

The Image of the Historical Figure in Eastern and Western Legends: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract. *This article offers a comparative analysis of the formation and interpretative features of the image of the historical figure in Eastern and Western legends. The study demonstrates that within Eastern traditions, historical figures are predominantly represented as embodiments of collective values, social harmony, and spiritual perfection, whereas in Western legends they are more closely associated with individualism, inner dramatic tension, and personal agency.*

The methodological framework integrates comparative-historical, structural-semantic, and hermeneutic approaches. The theoretical foundations of Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade play a central role in shaping the analytical perspective of the research.

The findings reveal that in both Eastern and Western cultural contexts, the image of the historical figure evolves into a universal archetype that reflects the complex relationship between the individual and society, while simultaneously reinforcing the moral and aesthetic values of a given culture. The article underscores the significance of studying representations of historical figures for the fields of literary studies, historiography, anthropology, and cultural studies.

Keywords: *Historical figure, Eastern legends, Western legends, mythological transformation, archetype, comparative analysis, spiritual values*

Introduction

The image of the historical figure in Eastern and Western legends constitutes a significant artistic phenomenon that embodies a society's moral and ethical values, religious perceptions, and aesthetic ideals. Over time, real historical personalities are idealized under the influence of folklore and mythological consciousness, gradually transforming into symbolic representations. As a result, historical reality becomes enriched through artistic interpretation and turns into an integral component of national consciousness and collective memory.

In mythological theory, this process is often explained through the archetype of the hero. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell analyzes the transformation of historical figures into mythological heroes on the basis of the universal model of the "hero's journey." Similarly, in *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Mircea Eliade substantiates the sacralization of historical images and the mechanism of archetypal repetition, emphasizing that within mythological thinking, a historical figure is interpreted not as an ordinary human being but as a symbolic restorer of cosmic order.

In Eastern legends, the image of the historical figure is more closely associated with moral perfection, spiritual maturity, and social responsibility. For example, in narratives about Amir Temur, he is idealized as a just ruler and state builder; in Zoroastrian tradition, Ahura Mazda appears as a symbol of goodness and cosmic order. In Western legends, by contrast, the historical figure is more frequently characterized by individual will, inner conflict, and a dramatic destiny. For instance, in representations

of Alexander the Great or the legendary King Arthur, greatness is intertwined with tragedy and the problem of personal choice.

Thus, while in Eastern traditions the historical figure is primarily interpreted as a symbol of spiritual ideal and social harmony, in Western traditions the same figure tends to be harmonized with individualism and dramatic tension. The aim of this study is to comparatively analyze these similarities and differences and to provide a scholarly interpretation of the semantic and cultural characteristics of the image of the historical figure.

Methodology

This study employs a комплекс methodological framework combining comparative-historical, structural-semantic, and hermeneutic approaches in order to identify the formation and interpretative features of the image of the historical figure in Eastern and Western legends.

First, through the comparative-historical method, sources belonging to different cultural spaces and historical periods were examined in parallel, enabling clarification of the relationship between the real historical prototype and its legendary interpretation. The structural-semantic approach was applied to analyze the internal structure of the image, including heroic motifs, moral virtues, elements of sacralization, and components of dramatic conflict. The hermeneutic method, in turn, facilitated contextual interpretation of the texts, allowing for consideration of historical circumstances, the unveiling of symbolic layers within the legends, and the explanation of their cultural-cognitive meanings.

The theoretical foundation of the research is grounded in mythological and archetypal theory. In particular, the concept of the hero archetype advanced by Joseph Campbell and the theory of sacred time and archetypal repetition developed by Mircea Eliade serve as the principal methodological pillars.

As research material, the study draws upon Eastern traditions, including legends about Amir Temur and the image of Ahura Mazda in Zoroastrian mythology, as well as Western traditions, including legendary interpretations of Alexander the Great and King Arthur. The selection criteria were based on the historical grounding of these figures, their exposure to mythological transformation, and their consolidation as stable symbolic images within national consciousness.

