

SOME SPECIFIC MOTIFS IN THE EPIC OF THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

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Abstract. The epic of the Central Highlands is a type of folk narrative hiding strong enduring, abundant, and diversity in cultural underground veins of the ethnic minorities here. One of the unique and attractive factors that attract readers when they come into contact with the Central Highlands epic is the appearance of motifs, especially typical motifs such as miraculous birth motif, the heroic motif of killing monsters, and the reborn motif. With the role of these specific motifs, the heroic character becomes the central figure in the epic Central Highlands. They are people who always conquer all enemies, protect a peaceful life for the village and tribe where they live.

Keywords: Motif, the role of some specific motifs in the epic Central Highlands.

1. Introduction

The epic of the Central Highlands is a type of folk narrative and oral stories. This genre of verbal literature is called Khan by Ede, H'mon by Bana, Ot n'rông by M'nong, Akhàt jucar by Ra Glai and Hơ-m'uan by Xo Dang, and so on. When studying and doing research on the epic of the Central Highlands, we understand more about the strong, durable, and diversity in cultural underground veins of the ethnic minorities here. We further understand that, in order to be able to circulate, survive, and overcome the elimination of time, an epic must also have “creative principles”, there must be solid constituent elements, that is to create, establishing, capturing, and using motifs like any other narrative genre, especially in typical motifs. Because in the form of folk narrative, the motif plays an important role in creating the completeness of the work. At the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, in European countries, the United States, and Finland, the scholars of the geography and history schools have studied and affirmed their popularity, role and function importance of motif in the structure of the plot of folk tales. Continuing the research achievements of the geographic-historical school of motifs, the movement of compiling and researching on motifs in folk tales “...expanded around the world during the second half of the twentieth century, the first half of the century XXI” [1;66]. In Vietnam, although motif theory and geographic-historical methods appeared quite late in the late twentieth and

Received July 11, 2020. Revised September 4, 2020. Accepted October 5, 2020.

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early twenty-first centuries, folk literature researchers such as Le Chi Que, Nguyen Thi Hien, Nguyen Tan Dac, Vu Anh Tuan, Nguyen Bich Ha, Phan Thi Hong, Le Hong Phong, etc., have applied type and motif theory to study, survey and clarify the function and meaning of the motif; motif's relationship in folk tales in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. According to researchers, popular motifs of folk narratives in Vietnam and Southeast Asia are betel nut motif, heroic motif, talented ugly character motif, and so on. In the research article "The relationship between the epic of the Central Highlands with the fairy tales, legends through motif" [2], Phan Thi Hong mentioned the typical motifs of the Central Highlands epic: the magic tree motif, the miraculous singing motif, and motifs in folk tales: the motif of the human bearer, the motif of the miraculous talent, and the motif of marriage combined to clarify the meaning of the motifs by highlighting the beauty and talent of the brave character in folk narrative type.

Le Hong Phong in his article "Tay Nguyen Ancient Tales and Southeast Asian Ancient Tales, some common motifs" [3], said that the popular motif in folk tales are: tree motif, gourd motif, heroic motif, motif destroy the evil spirit to save people, the language motif, etc., are related to the indigenous primitive beliefs, customs, cultural, material and spiritual fields of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands and other Southeast Asia. Continuing the work of our predecessors, in this article we also address the subject of the motif. However, we only focus on learning some specific motifs of the Central Highlands epic type, exploiting the role of the motif with the depiction of the heroic character - the central character in the works. The heroes always bring a peaceful and happy life to the village; made many victories and miracles; has supernatural qualities, strength, and talent symbolizing the beauty of a tribe.

The motifs that are mentioned specifically are as follows: the miraculous birth motif, the heroic motif that kills the monster, the regenerative motif.

2. Content

2.1. The definition for the motif

According to the dictionary of literary terms, "Motip (in French: motif) refers to the elements, large or small parts that have been stably and sustainably formed and are used many times in artistic and literary composition, especially in folk arts and literature" [4, 197].

