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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ROBIN HOOD AND HONG GIL DONG AS FOLK HEROES IN ENGLISH AND KOREAN TRADITION

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Annotation: This article presents a comparative-typological analysis of two well-known folk heroes in English and Korean tradition, Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong. The main purpose of the study is to identify their common and distinctive features and to explain their literary, ethical, and social functions. Robin Hood is interpreted as a folk hero in English folklore who defends social justice and resists oppressive authority. Hong Gil-dong, in turn, is analyzed as a heroic figure in Korean tradition who challenges class inequality, social restrictions, and discrimination. The article examines the place of these two characters in popular consciousness and compares their symbolic association with justice, courage, freedom, and human dignity. The results of the study show that although Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong belong to different cultural traditions, they share common typological features as defenders of the people, opponents of injustice, and symbols of moral superiority. The article argues that both heroes should be understood not only as literary characters, but also as cultural symbols shaped by collective memory and social ideals.

Keywords: folk hero, comparative-typological analysis, Robin Hood, Hong Gil-dong, English folklore, Korean tradition, social justice, heroism, literary image, literature and society.

ROBIN GUD VA HONG GIL-DONGNING INGLIZ VA KOREYS AN‘ANALARIDAGI XALQ QAHRAMONLARI SIFATIDAGI QIYOSIY TADQIQI

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada ingliz va koreys an‘analaridagi ikki mashhur xalq qahramoni — Robin Hood va Hong Gil-dong obrazlari qiyosiy-tipologik jihatdan tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotning asosiy maqsadi mazkur qahramonlarning umumiy va o‘ziga xos jihatlarini aniqlash, ularning badiiy, axloqiy hamda ijtimoiy funksiyalarini yoritishdan

iborat. Tahlil jarayonida Robin Hood ingliz folklorida ijtimoiy adolatni himoya qiluvchi, zolim hokimiyatga qarshi chiquvchi xalq qahramoni sifatida talqin qilinadi. Hong Gil-dong esa koreys an‘anasida tabaqaviy tengsizlik, ijtimoiy cheklov va kamsitishga qarshi kurashuvchi qahramon sifatida namoyon bo‘ladi. Maqolada har ikki obrazning xalq ongidagi o‘rni, ularning adolat, jasorat, erkinlik va insoniy qadr-qimmat bilan bog‘liq ma‘nolari qiyosiy asosda ochib beriladi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko‘rsatadiki, Robin Hood va Hong Gil-dong turli madaniy makonlarga mansub bo‘lsa-da, ular xalq manfaatlarini ifodalovchi, adolatsizlikka qarshi kurashuvchi va axloqiy ustunlikni namoyon etuvchi qahramonlar sifatida mushtarak tipologik xususiyatlarga ega.

Kalit so‘zlar: xalq qahramoni, qiyosiy-tipologik tahlil, Robin Hood, Hong Gil-dong, ingliz folklori, koreys an‘anasi, ijtimoiy adolat, qahramonlik, badiiy obraz, adabiyot va jamiyat.

СРАВНИТЕЛЬНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ РОБИН ГУДА И ХОНГ ГИЛЬ-ДОНА КАК НАРОДНЫХ ГЕРОЕВ В АНГЛИЙСКОЙ И КОРЕЙСКОЙ ТРАДИЦИЯХ

Аннотация: В данной статье проводится сравнительно-типологический анализ образов двух известных народных героев английской и корейской традиции — Робин Гуда и Хонг Гиль-дона. Основная цель исследования заключается в выявлении их общих и отличительных черт, а также в раскрытии их художественных, нравственных и социальных функций. Робин Гуд рассматривается как народный герой английского фольклора, выступающий защитником социальной справедливости и противником угнетающей власти. Хонг Гиль-дон, в свою очередь, анализируется как герой корейской традиции, борющийся против сословного неравенства, социальных ограничений и дискриминации. В статье сопоставляется место этих образов в народном сознании, а также их символическая связь с представлениями о справедливости, мужестве, свободе и человеческом достоинстве. Результаты исследования показывают, что, несмотря на принадлежность к различным культурным традициям, Робин Гуд и Хонг Гиль-дон обладают общими типологическими признаками как защитники народа, борцы против несправедливости и носители нравственного превосходства. В статье делается вывод о том, что оба героя являются не только литературными персонажами, но и важными культурными символами, сформированными коллективной памятью и общественными идеалами.

Ключевые слова: народный герой, сравнительно-типологический анализ, Робин Гуд, Хонг Гиль-дон, английский фольклор, корейская традиция, социальная справедливость, героизм, художественный образ, литература и общество.

INTRODUCTION. The image of the folk hero occupies a special place in the cultural memory of many nations. Such heroes are remembered not only because they are

brave or extraordinary, but because they represent the hopes, ideals, and moral values of ordinary people. In folklore and related narrative traditions, the folk hero usually appears as a defender of justice, a protector of the weak, and a challenger of unfair authority. For this reason, the study of folk heroes is important for understanding not only literature, but also the social imagination of a people.

