

# GPJ

## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON JAPAN

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## Scope

“Global Perspectives on Japan” focuses on developing a global perspective on the study of Japan and Asia. The journal promotes innovative, interdisciplinary, inter-regional and transnational approaches to Japanese Studies.

The journal aims to be a venue for scholarship in E.M.E.A. region with a special focus on Turkey and neighboring regions. It especially encourages scholars from the Middle East, Balkans, Central Asia and the Mediterranean but also welcomes scholars from other parts of the world.

GPJ invites papers in the fields of history, humanities, and social sciences including topics of the past and the present. In addition to articles, the journal publishes occasional article size translations, book reviews, and surveys of current trends in Japanese and Asian Studies.

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# Narrative Development across Cultural and Historical Contexts: A Case Study of the Asian Versions of *The Homecoming Husband*

Saida Khalmirzaeva

(Okayama University)

## Introduction

The story of a husband who returns home in disguise after a long absence strings his distinctive bow punishes his wife's suitors, and reunites with his family is a tale-type widely represented in folk and literary traditions worldwide. This tale-type is best known through its earliest recorded version, the *Odyssey*, an epic poem that is attributed to the ancient Greek poet, Homer. Comparative analysis of the stories about the homecoming husband and research on the historical and cultural background of these stories, suggests that an original tale, the so-called prototype, could have been transmitted from its place of origin to other parts of the world, giving birth to the many regional versions, such as Central Asia's *Alpomish*, Japan's *Yuriwaka Daijin*, and many other stories. My investigation led me to conclude that certain religious practices and population movements could be a driving force for the dissemination, development, and performance format transformations of the stories of the homecoming husband that can be found across the length and breadth of Eurasia.

The study presented in this paper is part of the broader research on the above-mentioned tale-type known in folklore studies as *The Homecoming Husband*.<sup>1</sup> It focuses on four stories representing the tale-type in Asia: *Alpomish*

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1 The tales of this type are classified as *The Homecoming Husband* and assigned the number 974 in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther tale-type system.

in Central Asia, *The Epic of King Gesar* in Tibet, Mongolia, and other parts of Inner Asia, *The Song of Chunhyang* in Korea, and *Yuriwaka Daijin* in Japan. In this study, I first identified major structural elements and motifs in each story. I then analysed how these stories were narrated across sociocultural and historical contexts. Second, I discussed the possibility of a historical connection between the Asian versions of tales about the homecoming husband.

### **The Tale-type *The Homecoming Husband***

The tale-type *The Homecoming Husband* has long been of interest in international folklore and literature. It has been studied and discussed by scholars from many different perspectives: the original meaning of the tale-type and its relation to the myth about the revived vegetation God (Kaspar Schnorf, Albert Lord), the structure and significance of its motifs (Patricia Arant, William Hansen, Joseph Russo, Jonathan L. Ready), the origin and relationship between the existing versions (Ivan Sozonovich, Ivan Tolstoy, Victor Zhirmunsky, Takeo Kanaseki, James T. Araki, Akira Fukuda, Karl Reichl, Sabir Badalkhan), and many others.

My own research led me to some important conclusions on the tale-type development from the oldest known literary version of the tale-type, the *Odyssey* (The prototype or Type A), to Japan's *Yuriwaka Daijin* (Type C) and the role of religion and cultural exchange in its transmission. In my earlier research on this topic, I focused on the origin of Central Asia's *Alpomish* and *Yuriwaka Daijin*. I proposed the following hypotheses: A) *Alpomish* was born as a result of the combination of the *Odyssey* and a Buddhist tale about the Good Prince and Bad Prince, and B) Central Asia's story spread to Japan, where it was adapted into a story known as *Yuriwaka Daijin*.

While working with different versions of *The Homecoming Husband* collected from various regions from Greece to Japan, I became particularly interested in the tale-type's meaning, role, and function in human civilization history, as well as the differences in its actual narration across cultures and periods. The differences found in many regional versions are clearly reflections of certain sociocultural practices and behaviours, formed in particular historical settings, sometimes through interactions with other stories and genres.

