeat of the rival. Rama–Ravana: aggression of the rival → abduction of the wife → transfer of the wife into alien space → movement of the hero toward that space → attack upon the rival's realm → defeat of the rival → recovery of the wife.

Meletinsky's comparison of archaic epic traditions is also relevant here: he places Enkidu and Hanuman side by side as figures with partly animal or non-human traits assisting the hero and notes the struggle against rakshasas and Humbaba among comparable archaic epic configurations. Such parallels should not be treated as evidence that the characters are identical. Rather, they reveal culturally distinct realizations of the broader hero–helper–rival relationship.

The conflict with Ravana eventually expands from personal injury into collective warfare. Rama, Lakshmana, and Sugriva's forces advance toward Lanka, and the confrontation involves commanders, warriors, and supernatural forces on both sides [4; p. 116]. Ravana thus functions successively as the violator of familial unity, the abductor who removes the wife into alien space, the ruler of the destination toward which the hero must travel, and finally the principal force of the opposing side in large-scale battle.

This sequence permits Ravana to be described as an aggressive ruler-rival: aggression against the hero's world → abduction → detention in alien space → gathering of helpers → movement into alien space → large-scale confrontation → defeat of the rival → restoration of disrupted order. Accordingly, the three analyzed figures reveal different narrative models: Enkidu as rival-companion, Humbaba as mythological-spatial rival, and Ravana as aggressive ruler-rival.

Discussion. The comparison shows that what remains stable across epic traditions is not the external form of the rival but the narrative necessity of opposition. The rival may appear as a human being, ruler, warrior, or mythological creature, and the motives and spatial conditions of conflict may vary. Yet the rival

consistently disrupts an existing condition, compels the hero to act, and opens a new field of trial. Typological affinity therefore lies less in identical characters than in comparable mechanisms of narrative opposition.

Rivalry should consequently be studied as a process rather than as a fixed status. It is necessary to ask not only who opposes whom, but why opposition emerges, whether the rival's function changes during the plot, how the hero is affected by the confrontation, and what new narrative condition follows its resolution. Enkidu demonstrates transformation of function, Humbaba demonstrates the importance of guarded alien space, and Ravana demonstrates the expansion of a personal violation into spatial and collective conflict.

Epic space itself becomes an active component of this process. The crossing or violation of the boundary between one's own and alien space may generate, intensify, or redirect opposition. Accordingly, epic space should not be treated merely as the setting in which events occur. It participates in determining the cause and form of rivalry and provides a productive basis for studying the typological system "own space – alien space – boundary – rival."

Conclusion. The study leads to the conclusion that the rival is not a secondary appendage to the heroic figure but one of the conditions through which heroism becomes narratively visible. Heroic strength, courage, and extraordinary status acquire epic significance through resistance, trial, and the consequences of overcoming opposition.

A further result is that victory itself is not the only meaningful measure of heroism. More significant for the epic plot is the new status produced by confrontation. After a major conflict, the hero does not simply return to the previous condition: experience, relationships, spatial orientation, or responsibility are altered. The deeper function of the rival is therefore to mediate the hero's passage from one epic state to another.

On this basis, the hero–rival relationship may be conceptualized through the triad "opposition – trial – transformation." Opposition initiates narrative movement, trial reveals heroic qualities, and transformation defines the epic result of confrontation. This model makes it possible to move beyond the search for superficially similar episodes and to identify typological regularities within the internal operation of epic plot.

Thus, the typological proximity of "Gilgamesh" and "Ramayana" does not depend on the identity of their characters or events. It is revealed in the structural logic through which opposition generates action, tests the hero, reorganizes spatial relations, and produces a new narrative state. A functional and plot-centered study of the hero–rival relationship therefore allows both common epic regularities and the culturally specific realization of those regularities to be examined without reducing one tradition to another.

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