



THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE HERO AND ITS ROLE IN THE
FORMATION OF THE EPIC IMAGE

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Abstract: This topic examines the motif of the divine origin of the hero and its role in shaping the epic image. The divine origin emphasizes the hero's superiority over ordinary people and highlights their special destiny and mission. Through this motif, the hero's strength, bravery, and social status are justified and elevated. It is closely connected with mythological beliefs and contributes to the idealization and sacralization of the hero in epic narratives.

Keywords: divine origin, hero, epic, mythology, epic image.

The heroic birth as either a result of prayer or pilgrimage is common to other epics and fairy tales later in life. In this context, the belief in a single God starts to solidify and the system of beliefs (polytheism and archaic rituals) gradually become uniform. While the deity in Mongolian tales might still be represented as an animal, in the Central Asian epics of subsequent centuries (such as Alpomish) a Muslim saint does provide a crucial dimension to the hero's genesis:

He is an early forecaster of the birth but also bestows the child with a name and becomes his patron. Consequently in later versions of Turkic epics, elements of paganism are supplanted by Islamic beliefs. Parents may have sacrifices made to a saint, or pray up to some holy tree, to help achieve their goal of a child. From there, the awaited child is born, but often the father himself is out at that point. He is typically off hunting, or traveling far (often for years).

Some scholars tie this to an ancient custom that says during a woman's impending birth, the man went hunting. In later epics, though, the answer is a different thing: the father descends to the mountains to escape from the emotional stress of waiting for the child. The father on occasion receives a message announcing his son's birth while on other occasions only the son is revealed after he gets there on his journey. In some stories, though, there is also the motif of questioning paternity. He tells of his wife's infidelity and refuses to



acknowledge the offspring. This is the nature of a patriarchal society.

The child is laughed at and shamed for not being a legitimate child, further strengthening the father's suspicions. Sometimes, such doubt prompts the attempted killing of the child. But the future hero usually survives this threat. He has his first trial — not yet an heroic feat, but a trial that makes his birth rightful. For instance, if the child survives under any circumstances in some myths, it implies that he is the rightful heir. In other tales a protector or a saint protects a hero with the explanation that the child had been granted in reply to his prayers. Sometimes the hero's exceptional strength is noticed by his father.

However, the divine birth of a hero does not invariably happen when old parents suffer from childlessness. In some narrations, a hero is actually represented as an offspring of divine descent, where it is believed that both a god and a goddess are her parents. The original Babylonian Gilgamesh is the son of the goddess Ninsun and the prince King Lugalbanda who rules; King Achilles is the son of the goddess Thetis and King Peleus; Aeneas the son of Aphrodite and the shepherd Anchises, who is an ancestor to Aeneas; Sarpedon is the son of Zeus and Europa, who is the daughter of a Phoenician king; The Ugaritic Keret was created by the god El; Väinämöinen from the Karelian-Finnish epic of the Karelians is due to the air maiden Ilmatar; likewise, many Serbian epic heroes, even Marko Kraljević, have also been brought into existence from the humans and a vila. The ancient Greek hero Perseus was born upon the entrance of Zeus, in golden rain, who accompanied Danaë, who was imprisoned in the tower (or underground chamber) of a castle. So, the twins Romulus and Remus was the child of a god, Mars, visiting the virgin Rhea Silvia (a virgin of Vestal descent) in a sacred grove.

The birth of the Dioscuri and Helen from the union of Leda and Zeus, or birth by a divine birth, is another variant of divine birth. But this story is rife with contradictions. Zeus, in the guise of a swan, had approached Leda and she had laid an egg, so that Helen and Castor and Pollux (called Polydeuces) could be born; Leda was thus made a god in virtue and was later known as Nemesis. On this very same evening, Leda likewise was united with her husband Tyndareus. Some hold that Helen belongs to Zeus, whereas Castor and Polydeuces belong to Tyndareus. This view, in contrast, claims that Castor and Clytemnestra are the children of Tyndareus, while Helen and Polydeuces are the offspring of Zeus. That view, likely from the Greek perspective, connects Castor to the mortal and Polydeuces to the immortal.

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