According to Wikipedia Encyclopedia: "Mô típ or Mô-típ (in English: motif) is a conventional and artistic symbolic formula for a plot and is frequently appeared to capture the the impression of the reality that are particularly powerful, significant and repetitive" [5].

From the interpretation of motif researchers, when studying the epic of some minorities ethnic in the Central Highlands, we found that revolving around the protagonist, covering the entire life of the heroes is a system of various motifs such as the hero destroying the evil beast, the hero saving the beauty, the magic weapon motif, and so forth. These motifs are mostly derived from fairy tales, legends, therefore the image of the epic character is always magnificent and fascinating.

The transformation of motifs shows the progress of changing and integration among motifs which builds the unique and poetic image of a heroic characters. As a result, this creates a strong and deep impression in the reader's hearts.

In this article, we explore a few typical motifs and analyze the role of motifs in

depicting and highlighting the beauty, talent, and extraordinary power of the heroic character who belongs to epic type of some minorities ethnic in the Central Highland.

2.2. Some specific motif

2.2.1. Miraculous birth, appearance Motif

In the Central Highlands epic, the heroic character often has a very special and unusual origin and birth. The heroes mostly often come from a divine lineage. They are the children of gods - powerful and highly revered supreme deities. The brave hero Dam Duong in the Hơ-m'uan Xo Dang was the son of the god To Ro who opened the Natural place - ancestor of the clan.

The hero Giong in the Bahnar epics is the son of the god (Yang) Yang Bok Koidoi who created the sun and moon, Mrs. KungKer created the earth and heaven. The heroes in akhàt jucar Ra Glai: Ujàc, Cei Balaok Li-u, Amã ChiSa, Amã Cuvau VongCoi, etc. are also the children of the gods, the kings. Sometimes the heroes are reincarnated into poor families, blind-eyed old parents, weak feet and infertility, longing for children, lamenting day and night, praying to the gods, and then being fulfilled; the heroes are born from the mother who swallows some animal, such as the fly, and gets pregnant when coming home; Sometimes the mother, by eating mushrooms or picking up coconut in the forest, drank coconut water and then gets pregnant,... [6-10], and sometimes a hero is born without knowing who his parents are, and the list goes on. Miraculous appearance, the birth of the heroes is also strange, there is no guy like any guy. Mr. Giong Trong Yuan kept sleeping for several hundred years since his birth. Mr. Giong, Mr. Dam San nonstop cried when was born, crying all day until afternoon, all night until morning. Xing Nha also cried continuously seven days and seven nights after coming out his mother's womb, etc. Only when their parents named Giong, Dam San and Xing Nha take care/come home then they stopped crying [7, 11]. Dam Tiong was born with a shield, a blade, a spear, a water bottle, then got up, ran out of the house, jumped onto the ground, threw the rice mortar on the floor, held a shield in his hand, a blade hung on his side, then step out slowly. When Ujàc had just come out of his mother's womb, he spoke, gave himself a name, asked to take a bath in the sea, in the big river and planned to build a big house for his mother... [8]. Mr. Amã Cuvau Vong is hidden in a male buffalo that can hear and speak human language, demanding to name himself and his sister. Amã Cuvau Vong grew as fast as a blow, his body could not pierced by a knife or a sword [12]. Cei Balaok Li-u hidden in a coconut fruit which has no arms and legs but knows how to forge weapons and bows.

The miraculous birth of the heroic characters in the epic of the Central Highlands is diverse, rich, containing many different contents as well as conceptions related to the life, customs, and beliefs of primitive people, creating a fascinating and thrilling story. The strange and unusual birth of a heroic character is also a signal for extraordinary actions, unexpected victories, miracles, miraculous talent and respectable qualities of the character who representative for the beauty of the community and the tribe in which they live.

