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Motivational Foundations of the Conceptosphere of the Ideal Hero in Epic Texts as *Alpomish*, *Beowulf* and *Ilya Muromets*: A Cross-Cultural and Cognitive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The conceptosphere of the ideal hero belongs to the universal stock of human culture, yet the reasons for which a hero acts differ from one tradition to another. The article examines this difference as an independent parameter of cross-cultural analysis. On the material of three epic texts – the Anglo-Saxon epic Beowulf*, the Uzbek heroic dastan* Alpomish *and the Russian bylinas about Ilya Muromets – it is demonstrated that the nuclear semes of the concept of heroism (courage, protection of the community, self-sacrifice) coincide, whereas the hierarchy of axiological priorities does not. The study argues that this discrepancy is explained by the motivational foundation on which heroic action rests: a contractual and economic basis in the Anglo-Saxon text (the "ring-giver – thane" relationship), honour and clan law in the Turkic text (*or, o'ch*), and a confessional and statehood basis in the Slavic text (*вера, отечество*). The motivational foundation determines four further parameters: the source of legitimacy, the position of the hero in relation to the community, the attitude towards fate and divine power, and the final axiological outcome of heroism – enduring personal glory, the restoration of the community, and the continuity of service. The article also describes the cognitive organisation of the concept through key nomination, the heroic frame and the nucleus-periphery model. The proposed model treats motivation as a verifiable cross-cultural parameter and provides an instrument*

for comparing heroic concepts in typologically distant epic traditions without reducing them to a fixed opposition between East and West.

Keywords: Conceptosphere, ideal hero, linguoculturema, motivation, axiological hierarchy, cross-cultural analysis, frame, nucleus and periphery, epic text, *Beowulf*, *Alpomish*, *Ilya Muromets*

1. INTRODUCTION

The ideal hero is one of those concepts that appear to require no comparison: every culture praises courage, loyalty and the readiness to defend the community. Precisely for this reason comparative research on heroic epic often stops at the level of shared features and concludes that heroism is a universal category realised in national costume. Such a conclusion is correct but uninformative, because it leaves unanswered the question that actually differentiates the traditions: not what the hero does, but why he does it. The present article treats this question as an independent object of linguistic analysis. Within the anthropocentric paradigm of modern linguistics, a concept is understood as a mental unit enriched by cultural experience and only partially verbalised in language, while a conceptosphere is the ordered totality of such units in a national language [15: 5]. A conceptosphere possesses a field structure: the most prototypical features occupy the nucleus, the less relevant or socially restricted ones the periphery, and no rigid boundary exists between them [19: 60]. The value layer of a concept, as V. I. Karasik has shown, is what converts a mental unit into a national-cultural phenomenon [14: 91]. It follows that two cultures may share the nucleus of a concept and still differ radically in the value hierarchy built upon it.

Folklore is the most reliable verbal source for such an analysis. Orality, collective authorship, traditionality and formulaic composition preserve the oldest layers of a people's world view, and the recurrent epic formula makes the value system observable in language rather than reconstructed from it.

The classical studies of V. Ya. Propp and of V. M. Zhirmunsky together with H. T. Zarifov demonstrated the typological comparability of heroic epic across traditions [20: 24; 11: 40], while the oral-formulaic theory of M. Parry and A. B. Lord, later applied by F. P. Magoun to Anglo-Saxon narrative poetry, established the formula as a stable unit of analysis [9: 266; 6: 30; 7: 446]. The relevance of the topic is reinforced by the current state of research on the Uzbek epic heritage. Studies of national concepts such as *vatan*, *oila*, *mardlik* or *sabr* have multiplied in recent years, and their nuclear nominations and field structures have been described in detail; however, most of this work has been carried out within a single language. The task of comparing the Uzbek epic tradition with other epic traditions inside one methodological system remains largely open, and it is this gap that the present study addresses. An additional consideration concerns the object of comparison itself. Heroic epic is one of the few genres in which a society formulates its values explicitly, because the genre is required to justify the hero rather than merely to describe him. A *dastan*, an epic or a *bylina* must show why the community should regard a particular act as exemplary, and this justification is normally verbalised in stable formulas. Epic texts therefore provide unusually direct access to the axiological layer of a conceptosphere, which in other genres has to be reconstructed indirectly. The aim of the article is to identify the motivational foundations of the concept of the ideal hero in three epic traditions and to show that motivation functions as a distinct cross-cultural parameter capable of explaining the non-coincidence of axiological hierarchies. Five research questions organise the discussion: which nuclear semes are shared by the three texts; on what motivational basis heroic action rests in each of them; from what source the hero derives the legitimacy of his action; how the motivational basis determines the final axiological outcome; and how the concept is organised cognitively, in terms of key nomination, frame and field structure. The article proceeds in three steps. First, the theoretical premises and the methodological procedure are set out. Second, the three traditions are analysed successively on the basis of textual evidence, and each parameter is examined separately.

