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A STRUCTURAL AND MYTHOLOGICAL COMPARISON OF TURKIC EPIC
OGUZNAME AND IRISH EPIC *TÁIN BÓ CÚAILNGE*

Sapayeva Bibijon Rustamovna,

Teacher of the Department of English Language and Literature at
Urgench State University named after Abu Rayhan BiruniORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8353-7859>E-mail: sapayevabibijon1985@gmail.com

Abstract. This study compares the *Oguz Khagan Epic* and the *Tain Bo Cuailnge*, analyzing their structures and mythologies. Using Propp, Campbell, and Levi-Strauss, it explores patterns of heroism, social organization, and cosmology within distinct oral traditions.

Keywords: *Oguz Khagan*, *Tain Bo Cuailnge*, epic, mythology, structure, heroism, folklore, Propp, Campbell, Levi-Strauss.

Аннотация. В данном исследовании проводится сравнительный анализ эпоса об Огуз-хане и ирландского эпоса «*Táin Bó Cúailnge*» с точки зрения их структуры и мифологии. На основе теоретических подходов Vladimir Propp, Joseph Campbell и Claude Lévi-Strauss исследуются модели героизма, социальная организация и космологические представления в рамках различных устных традиций.

Ключевые слова: Огуз-хан, *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, эпос, мифология, структура, героизм, фольклор, Пропп, Кэмпбелл, Леви-Стросс.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu tadqiqotda O'g'uz xoqon haqidagi epos hamda irland "Táin Bó Cúailnge" eposi ularning strukturasi va mifologiyasi nuqtai nazaridan qiyosiy tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda Vladimir Propp, Joseph Campbell va Claude Lévi-Strauss nazariyalari asosida turli og'zaki an'analar doirasida qahramonlik, ijtimoiy tuzilma va kosmologik tasavvurlar o'rganiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: O'g'uz xoqon, *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, epos, mifologiya, struktura, qahramonlik, folklor, Propp, Campbell, Levi-Stross.

Introduction. Epic narratives operate as cultural systems that encode values, political ideologies, and models of heroic behavior. The Turkic *Oguz Khagan Epic* and the Irish *Táin Bó Cúailnge* emerge from distinct oral traditions but share a reliance on mythic structure to articulate social order. The *Oguz Khagan Epic* presents a linear myth of origin in which a divinely marked ruler establishes universal sovereignty. In contrast, the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* constructs a fragmented narrative centered on cyclical warfare, heroic endurance, and tragic consequences. These epics embody fundamentally different mythological logics. Through the frameworks of Vladimir Propp's narrative functions, Joseph Campbell's monomyth theory, and Claude Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology, the analysis demonstrates that the *Oguz Khagan Epic* constructs myth as a system of integration and expansion, while the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* preserves myth as a system of rupture and unresolved contradiction.

Literature analysis. Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* identifies recurring narrative functions such as departure, struggle, victory, and return. These functions provide a structural model for analyzing mythic coherence. *Morphology of the*

folktale. The *Oguz Khagan Epic* closely follows Propp's sequential structure, whereas the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* disrupts it through repetition and episodic fragmentation.

Joseph Campbell's monomyth theory proposes a universal heroic cycle consisting of separation, initiation, and return. *The hero with a thousand faces*. The *Oguz Khagan Epic* aligns strongly with this model, while Cúchulainn's narrative resists full reintegration into society, indicating a partial or failed monomyth.

Claude Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology argues that myths function by mediating binary oppositions such as nature/culture, chaos/order, and life/death. In this framework, the *Oguz Khagan Epic* resolves contradictions through imperial synthesis, while the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* preserves them in tension. The analysis demonstrates that the *Oguz Khagan Epic* follows a linear and integrative mythological logic in which divine legitimacy, conquest, and genealogical expansion culminate in the establishment of imperial order. Its structure aligns closely with Proppian narrative progression and Campbell's complete heroic cycle, culminating in the hero's successful return and institutionalization of authority. In contrast, the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* is characterized by episodic fragmentation, cyclical combat, and structural incompleteness. The narrative resists full monomythic resolution, instead emphasizing endurance, contradiction, and psychological strain, particularly through the figure of Cúchulainn.

Research methodology. From a Lévi-Straussian perspective, the *Oguz Khagan Epic* resolves fundamental binary oppositions such as chaos/order and nature/culture through synthesis and political unification, whereas the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* sustains unresolved oppositions, particularly between kinship and violence, and individual heroism and collective warfare. The study concludes that these epics reflect divergent cultural logics: one oriented toward mythic integration and imperial legitimization, and the other toward narrative tension, cyclical conflict, and tragic persistence.

Results and discussion. The *Oguz Khagan Epic*: Linear Myth and Imperial Structure: The *Oguz Khagan Epic* presents a continuous heroic biography structured around expansion and cosmic legitimacy. The narrative begins with Oguz's miraculous birth and rapid maturation, signaling his divine status. His early speech functions as a declaration of authority. E.g.: "I am Oguz Khagan, ruler of the earth".