All tales are a "cultural" product and are born as a reaction of society to

specific sociocultural and historical processes. They express the ideology of the group of people that created these tales, reflect the peculiarities of this group, justify its rules, customs, and traditions, and depict its ideals and beliefs. Different people and societies worldwide employ similar patterns when telling the stories of their lives. These patterns can be the product of similar perceptions of circumstances or historical borrowings that still follow the trends laid down by psychological constants. Patterns relevant to certain social groups are memorized and passed on, sometimes crossing cultural and language barriers. Although the tale-types found in different parts of the world are essentially the same, they evolve independently. Their actual narration includes references to specific events, names, customs, traditions, rituals, and beliefs of specific audiences. The process of vocalization of similar patterns in the different environments brings about differences in regional versions of the tale-types and leads to their many variations.

The tale-type *The Homecoming Husband* is a unique opportunity to explore and illustrate how stories based on the same pattern, regardless of the form of expression (be it a myth, legend, or tale), its actual origin (be it a universally conceived plot or historical borrowing), emerged, evolved, developed, and functioned in various sociocultural environments. There are several reasons that make this particular tale-type an interesting subject for comparative analysis, enabling broad interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research.

(1) *Relative stability of structure and length*

In many cases, the stories about the homecoming husband are long narratives with relatively stable, complicated plots; traditionally, they are transmitted orally by special groups of semi-professional storytellers, which explains a certain degree of the fixity and stability of the narrative structure.

(2) *Geographic and chronological dissemination*

The stories are not only widely disseminated geographically but have been popular throughout history; there are several modern interpretations, which set the story in the realities of modern life.

(3) *Availability of sources and previous research*

The tale-type *The Homecoming Husband* is well documented throughout the world, with many manuscripts and recorded versions being available. Furthermore, extensive research on regional versions and broader comparative research has been conducted.

**The *Odyssey* and *Alpomish***

*Alpomish*, the Central Asian version of *The Homecoming Husband*, is one of the most famous narratives of Central Asia. The story has been transmitted orally for centuries by professional storytellers called *bakhshi* and is still performed in some regions of Central Asia. It is thought that the story emerged among the Turkic people not later than the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. This time-period is explained in relation to the story of *Bamsi Beyrek*, which significantly resembles *Alpomish*. *Bamsi Beyrek* is included in the compilation called the *Book of Dede Korkut*. This book includes stories that circulated among the Turkic people from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Some of them are very old and supposedly date back to the time when the Turkic people lived in the regions of Central Asia. It is a historical fact that the Turkic tribes migrated westward and spread into Western Asia and Eastern Europe between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is possible that some oral stories emerged in Central Asia and were then transmitted by the Turkic peoples from Central to Western Asia (Zhirmunsky & Zarifov 1947; Zhirmunsky 1960; Zhirmunsky 1962).

Victor Zhirmunsky noticed that *Alpomish* shared remarkable motivic similarities with the Ancient Greek epic poem, the *Odyssey*, which existed in written form near the sixth century B.C. Indeed, in both stories, the *Odyssey* and *Alpomish*, we can find many common motifs, including such as 'the hero returns home and saves his wife,' and 'the hero returns home disguised and strings his distinctive bow.' These similarities appear in the second half of the story, in the part where the hero returns to his country after years of adventures and captivity in an isolated place. In both stories, we find many common details: the hero has a loyal servant, he has a mark on his body, he is recognized by an animal, and he has a son. Of course, these motifs are not unique to the *Odyssey* and *Alpomish*. We can find many folk tales and legends

with similar motifs in different parts of the world. Such famous researchers as Ivan Sozonovich, Georgy Potanin, and Ivan Tolstoy collected dozens of Western and Eastern tales with similar motifs. According to Zhirmunsky, only two of them, the *Odyssey* and *Alpomish*, demonstrate the remarkable similarity of motifs and their order within the story in the part where the hero returns to his homeland. It can be referred to as the 'Return of the hero.' However, Zhirmunsky maintained that these similarities could not be attributed to mutual influence between the *Odyssey* and *Alpomish*, since any direct contact between the two stories was difficult to explain either historically or geographically.

