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THE ARTISTIC TRANSFORMATION OF MYTHOLOGICAL CHARACTERS IN UZBEK FOLK TALES

Abbasova Durdona Bahromovna
Webster university,M.A .
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Abstract. This article examines the artistic transformation of mythological characters in Uzbek folk tales and explores the ways in which ancient mythological representations have been reinterpreted within the artistic and ideological framework of folklore. Mythological characters constitute an important layer of Uzbek folk-tale poetics, reflecting the historical worldview, beliefs, moral values, and imaginative perceptions of the Uzbek people. Particular attention is paid to the transformation of their original mythological meanings into artistic, narrative, symbolic, and ethical functions. The research demonstrates that mythological characters in Uzbek folk tales do not simply preserve their archaic meanings.

Keywords: Uzbek folklore, folk tales, mythology, mythological characters, artistic transformation, dragon, folklore poetics, cultural memory, artistic image.

INTRODUCTION. Uzbek folk tales constitute an important component of the national oral literary heritage and reflect different historical layers of the spiritual and cultural development of the Uzbek people. For centuries, folk tales have transmitted traditional beliefs, moral principles, social experiences, aesthetic ideals, and perceptions of the natural and supernatural worlds from one generation to another. One of the most distinctive features of Uzbek folk tales is the interaction between realistic representations of human life and fantastic images inherited from ancient mythological traditions.

The theoretical foundations for such an approach can be found in Uzbek folkloristic scholarship. In the work An Introduction to Folklore Studies, M. Jo‘rayev and J. Eshonqulov emphasize the importance of investigating the historical development, genres, motifs, images, and artistic characteristics of folklore. The study of folklore from this perspective makes it possible to understand mythological characters as elements of a historically developing artistic system.

Particularly significant for the present research is M. Jo‘rayev and D. O‘rayeva's work Uzbek Mythology. This study provides important information concerning mythological concepts, supernatural beings, traditional beliefs, and mythological images associated with Uzbek cultural heritage. The material presented in the book provides a valuable theoretical basis for identifying the archaic semantic layers of mythological characters and comparing them with their later representations in folk tales.

Another important source is the collective work Uzbek Folk Oral Poetic Creativity by K. Imomov, T. Mirzayev, B. Sarimsoqov, and O. Safarov. The authors examine the artistic nature of oral literature, its genres, poetic principles, and traditional imagery. Their approach is particularly relevant to understanding the transformation of traditional images into artistic characters.

O. Madayev's Uzbek Folk Oral Creativity also provides important theoretical perspectives on the historical and artistic characteristics of Uzbek folklore. The work demonstrates that oral literature should be regarded not merely as a collection of traditional stories but as a form of collective artistic consciousness that reflects the historical and cultural experience of society.

METHODS. The research employs several complementary methodological approaches, including the historical-genetic, comparative, structural-semantic, and textual methods.

RESULTS

3.1. Mythological Characters as a Historical Layer of Uzbek Folk Tales. The analysis demonstrates that mythological characters represent one of the oldest semantic layers of Uzbek folk-tale traditions. Their presence indicates that many folk tales preserve elements of ancient cultural consciousness.

However, Uzbek folk tales do not reproduce mythological concepts in their original form. Instead, mythological images are reconstructed according to the artistic requirements of the narrative. The transformation generally involves a shift from sacred or cosmological meaning toward narrative and symbolic meaning.

For example, a supernatural being that may originally have been perceived as an independent supernatural force becomes an antagonist, helper, guardian, or tester of the protagonist. The narrative consequently determines the character's meaning.

This transformation is important because it demonstrates the gradual humanization of mythological material. Instead of focusing on the supernatural being itself, the folk tale emphasizes its relationship with human characters and the challenges it creates for them. Thus, mythological characters become instruments through which the narrative explores such universal concepts as courage, fear, justice, deception, loyalty, and wisdom.

Artistic Transformation of the Div. The **div** is one of the most recognizable supernatural figures in Uzbek folk tales. It is usually characterized by enormous physical strength, frightening appearance, extraordinary abilities, and association with remote or dangerous spaces.

In its mythological dimension, the div represents a supernatural and potentially destructive force. In the folk tale, however, this image undergoes significant transformation. The div becomes a clearly defined narrative antagonist whose principal function is to create obstacles for the protagonist.

The conflict between the hero and the div frequently establishes an opposition between: human courage and supernatural power; intelligence and brute force; good and evil; justice and injustice.

Consequently, the defeat of the div acquires symbolic significance. The hero's victory demonstrates that human intelligence, courage, perseverance, and moral strength can overcome apparently superior supernatural power.

Artistic Transformation of the Dragon. The dragon or ajdarho is another significant mythological image in Uzbek folk narratives. Its traditional characteristics include enormous physical power, supernatural abilities, destructiveness, and association with danger.