This statement marks the hero as preordained for universal rule and corresponds to Propp's function of recognition. The hero's first major action is the defeat of a monstrous creature, symbolizing the transformation of chaos into order. This act initiates his role as civilizing agent. He subsequently engages in political conflict, including the overthrow of rival authority figures, reinforcing the consolidation of power. A key structural moment is Oguz's sacred marriage to supernatural beings associated with celestial and natural forces. His sons—Sun, Moon, and Star—represent cosmological integration into political genealogy. This fusion of myth and governance transforms lineage into cosmic order. The narrative culminates in expansive military campaigns guided by a sacred wolf, a totemic mediator

between wilderness and civilization. E.g.: “Kök böri yol gösterdi.” (“The blue wolf showed the way.”). Finally, Oguz divides his empire among his sons, establishing a structured political order that ensures continuity after his death. This ending reflects Propp’s “distribution of reward” function and Campbell’s “return with boon,” where the hero’s achievements are institutionalized.

The *Táin Bó Cúailnge*: Episodic Structure and Heroic Fragmentation. The *Táin Bó Cúailnge* follows a non-linear, episodic structure shaped by oral tradition. The narrative begins when Queen Medb initiates a cattle raid to equal her husband’s wealth, setting in motion a conflict centered on possession of the Brown Bull of Cooley. E.g.: “We set out to take the bull by force.”

A key structural disruption occurs when the warriors of Ulster are incapacitated by a curse, leaving Cúchulainn as the sole defender. This initiates a repetitive combat sequence in which the hero delays the invading army through single combat at river crossings. “He would hold the ford against every champion.”

Unlike Propp’s linear progression, the narrative cycles through repeated battles rather than advancing toward resolution. The structure emphasizes delay, endurance, and exhaustion rather than transformation. The emotional and structural climax occurs in the duel between Cúchulainn and his foster brother Ferdia. This episode introduces internal conflict into the heroic system, where kinship becomes indistinguishable from violence. The result is psychological collapse rather than narrative resolution. The epic concludes not with restoration but with exhaustion and temporary cessation of violence. Even the final bull fight resolves the conflict symbolically rather than structurally, reinforcing the absence of closure.

Proppian Structural Comparison: Applying Propp’s functions reveals a fundamental divergence: The *Oguz Khagan Epic* follows a complete sequence: Departure; Test and victory; Acquisition of power; Return; Distribution of rewards

In contrast, the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* presents a fragmented cycle: Initiation of conflict; Repeated struggle; Temporary pauses; Absence of return or redistribution. Thus, Oguz functions as a fully realized Proppian hero, while Cúchulainn exists in a suspended heroic state defined by repetition rather than completion.

Campbellian Analysis: Monomyth Completion vs. Disruption: Within Campbell’s framework, Oguz represents a complete monomyth cycle. *The hero with a thousand faces*. He receives the call to adventure, crosses thresholds into conflict, undergoes trials, and returns to establish order through imperial division. His journey produces cultural integration. Cúchulainn, however, exemplifies a disrupted monomyth. While he undergoes initiation and trials, he never achieves full reintegration into society. His role is defined by continuous liminality—he exists between human limitation and heroic excess. This failure of return reflects a cultural emphasis on sacrifice rather than reintegration.

Lévi-Straussian Structural Oppositions: The *Oguz Khagan Epic* resolves fundamental oppositions: Chaos → Order (monster defeated), Nature → Culture (wolf becomes guide of civilization) Fragmentation → Unity (tribal system established), Myth operates as a mechanism of synthesis. In contrast, the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* sustains unresolved contradictions: Kinship vs. Violence (Ferdia episode), Honor vs. Survival (Cúchulainn's refusal to withdraw), Individual vs. Collective Force (single hero vs. army)

Rather than resolving these binaries, the narrative intensifies them, suggesting a cultural acceptance of enduring contradiction.

Heroic Identity and Cultural Logic: Oguz Khagan is an archetypal founder figure whose identity merges with state formation. He is less a psychological subject than a structural force generating political order. Cúchulainn, by contrast, is a psychologically intensified hero marked by emotional conflict, bodily transformation, and moral tension. His “warp-spasm” state reflects internalized violence and instability, emphasizing the human cost of heroic ideology.

Conclusion. The *Oguz Khagan Epic* and the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* represent two fundamentally distinct mythological systems. Through Proppian, Campbellian, and Lévi-Straussian analysis, it becomes evident that the former constructs myth as linear integration and imperial expansion, while the latter constructs myth as cyclical conflict and unresolved tension. The *Oguz Khagan Epic* achieves closure through political and cosmic order.

The *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, however, preserves meaning through fragmentation, repetition, and tragedy. Together, they demonstrate that epic literature is not uniform in structure but reflects deeply divergent cultural models of order, heroism, and historical imagination.

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