

**Tales From Before the Long, Long Ago: A Study of Tuvan Ethnopoetics<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

Tuvan oral epics are a source of fascinating poetic devices and unique folk motifs, and the popular epic *Boktu-Kirish, Bora-Sheelei* is no exception. The first part of this paper explores the folk motifs – both those common to other cultures and those unique to Tuvan epics – that appear in *Boktu-Kirish*. Propp's work on the structure of folktales and Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* prove valuable in this work, with Propp's analysis defining the structure of the tale and Thompson's exhaustive catalogue of folk motifs identifying uniquely Tuvan motifs.

The second section explores Tuvan poetic structures using work done by Hymes in his studies of Native American ethnopoetics. His framework is used to identify poetic devices and connect them to meanings in the text. The two primary areas of focus are sound symbolism and the structural use of the emphatic suffix [daa]. The final section of this paper suggests that the connection between sound and meaning in Tuvan could have applications to the cognitive study of orality.

My hope is that the analysis in this paper will demonstrate not only the artistic value of Tuvan tales, but also the importance of analyzing the folklore of less-studied languages. Without knowledge of similar traditions, the study of oral literature would be limited indeed.

**1.0 Introduction**

The study of folklore is generally considered to be firmly in the territory of either literature or anthropology; very few linguists make a point of looking at a culture's folklore except as a medium for studying syntactic or phonological structures. However, this view of folk traditions is rather shortsighted, as folk literatures are full of fascinating linguistic phenomena that, I argue, can only be truly studied by analyzing folk literatures using a traditional, formalist folkloric approach, in addition to a rigorous linguistic analysis.

In this paper, I aim to demonstrate the efficacy of such an approach by using both folkloric and linguistic tools to analyze the poetic devices of Tuvan folklore, specifically as they appear in the Tuvan oral epic *Boktu-Kirish, Bora-Sheelei* (hereafter referred to as *Boktu-Kirish*). This tale tells the story of two siblings, the elder brother Boktu-Kirish and his younger sister Bora-Sheelei. In the tale, Boktu-

Kirish dies falling off his horse, and his sister is forced to enter a contest to win the sorceress-princess Angyr-Chechen as a wife, as only Angyr-Chechen is a powerful enough magician to bring Boktu-Kirish back from the dead. This goal involves Bora-Sheeley disguising herself as her elder brother and entering a series of contests posed by the princess' father, Shang Khan, who wants only the bravest, strongest man to take his daughter as a wife: an archery contest, a wrestling contest, and a horse race. Bora-Sheeley has to disguise herself as Boktu-Kirish because the magical princess will only bring a man back to life if she believes that he is her husband, and because, although it is never explicitly stated, it appears that only men can enter the competition.

Along the way, Bora-Sheeley's quest is threatened by Shang Khan's treacherous spy, who continually attempts to expose her true gender by suggesting modification of the competition to the Khan, such as the forcing the contestants to wrestle shirtless and enter the horse race naked. Bora-Sheeley is helped in her quest by her talking horse, Ajan-Kulaa, who aids her in disguising her gender by covering her chest with bear fur and creating fake genitals from the head of a goose. Ajan-Kulaa was formerly Boktu-Kirish's horse, and it was his fall that caused the accident that killed Boktu-Kirish, which helps explain the horse's grief at his master's death, and his persistence in the quest to bring Boktu-Kirish back to life.

*Boktu-Kirish* is an oral epic from Tuva, a semi-independent republic found in southern Russia, just west of Mongolia. Tuvan itself is a Turkic language that has been heavily influenced by Mongolian and, more recently, Russian. The Republic of Tuva was officially annexed by the Soviet Union in 1944; prior to that, the Republic

had been an autonomous satellite state dominated by the Soviet Union. The use of the Tuvan language has dropped in the years since the annexation due to Soviet language policies that aimed to discourage the use of indigenous languages and promote Russian in their place. However, feelings about the Tuvan language remain strong; the 1989 Soviet census recorded that 99.2 percent of Tuvans consider Tuvan, not Russian, to be their mother tongue. Despite these strong feelings, almost all Tuvans speak Russian, and while some are bilingual, some are entirely monolingual<sup>2</sup>.