Third, the results are generalised in a comparative table and evaluated for their theoretical and practical significance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The theoretical basis of the study combines conceptology, linguoculturology, cognitive linguistics and cross-cultural analysis. The term "concept" was introduced into scholarly use by S. A. Askoldov, who described it as a mental formation replacing a multitude of objects of the same kind in the process of thinking, and who distinguished cognitive from artistic concepts [10: 269]. D. S. Likhachev established the status of the conceptosphere as the totality of the concepts of a national language, directly dependent on the cultural experience of the people [15: 5]. Z. D. Popova & I. A. Sternin substantiated its field organisation and formulated the criteria of centrality [19: 60].The present study accepts the field model but modifies one of its parameters. Centrality is determined here not only by quantitative recurrence but also by the semantic, axiological and cultural significance of a concept within the text. This modification is necessary for epic material, where a value may be decisive for the plot while being named comparatively rarely, and where a frequently repeated formula may occupy a purely compositional position.

V. A. Maslova's work provides the second theoretical support: the linguoculturema is defined as a unit in which linguistic form and cultural content are inseparable, and national specificity is shown to be formed at the periphery of a concept rather than in its nucleus [16: 44]. This principle has direct consequences for the analysis: if national specificity is peripheral, then the coincidence of nuclear semes in different traditions is to be expected, and the analytically productive zone is the layer immediately adjacent to the nucleus.

In Uzbek linguistics the corresponding apparatus has been elaborated within the anthropocentric paradigm. Sh. Safarov laid the foundations of cognitive linguistics and applied conceptual and comparative methods to Uzbek material [21]; A. E. Mamatov analysed the realisation of national-cultural concepts in

phraseological units [8]; D. Ashurova & M. Galiyeva elaborated the theories of concept, conceptosphere, frame and conceptual metaphor together with methods of cognitive-stylistic text analysis [2]; and N. Z. Nasrullayeva carried out a cross-cultural comparison of gender concepts in English and Uzbek phraseology [18]. Research on epic material, however, has concentrated mainly on plot typology, on the language of written monuments and on the lexis of individual dastans; the motivational structure of the heroic concept has not previously been treated as a separate parameter of comparison.

The oral-formulaic theory requires one methodological comment in this context. If the epic text is composed from formulas, then a formula cannot be treated as an individual stylistic choice; it is a unit of the tradition, repeated because it is functional. Consequently the recurrence of a motivational formula – a promise to a ring-giver, a request for a communal blessing, a refusal in the name of vows – is evidence of a collective value rather than of a narrator's preference. This is precisely what makes formulaic material suitable for conceptual analysis.The study is also indebted to frame semantics and to the theory of conceptual metaphor. Ch. Fillmore's frame model provides the instrument for describing the stable role structure of heroic situations [4: 111], while G. Lakoff & M. Johnson's account of conceptual metaphor explains how abstract values are expressed through concrete image schemas [5: 3]. Both instruments are used here in a restricted way: not in order to produce an exhaustive cognitive description, but in order to verify whether the cross-cultural differences established at the axiological level are also visible at the level of mental organisation.

