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**RAPID GROWTH OF BOGATYR IN DZHANGAR EPOS: MOTIVE  
FROM ANTIQUITY TO HEROICS**

Evdokia Khabunova (a)\*, Lubmila Dampilova (b), Natalia Nikolaeva (c), Bamba Ubushieva  
(d), Balzira Elbikova (e)  
\*Corresponding author

(a) Kalmyk State University named after B.B. Gorodovikov, 11, Pushkin St., Elista, 358000, Russia,  
khabunova@mail.ru, 89093969054.

(b) Institute for Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Science,  
6, Sakhyanova St., Ulan-Ude, 670047, Russia, dampilova\_luda@rambler.ru, 9834353028.

(c) Institute for Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Science,  
6, Sakhyanova St., Ulan-Ude, 670047, Russia, natanika89@mail.ru, 89021664991.

(d) Kalmyk State University named after B.B. Gorodovikov, 11, Pushkin St., Elista, 358000, Russia  
ubamba@yandex.ru, 89054843527

(e) Kalmyk State University named after B.B. Gorodovikov, 11, Pushkin St., Elista, 358000, Russia  
elbikova91@mail.ru, 89615418000.

**Abstract**

Throughout many centuries the oral epos of the Mongolian people has been polystadial. Over the past centuries the genetically related epic traditions of the Mongolian people (the Buryats, the Kalmyks, the Mongols and the Xinjiang-Oirots) have been developing in different language, folklore, socio-historical conditions, but kept the archaic basis demonstrated in the epic narration at different levels, in particular, in the form of a motive. The study of the motive is characterized by the variety of opinions and formulations defining the concept of a “motive” that emphasizes its multidimensionality and importance as a narrative element. The motive is considered as essential structural and substantial element of a plot, at the same time its other features (eventivity, predicativity, mobility) are taken into account, including, the point of view of A.N. Veselovsky characterizing the motive as “the simplest narrative unit figuratively responding to different requests of a primitive mind or household behavior”. The definition of the scientist remains a starting point of the study in the field of the theory of motive despite a variety and, sometimes, discrepancy of opinions. The importance of the motive as the main unit of a plot is shown in the study of typology of national versions of the Dzhangar epos. The epic plot about courtship and marriage of the hero-bogatyр always has a number of motives ensuring structural-semantic integrity of a plot (miraculous birth, rapid growth of the bogatyр, message about the intended bride, departure, heroic courtship, marriage competitions, etc.).

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## 1. Introduction

The heroic epos of the Mongolian people (the Russian Buryats, Kalmyks, Khalkha-Mongols, Oirot-Mongols (Mongolia) and the Xinjiang-Oirots (China) are united by the genetic relationship expressed, first of all, in language similarity, in community of archaic bases of oral traditions, which developed during their ethnic consolidation. Disintegration of the Mongolian Empire (end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century), which defined further socio-historical development of the Mongolian people and influenced the evolution of oral tradition, fostered the formation of its ethnic originality.

By the beginning of written records and publication of epic works of the Mongolian people (the Kalmyks – the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Buryats – the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Mongols – the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Xinjiang-Oirots – the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) they already represented independent epic traditions, which developed in different conditions (socio-historical, language, folklore, cultural, geographical, natural, etc.).

At the same time continuity as the basic principle of oral tradition ensured safety of the uniform phenomena of the epos expressed as a plot and its minimum narrative unit – the motive.

Such motives include a typical plot about heroic courtship and marriage of the bogatyr of the Mongolian epos.

## 2. Problem Statement

The epos of the Mongolian people, which archaic basis was created during the era of their language and territorial unity and which was subsequently developed independently, requires a special study to identify the degree and level of similarity of the segment, which remained in the form of the plot motive of the national eposes (the Russian Buryats and the Kalmyks, the Mongols and the Xinjiang-Oirots).

