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INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MOTIF OF FRIENDSHIP IN THE EPICS OF THE TURKIC PEOPLES — 'THE BOOK OF DEDE KORKUT' AND 'O‘G‘UZ KHAGAN' — AND OF THE’ ENGLISH-IRISH PEOPLES — 'BEOWULF' AND 'TÁIN BÓ CÚAILNGE

Sapayeva Bibijon Rustamovna
Urgench State University Named after Abu Rayhon Beruni Teacher of the department “English language and literature”

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ABSTRACT

In "Kitabi Dada Qorqud", friendship is portrayed through loyalty to tribe and homeland, exemplified by Qorqud Ata's wisdom uniting Oghuz clans. "Beowulf" emphasizes warrior camaraderie, particularly Beowulf's loyalty to Hrothgar and Wiglaf's unwavering support in battle, reflecting Anglo-Saxon ideals of allegiance. "Táin Bó Cúailnge" explores the tragic friendship between Cú Chulainn and Ferdia, torn apart by political conflict, highlighting the cost of loyalty in war.

KEY WORDS: *Turkic epics, European epics, motive of friendship, loyalty, moral concepts and values, humanity, family values, wisdom.*

The epics "Kitabi Dede Qorqud" and "Oguz Khan" have reflected the values, customs, and moral concepts of the people for centuries. In these works, concepts such as friendship, loyalty, heroism, and love for the motherland hold a special place. Especially, the theme of friendship is deeply illuminated through unique artistic devices. In the epics "Kitabi Dede Qorqud" and "Oguz Khan," the motif of friendship is artistically elevated as a symbol of loyalty, devotion, brotherhood, and humanity. This motif reflects the solidarity, courage, and high moral values of Turkic peoples.

It should be noted that the "Kitabi Dede Qorqud" epic is one of the most famous epic monuments of the Turkic peoples. Although it was written down in the 15th-16th centuries, it was formed based on much older oral traditions. In this epic, patriotism, heroism, honor, wisdom, and family values hold a central place.

The theme of "friendship" in the epic is depicted in a more lively and folk-like manner, where the friendship between heroes is especially revealed during difficult trials. Through characters such as Bayindir Khan, Qazan Bey, and Bamsi Beyrek, the most beautiful examples of friendship are shown. For example, when Bamsi Beyrek is captured, his friends risk their lives to rescue him. Qazan Bey puts his own life in danger to protect his friends from enemy attacks. Their friendship is depicted as a symbol of loyalty, devotion, and camaraderie.

The next epic belonging to the Turkic peoples, "Oguz Khan" or "Oguznama," is an ancient traditional Turkic epic, holding an important place in the literature of Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. In the "Oguz Khan" epic, the main character Oguz Khan is always accompanied by his loyal friends and comrades, the Chaghatays. They stand shoulder to shoulder with Oguz Khan in the fight against the enemy.

For example, when Oguz Khan fights the dragon, his friends and comrades risk their lives to help him. Through this, the concept of friendship is reflected not only as emotional closeness but also as a symbol of loyalty and devotion.

It can be said that in the epics "Kitabi Dede Qorqud" and "Oguz Khan," the motif of friendship is expressed through the ancient moral values of the Turkic peoples—loyalty, mutual support, and brotherhood. Below are meaningful excerpts from both epics that highlight this motif.

Excerpt from the "Story of Bamsi Beyrek" in "Kitabi Dede Qorqud"
“Bamsi Beyrek traveled with fifty young men. He always relied on his friends, speaking honestly before them. One day, when he was captured by the enemy, his friends did not forget him, and even after many years, they set out to rescue him...”

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In this epic, the main character Dede Qorqud, considered a wise leader, has many wise sayings. One of them: “A friend is known in dark days.”

This proverb emphasizes that friendship is tested in difficult times.
In the "Oguznama" epic, the following situation is observed:
“When Oguz Khan set out for great battles, his loyal young men were always by his side. He advised them: ‘Be friends, protect one another. A lonely man may stray from the path, but with a friend, the journey is walked together.’”

In this wisdom, friendship is depicted as a guiding force that prevents a person from going astray.
It can be said that in the epics "Kitabi Dede Qorqud" and "Oguz Khan," the motif of friendship reflects the solidarity, courage, and high moral values of the Turkic peoples. In both epics, friendship is depicted not only as a personal relationship but also as a symbol of social unity and loyalty. The courageous actions of friends and their loyalty are sometimes portrayed in an exaggerated form. This corresponds to the general poetics of Turkic oral literature; the alliance between friends and relatives forms the basis for state-building, national unity, and peace.