The material of the study consists of three primary sources. The Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf* is analysed in the bilingual verse translation of S. Heaney [3], which consistently preserves the formulaic system of the poem – 'ring-giver,' 'shepherd of our land,' 'enduring glory,' 'fate' – and therefore permits formulaic analysis; the key units are additionally verified against their Old English equivalents, since a translation that renders a formal oath formula simply as "promise" would neutralise precisely the

element under investigation. The Uzbek *dastan Alpomish* is used in the academic edition prepared from the version of Umir baxshi Safarov [1]. The *bylinas* about Ilya Muromets are cited from the academic collection edited by A. M. Astakhova [12].An important qualification concerns the status of the Anglo-Saxon material in this comparison. *Beowulf* is analysed in a modern verse translation, and every conclusion drawn from it must therefore be controlled against the Old English text. Two safeguards were applied. First, all units assigned to the motivational layer were checked in their original form, since a translation that renders a formal oath as an ordinary promise, or a compound designation of a lord as a neutral noun, eliminates precisely the element under study. Second, formulaic units were preferred over isolated expressions, because a formula is more likely to survive translation as a recognisable unit. The Uzbek and Russian materials were analysed in the original languages, which makes the asymmetry of access an acknowledged limitation of the study rather than a hidden assumption.

The methodology is comparative-cognitive and cross-cultural. The terms “cross-cultural” and “intercultural” are distinguished: cross-cultural analysis compares cultures from the position of an external observer, whereas the intercultural approach concerns the process of direct communication between representatives of cultures; the present work belongs to the first type. The analysis proceeds in four stages. First, a common ground of comparison (*tertium comparationis*) is established: the idea of an ideal person who assumes danger for the sake of the community. Second, each concept is analysed within its own cultural context (the emic stage), so that the categories of one tradition are not projected onto another. Third, the results are compared in a single analytical language and the similarities and differences are identified (the etic stage). Fourth, the differences are explained through historical, religious, social and mental factors. The unit of analysis is the linguoculturema, understood as a linguistic form together with its denotative meaning and its national-cultural seme. Two criteria are used to identify it: the presence of a national-cultural seme that is not reducible to the denotative meaning, and the stability of the linguistic form, that

is, its recurrence as a formula or a fixed collocation. The cognitive part of the analysis employs frame semantics, according to which each concept activates a system of situational roles, and the nucleus-periphery model, which is applied here not as a cultural hierarchy but as a hierarchy of mental structure.

3. Discussion and Results

3.1. *The shared nucleus: protection, courage, self-sacrifice*

The comparison confirms that the nuclear semes of the concept are shared. In all three texts the hero is defined through courage, the protection of the community and the readiness to sacrifice himself. In *Beowulf* the formula "a protector of his people, pledged to uphold truth and justice and to respect tradition" names the protective function directly and connects it with moral obligation [3]. In the *bylinas* the formula "Што святая Русь не пуста стоит, на святой Руси есть сильны-могучи богатыри" ascribes the same function not to an individual but to a whole class of heroes, which already indicates an institutional understanding of defence [12]. In *Alpomish* the line "Xalqi uchun o'lish, mardningishidir" – "to die for one's people is the deed of a brave man" – formulates protection as a moral norm rather than as a heroic exception [1].

Courage is likewise present in all three traditions, but its measure differs even at this level. In "Beowulf" it is quantified through physical superiority: "a thane, they declared, with the strength of thirty in the grip of each hand" [3]; the hyperbole sacralises the ideal warrior through supernatural physical power. In *Alpomish* courage appears as an act of decision and responsibility: "Or uchun polvon oshi bo'lsinbirtanam" – the hero offers his body for the sake of honour, and the emphasis falls on the inner will rather than on muscular strength [1]. In the *bylinas* courage is most fully revealed in captivity, where it takes the form of refusal rather than attack. This distribution already suggests the central hypothesis of the article: the shared nucleus does not guarantee a shared hierarchy. In order to explain the divergence it is necessary to examine the motivational foundation on which heroic action rests in each tradition.

3.2. *Folklore text as the source of the heroic concept*

The choice of folklore as material requires justification, since the same concept could in principle be studied on written literature or on modern media discourse. Four properties of the folklore text make it particularly suitable. Orality and collective authorship mean that the text preserves the evaluation of a community rather than of an individual writer. Traditionality means that values are transmitted through stable formulas across generations, so that the linguistic form itself becomes a carrier of cultural memory. Variability makes it possible to distinguish the stable nucleus from the changeable periphery: elements that survive across variants belong to the value core, whereas elements that differ from one performance to another are compositional. Syncretism – the unity of word, melody and ritual context – explains why formulas are marked by rhythm and repetition and therefore easy to identify.