2.2.2. Motif of Monster killing hero

Motif of killing monsters to save the beauty or kill monsters to plunder, destroy the peace of the village or tribe, and cannibalism in the village has been “embryo” in myths

and fairy tales. Now, the monster-killing motif is attracted to the spiral of the epic form, becoming the nucleus of the heroic and majestic tales of the hero's strength and talent in the “destroying evil and exorcise” to save people.

The monster appearing in the epic Xo Dang [13] was a turtle named Mang Lang. He has sharp toenails that are sharper than iron and look fierce. Mang Lang was a general of the Tur Gok leader. Because of his jealousy with the wealthy Tur Du patriarch, his well-off, prosperous life with countless land, Tur Gök dragged his troops to conquer Tur Du's village. The battle took place fiercely, valiant Dam Duong carried large rocks thrown at Mang Lang. Giant rocks fell like a landslide. Mang Lang's arms and legs were broken, his breath is very short. Turkoes and his soldiers are all killed. Thanks to the hero Duong, the village of Tur Du returned to a peaceful life, they celebrated the victory. In Xo Dang “Dam Duong save Miss Bar Ma”, the hero Dam Duong fought alone with Te To to save the famous beautiful Bar Ma and the villagers from disaster. The ferocious female demon had ax-sized teeth, and her breasts hung down to the ground. When her milk is shot at someone, that person becomes paralyzed and dies; the sword cut at her only sparked fire; rattan, iron chains tied it up, it just moved and broke,... Dam Duong, with a mavelous strength for human, knocked Te To down, tied it up with only a thin thread.

The epic Bahnar “Giong Challenge” is a fierce battle between hero Giong and a snake god Prao to save two beautiful women Xem Yang and Rang Nār who are arrested to get eaten by snakes. Prao monsters look ferocious: its head stretched to the sky, its body and tail are still lying on the ground, and its mouth wide opens as if trying to swallow everyone. Hero Giong let out a loud sound of sky: silk roared and then flew straight to the sky to fight with snakes, slashing fast, extremely skillful. Giong waved the shield and it turned into fire, making it impossible for the snake to bite. Snakes snatched on his shield, fire immediately ignited and spread to the snake's mouth. The serpent opened its mouth to breathe, he jumped in, and went straight into its stomach. “Prao has a big heart. Giong cut it down right away when he saw it. As soon as the snake's heart was cut off, the whole body of the snake fell down from the air and turned toward a riverbank” [15; 87]. Prao struggled, writhed, hit a tree - the tree's root immediately turned up, its leaves fluttering like a storm; When the stone was hit, it was thrown all over, the earth and sand were dark, the sky and earth were as dark as night.

In the Ede khan “Dam Trao- Dam Rao”, the hero Dam Rao killed the ferocious giant snake who every year raise the river water to wash away the village, making the lives of the people all over the villages become poor and exhausted. Not only that but the monster also specializes in cannibalism, especially virgin, young and beautiful girls like Hbia Ja. The snake-headed monster was the size of an elephant's head, its skin and scales are as hard as iron and steel, and the sword that slashed at it was all thrown out. Many people came to kill it but were all eaten. Hero Dam Rao killed the snake and saved Hbia Ja “...As fast as lightning, he swung his blade and slashed at the neck of Water God. The Water God snake's neck was broken, its head was on the floor and the body fell to the ground. He jumped to the ground to cut it into two more pieces” [16, pg.421]. Dam Rao cut off the tail of the loincloth that Hbia Ja was holding and then calmly left as if nothing had happened.

In akhàt jucar Ra Glai, the hero Ama Sa Ea facing alone with the five-color feather evil snake. It was a monster that blatantly ate the villagers' flesh, arrested the beautiful Anai Ubala to watch and play then swallow into its stomach, and so on. The snake monster is enormous, curled up, "enveloping the whole land, the whole village, its eyes is as big as a pan, its scales is as big as a pole, its body grows full of rocks and trees. [9, p.1365]. The hero Sa Ea chanted a spell to make the snake fall asleep and then used the iron pillar to support the snake's jaw. Sa Ea entered the abdomen of a snake, slitting the intestines, cutting the heart, the liver, and the entire viscera.