In folk tales, the dragon is frequently incorporated into a specific conflict. It may threaten people, guard a treasure, capture an individual, block the hero's path, or represent an extraordinary danger that must be overcome. As a result, the dragon is transformed from a mythological creature into a symbol of extreme danger and disorder.

The artistic representation of the dragon also relies heavily on hyperbole. Its extraordinary physical characteristics increase the emotional intensity of the narrative and emphasize the heroic nature of the protagonist. The hero's confrontation with the dragon consequently represents more than an ordinary physical struggle. It frequently symbolizes the restoration of order and justice.

The Yalmog‘iz as a Complex Mythological Character. The yalmog‘iz occupies a particularly complex position in the system of Uzbek mythological and folk-tale imagery. It generally combines human and supernatural characteristics and is frequently associated with old age, magical abilities, cunning, deception, and danger. Its artistic transformation is especially important because the yalmog‘iz can perform several functions simultaneously. It may act as an antagonist, deceiver, magical obstacle, keeper of secret knowledge, or tester of the protagonist.

The character's principal artistic function is often connected with **testing**. The hero must recognize deception, demonstrate intelligence, overcome fear, and make appropriate decisions. In this way, the yalmog‘iz contributes indirectly to the hero's development. The protagonist becomes stronger and wiser as a result of confronting the supernatural character. The transformation therefore demonstrates how folklore converts a mythological figure into a mechanism of character development.

Artistic Transformation of the Pari. The pari occupies a substantially different position from the div, dragon, and yalmog‘iz. It is commonly associated with beauty, supernatural attractiveness, wisdom, mystery, and magical abilities. In folk tales, the pari may function as a beloved character, supernatural helper, guide, or mediator between the human and supernatural worlds. Its artistic transformation demonstrates that mythological figures are not necessarily represented as negative forces. The supernatural can also become a source of assistance, beauty, knowledge, and emotional connection.

The contrast between the pari and yalmog‘iz is especially significant. Both are supernatural female figures, but their narrative functions can be radically different. The yalmog‘iz is frequently associated with danger and deception, whereas the pari can represent beauty, loyalty, assistance, and idealized femininity. This opposition demonstrates the importance of the narrative context in determining the meaning of mythological characters.

Supernatural Helpers. Supernatural helpers represent another important category of mythological characters in Uzbek folk tales. Such figures may provide the protagonist with information, magical objects, protection, transportation, or guidance. Their presence reveals an important characteristic of folk-tale worldview: supernatural power is not necessarily evil. It can also support justice and human welfare. This represents a significant transformation of the mythological image. A supernatural force that might originally have been regarded as mysterious or dangerous becomes an ally of the protagonist. Supernatural helpers therefore connect two semantic systems: the ancient mythological worldview and the later ethical worldview of the folk tale.

DISCUSSION. The findings demonstrate that the artistic transformation of mythological characters represents an important mechanism through which Uzbek folk tales preserve ancient cultural traditions while adapting them to new historical and aesthetic circumstances.

According to M. Jo‘rayev and D. O‘rayeva's Uzbek Mythology, Uzbek mythological consciousness contains numerous representations associated with supernatural beings, natural phenomena, sacred concepts, and traditional beliefs. When these representations enter folk-tale narratives, they undergo a process of artistic reinterpretation.

This process can be represented schematically as: myth → mythological image → folklore motif → artistic character → symbolic meaning

At the first stage, the supernatural being belongs to the traditional worldview. At the second stage, it becomes a recognizable cultural image. At the third stage, it becomes associated with recurring narrative situations. At the fourth stage, it functions as an artistic character. Finally, it acquires symbolic meaning within the ideological structure of the tale. This process explains why the same mythological character may have different meanings in different narratives. The div, for example, may symbolize physical danger in one tale but greed, injustice, or destructive power in another. The dragon may symbolize destruction or simply serve as a spectacular obstacle that increases the heroic significance of the protagonist.

CONCLUSION. The research demonstrates that mythological characters constitute an essential component of Uzbek folk-tale poetics and represent a significant connection between ancient mythology and later forms of oral literary creativity. The analysis confirms that Uzbek folk tales do not simply

reproduce ancient mythological images. Instead, they transform these images into artistic characters with specific narrative, symbolic, ethical, and aesthetic functions. The div becomes a representation of destructive supernatural power and an obstacle against which the hero's abilities are tested. The dragon becomes an embodiment of extreme danger, disorder, and destructive force. The yalmog‘iz develops into a complex supernatural figure associated with deception, danger, magical knowledge, and testing. The pari, in contrast, frequently acquires positive or ambivalent functions connected with beauty, love, assistance, wisdom, and supernatural protection. The principal mechanism of this process is the transition from mythological meaning to artistic meaning. A supernatural being that originally belonged to a sacred or cosmological worldview becomes a participant in a fictional narrative. Its significance is subsequently determined by its position in the plot and its relationship with the protagonist.

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