In Uzbek folklore studies these properties have been described in the collective account of oral poetic creation by K. Imomov, T. Mirzaev, B. Sarimsoqov and O. Safarov [13: 236], while T. Mirzaev's study of the Uzbek variants of *Alpomish* demonstrates how a stable value core is preserved across performances [17: 34] and Sh. Turdimov traces the genesis and the developmental stages of an epic cycle [22: 60]. These properties have a direct methodological consequence. In a folklore text the analyst is not obliged to reconstruct the value system from psychological inference; it is verbalised, repeated and positioned at the decisive points of the plot. This is why epic material permits conclusions about a conceptosphere that would be far less secure if drawn from a single authored work, where the value system may be individual, ironic or deliberately subverted.

3.3. *Anglo-Saxon motivation: the "ring-giver - thane" contract*

In the Anglo-Saxon text the motivation is contractual and economic. The conceptosphere of the ideal hero is formed on the basis of the Germanic-Scandinavian system of mutual loyalty between the lord and his warriors: the ruler distributes rings and weapons, and the warrior repays the gift with his life. The

formula "...promised our ring-giver we would be worth our price..." makes this explicit: heroic obligation appears as the repayment of a gift already received [3]. The source of the duty to protect is therefore not patriotism in the modern sense but a previously concluded exchange. This structure explains several features of the poem that would otherwise seem unrelated. It explains why generosity is a royal virtue of the same order as courage: the lord who fails to distribute treasure destroys the basis of the contract. It explains why betrayal by retainers is represented as the gravest moral failure: it breaks an obligation that has already been paid for. And it explains why the hero's reward is formulated in terms of reputation rather than of communal welfare. The reward corresponds to the motivation. "Hygelac's kinsman kept thinking about his name and fame: he never lost heart," and "so must a man do who intends to gain enduring glory in a combat" [3]. Heroism is measured by what survives the hero – the name preserved in social memory. The formulas "name and fame" and "enduring glory" thus occupy the position that "or" occupies in the Turkic text and *вера* in the Slavic one: they are the terminal value towards which the whole system of action is oriented.

3.4. *Turkic motivation: Honour and clan law*

In the Turkic text the motivation is honour and clan law. The hero acts in order to restore the honour of his people, and the semantic pair "or ↔ o'ch" – honour and retribution – organises the plot. Honour here is not a personal attribute but the common property of the clan, which is why its violation affects the whole community and its restoration requires a public resolution. The line "Or uchun polvon oshi bo'lsin bir tanam" shows that the body of the hero may be offered for this purpose [1]. This collective understanding of honour was already emphasised in the classical description of the Uzbek heroic epic, in which the fate of the clan and the fate of the hero are shown to be inseparable [11: 112].

The collective character of motivation is confirmed by the way in which strength is represented. In *Alpomish* the hero's power is not an individual resource: "Duo qilib turar Qo'ng'irot

eling… Kir maydonga, bizlar duo beramiz” – the community stands in prayer and grants him the field [1]. Before combat the hero asks for this blessing: “Ha ellar, qarindoshlar, bu kun mard maydoniga chiqishima bir duo beringlar!” [1]. The right to act is thus derived from the community, and heroism is legitimised from below rather than from above.

The same logic governs the naming of the hero. He is called “Elatimning arslon zo‘ri, Barchinning sevikli yori” in the words of an ordinary shepherd [1]; status is confirmed by a lower social stratum, not conferred by a ruler. Consequently the final outcome of heroism is collective: the *dastan* ends not with an epitaph but with the return of the people (*ko‘ch*) and a wedding feast (*to‘y*), that is, with the restoration of the social order that the conflict had destroyed. In this model a hero who does not return cannot be fully ideal, because the value of his action is realised only in the restored community.

3.5. *Slavic motivation: Faith and fatherland*

In the Slavic text the motivation is confessional and statehood-based. The hero serves *вера* and *отечество*, and the decisive episode of his characterisation takes place not on the battlefield but in captivity: “Не могу я служить тебе, собаке царю Калины, у меня сделанызаповедивеликии” – “I cannot serve you, Kalin the dog-tsar; great vows are laid upon me” [12]. Under the threat of death, heroism is redefined as fidelity to an obligation of a higher order; the field of action becomes the field of moral choice. The formula “ШтосвятаяРусь не пуста стоит” denotes the absence of a gap in defence and connects the concept of protection with the institution of the *застава*, the frontier outpost held in turn [12]. Defence is therefore not the exploit of a single warrior but a system of duty in which individual heroism is a contribution to continuity. This explains why the Russian epic hero is characteristically modest about his strength and uses it only for justice and for the people: excessive display would contradict the institutional logic of service. The social provenance of the hero supports the same interpretation. Ilya Muromets is the son of a peasant, and his status is not derived from a court relationship; the epic thereby articulates a

democratic conception of defence in which legitimacy comes from the land and the faith rather than from a lord's gift.