*Even though there are significant similarities between the two stories, the Odyssey and Alpomish, it is hard to believe that these similarities could have emerged as a result of direct contact between the two stories. It is unlikely that Alpomish could have been influenced by the Odyssey at the initial stage of formation. It would be impossible to explain this kind of contact historically. It is more probable that these two oral stories included some old motifs that in the past were popular among many different peoples. (1974: 317 [translated from Russian])*

In other words, Zhirmunsky postulated that the two stories developed based on some ancient motifs that circulated among different peoples who lived in different parts of the world and that the *Odyssey* and *Alpomish* were born in Ancient Greece and Central Asia independently. However, in his statement, Zhirmunsky clearly ignored one important historical fact: Greek culture long influenced the geographical area in which *Alpomish* is disseminated. It is not clear why Zhirmunsky disregarded this fact in his research: was it because the contact between the two cultures, Central Asian and Greek, was something that happened back in the past, many centuries ago, or was it just because he underestimated the role of Greek influence on the culture of the Central Asian peoples?

Central Asia, which is sometimes called the crossroad of civilizations due to its geographical location, experienced many wars. Throughout its history, the region has been conquered and ruled by many different nations and was part of many great empires. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the region was conquered by

Alexander the Great,<sup>2</sup> and later became part of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> It is thought that during this period, Central Asia experienced a significant Greek influence. Even though Central Asia lost its direct connection to the Greek civilization with the fall of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, the influence of Greek culture did not cease completely.

There is historical evidence that reveals the presence of Greek culture in the region in later centuries. Most of the discovered objects represent the past material culture, such as coins, statues, or even ruins of ancient cities. However, there are some related to nonmaterial culture as well. For example, some manuscripts, supposedly parts of *Aesop's Fables*,<sup>4</sup> written in the Old Turkic, Parthian, and Sogdian languages were discovered in Xinjiang. The manuscripts are thought to have been written sometime between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. (Henning 1945). Some murals depicting scenes from the same *Aesop's Fables* were discovered in Penjikent, located in Tajikistan (Compareti 2012). Unfortunately, evidence of this kind is very limited: due to many wars in the region, much evidence, remnants of the material and non-material culture of the past have been lost or destroyed on purpose.

Karl Reichl considered the possibility of the *Odyssey's* transmission to Central Asia; however, he stressed that such a hypothesis would be difficult to prove. At the same time, he mentioned another story in the *Book of Dede Korkut* that could become another clue to understanding the route of transmission (Reichl 2001). It is a story about a giant ogre named Tepegöz. It resembles the famous episode of the *Odyssey*, in which the hero blinds a one-eyed giant Polyphemus. Is it just a coincidence that the two famous episodes of the *Odyssey*—the blinding of Polyphemus and stringing the distinctive bow in a disguise—appeared in the folk tradition of the Turkic people of Central Asia?

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2 The northeasternmost part of Alexander the Great's kingdom, Alexandria Eschata (lit. 'Alexandria the Farthest'), was established in the southwestern part of the Fergana Valley (Uzbekistan) at the location Khujand (Tajikistan).

3 The Greco-Bactrian Kingdom was the easternmost part of the Hellenistic world that included Bactria, a historical region between the Hindu Kush mountain range and the Amu Darya river, and Sogdiana and occupied the territory between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers from 250 to 125 B.C.

4 *Aesop's Fables* is a collection of stories attributed to Aesop, a slave and storyteller, who is believed to have lived in ancient Greece around the 6th century B.C.