The evil snake felt like tearing, roaring, struggling, causing mountains to collapse, earth and sky shaking, smog, storms emerge "the flat earth was waved, the stars were fluttered. The Snake cried, tears pouring like a shower and tears were as big as rocks" [9;1367]. Hero Sa Ea plucked his sword to cut the evil snake into three pieces. He swung his sword to break a stone chest in the snake's stomach and took out a pearl from there. Using his power, Sa Ea broke the pearl in half and found Anai Ubala had died due to the terrible torture of a five-color feather snake. He became furious, swinging his sword and slicing the snake into thirty-seven pieces, making the earth and sky cloudy, leaving heavy smoke, dust, and earthquake. He brought the beauty Anai Ubala body to the big riverbank, left her body down for the fish to wash her body. Sa Ea recites a chant that gives Anai Ubala a new and beautiful appearance - prettier than all the other girls in the area with her new name Away Tulor... Kamao in akhàt jucar "Kei Kamao" is an extremely powerful hero who defeated the monster at sea – a Giant Worm specializing in cannibalism and human blood-sucking. The battle between Kei Kamao and the Giant Worm took place seven days and seven nights from sky to earth, east to west, from mountain to mountain. The two sides met fiercely in the deep sea, causing the sky to fall, the fire burned, the earth turned to ash. The Worm Monster "spits its saliva towards Kei Kamao like thunder, creating thunderstorms and stormy winds" [11;276-277]. Kei Kamao sprayed a poison that made Worm's eyes dark. He swung the dagger on the left and swung the right sword and cut the Worm into two pieces. After Kei Kamao killed the Monster Worm, he continued to kill the Python, the Big-eyed Snake who specialized in finding people and animals: buffaloes, goats, pigs, cows, chickens, etc., all day and night to eat meat. The battle between the Kei Kamao guy and the monster Python and Snake took place fiercely the weed and trees died, the sea rolled up, the mountains and hills collapsed, and it was dark" [6;280]. Kei Kamao sprayed thirty-seven poisons to make the Python and the Snake blind, and their intestines burst. Since then, the villagers of Kei Kamao have been able to live in a peaceful scene with good crops, not be afraid of monsters coming to harass and eat meat. The hero Cei Balaok Li-u in the epic "Kei Kamao and Cei Balaok Li-u" defeats the couple of evil monsters Rak Dewa from the sea island to destroy his village. They cut their skin, suck human blood, eat humans and all animals. The Monster couple is very big, their skin is so thick that can not be cut by sword or spear. They have long claws and wings, when they stamp their feet, the earth shakes. Cei Balaok Li-u rushes to hit Rank Dewa, causing the sun and moon to shake. Rak Dewa pecks on Cei Balaok Li-u "by its mostrum but it was broken, kicked by its claw but the claw was broken, stabbed by spear but the spear was broken, slash with a sword but the sword was broken,..." [6; 400] but cannot kill him. Cei Balaok Li-u hold Mr. Rak Dewa's beard, holding Mrs. Rak Dewa's arm, and sinking into the ground with

only her head rising. He cuts off the head of Rak Dewa's youngest daughter when she tried to fight with him to avenge her parents. Hero Cei Balaok Li-u goes to the Cham land to help the Cham people king kill Rak Dewa and his wife when they force the king to offer the youngest princess to eat otherwise it would destroy the country. He cuts off the necks of the Rak Dewa with a magic knife. The couple struggle and rock heaven and earth. Their blood flow, rushing like a waterfall pouring down from the top of a mountain. Hero Cei Balaok Li-u ends the life of a monster that harms all kinds.