The motive as the main unit of a plot highlights deep links of the uniform phenomena of the epos, allows tracking the process of spiritual and practical development of the world by a person revealing the essence of developed mindsets. The multidimensionality of *motive* categories causes some difficulties in defining a motive that was reflected in ambiguity of judgments and formulations of scientists, which scientific review is carried out by Silantyev (1999).

The variety of opinions on the concept of the “motive” of domestic folklore studies poses the need to study this “narrative unit of a plot” in different perspectives using different material (national, stadial, local), in this case on the basis of the Mongolian epos (the Buryats, the Kalmyks, the Mongols, the Xinjiang-Oirots). The motive as an essential structural and substantial element of a plot is quite relevant in terms of its polystadial nature, which is illustrated in the national versions of the Dzhangar (1978) epos.

The question of defining the motive still remains open that confirms the importance of studying this phenomenon using new material, which may include the national texts of the Dzhangar epos, which history of records covers over a bicentennial period. The last record of the oral epos in its national version was made by Khabunova (2007) in 1990 (from the derbet Aduchiev C., Republic of Kalmykia), in 2007 (from bait N. Ankhbayr, Western Mongolia), in 2017 (from torgut N. Bat, XUAR, China).

This study considers the dichotomizing nature of motive allowing analyzing the epic motive taking into account such typical properties as “structural and substantial independence”, “predicativity”, “link to

an event” (Putilov, 1988; Meletinsky, 1994). At the same time the emphasis is placed on the link of a motive to symbolic features connected by the “basic word” binding all other verbal features (Gatsak, 2002).

It is known that “the thematic selectivity of the epos reflects typical restrictions in content, problematics, personal point of view on reality” (Putilov, 1988, p. 46). In this respect the motives indicating the different degree of stability, universality or variability of certain segments of the Mongolian epos seem quite prominent. Identification and analysis of the uniform phenomena of the Mongolian epos and its text embodiment is relevant for further study of folklore typology.

### **3. Research Questions**

The epos of the Mongolian people mainly focuses on a plot about the bogatyr’s heroic courtship and marriage. The narration about epic collisions connected with the history of the family is more typical for the archaic epos of the Mongolian people and is peripheral for later tradition, but at the same time it plays an important role in implementing the ideas of the epos.

“The epic plot as a whole, as the dynamic narration about selected events and conflicts consists of motives” (Putilov, 1988, p. 39). At the same time the motive shall “be recognized as tradition or have the qualities allowing it remaining in it” (Putilov, 1994, p. 22).

Being the main unit of an epic plot, the motive more accurately highlights the typology of genetically related, but in the stadial respect different national versions of the epos due to collapse of the Mongolian Empire (end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century) developing in different language, folklore, socio-historical conditions thus making it possible to track the dynamics of epic traditions.

The plot about a courtship and a marriage of the epic hero bogatyr always has some motives ensuring structural-semantic integrity of a plot, including the following: the bogatyr’s birth, his rapid growth, capture of a horse, departure, journey, heroic courtship, marriage competitions, etc.

The subject of the study is the motive of the bogatyr’s rapid growth as one of the stable substantial structural elements “recognized as tradition” and therefore remaining in the epic narration, in this case, in the plot about the powerful courtship and marriage characterized by archaism of the Mongolian epos.

In the national epos the nature of the motive of rapid growth can shed light on the evolution of the motive, on stadial and other features of the epic narrative. The miraculous origin of the epic hero bogatyr predetermines the precipitancy of his further actions aimed at the fastest implementation of his heroic ambitions. Rapid growth and attainment of the bogatyr power at early age indicate exclusiveness and chosenness of the hero, show his readiness for heroic acts, including courtship and marriage of the epic bogatyr.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The research is aimed to study the motive of the bogatyr’s rapid growth, which stability is observed in national versions of the Dzhangar epos demonstrating all levels of stadial development of the Mongolian epos; to identify the degree of coincidence and the nature of variability of the motive in its stadial development from antiquity to heroics (Dzhangar, 2005).