Among the many heroic figures preserved in world culture, Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong deserve special attention. They belong to different historical, linguistic, and narrative traditions, yet both have become symbols of resistance to injustice. Robin Hood is widely known in English folklore as an outlaw who opposes corrupt officials and protects the poor. Hong Gil-dong, one of the best-known heroic figures in Korean narrative tradition, is remembered as a talented and courageous man who struggles against social discrimination and hierarchical injustice. Although the two characters developed in different cultural environments, they can be meaningfully compared from a comparative-typological perspective.

The relevance of this topic lies in the fact that both Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong express the relationship between literature and society. Their stories are not only entertaining narratives. They also reflect public dissatisfaction with inequality, abuse of power, and social exclusion. Through these heroes, communities imagine alternative forms of justice and moral authority. Thus, the comparison of Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong makes it possible to reveal both universal features of heroic representation and the specific cultural values embedded in English and Korean tradition.

The aim of this article is to compare Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong as folk heroes and to determine the common and distinctive features of their images. Special attention is given to their social position, their attitude toward authority, their relationship with ordinary people, and their symbolic role in the moral imagination of society. The article argues that both heroes represent the people's desire for justice, yet the meaning of their heroism is shaped by different social conditions. Robin Hood embodies the morally justified outlaw who restores balance from outside the law, while Hong Gil-dong represents the gifted but excluded hero who exposes the injustice of inherited hierarchy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS. The materials of the study consist of selected sources from English and Korean heroic tradition, as well as scholarly works devoted to folklore, folk narrative, and comparative literature. For the English side, the primary material includes the Robin Hood ballad tradition, especially as represented in the collection edited by Francis James Child (Child, 1965). For the Korean side, the study mainly relies on *The Story of Hong Gildong*, traditionally attributed to Heo Gyun and available in modern English translation (Heo Gyun, 2016). Although Robin Hood is more directly rooted in folklore and ballad circulation, while Hong Gil-dong comes to us primarily through a written narrative, both figures function in cultural memory as heroes who stand with the people and challenge injustice. This functional similarity makes comparative analysis possible.

The methodological basis of the article is comparative-typological analysis. This method does not attempt to prove direct historical influence between English and Korean tradition. Instead, it identifies similar structural, moral, and symbolic features in heroes who emerge in different cultures. The method is suitable for this topic because it allows the researcher to analyze how societies create parallel heroic models in response to similar social needs.

Several additional methods are also used in the article. The descriptive method helps identify the main traits of Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong as heroic characters. The contextual method is used to explain how each figure reflects the social realities and moral priorities of his own tradition. The interpretive method is applied in order to understand the deeper symbolic meaning of the heroes and their place in collective memory.

The study focuses on the following analytical questions. First, how do Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong become outsiders in relation to the social order? Second, in what ways do they challenge authority? Third, how are they connected with ordinary people? Fourth, what values do they symbolize in their respective traditions? These questions form the basis for the comparative discussion below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. The comparative analysis of Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong reveals both strong typological similarities and important cultural differences. These may be discussed through several interconnected aspects.

1. Outsider status and the beginning of heroism

One of the main similarities between Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong is that both stand outside the dominant social order. However, the reason for this outsider position differs significantly in each case.

Robin Hood is generally represented as an outlaw. He lives beyond the formal law, often in the forest, together with his companions. His opposition to society begins as a response to corrupt power. The authorities who pursue him are usually shown as greedy, unjust, or morally compromised. Therefore, Robin Hood’s outlaw status does not reduce his heroic value. On the contrary, it gives him moral legitimacy in the eyes of the people. He becomes an outlaw because the law itself fails to embody justice (Child, 1965; Hobsbawm, 2000).

Hong Gil-dong’s outsider status develops differently. He is marginalized from the beginning because of his birth. As the illegitimate son of a nobleman, he is denied full recognition despite his exceptional abilities. In other words, he does not first break the system; the system first rejects him. This difference is very important. Robin Hood becomes an outsider through conflict with authority, while Hong Gil-dong becomes an outsider because society refuses to accept his human worth. His rebellion begins with exclusion and humiliation, not only with resistance.

From a typological point of view, both heroes are outsiders, but Robin Hood is an outlaw outsider, whereas Hong Gil-dong is a socially excluded outsider. This difference determines the emotional and ideological direction of their stories.

2. The struggle against injustice

A second major point of comparison is the nature of their struggle against injustice. Both heroes oppose unfair authority, but the target and depth of their protest are not exactly the same.

Robin Hood is associated with direct and practical justice. He resists sheriffs, corrupt officials, and powerful figures who misuse their position. He protects travelers, humiliates the greedy, and symbolically redistributes wealth. His heroism is based on action rather than theory. He sees injustice and answers it immediately. Because of this, he becomes a popular symbol of moral resistance from below. Even when he violates the law, his actions appear ethically justified because the legal order itself is shown as unjust (Seal, 1996).

