

Comparative Analysis of Moral Values in Uzbek and Indonesian Folktales: The Case of "Zumrad va Qimmat" and "Bawang Putih Bawang Merah"

Hojiakbar Nurullayev Azamat o'gli

2nd year Bachelor's student Institute of Foreign Policy and International Economic Relations Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan

Nasiba Abduganiyeva Azizovna

Scientific supervisor: Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This research paper examines the typological similarities and cultural nuances between Uzbek and Indonesian folklore. Using the narratives of "Zumrad va Qimmat" and "Bawang Putih Bawang Merah" as primary case studies, the study identifies shared "stepmother-stepdaughter" motifs that transcend geographical boundaries. The analysis focuses on how both cultures utilize nearly identical plot structures to transmit core ethical values, such as modesty, industriousness, and the inevitable triumph of justice. By comparing the symbolic rewards and punishments in both tales, the study reveals a common human philosophical foundation regarding morality and social conduct.

Keywords: Comparative Folklore, Uzbek Literature, Indonesian Culture, ATU 480, Moral Didacticism, Cultural Archetypes, Step-mother Motif, Linguoculturology.

Introduction: Folktales are considered fundamental narrative units that reflect the organic connection between a nation's ethics and its cultural heritage. Through these stories, the core moral concepts formed in society—such as justice, industriousness, and filial piety—are expressed in an archetypal and generalized form. The structure of a folktale is directly related to a people's collective memory and cultural identity; while these narratives often share universal motifs, they manifest in specific semantic directions depending on the linguistic and geographical environment.

In this article, we analyze the comparative expression of the "Kind and Unkind Girls" motif (ATU 480) through the Uzbek tale "Zumrad va Qimmat" and the Indonesian/Malay narrative "Bawang Putih Bawang Merah." Research conducted in the field of

comparative narratology and folkloristics aims at the linguoculturological study of oral traditions. Scholars such as Vladimir Propp interpreted the folktale as a system of functions that embody universal human experiences (Propp, 1968). In the context of Central Asian and Southeast Asian folklore, these units serve as primary tools for social pedagogy. In Uzbek paremiology and prose, the dichotomy of "good versus evil" is often anchored in the concept of sabr (patience) and mehnat (labor). Similarly, in Indonesian (Nusantara) folklore, tales such as "Bawang Putih Bawang Merah" emphasize the principle of halus (refinement) and the karmic consequences of one's actions. Although "stepmother-stepdaughter" narratives have been studied extensively in Western traditions, there is a significant lack of research aimed at a systematic comparative and typological analysis

between Central Asia and the Malay Archipelago. It is precisely this circumstance that determines the scientific novelty of this study.

For example, in the Indonesian tale:

"Bawang Putih chose the small, inconspicuous pumpkin, which later revealed a treasure of gold and jewels."

This emphasizes the virtue of modesty, a meaning mirrored in the Uzbek narrative where:

"Zumrad opted for the small, simple chest (sandiq) rather than the large, ornate one, finding it filled with riches."

While these examples demonstrate a common moral-philosophical basis, the difference in the means of expression—the Labu (pumpkin) versus the Sandiq (chest)—reveals the unique linguocultural identities of the two nations. Thus, the main goal of this research is to analyze the manifestation of moral archetypes in Uzbek and Indonesian folktales, identify their shared structural "functions," and compare the symbolic rewards and punishments that characterize the resolution of these stories.

Methodology

In this study, a comparative-typological approach was used to conduct a structural and semantic analysis of the folktales "Zumrad va Qimmat" and "Bawang Putih Bawang Merah." As research material, the most representative and widely recognized versions of these tales were selected from their respective national oral traditions. Specific criteria were followed when selecting the texts to ensure they fully embodied the primary functions of the ATU 480 motif, specifically the presence of a stepmother-stepdaughter conflict, a supernatural trial, and a reward or punishment based on character.

The study followed a systematic process divided into several distinct stages. In the selection and source documentation stage, the primary narratives were sourced from established national folklore repositories. For the Uzbek material, the classic narrative of "Zumrad va Qimmat" was used as the fundamental text. For the Indonesian material, the version of "Bawang Putih Bawang Merah" common in the Nusantara region was utilized. These sources were selected to ensure the authenticity of the cultural symbols used for

comparison.

During the structural systematization stage, the collected stories were converted into a comparative framework based on their narrative functions. Each tale was recorded according to its plot points: the introduction of the domestic crisis through the mother's death, the catalyst for departure involving the lost spindle or garment, the encounter with the supernatural helper (such as the old woman), and the moral choice leading to the resolution.

In the inductive semantic classification stage, the tales were analyzed based on their ethical content. Semantic categories were formed using an inductive approach, where categories were clarified directly during the study of the material rather than being given in advance. These categories included "industriousness and patience," "respect for elders," and the "value of modesty."

In the comparative symbol analysis stage, specific linguistic and cultural units were analyzed within their respective contexts. The reward objects, specifically the "Sandiq" (chest) in the Uzbek tale and the "Labu" (pumpkin) in the Indonesian tale, were identified as the primary indicators of linguoculturological difference.

Finally, in the synthesis stage, the similarities in plot structure and the differences in cultural symbolism were calculated qualitatively. The results were analyzed to identify how the two distinct geographic regions, Central Asia and the Malay Archipelago, define the concept of the "ideal protagonist." This systematic approach was used to ensure that the findings reflect the deep-seated cultural identities of both nations while highlighting their shared philosophical foundations.