## 5. Research Methods

The study of the motive, an important substantial structural element of the epos, is based on the main ideas of Veselovsky (2006) who defined a motive as the main narrative unit of the plot having particularly highlighting its semantic integrity. The study considers “the dichotomizing nature” of the motive (Putilov, 1994; Meletinsky, 1994; Chernyaeva, 1980). According to Silantsev (1999), “the dichotomizing concept of the motive was one of the most considerable theoretical achievements in modern narratology” (p. 45).

As noted by Putilov (1988), the identification of the motive invariant in the epos of the Mongolian people considers the ability of the motive “to change, to vary, to transform”. In considering the nuclear basis of the motive (invariant) we followed the theory of ethnopoetic constants by Gatsak (2002) allowing tracking the link between the motive and symbolic features connected by the “basic word”. This approach made it possible to analyze the text embodiment of the motive of the bogatyr’s rapid growth and to define that the constant nature of formulas demonstrates ethnopoetic national features of the Dzhangar epos.

## 6. Findings

The hero of all national versions of the Dzhangar epos has magic qualities and abilities from the moment of his birth. The fact of his birth is surrounded by a sacrament aura: “he is given birth from a heavenly dagina, he is strong so that he twists a skin of a bull, in which it is wrapped at birth, he is the only son, he has mediative skills (the Mongolian version); he is born at the beginning of precious times, in the era of the Universe, prematurely, with strong force, under a lucky star to approve the power and belief, he is the only son of his parents (the Xinjiang-Oirot version); he is born in the era of the first creation and blossoming of religious beliefs to strengthen the power and belief in the middle world, he is granted by the sky, he is born with clotted blood and steel iron in his hand, he is born under a lucky star, at the beginning of a month and notifies his appearance by crying and falling, he is the only son (the Kalmyk version)” (Khabunova, 2007).

The Buryat legends more resembling prosaic retelling of a plot on the marriage of the bogatyr Hongor in the Kalmyk version of the Dzhangar tell that “Zhagar Bogdo-han of humble origin, having stooped, was born from hapless Dari-hatan” (Neklyudov, 1992); a beautiful Dari-hatan gave birth to a noble orphan Zhagar (Neklyudov, 1992); he was born due to urila received by parents from lama (Neklyudov, 1992).

The miraculous origin of the epic hero bogatyr predetermines the precipitancy of his further actions aimed at the fastest implementation of his heroic ambitions. Rapid growth and attainment of the bogatyr power at early age indicate exclusiveness and chosenness of the hero, show his readiness for heroic acts, including hunting, courtship, marriage, stealing of herd, a duel with the enemy, and protection of the country. In the national epos the nature of the motive of rapid growth can shed light on the evolution of the motive, on stadial and other features of the epic narrative.

Let us track how the content of the motive of rapid growth changes in various versions, what qualities and abilities of the epic hero it highlights.

The studied versions are characterized by a stable formula transferring rapid maturation and physical power of the hero: a two-year-old baby knocked out a three-layer iron cradle and left the room (the

Mongolian version); in a day the baby does not fit in a skin of one ram, in two days – in a skin of three rams (the Buryat version); he grows so that per day he eats a ram carcass and does not fit in a diaper from a skin of one wedder, over two days he eats the carcass of two rams and does not fit in a diaper from the skin of two widders, in ten days he eats the carcass of ten rams and does not fit in a diaper from the skin of ten widders (the Xinjiang-Oirot version).

This motive is similar in the Kalmyk fairy tradition: over one day (after birth) he does not fit in a diaper from a sheepskin of one wedder, he does not find room in a cradle from one oak, on the second day he does not fit in a diaper from a skin of two widders and does not find room in a cradle from two oaks, on the third day he does not fit in a diaper from a skin of three widders and does not find room in a cradle from three oaks, on the fourth day he does not fit in a diaper from a skin of four widders and does not find room in a cradle from four oaks, on the fifth day he does not fit in a diaper from a skin of five widders and does not find room in a cradle from five oaks, on the sixth day he does not fit in a diaper from a skin of six widders and does not find room in a cradle from six oaks, on the seventh day he does not fit in a diaper from a skin of seven widders and does not find room in a cradle from seven oaks.