In the Bahnar h'mon, "Giong kills a lion to save Lightning village", hero Giong alone kills two monsters, a male lion and a female lion, each of which is as giant as a mountain with hundreds of ears, eight tails, specializing in eating people in the area. Hero Giong plucks his sword out of its sheath, raises his sword and jumps to slash the lioness's paw, making it roar throughout of mountains and forests. Quickly, he slashes on its other knee, the lion fell to his knees. He swings the spear and stabs the lion's heart, it writhes, howls, and then stops breathing. Giong chases after the male lion, cuts the lion with his spear, the lion roars throughout mountains and forests. He and the people of Lightning village crush the flesh and bones of the lion and his wife, then scatter them everywhere to release their anger. Hero Dyong Kman [17] alone kills the monster that transformed from tigers, the couple Bok Glung and Bok Gloong, specializing in cannibalism. Kman kicks the door of the cave, plucks his blade, and takes his spear at the tiger. He slashes, sticks his teeth, pulls out his tongue, stabs a couple of tigers, causing Bok Glung to be thrown into the sky, Bok Gloong crashes into the sea, crying terrifyingly and then dying. Hero Kman continues to fight with two daughters of Bok Glung. The two female tigers Hui Hai and Pong Prok are exposed under his sharp blades. He eradicates evil to save the gentle and honest people from being eaten by evil animals. Hero Dyong Wiwin [17] kills the goblin Bya Kbu - a giant female turtle by himself. It is as big as a house, its head is as big as a boat, its skin melted, harder than rock, and smashed without breaking. Bya Kbu specializes in eating the people of a large area, capturing the beautiful girl Bya Bong at the sea to hook her heart and suck blood. Hero Dyong Wiwin draws his sword and cuts a path, the tail of Bya Kbu is thrown into the sea. When his second sword flashes, Bya Kbu's body flew up to the source and his bloody head is rolling on the center of the floor...

Motif of hero to kill monsters, the monsters are not only Snakes, Worms, Stars, Lions, Turtles, but also Giant Fierce Fish. The fierce fish Jô Gök specializes in eating the flesh of villagers from old to young, from boys to girls, especially likes eating beautiful girls. He swallows Rang Hu as she wades into the lake to wash her hands and feet. Hero Giong jumps into the lake, diving deep into the rocky ravine for six months to fight with Jo Gok. He boldly goes into the fish's belly, burns a large pile of firewood in the belly of Jook, Rook roars, and dies. Giong saves Rang Hu and her villagers from the belly of Jo Gok "those who go north to the south, those who go backwards, those who go back and forth, people from any village go back to that village, whoever goes home and peaceful life returned in every village [18; 313-317].

The monster in the akhàt jucar Ra Glai "Udai - Ujàc" is the Human-Tiger-Monster Tiger goblin: sometimes it turns into a fierce tiger to become a monster tiger; sometimes turned into a human to deceive people and animals to eat. Hero Udai is angry when he

learns that the goblins has taken his sister Tiluiq to eat. He come to the area of Human-Tiger goblin to burn all their house, treasure and burn alive the Human- Tiger goblin couple. He launches the javelin, draw the sword on his back, stormed, slashed the Chi Capa Via Raw's daughter "... Chi Capa Via Raw's head cut like a fly, neck cut like a worm,..." [8; 662]. The hero Udai carried his sister's body to the riverbank wash away all the filth of the Human – Tiger monster and chant a spell to bring her back to life...

Motif hero kill monsters in epic is a testament to eloquently praise the heroes of the Central Highland village: Giong, Dam Duong, Dam Rao, Ama Sa Ea, Kei Kamao, Cei Balaok Li-u, Dyông Kman, Dyông Wiwin, etc. They waged a war with monsters not only to save beauties, to villagers eaten by monsters, but also to protect a peaceful life for the village, for the tribe. Motif to kill "monsters" to save people is legendary, but the hero's battle for such a feat has never been merely a product of imagination. That war is deeply epic in a great stature. The hero who goes into battle with the monster in a posture is the best representative of the strength and talent and the desire to win the entire community. The monster-killing motif is indispensable in the epic of the Central Highlands because through the action of killing monsters, the heroes have shown their talents and superhuman strength, demonstrating outstanding strength that no one can be equal and replaced.