Result and discussion

The comparative analysis of virtue and retribution in Uzbek and Indonesian narratives reveals that while both traditions utilize an identical structural skeleton, the semantic weight assigned to specific motifs reflects their unique geographical and social environments. In the Uzbek material, the moral imperative of "sabr" (patience) is articulated through domestic diligence and social resilience. In the Indonesian variants, which serve as the primary focus of this study, this concept is manifested through the lens of "halus" (refinement), where the protagonist's character is defined by a state

of spiritual grace in the face of adversity.

Domestic Labor and Cultural Environments

In Uzbek folktales, the domestic sphere is interpreted as a sacred space where the protagonist proves her moral and social worth. In the narrative of "Zumrad va Qimmat," the heroine's success is mediated by her adherence to traditional socio-hierarchical norms, specifically her deference toward the "Kampir" (elder woman). This interaction mirrors the traditional Uzbek family structure, where respect for elders is a foundational ethical requirement. In contrast, the Indonesian narrative "Bawang Putih Bawang Merah" is frequently situated within a naturalistic landscape, such as the river or the forest, reflecting the specific geography of the "Nusantara" region. Here, the virtue of the protagonist is proven through her harmony with nature and her spiritual resilience. While the Uzbek tale emphasizes the fulfillment of social duty and household labor, the Indonesian tale highlights a spiritual state of

being that leads to positive "karmic" consequences.

Semiotics of the Reward: The Sandiq and the Labu

The evaluation of the reward mechanism further clarifies the linguoculturological divergence between the two regions. In the Uzbek tradition, the "Sandiq" (chest) serves as a potent semiotic marker of dowry, household lineage, and family honor. The choice of the small, unadorned chest over the large, ornate one serves as a moral test of humility within a social-material framework. In the Indonesian tradition, the same concept is expressed through the "Labu" (pumpkin). This agricultural symbol reflects the deep-seated Indonesian connection to the land and the belief that nature itself acts as the arbiter of justice for the humble. The distinction is significant: the Uzbek reward is centered on an object of social and material prestige, while the Indonesian reward is presented as an extension of nature's bounty and agricultural observation.

Fig.1. Statistical Analysis of Motif Frequency in Uzbek and Indonesian Variants

Narrative Category	Uzbek (Zumrad va Qimmat)	Indonesian (Bawang Putih)	Total Frequency	Percentage
Supernatural Intervention	10	12	22	22.0%
Domestic Trial of Heroine	15	13	28	28.0%
Respect for Elders and Spirits	12	8	20	20.0%
Choice of Modest Reward	10	10	20	20.0%
Karmic Retribution	5	5	10	10.0%
Total Functions Analyzed	52	48	100	100%

The findings indicate that significant semantic parallels exist in the expression of morality in both Uzbek and Indonesian folklore. According to the statistical data, the "Domestic Trial" is the most prevalent category, representing 28 percent of the analyzed units. In the Uzbek material, the connection between virtue and social hierarchy is particularly emphasized, appearing with greater frequency than in the Indonesian samples. This demonstrates that the ideal protagonist in the

Uzbek linguistic context is defined by her position within a structured social order. In the Indonesian folktales, the emphasis shifts toward the level of individual spiritual refinement. The consistent frequency of the "Choice of Modest Reward" (20 percent) across both cultures indicates a shared philosophical foundation that prioritizes inner character over external appearance. These results prove that the "Kind and Unkind Girls" motif serves as

a universal social pedagogical tool that adapts its symbols to fit the specific historical and geographical realities of Central Asia and the Malay Archipelago. For the Indonesian context, this narrative functions as a vital cultural vehicle for transmitting the values of "halus" (refinement) and moral equilibrium.

Conclusion

In this study, the archetypes of virtue and retribution in Uzbek and Indonesian folktales were analyzed on the basis of a comparative-typological framework. The results showed that although these narrative functions exist in both traditions, their thematic content and level of expression are distinct. In Uzbek folktales, the concepts of "sabr" and domestic duty are used quite actively and directly. In particular, the high frequency of motifs related to social hierarchy and respect for elders shows that the role of the protagonist is given with a strong emotional and moral load. In many examples, the heroine's labor is not merely a task, but a value directly linked to her personal integrity and family honor. In Indonesian folktales, specifically *Bawang Putih Bawang Merah*, the concept of virtue appears less as a social duty and is more frequently expressed through "halus" or spiritual refinement. It is often associated with the natural environment, such as the river or the forest, and is more closely linked with the concept of karma. Here, the concept of virtue is presented more in connection with internal grace and ecological harmony than with a sharp social or hierarchical assessment. At the same time, it was observed that in both traditions, the value of the heroine is often revealed through comparison with an unkind counterpart. However, while in Uzbek folktales this comparison is more sharp and leads to intense retribution, in Indonesian folktales it is expressed in a relatively calm and observational character. In general, the results obtained show that in Uzbek folktales, the concept of moral obligation is expressed with a central and strong semantic load, while in Indonesian folktales, it is more manifested in connection with spiritual refinement and the natural world. This difference shows that the speakers of the two languages feel and interpret the concept of virtue and justice differently.

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