Among the important works of ancient English literature are the "Beowulf" (Anglo-Saxon epic) and the ancient Irish epic "Táin Bó Cúailnge." These are among the oldest examples of European literature, in which themes of heroism, loyalty, fidelity, and friendship play an important role. In both works, friendship is depicted not only as a personal relationship but also as a symbol of social unity and community values.

The "Beowulf" epic is considered the pinnacle of ancient English literature and the oldest European folk epic. The events of the early 6th century are depicted, reflecting the customs, heroism, and social structure of the ancient English. The epic describes Beowulf’s battles with Grendel, Grendel’s mother, and the dragon.

In "Beowulf," the loyalty and camaraderie between Beowulf and his friends are shown in many scenes. Beowulf, as the most loyal warrior of the Geats, risks his life to solve the problems of the Danes’ kingdom.

Excerpt from the epic
“When Beowulf came to Hrothgar to fight Grendel, his friends, the Geatish warriors, were with him. They encouraged Beowulf to fight and were ready to help in every way.”

One of the most impressive examples of friendship in the epic is shown through the character of Wiglaf. When Beowulf fights the dragon, other warriors run away in fear, but Wiglaf, as a loyal friend, does not leave Beowulf alone and fights by his side. This scene is interpreted as the highest example of friendship and loyalty.

Excerpt from the epic
“Wiglaf, son of Weohstan, came to Beowulf’s aid. Remembering the old bonds of friendship, he did not leave his master alone in a difficult moment.”

The next epic is the Irish folk epic "Táin Bó Cúailnge," in which the character Cú Chulainn holds a central place. His concept of friendship is especially closely linked to the themes of war and loyalty. For example, Cú Chulainn is forced to fight his childhood friend Ferdiad. Although they were once friends and even as close as brothers, due to political obligations and duty to their homeland, they confront each other as enemies. The tragic battle between Ferdiad and Cú Chulainn reveals the inner conflict between friendship and war.

Excerpt from the epic
“Ferdiad and Cú Chulainn stood on opposite banks of the river, their hearts filled with memories of old friendship. But their swords met like enemies.”

Through this scene, the epic expresses the complex balance between human feelings, loyalty in friendship, and life’s obligations. Both heroes respect each other, but due to their loyalty to their people, they fall into a tragic conflict. It can be said that the theme of friendship is of great importance in both "Beowulf" and "Táin Bó Cúailnge." In "Beowulf," friendship is expressed through martial loyalty, devotion, and fidelity. In "Táin Bó Cúailnge," friendship is depicted through the complex relationships between tragedy, war, and loyalty. In both epics, friendship is shown not only as a personal matter but also in connection with the concepts of society and homeland.

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The motif of friendship is expressed in different ways in "Beowulf" and "Táin Bó Cúailnge." The following excerpts show how friendship is artistically portrayed in these epics:

In "Beowulf," the motif of friendship and loyalty mainly demonstrates Beowulf's loyalty to his people, friends, and king. The following excerpt expresses Beowulf's loyalty and love for friendship:

"Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow: 'I have heard, my lord, that you are in need, that you suffer from the monster's power. Let me come to your aid, I will offer the help of my hands, my heart, my courage.'"

This excerpt shows how Beowulf expresses friendship and loyalty through heroism. He is ready to fight for the kingdom of the Danish king, risking his own life for the safety of his friends and king.

In the "Táin Bó Cúailnge" epic, the motif of friendship is more based on alliances, loyalty, and mutual assistance. The following excerpt shows Cú Chulainn's friends and their mutual help in battles:

"Cú Chulainn, with all his might, stood firm in battle, and his friends, the warriors of Ulster, fought beside him with courage and strength. Together they faced the great enemy and their bonds were stronger than any sword."

This excerpt shows the importance of friendship in battle and war. Cú Chulainn and his friends protect each other, entering battle with mutual loyalty and support. This expresses their mutual friendship and loyalty.

In conclusion, in the epics mentioned above, the motif of friendship is based on the high morality and loyalty of the main characters, expressed through protecting each other and showing loyalty in war and battle, and is manifested as a strong moral value.

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