In the course of the evolution of the epos the archaic motive of the rapid growth gradually expands with different options, in which alongside with the assessment of physical parameters and physiological needs of the hero of the archaic epos other functions of the bogatyr are even more often mentioned. The space of the bogatyr is beyond a diaper and a cradle and his actions are not limited to eating of a large amount of carcasses of animals.

In the Mongolian legend “Ayana aldart ayalgan Hongor” (“The capricious Hongor who became famous in campaigns”) the motive of the rapid growth transfers the adulting dynamics of the hero baby, the scope of his first achievements: on the third day after birth he suppressed the shulmuses of three countries, on the fourth one – four countries, on the fifth day – five countries, on the sixth day – six countries, on the seventh day the bogatyr destroys all shulmuses and gets the title of the bogdo noyon. He is given all honors and seat on a throne (Zagdsuren, 1978).

The given example shows that the rapid growth of the hero is accompanied by the bogatyr power necessary to suppress the demonic beings. The archaic basis of the motive is revealed in the mention of otherworldly powers of darkness, which elimination guarantees quiet life on earth. A new version of the motive indicates that the devil power is succeeded by powerful domination. The mission of the bogatyr is clear – to organize peace by eliminating the domination of demonic forces.

Another version of the motive “rapid growth” allows understanding that a young bogatyr of the Mongolian version of the Dzhangar manages to conquer not mythical monsters, but more realistic terrestrial enemies: at three he conquered three possessions and planted down their standards, at four he conquered the possessions of four noyons and planted down their standards, at seven he conquered the possessions of seven noyons and planted down their standards (Zhangaryn tuuls, 1968).

Through the motive of the rapid growth the archaic traditions show giant abilities of the juvenile hero in such classical epos as the Kalmyk Dzhangar, the same motive is filled with other semantics – it idealizes heroic qualities of the epic bogatyr, its exclusiveness and chosenness.

If in Mongolian epic legends on Dzhangar we can track the movement of the motive of rapid growth from antiquity to heroics, then the Kalmyk Dzhangar epos shows the final phase of its development: the

hero baby is not an embodiment of physical power any more, but has features of the bogatyr soldier capable of heroic achievements. The maturation of the epic hero is subordinated to a different task – to create a powerful state and an ideal society.

The bogatyr of the Kalmyk Dzhangar manages to destroy the opponents having a powerful force and features of fantastic monsters: when he was only two <...> he became an orphan. At three <...> he opened the gate of three big fortresses and subordinated the mighty Guldzhing mangas-khan. At four, having destroyed a gate of four big fortresses, he subordinated mighty Derdeng Sphara mangas-khan, at five he captured and subordinated five angry devilish khans. At six, having destroyed a gate of six fortresses, he subordinated the clairvoyant Altan Chedzhi <...>; at seven he conquered seven lower countries, proclaimed the name of Dzhangar, <...> married the daughter of the khan Nomo Tegyus (Dzhangar, 1978).

## 7. Conclusion

The study showed that the glorification of heroic qualities ensures further development of the motive of rapid growth, strengthens the dynamics of exaggeration. The nuclear basis of the motive of rapid growth (invariant) expressed in the archaic epos regarding the growth speed and size of the hero remains the same, the semantic integrity of the motive is not broken despite the fact that it acquires new options substantially different from early editions. The Chronos of the juvenile giant is not measured in days, but years; the actions aimed at wellbeing of the people, the country, the world become the results of his powerful maturation.

The variability of the motive serves a good illustration of the archaic epos of the Mongolian people towards the classical heroic epos. It demonstrates superficial and deep layers of the motive. “The surface layer is the implementation of the motive element in the text whereas the deep layer represents a hidden semantic field, which latitude and wealth are perhaps in direct dependence on the antiquity degree of an element” (Neklyudov, 1984, p. 38). In later epos the plots become more complicated, contaminated, receive different semantic meaning, military, powerful motives sound even more often instead of the dominating matrimonial topic.

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