3.6. *The source of legitimacy: Gift, blessing, commandment*

The three motivational bases produce three different sources of legitimacy, and this parameter deserves separate treatment because it is expressed by stable formulas in all three corpora. In *Beowulf* legitimacy derives from the lord's gift and the warrior's oath; the hero acts because he has promised. In *Alpomish* it derives from the blessing of the community, requested publicly before combat and repeated at departure: "Xayr, omin, yo'lbars bolam, yoring bo'lsin Olloh taolom, omonda kelgin sen ham" [1]. In the bylinas it derives from a blessing that is explicitly moral in its scope: "Я на добрые дела тебе благословленье дам, а на худые дела благословленья нет" — the blessing is granted for good deeds and withheld for evil ones [12].

The comparison of these three formulas shows that legitimacy is not a background detail but a structural constraint on heroic action. In the Anglo-Saxon model the constraint is contractual: the hero must be "worth his price". In the Turkic model it is social: the hero must not act without the consent of the community that will bear the consequences. In the Slavic model it is ethical and religious: the hero may act only within the limits of "добрые дела". Each constraint predicts which actions the text can represent as heroic and which it cannot.

3.7. *The position of the hero in relation to the community*

The fourth parameter concerns the position that the hero occupies with regard to the group he protects. In "Beowulf" the metaphor "the shepherd of our land, a man unequalled in the quest for glory" describes the relation in terms of a shepherd and his flock, placing the hero above the community rather than within it [3]. The community is the object of protection and the audience of glory, but not the source of the hero's strength.

In *Alpomish* the hero is inside the community: his strength is sustained by its prayer, his status is confirmed by its members, and his victory is completed by its restoration [1]. In the *bylinas* the hero is positioned inside an institution: the *застава* is a

structure that exists independently of any individual, and Ilya Muromets's heroism consists in occupying his place in it [12]. Three different configurations therefore emerge – above the community, within the community, and inside an institution of service – and each of them follows directly from the corresponding motivational basis.

3.8. *Fate and divine power as a metaphysical layer*

The metaphysical layer follows the same distribution. In *Beowulf* fate is an irreversible force: "Fate goes ever as fate must" [3]; human will is not placed above it, and dignity consists in meeting it without losing heart. The same poem also contains the formula "often, for undaunted courage, fate spares the man it has not already marked", which links courage with an attitude towards destiny rather than with the expectation of survival [3].

In the *bylinas* victory is legitimised as divine assistance granted for endurance: "А и пособил господь Илье же тут ведь Муромцу, а и за его ли всё замногоетерпеньицо" – God helped Ilya for his great patience [12]. Strength and victory are thus not personal ambition but a granted resource, and the moral precondition for receiving it is *терпение*, endurance.

In *Alpomish* the prevailing model is the triad of trial, patience and blessing. Seven years in the dungeon are represented as a trial – "Chohda suyagim sil bo'lgan… shu bu yil yettiyilbo'lgan" – and the hero passes through it by patience and prayer rather than by force [1]. Divine power here is not a verdict pronounced in advance but a companion of human action, and it is mediated by the blessing of the community, which shows the inseparability of the sacred and the social layers in the Turkic model.

3.9. *Gender as a parameter of the heroic concept*

Gender constitutes a further parameter of the concept, and its analysis confirms that heroism is organised by a system of values rather than by biological sex alone. In the Slavic epic the three-part fixed epithet "удаленькой-дородний-добрый молодец" formulates the ideal of masculinity as a unity of courage, physical impressiveness and social approval, and its recurrence shows that this is a genre-level formula rather than an individual

description [12]. The existence of the term “паленица удалая” demonstrates that the figure of the woman warrior is recognised at the level of language; yet she normally appears as an opponent rather than as a companion, so that the gender boundary is reinforced rather than dissolved [12]. In the Turkic tradition the image of Tovka in *Alpomish* provides different evidence: the heroine gathers her hair and puts on male clothing, and thereby acquires freedom of movement and social agency [1]. The external signs of gender identity are thus shown to be manageable, and the category of heroism proves broader than its prototypical realisation. In cognitive terms, gender belongs to the periphery of the concept rather than to its nucleus: the nuclear semes – courage, protection, self-sacrifice – are not sex-specific, even though their prototypical carriers in all three corpora are male.