Throughout the analytical process, methods of generalization, classification, and conceptual modeling were employed to articulate, on a scholarly basis, both the similarities and differences in the representation of historical figures across Eastern and Western cultural contexts.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of historical figure representations in Eastern and Western legends indicates that these images serve as central phenomena expressing the moral, ethical, and aesthetic values of society in both cultural contexts. However, their formation mechanisms and semantic significance differ markedly according to cultural background. In Eastern traditions, historical figures are frequently interpreted as symbols of collective values, social harmony, and spiritual maturity. For example, in the image of Amir Temur, justice, governance, and loyalty to communal interests are emphasized as primary characteristics. Similarly, in Zoroastrian mythology, Ahura Mazda is depicted as a sacred archetype restoring cosmic order. These cases illustrate that, in Eastern legends, the idealization of historical figures serves to reinforce moral and spiritual virtues and to promote dedication and loyalty within society. In this way, historical figures emerge as archetypal representations, through which cultural and ethical norms are consolidated in the collective consciousness. This process is not solely based on the historical prototype but is enriched through oral tradition, mythological thought, and religious concepts, crystallizing on symbolic and cosmic levels. Such analysis explains the stability and enduring presence of historical figure images in the collective memory of Eastern cultures. In Western legends, historical figures are shaped more as symbols of individualism, psychological drama,

and personal agency. In the portrayals of Alexander the Great and King Arthur, alongside greatness, tragedy, inner conflict, and dilemmas of personal choice occupy central roles. In Western culture, the mythological transformation of historical figures is closely linked to their psychological experience, individual decisions, and dramatic events, making their representation more complex and humanized. From this perspective, historical figures in Western legends function not only as social symbols but also as instruments to explore human psychology, ethical decision-making, and responsibility. Through their tragic and dramatic aspects, Western legends illuminate the complex relationship between the individual and society, the artistic interpretation of historical reality, and personal accountability. This highlights a fundamental difference: in the East, historical figures symbolize collective values and social harmony, while in the West, they embody individual decisions, dramatic situations, and personal agency.

The analysis further demonstrates that the similarity between Eastern and Western historical figures lies in their archetypal nature. Joseph Campbell's hero archetype concept explains the formation of historical figures in both traditions through the model of the mythological journey. Similarly, Mircea Eliade's theories of sacred time and archetypal repetition allow Eastern historical figures to be interpreted as symbols restoring cosmic and spiritual order. Using these theoretical frameworks, the analysis shows that historical figure images, as universal archetypes, reflect common moral values of humanity, while their semantic content, dramatic structure, and individual characteristics are determined by cultural context. From this perspective, the study of Eastern and Western historical figures is significant not only for historical and literary analysis but also for cultural, psychological, and anthropological research.

The study also highlights the role of historical figure images in representing the complex relationship between society and the individual. In Eastern legends, idealization reinforces social cohesion and moral values; in Western legends, personal choice, tragic drama, and inner conflict allow for an exploration of human historical and social responsibility. While in Eastern legends historical figures consolidate collective consciousness and ethical norms, in Western legends they express human experience, individual decision-making, and moral dilemmas. This analysis enables a scholarly comparison of the approaches, mythological frameworks, and ethical functions of historical figures in Eastern and Western cultures.

Overall, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the semantic, cultural, and psychological aspects of historical figure images in both traditions. The findings demonstrate that mythological transformation shapes historical figures into universal archetypes, reflects the relationship between society and the individual, and reinforces a culture's moral and aesthetic values. Thus, studying historical figure images is of significant academic relevance not only for literary studies but also for historiography, anthropology, psychology, and cultural studies.

Conclusion

The images of historical figures in Eastern and Western legends emerge as central artistic phenomena reflecting the moral-ethical, aesthetic, and social values of their respective societies. The findings of this study demonstrate that in Eastern traditions, historical figures are predominantly interpreted as embodiments of collective values, social harmony, and spiritual perfection, and their idealization serves to reinforce established moral and cultural norms. The representations of Amir Timur and Ahura Mazda provide vivid examples of this tendency.

In Western legends, by contrast, historical figures are shaped as symbols of individualism, inner dramatic tension, and personal will. In the portrayals of Alexander the Great and King Arthur, tragic elements and the problem of personal choice occupy a central position.

At the same time, the study establishes that in both Eastern and Western traditions, the image of the historical figure evolves into a universal archetype that reflects the relationship between the individual and society and contributes to the consolidation of a culture's moral and aesthetic values. The research

thus provides a scholarly explanation of how approaches to historical figures, processes of mythological transformation, and modes of artistic interpretation are deeply conditioned by cultural context. Accordingly, the study of historical figures in legend constitutes an integrative and interdisciplinary resource for literary studies, historiography, and cultural studies.

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