Here, I would like to present some research that will demonstrate the cultural importance of the *Odyssey* and strengthen my hypothesis. According to Henri Irene Marrou, the works of Homer who is thought to be the author of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* were an important part of elementary education in antiquity. Education manuals of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century included excerpts from Euripides and Homer. Competitions were held in middle-schools where students recited memorized works of Homer (Marrou 1964: 153-166). Richard Hunter maintained that works of Homer in the ancient world were the foundation of literacy; he explains this as follows: "through Homer one learned Greek and Greekness" (Hunter 2004: 246). Lawrence Kim pointed out that teaching Greek and Greek culture was important to maintain control over the vast territory spreading from Egypt to Bactria (present-day Central Asia). Kim noted that since Homer was part of elementary education, learning Homer's works meant learning Greek (Kim 2015: 7).

Next, I would like to quote some of the scholars who lived just a few centuries after Alexander the Great. Dio Chrysostom, a Roman philosopher, and historian of the 1<sup>st</sup> century wrote the following in his work, *Discourses*:

*... even many of alien race, yes, so that not only men who speak two languages and are of mixed stock, though unacquainted with much else that is Greek, are very familiar with Homer's verses, but even some who live very far away. For example, it is said that Homer's poetry is sung even in India, where they have translated it into their own speech and tongue. The result is that, while the people of India have no chance to behold many of the stars in our part of the world—for example, it is said that the Bears are not visible in their country—still they are not unacquainted with the sufferings of Priam, the laments and wailings of Andromachê and Hecuba, and the valour of both Achilles and Hector: so remarkable has been the spell of one man's poetry!* (Dio Chrysostom 1946 (online resource))

Plutarch, a Greek biographer, and essayist of the 1<sup>st</sup> century wrote in his *De Fortuna Alexandri*:

*Yes, the equipment that he had from Aristotle his teacher when he crossed over into Asia was more than what he had from his father Philip. But although we believe those who record that Alexander once said that the *Iliad* and the*



*Odyssey accompanied him as equipment for his campaigns, since we hold Homer in reverence, yet are we to condemn anyone who asserts that the works of Homer accompanied him as a consolation after toil and as a pastime for sweet leisure, but that his true equipment was philosophic teaching, and treatises on Fearlessness and Courage, and Self-restraint also, and Greatness of Soul? (Omitted) But when Alexander was civilizing Asia, Homer was commonly read, and the children of the Persians, the Susianians, and the Gedrosians learned to chant the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides. And although Socrates, when tried on the charge of introducing foreign deities, lost his cause to the informers who infested Athens, yet through Alexander Bactria and the Caucasus learned to revere the gods of the Greeks. (Plutarch 1936 [online resource])*

As we can see, Homer's works, including the *Odyssey*, were an important part of Greek culture that was apparently intentionally spread into the conquered territories. Since Central Asia formed part of those territories, we cannot disregard the possibility that the *Odyssey*, or some of its most famous episodes, could have been brought there by the Greeks.

I believe that the *Odyssey*, or perhaps parts of the story, like its predominantly performed episodes, could have been brought to the region as part of Greek culture, spreading to the conquered territories. It is by going through changes in a new cultural environment or merging with other tales, such, for example, *The Tale about Good Prince and Bad Prince*,<sup>5</sup> in the folk tradition of local peoples that the *Odyssey* was reborn as a prototype of *Alpomish*. Some researchers, especially in Japan, doubt the possibility of the *Odyssey's* transmission to such a broad territory as there is currently no material evidence to prove the existence of the *Odyssey* in Central Asia.

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5 One such instance could have been a Buddhist tale, *The Tale about Good Prince and Bad Prince*, which was believed to be a possible source of the Japanese *Odyssey*, *Yuriwaka Daijin*. *Alpomish* not only shares similarities with the *Odyssey* but also has motifs similar to *The Tale about Good Prince and Bad Prince*, which can be found in two Buddhist sutras, *Da Fang Bian Hong Bao En Jing* and *Xian Yu Jing*. The latter is known in its English translation as *The Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish*. And even if in the case of the *Odyssey* there is no material evidence to prove the possibility of the story's dissemination in Central Asia, in the case of the Buddhist tale such evidence exists. There is a manuscript of the tale written in the Old Turkic language, the language which was commonly used by the Turkic tribes of Central Asia in the past. The manuscript was discovered by Paul Pelliot in Gansu.