3.10. *The cognitive organisation of the concept: Key nomination and frame*

The cross-cultural results acquire additional precision when the concept is examined cognitively. The first step of such an analysis is the identification of the key nomination - the unit that names the concept in the text. In “Beowulf” the hero is introduced through his social relation rather than through his name; in *Alpomish* he is *polvon* and *alp*; in the *bylinas* he is *богатырь* and *добрый молодец*. The nominations themselves therefore encode the motivational basis: service, communal strength and institutional standing respectively.

The second step is frame analysis. Following the principle that a concept activates a system of situational roles, the heroic frame may be described through five stable positions: subject, threat, protected party, action and result. These positions are identical in the three texts and constitute the universal “skeleton” of the concept. Their filling, however, is national: in *Beowulf* the threat is a supernatural monster, the protected party is the hall of Heorot and the result is glory; in *Alpomish* the threat is oppression and betrayal, the protected party is the people and the beloved, and the result is the restoration of honour; in the *bylinas*

the threat is an invader, the protected party is the Russian land and the result is the continuity of service.

The third step is nucleus – periphery modelling. In all three traditions the nucleus is occupied by the figure of the hero together with the semes of courage and protection. The near-nuclear layer differs: protective function and glory in the Anglo-Saxon model; fidelity, patience and loyalty to the people in the Turkic model; faith, fatherland, justice and service in the Slavic model. The periphery contains attributes and circumstances – horse, weapon, dungeon, hall, frontier post – which support the concept without defining it. This distribution confirms Maslova's principle that national specificity is formed at the periphery and in the layer adjacent to the nucleus rather than in the nucleus itself [16: 44].

3.11. *The epic formula as evidence: A methodological note*

Before the results are generalised, the evidential status of the material deserves a separate comment. All the units used in this analysis satisfy two conditions: they are formulaic, that is, they recur in fixed or nearly fixed form, and they occupy a compositionally marked position – a declaration before combat, a refusal under threat, a blessing at departure, an evaluation after victory. These two conditions are what distinguish a motivational formula from an incidental utterance. The first condition guards against over-interpretation of single lines. A phrase that appears once may be attributed to the improvisation of a particular singer or to the decision of a particular editor; a phrase that recurs across episodes belongs to the tradition. The second condition guards against the opposite error, in which frequency alone is taken as significance. Formulas of address or transition may be extremely frequent and yet carry no axiological content, while a formula that appears three times at the decisive points of a plot carries a great deal. Applying both conditions produces a relatively small but reliable set of units for each tradition: the gift-and-oath formulas and the glory formulas in *Beowulf*; the honour, blessing and return formulas in *Alpomish*; the faith, vow and continuity formulas in the *bylinas*. It is on this restricted set,

rather than on the general impression produced by the texts, that the comparative conclusions of the article rest.

3.12. *Universality and national specificity: Delimiting the layers*
The results also permit a more precise formulation of the relation between universal and national-cultural content. Three criteria may be used to assign a unit to one layer or the other. The first is the presence of a national-cultural seme that is not reducible to the denotative meaning: "honour" is universal, whereas "or" as the collective property of a clan is not. The second is the stability of the linguistic form: a value that is expressed by a fixed formula is culturally codified, whereas a value expressed by free paraphrase may be situational. The third is behaviour in translation: a unit that requires an explanatory rendering in another language marks a point at which the conceptual systems do not overlap. Applied to the present material, these criteria distribute the units as follows. Courage, protection and self-sacrifice belong to the universal layer: they are expressed in all three traditions by ordinary lexical means and translate without residue. The relation "ring-giver – thane", the pair *or -o'ch*, the ceremonial "duo" before combat, the outcome formulas *ko'ch* and *to'y*, and the institutional *застава* belong to the national-cultural layer: each requires explanation rather than substitution. The analytically decisive zone is therefore not the nucleus of the concept, where the traditions agree, but the layer immediately adjacent to it, where the motivational formulas are located. This distribution has a further consequence for comparative method. If the universal layer is shared and the differentiating units are formulaic, then cross-cultural comparison should begin from formulas rather than from themes. A thematic comparison will always conclude that all three heroes defend their people; a formulaic comparison shows on what basis, by whose authority and for what reward they do so.