Hong Gil-dong's struggle is broader and more structural. He is not only fighting individual acts of oppression. He is confronting an entire hierarchical order in which birth determines status more than ability or merit. His heroism therefore has a stronger social and ideological dimension. He exposes the injustice of a system that denies dignity to a worthy person simply because of social origin. If Robin Hood corrects abuses within society, Hong Gil-dong questions the fairness of the social structure itself (Heo Gyun, 2016).

This difference reveals two models of heroic protest. Robin Hood represents resistance to corrupt administration and economic inequality. Hong Gil-dong represents resistance to inherited social discrimination and the denial of recognition. Both models are rooted in public dissatisfaction, but they express different historical tensions.

3. Relationship with the people

Another important common feature is the close relationship of both heroes with ordinary people. A true folk hero is not defined only by bravery, but by the people's acceptance of him as morally right.

Robin Hood's connection with common people is visible in his generosity, loyalty, and readiness to defend the poor. He is not a distant royal hero. He lives among companions and acts in solidarity with ordinary society. The greenwood in Robin Hood tradition functions as a symbolic space where power is reorganized according to different values. In this alternative world, character matters more than status, and justice matters more than wealth. This strengthens Robin Hood's image as a hero of popular ethics.

Hong Gil-dong is also closely tied to the people, but his connection has a somewhat different emotional base. Because he himself suffers from social injustice, he becomes a convincing representative of those who are excluded or devalued. He is not simply helping the oppressed from a position of strength; he is also one of those who has experienced humiliation. This makes his image especially powerful. He becomes a symbol of hope for those who long for recognition, equality, and dignity.

Therefore, both heroes are loved by the people, but the basis of that affection is slightly different. Robin Hood inspires admiration for his bold justice and practical generosity. Hong Gil-dong inspires both admiration and identification because his story grows from personal exclusion and social protest.

4. Heroic qualities and moral authority

Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong also resemble each other in the fact that both possess unusual abilities. However, their heroic styles are not identical.

Robin Hood is famous for physical skill, especially archery, as well as quick thinking, tactical cleverness, and leadership. He is a hero of movement and action. His victories often depend not only on strength but on intelligence and timing. This makes him an energetic and accessible hero, one whose moral message is carried through adventurous action.

Hong Gil-dong's image places stronger emphasis on talent, intelligence, and capability in the face of imposed limitation. His abilities matter because they contradict the social order that tries to diminish him. In his case, heroic skill is inseparable from the theme of recognition. He proves through action that the system is wrong to deny him equality. Thus, his heroism is not only physical or strategic; it is also symbolic. His very success becomes a critique of the hierarchy around him.

Both heroes gain moral authority not through office or inherited title, but through demonstrated worth. This is one of the central reasons why they belong to the broader type of the folk hero. They are judged by what they do, not by what society officially calls them.

5. Cultural meaning and symbolic function

At the deepest level, Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong function as cultural symbols. Their stories preserve not only events and adventures, but moral visions of society.

Robin Hood symbolizes the dream that unfair power can be challenged and that justice can be restored even when legal institutions are corrupted. He embodies a popular wish for fairness, generosity, and courage. His legend has remained alive because it offers a moral fantasy in which the powerless are not abandoned.

Hong Gil-dong symbolizes a different, though related, aspiration. He represents the struggle for human worth in a world where inherited hierarchy suppresses talent and dignity. His image expresses dissatisfaction with a society that values birth more than merit. In this sense, he becomes a hero of recognition as much as a hero of protest.

The comparative-typological reading of these two figures shows that the folk hero is always both universal and local. Universally, he answers the need for justice and moral leadership. Locally, he reflects the specific social pressures and values of his own culture. Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong are therefore similar as heroic types, yet distinct as cultural symbols.

CONCLUSIONS. In conclusion, the comparison of Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong demonstrates that the image of the folk hero occupies an important place between narrative art and social consciousness. Both heroes challenge injustice, defend ordinary people, and gain moral authority through their actions rather than through official status. In this respect, they belong to a common typological pattern of the people's hero.

At the same time, their differences are essential. Robin Hood is the morally justified outlaw who resists corrupt authority and restores social balance through practical action. Hong Gil-dong is the excluded but gifted hero whose rebellion reveals the injustice of

hereditary hierarchy and the need for recognition. Robin Hood is associated more strongly with redistributive justice and resistance to abusive power, while Hong Gil-dong is associated more strongly with social dignity, merit, and equality.

The study confirms that heroic images cannot be fully understood outside their cultural context. English tradition and Korean tradition each shape the folk hero according to their own historical experiences and moral priorities. Yet the comparison also shows that societies separated by language and geography may create remarkably similar heroic figures when confronting unfairness and exclusion.

Thus, Robin Hood and Hong Gil-dong remain valuable not only as literary characters, but also as social symbols. Through them, communities preserve their ideas of justice, courage, and human worth. This is why the comparative study of such heroes continues to be relevant in literary scholarship and in broader discussions of culture and society.

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