However, further research may reveal or provide additional information that will help us understand the phenomena of transmission.

### ***Alpomish and Yuriwaka Daijin***

Let us now examine the Japanese *Odyssey*, *Yuriwaka Daijin*. The story about Minister Yuriwaka has a long research history. The possible continental origin of the story has long been a matter of discussion among scholars. Dozens of similar tales, including Central Asia's *Alpomish*, have been introduced since 1906 when Shōyō Tsubouchi first suggested that the story about Yuriwaka was an adaptation of the *Odyssey*. In his 1977 "Yuriwaka densetsu to nairiku ajia," Taryō Ōbayashi introduced *Alpomish* as one of the continental stories that shared motifs with *Yuriwaka*. Akira Fukuda also mentioned the similarities between the two stories in "Chūsei no shinwateki densō: kōga saburō yuriwaka daijin o megutte" (1989). In the same article, Fukuda suggested that *Yuriwaka Daijin* could have had two sources of origin: one of them was a story related somehow to the tale about Good Prince (tales similar to *The Tale about Good Prince and Bad Prince*), and the other was a story about the hero's beautiful wife, who was being stolen from her husband (tales similar to the *Odyssey*) (1989). Fukuda introduced a number of different tales and legends in his article, but he did not consider any of the stories to be a direct source for the story of Yuriwaka.

Even though the content of *Alpomish* was introduced in Japan decades ago, and the possible continental origin of Yuriwaka's story has long been a matter of discussion among scholars, a thorough comparative analysis and research aimed at establishing possible connections between Central Asian *Alpomish* and Japanese *Yuriwaka* have never been undertaken, possibly due to the lack of information available in Japanese on Central Asian narratives.

My study showed that the two stories shared remarkable similarities. As we can see from TABLE 1, the *Odyssey* and *The Tale about Good Prince and Bad Prince* are two completely different stories. They have almost no common motifs, except for one: the hero leaves his home and goes to a faraway country looking for adventures. This motif is common to dozens of other stories, which is why it should be disregarded as a similarity in this particular case. It is clear, though, that the two stories, the *Odyssey* and *The Tale about*

*Good Prince and Bad Prince*, both share motifs with the Central Asian story *Alpomish*. Moreover, motifs are grouped within the story and appear in the same sequence. The first half of *Alpomish* is similar to *The Tale about Good Prince and Bad Prince*. The second half of *Alpomish* resembles the *Odyssey* in its details. As for *Yuriwaka Daijin*, it has similarities with both the *Odyssey* and *The Tale about Good Prince and Bad Prince* but clearly shares more motifs with *Alpomish*.

**TABLE 1**

Motif	<i>The Odyssey</i>	<i>The Tale about Good Prince and Bad Prince</i>	<i>Alpomish</i>	<i>Yuriwaka Daijin and Yuriwaka Sekkyō*</i>
1) CHILDLESS LORD and BIRTH THROUGH THE INTERVENTION OF SUPERNATURAL POWER (The hero is born through the intervention of some supernatural power to childless parents.)	×	○	○	○
2) GREAT DEED (The hero goes to a faraway country in order to accomplish a great deed. After successfully reaching his goal, he falls asleep. While deeply asleep, he is left alone in a deserted place.)	×	○	○	○
3) HELP OF A LOCAL (A local man (or some creature) becomes the hero's friend and helps him.)	×	○	○	○

\* The Japanese story about Yuriwaka is commonly known today through two recorded versions: *Yuriwaka Daijin*, a story in the repertory of *kōwakamai*, one of the performing arts of the Muromachi period, and *Yuriwaka Sekkyō*, a narrative from the repertory of the *ichijō* ritualists from the Iki islands.