3.13. *The heroic concept and the antagonist*
The concept of the ideal hero is not constructed in isolation: it acquires its contours in opposition to the antagonist, and the nature of the opponent is itself a cross-cultural parameter. In

Beowulf the hero confronts supernatural creatures – Grendel, Grendel's mother and the dragon – and the poem is compositionally organised around these three encounters [3]. The conflict is therefore located between the human order and a force outside it, which reinforces the exceptional, super-social position of the protector.

In *Alpomish* the opposition is of a different kind: the hero confronts oppression and treachery, and the danger comes from inside the social world rather than from outside it. The plot accordingly requires not only strength but discernment, patience and the ability to survive captivity. In the *bylinas* the antagonists – the robber of the forest road and the invading tsar – threaten the land and the faith, and the conflict is defined territorially and confessionally [12].

These three configurations correspond exactly to the three motivational bases. A contractual hero fights what lies beyond the contract; a hero of collective honour fights what has violated the honour of his people; a hero of service fights what threatens the territory he is charged to guard. The antagonist thus functions as a mirror of the value system, and its analysis provides independent confirmation of the results obtained from the motivational formulas.

3.14. *The concept in the light of statehood and historical experience*

The differences established above are not arbitrary: each motivational model corresponds to a distinct form of social organisation reflected in the text. The Anglo-Saxon material presupposes a comitatus society in which political stability rests on personal bonds between a lord and his retainers, and in which treasure circulates as the material form of those bonds. In such a society the highest risk is the failure of loyalty, and the highest reward is a reputation that outlives both lord and warrior.

The Turkic material presupposes a clan-based social order in which rights and obligations belong to the group, marriage alliances carry political weight, and the displacement or return of a community is itself an event of the first magnitude. In such a society the highest risk is the disintegration of the collective, and

the highest reward is its restoration, ritually marked by the feast that closes the narrative.

The Slavic material presupposes an early state with a defended frontier and a confessional identity, in which defence is organised as a permanent institution rather than as an occasional exploit. In such a society the highest risk is a gap in the line of defence, and the highest value is continuity of service. Reading the three motivational models against these social configurations does not reduce literature to sociology; it shows why each text formulates its values in the way it does, and it explains the internal coherence of the parameters summarised below.

3.15. *Comparative interpretation*

The results of the comparison along six parameters are summarised in Table 1. Two observations follow. First, motivation behaves as a measurable parameter: it is expressed by stable formulas, it recurs across episodes, and it can be verified against textual evidence rather than inferred from general cultural assumptions. Second, the parameters are interdependent: the motivational basis predicts the source of legitimacy, the position of the hero, the attitude towards fate and the final outcome.

Table 1. *Motivational parameters of the concept of the ideal hero in three epic traditions*

Parameter	**"Beowulf" (Anglo-Saxon)**	**"Alpomish" (Turkic)**	**"Ilya Muromets" (Slavic)**
Motivational basis	Contractual and economic: the "ring-giver – thane" exchange	Honour and clan law: or ↔ o'ch	Confessional and statehood: *вера*, *отечество*
Key formula	"promised our ring-giver we would be worth our price"	*Or uchun polvon oshi bo'lsin bir tanam*	*Не могу я служить тебе, собаке царю Калины*
Source of legitimacy	The lord's gift and the warrior's oath	The blessing of the community requested before combat	Parental blessing limited to *добрые дела*
Position of the hero	Above the community: "the	Within the community: named	Inside an institution of service: the

	shepherd of our land”	by an ordinary shepherd	*застава*
Attitude towards fate	Irreversible destiny: “Fate goes ever as fate must”	Trial – patience – blessing	Divine grace granted for endurance (*терпеньицо*)
Final axiological outcome	Enduring personal glory: “name and fame”, “enduring glory”	Restoration of the community: *ko‘ch*, *to‘y*	Continuity of service: *не пуста стоит*, *застава*

The interdependence of the parameters is the principal theoretical result of the analysis. A gift-based obligation predicts personal glory as a reward, because a name is the only durable form of repayment; collective honour predicts collective restoration, because the damaged entity is the community itself; service to faith and fatherland predicts continuity, because an institution cannot be completed by a single act. The three models are therefore internally coherent rather than accidental collections of features.