2.2.3. Reborn motif

The reborn motif appears in the Central Highlands epic is about the resurrection or reincarnation of the hero's life or the resurrection of the village and other creatures. Among the Bahnar h'mon, the heroic character is many times reborn thanks to divine beings or many talented women. In the epic "Giong wrapped with chicken eggs" [19], Po Lao Chuoh Dreng, due to the love of Giong's beauty and talent, wanted to marry him but Giong disagreed. Angry, Po Lao Chuoh Dreng used magic to make Giong sick to dead. After that, it was Po Lao Chuoh Dreng who resurrected Giong because she understood that a village could not be without a mighty and courageous hero Giong. In the epic "Giong climbs the magical cane", Po Lao Chuoh Dreng used wormwood medicine to revive hero Gio and all villagers in the village, the destroyed village was revived [20].

Khan Dam San, valiant Dam San - mighty chief, bravely riding a horse to heaven with the desire to marry the Sun Goddess. Unaccepted by the goddess, he returned and died in the wasteland of a mess - the forest of Mrs. Sun Yít - where the end of the border between the earth and heaven. Dam San was then reincarnated in the womb of his sister named Hơ Âng. Akhàt jucar Ra Glai [8], in his previous life, Udai appeared as the hero to kill the goblins to save the beauty, in the next life he appeared with the new name Ujàc - the hero in the battle to kill the Cur enemies, the Jawa enemy, the wicked people like the king of Fire to protect the honor of the tribe, establishing a new social order across the vast, rich and beautiful land.

Motif reborn in ancient stories expresses the noble meaning of human life, associated with the ideas and conceptions about human society and morality. The transformation or reincarnation of a character in an ancient story reflects the people's conception of a sustainable truth of good, good will last forever and evil will inevitably be destroyed. Motif reborn in the epic of Central Highlands: Bahnar, Ra Glai, Ede,... also contains unique characteristics and meanings, contributing to the sparkling halo

border around the heroic character. The hero has a divine and legendary color. The heroic character is always immortal and “goes” from one work to another to carry out the community's mission. The reborn in the epic not only affirms the immortality of the heroes but also shows that the fight of the heroes is very tough and fierce. The hero must live, must survive, must fight to the end to carry out his divine mission: destroy evil, save people. The Bahnar, Ede, Ra Glai,... believe that the heroes in the epic are of divine lineage and immortality. They even are not injured. If they are injured they are healed by themselves or by magical medicine. The heroic characters do not die at the end of the work but continue to be reborn and reincarnated in the next life, “go” from one work to another in order to continuously carry out the missions entrusted by the community. The reborn motif expresses the strong belief of the Central Highlands: immortal heroes to protect the community peace and happiness.

3. Conclusions

Specific motif system in the Central Highlands epic: miraculous birth, miraculous appearance; monster killing hero; reborn motifs are the key elements to create the hero's action, making the hero bring many unique colors, full of supernatural powers, both majestic and real... With the role of specific motifs, the heroic character appears as alive engraved, carving pictures. In each different aspect in the typical motif in the Central Highland epic, the images of the key heroic characters is deeply highlighted and become the typical aesthetic image that is admired and praised. Heroes are those who are always aiming for and creating feats and miracles. The hero always conquers victory; refusing to be defeated, step back, surrender to all dangers, always satisfy the aspirations of the times: “The key character represents for the greatest, sacred, burning desire of the people of the time: he indomitable rises to conquer over all enemies” [21, tr.12]. These are the motifs that are almost all derived from fairy tales, legends, so the image of the heroic character in the epic, attractive. It is that characteristic that makes the heroic character always play a central role throughout a series of works, leaving a deep impression, attracting the receiver when studying and exploring the epic of the Central Highlands.

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