Narrative Development across Cultural and Historical Contexts

4) SHEPHERD and AN INSTRUMENT (A local shepherd helps the hero. He gives the hero an instrument. The sound of the instrument attracts the attention of a local princess).	×	○	○	×
5) LOCAL PRINCESS (The local princess falls in love with the hero and wants to marry him.)	×	○	○	×
6) MESSENGER BIRD (The hero, while away from home, communicates with his family with the help of a bird.)	×	○	○	○
7) STEALING THE HERO'S WIFE (The hero's wife, who he left back home, is being forced to marry someone else while the hero is away.)	○	×	○	○
8) CHANGE OF APPEARANCE (The hero's appearance changes, which is why no one can recognize him when he returns home.)	○	×	○	○
9) SERVANT (The hero has a loyal old servant who helps him when he returns home.)	○	×	○	○
10) RECOGNITION BY A MARK (The hero has a mark on his body. The servant recognizes his master by seeing the mark.)	○	×	○	○

11) RECOGNITION BY AN ANIMAL (Some animals recognize the hero despite his changed appearance.)	○	×	○	○
12) HERO'S SON (The hero has a son who helps him when he returns home.)	○	×	○	×
13) BOW (The hero strings his distinctive bow.)	○	×	○	○
14) REVENGE AND PUNISHMENT (The hero kills his enemy and becomes the lord.)	○	×	○	○

In the case of *Alpomish* and *Yuriwaka Daijin*, we are dealing not just with random motivic similarities but with the similarity of the general plot. The two stories have a similar structure: all motifs common to both stories appear in a very similar sequence. The general structure of the two stories can be shown as follows.

- A) CHILDLESS LORD
- B) DISRESPECT
- C) PROPHECY
- D) BIRTH THROUGH THE INTERVENTION OF SUPERNATURAL POWER
- E) GREAT DEED
- F) SLEEP
- G) BETRAYAL
- H) ISOLATION
- I) HELP FROM A LOCAL
- J) STEALING HERO'S WIFE
- K) MESSENGER BIRD
- L) CHANGE OF APPEARANCE
- M) SERVANT
- N) RECOGNITION BY A MARK

- O) RECOGNITION BY AN ANIMAL
- P) BOW
- Q) REVENGE AND PUNISHMENT

In folklore studies, there are several theories on the origin of similar tales worldwide. Most popular among them are the theories of universal origin (polygenesis) and of transmission or diffusion of tales (monogenesis). In his *Istoricheskaya Poetica* (1940), Alexander Veselovsky discussed theories on the possible origin of folk tales and stated that we should make a clear distinction between categories such as motif and plot.

*Motif is the smallest unit of a tale that was born as an answer to the doubts of the primitive mind and daily observation... The plot is made up of a combination of different motifs... In those cases when the number of motifs is multiple and their combination within the plot is complex, it is unlikely that similar folk stories of different peoples could have emerged naturally in the process of comprehension of the world and life common to all humanity. It is possible that simple motifs could have emerged in different parts of the world, but the similarity of the plot that is made up of their combination suggests the possibility of transmission. (1940: 500 [translated from Russian])*

Veselovsky further developed his hypothesis and suggested that in some cases, routes of transmission are possible to trace. Veselovsky stated that when similar tales appear in regions that have no connection, the route cannot be determined and the connection is difficult to explain, but in the case of the regions connected through a cultural phenomenon, such as, for example, Buddhism, the possibility of transmission should not be disregarded.

In the case of *Alpomish* and *Yuriwaka Daijin*, the territories of dissemination of the stories have the connection mentioned by Veselovsky, namely Buddhism. It is hard to determine exactly how the story of *Alpomish*, or its prototype, could have been brought to Japan. But we can assume that the route of transmission is likely to have been storytelling, an oral tradition that had a connection with Buddhism, rather than some written source. The story could have travelled from one language to the other as some structure, or a plot made up of motifs.