It should be emphasised that these tendencies are textual and authorial rather than national essences. Personal fame is not absent from the Turkic epic, and collective interest is not absent from the Anglo-Saxon one; what differs is which value occupies the dominant position and which motivational formula the text repeats. This qualification protects the comparison from the circularity in which a hero behaves in a certain way because he belongs to a culture, and the culture is then defined through the hero’s behaviour. The methodological requirement that follows is simple: every cross-cultural statement must be supported by a recurrent formula, and every formula must be interpreted within its own textual context before being compared.

A final observation concerns translation. The units that carry motivational meaning – “ring-giver,” “or,” *o‘ch*, *ko‘ch*, *to‘y*, *вера*, *отечество*, *застава* – are precisely those that lose their national-cultural seme when rendered by a single-word equivalent. A translator who recognises that such a unit belongs to the motivational layer of the concept can compensate for the loss by contextual means; a translator who treats it as ordinary

vocabulary will preserve the plot and eliminate the value system that makes it intelligible.

4. CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of *Beowulf*, *Alpomish* and the *bylinas* about Ilya Muromets leads to several conclusions. First, the nuclear semes of the concept of the ideal hero – courage, protection of the community and self-sacrifice – are common to the three traditions, which makes the concept a legitimate object of cross-cultural comparison and confirms the theoretical expectation that national specificity is formed outside the nucleus.

Second, the axiological hierarchies constructed on this common nucleus do not coincide, and the non-coincidence is explained by the motivational foundation of heroic action: a contractual and economic basis in the Anglo-Saxon text, honour and clan law in the Turkic text, and a confessional and statehood basis in the Slavic text. Motivation thus functions as an independent parameter of cross-cultural analysis, verifiable through recurrent formulas.

Third, the motivational basis determines a set of dependent parameters: the source of legitimacy (the lord's gift, the blessing of the community, a morally limited blessing), the position of the hero in relation to the group (above it, within it, inside an institution), the attitude towards fate and divine power (irreversible destiny, trial with patience and prayer, grace granted for endurance), and the final axiological outcome (enduring personal glory, the restoration of the community, the continuity of service).

Fourth, the cognitive analysis shows that the heroic frame has an identical role structure in the three texts and that gender is a peripheral rather than a nuclear feature of the concept. The nucleus – periphery model therefore describes a hierarchy of mental structure, while the cross-cultural differences are located in the layer adjacent to the nucleus.

Methodologically, the study suggests that the reliability of cross-cultural conceptual analysis depends on three requirements:

the unit of comparison must be formulaic, each unit must first be interpreted within its own textual context, and every generalisation must be traceable to specific textual evidence. Reversing this order – starting from a cultural hypothesis and collecting confirming examples – produces conclusions that the material cannot sustain. A further practical application concerns lexicography. The units identified as culturally specific in this study are precisely the ones that a bilingual dictionary must treat with an expanded entry rather than with a single equivalent. A dictionary article for such a unit should contain the denotative meaning, the national-cultural seme, a formulaic example and a note on its position in the value system. Constructed in this way, a dictionary of epic linguoculturemas would serve both translators and comparative researchers. Finally, the results have implications for the teaching of comparative literature and folklore. Students frequently arrive at the conclusion that epic heroes are interchangeable because their deeds are similar, and this impression is difficult to dispel with general statements about cultural difference. A motivational analysis provides an operational alternative: given a short passage, the student is asked to identify who authorises the hero's action, what he is repaying or restoring, and what he will possess at the end. Answering these three questions on textual evidence reveals the distinctive value system of each tradition more effectively than any thematic summary, and it trains precisely the analytical skill that comparative work requires.

The theoretical significance of the results lies in the introduction of motivation as an independent and verifiable parameter of conceptual comparison. The practical significance lies in the applicability of the model to translation studies, to the teaching of comparative literature and linguoculturology, and to the lexicographic description of culturally specific epic units. Further research may extend the model to other Turkic and Germanic epics, may test the proposed parameters with corpus-based frequency analysis of formulas, and may examine the transformation of the heroic concept in modern literature and media, where the same motivational structures continue to operate in new forms.

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