One of the problems I faced in my research that substantially weakened

my hypothesis about the origin of *Yuriwaka Daijin* in Japan was that no tales explaining the transmission were found in the territories between Central Asia and Japan, namely China and Korea. As mentioned above, some tales were introduced; however, none of them were similar to *Yuriwaka Daijin* to the extent that Central Asia's *Alpomish* had been. However, the fact that similar tales have not been identified yet does not mean that they do not exist. My research over the past few years has led to *The Epic of King Gesar*, a story found in Tibet, Mongolia, Buryatia, and some other regions of China, and another story from Korea, the *The Song of Chunhyang*, neither of which was introduced in earlier research, despite obvious similarities to the Japanese version of *The Homecoming Husband*.

### ***The Epic of King Gesar***

Next, let us examine the *The Epic of King Gesar*. This work exists in many versions: oral, written, and printed. It was collected from various ethnic groups in Tibet, China, Mongolia, Buryatia, and other regions of Continental Asia. The first printed edition of the epic, the Mongolian version, was published in Peking in 1716, at the order of the Kangxi Emperor of the Qing dynasty, but the Tibetan versions are believed to be centuries older. There are numerous theories dating the epic to the 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 3-4<sup>th</sup>, 7-8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> centuries (Jiangbian 1985, 1986; Bell 1931; Rock 1947; David-Neel 2004; Roerich 2013; Damdinsuren 1957). The core of *The Epic of King Gesar* is believed to have been developed from oral traditions, some parts of the epic emerged earlier, and some parts were added later. *The Epic of King Gesar* has undoubtedly undergone transformations over time.

*The Epic of King Gesar* is a lengthy account composed of many shorter episodes about the adventures of the main character, King Gesar. The many existing versions differ greatly in length and content. However, some episodes (chapters) are comparatively stable, regardless of the language, and region where they were collected or recorded, for example, the prologue that tells the story of the birth of King Gesar and an episode about Kings of Hor. The episode about Kings of Hor is basically the story of the homecoming husband who returns in disguise and saves his wife from the unwanted husband. The episode resembles *Alpomish* to a great extent, a fact noticed by

Victor Zhirmunsky, who studied *Alpomish* and other continental tales with similar motifs.

**TABLE 2**

Motifs	<i>The Epic of King Gesar</i>	<i>Alpomish</i>
1) The hero must go to a faraway country. There he defeats a powerful enemy.	○	○
2) The wife of the hero is being forced to marry someone else.	○	○
3) The hero stayed in the faraway country with another woman.	○	○
4) The reason he stayed away was because he was given a drink (poison).	○	○
5) While the hero is away, his family (wife) communicates with him using a flying object (a bird, flying arrow, etc.).	○	○
6) The hero's horse helps him leave the faraway country (becomes awakened).	○	○
7) The hero changes his appearance when he returns home so that nobody can recognize him.	○	○
8) There is a mark on the body of the hero. Someone who knew the hero from his childhood recognizes the mark.	○	○
9) The hero strings the strong bow that no one else can.	○	○
10) The hero kills the enemy and reunites with his wife.	○	○

Tsendiin Damdinsuren, George Roerich, and Geoffrey Samuel compared and analysed different versions of the *The Epic of King Gesar*. They suggested that the episode about Kings of Hor could be one of the oldest parts of the long epic because it is one of the most stable parts in the variants and regional



versions (Damdinsuren 1957; Roerich 2013, 2014; Samuel 2005). Moreover, Damdinsuren and Roerich noted that parts of the epic, including an episode about Kings of Hor, could have developed because of migrations of the Central Asian people during the periods of unrest, or through cultural exchange between the people of Tibet and other regions of Central Asia (Damdinsuren 1957; Roerich 2013, 2014).

Interestingly, the similarity between this episode of *The Epic of King Gesar* and the Japanese *Odyssey*, *Yuriwaka Daijin*, was not noticed by any Japanese researcher until now, probably because the episode was part of a long epic, and certain research in the Russian and English languages was unavailable in Japan.

### ***The Song of Chunhyang***

Another tale of the Korean homecoming husband that I came across while searching for the continental links between *Alpomish* and *Yuriwaka Daijin* is *The Song of Chunhyang*. This is one of Korea's best-known love stories, mostly known as a song of the *pansori* repertory. The exact date of composition and author of the original tale is unknown. Unlike other tales discussed in this paper, *The Song of Chunhyang* lacks dramatic battle scenes and an episode with the bow —one of the elements of the tale-type of the homecoming husband— but it can be categorized as *The Homecoming Husband*.

The heroine, Chunhyang, the daughter of a *kisaeng*, and Yi Mong-ryong, the magistrate's son, fall in love and get married. However, Yi soon leaves Chunhyang because he must follow his father to Seoul. While Yi is away, Byeon Hak-do replaces Yi's father. He tries to seduce Chunhyang and wants her to become his lover. Chunhyang, faithful to her beloved Yi, refuses his advances, so Byeon imprisons her. He decides to punish her during his birthday celebration.

Meanwhile, Yi becomes a secret royal inspector, an undercover officer sent to spy on government officials secretly. While traveling, he learns that Chunhyang is in danger. He returns and, for a while, does not reveal his identity to anyone. He visits his wife at the prison and tests her loyalty. Then, in disguise, he comes to the magistrate's residence during the celebration. There, he composes a poem when no one else can at the poem contest. Then,

Yi reveals his identity, punishes the magistrate, and reunites with his wife.

We find an interesting adaptation of the motif 'the husband returns in disguise' to the historical realities of the Joseon period. The change in the husband's appearance into a beggar is linked to the duties that he performs as a secret royal inspector. Also, the Korean version of *The Homecoming Husband* Hu lacks an important component found in other stories: the bow competition. It is substituted in *The Song of Chunhyang* by the poem contest. Most probably, this is because the demand for representation of physical strength was not as important as the demonstration of intellectual abilities in this version of *The Homecoming Husband*, namely wit and eloquence, which were necessary for Yi to perform his duties as a secret royal inspector.

Further analyses of the stories mentioned in this paper as they appear today, as well as research on the cultural and historical backgrounds of the territories of their dissemination, must be undertaken. The results gained through this research will contribute to the study of *The Homecoming Husband* tale-type in many regions, shedding light on new facts about the history of cultural exchange and the role of migration and religion in the transmission of culture and thought and will prompt further comparative research of Asian literature and folklore.

### **Factors influencing dissemination and vitality of a tale-type**

Folklore is a world where information, be it a tale, anecdote, charm, or anything else of this genre, is alive for as long as folk demands it. The moment the interest of an audience is lost, the information stops being transmitted and is eventually forgotten unless it has been written down or recorded. For some reason, the tale-type of the homecoming husband discussed in this study has always been very popular among different people. Moreover, it is one of the stories that is referred to as a source of inspiration, even today. One such example, is the novel by Paolo Coelho titled *Zahir*, a sort of adaptation of the *Odyssey*.

What makes the story so popular? It is easy to explain why it was popular in the past. It tells the story of a man who had to leave his home and wandered for years till he finally got a chance to return; it is about a wife who has been faithfully waiting for her husband despite hardships; it is a type of story that

warriors or travelers, anyone who has left their home and family, would want to hear during a long campaign or trip to a faraway country. The story also touches on many psychological topics about a male-female relationship that is universal and still of interest and urgency even today, such as, for example, a cheating husband, an all-forgiving wife, and a competition between men for a woman. In other words, the homecoming husband is a tale-type that appeals to both men and women, regardless of the language they speak or the century they live in. This is a reason why the story has lived for so long and has been easily transmitted from region to region, passing language and cultural barriers.

Some of the motifs mentioned in my research are universal. I believe simple stories about the homecoming husband could have been created and existed independently in different parts of the world. However, whenever more elaborate and complicated plots were possible, they were borrowed and adapted to the realities and circumstances of the new culture.

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