Traditional Tuvan society is nomadic, like that of most central Asian peoples, and many of the indigenous peoples of Tuva and the surrounding area still live a nomadic lifestyle, surviving by herding yak and reindeer<sup>3</sup>. Tuvan society is traditionally Buddhist, with a good deal of shamanism and animistic worship integrated with more traditional Buddhist practices. However, when Tuva was first dominated by the Soviet government in the 1930s, even prior to annexation by the Soviet Union, these practices were liquidated in favor of Soviet atheism (Levin 16). While the independent Tuvan government of the 1920s had strongly supported Buddhism, by the early 1930s all Buddhist monks had been stripped of the right to vote, and all but one previously existing Buddhist monastery had been destroyed. In recent years, however, due to more liberal policies on the part of the Russian

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<sup>2</sup> Levin, Theodore. *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing: Sound, Music, and Nomadism in Tuva and Beyond*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Ballis, William. "Soviet Russia's Asiatic Frontier Technique: Tana Tuva." *Pacific Affairs*. 14.1 (1941). Print.

government, Buddhism, like other Tuvan cultural traditions, has experienced a resurgence<sup>4</sup>.

Today, Tuva is most widely known because of the practice of Tuvan throat singing, a musical style in which “a single vocalist can simultaneously produce two distinct pitches by selectively amplifying harmonics naturally present in the voice” (Levin xi). Artists such as the groups Huun-Huur-Tu and Alash, as well as individuals such as Kongar-ol Ondar, have popularized the art form in the West, touring and producing recordings that are enjoyed by audiences the world over. Traditional Tuvan verbal arts such as *Boktu-Kirish*, however, have not enjoyed the same kind of success, and are largely unknown to audiences outside of Tuva, with the exception of certain academics.

*Boktu-Kirish* is a very popular tale in Tuva and has appeared in many versions, several of which have been written down and studied by linguists and folklorists over the years. The two most notable versions were both published by Russian folklore scholars, and were collected by Xunan-Kara<sup>5</sup> and V.Sh. Cham'yan<sup>6</sup>. Cham'yan's version is the longest telling of the tale that has been collected, measuring 9440 lines, and it is not a single telling of the tale, but rather sections from different versions that have been combined into a single text. The version with which I will be working is a very short telling of the tale – only 381 lines – told to K. David Harrison by the Tuvan storyteller Shojdak-ool Xovalıg, which was published in 2005.

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<sup>4</sup> Alalatu, Toomas. “Tuva: A State Reawakens.” *Soviet Studies*. 44.5 (1992). Print.

<sup>5</sup> Хунан-Кара. *Боктуг-Кириш, Бора-Шелей*. Новосибирск: Сибирское Предприятие РАН, 1997. Print.

<sup>6</sup> Чамьян, В.Ш. *Бокту-Кириш, Бора-Шелей на тувинском языке*. Кызыл: Тувинское книжное издательство, 1995. Print.

I will begin my exploration of this tale with a very strict formalist analysis, using the methods developed by Vladimir Propp and Stith Thompson to break the tale down into its basic structures and motifs, which I will then compare to Western folklore, including fairy tales – in particular the Russian tales that Propp used to create his formalist structure – and oral epics such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. This section will demonstrate the usefulness of a traditional folkloric approach in describing both the common and the extremely unusual themes and motifs found in *Boktu-Kirish*.

In the second section of the paper, I will analyze the tale in terms of the poetic devices used, in particular the use of formulaic names, formulaic speech, alliteration, and emphatic suffixes. This discussion will once again draw connections between *Boktu-Kirish* and other, more widely known folktales and oral epics. In addition, the phonological analysis of these poetic features will pave the way for the application of linguistic theory in section three.

The third section of the paper will apply linguistic theory – specifically the theory of sound symbolism and Dell Hymes' theory of the structured use of affixes – to the poetic structures discussed in the previous section. This section will demonstrate the importance of the study of folklore in linguistics, as I believe the instances of sound symbolism that appear as part of the poetic devices in *Boktu-Kirish* have not been previously documented in the literature on Tuvan. In addition, the connection between sound and meaning as exemplified by Tuvan sound symbolism is an understudied area in linguistics, largely because of Saussure's widely accepted formulation of the arbitrary relationship between sign and

meaning. However, the sound symbolism apparent in *Boktu-Kirish* argues that there is some connection between sound and meaning, and contributes greatly to the limited existing literature on sound symbolism. The extremely strong connection between sound and meaning found in Tuvan is unique, but also applicable to the study of sound symbolism cross-linguistically. By showing the incredible richness of Tuvan sound symbolism, and the cross-linguistic applications of its study, I hope to demonstrate the importance of linguistic analysis of folk literature, in which patterns of this type are quite common.

The other theoretical area on which I focus is the connection between emphatic suffixes and the tale's overall structure. A pattern of expressive prefixes in tales from the Takelma tribe was analyzed by Hymes to demonstrate that these prefixes are used to indicate and intensify certain structural moments in the tales. I will argue that a similar phenomenon occurs with the Tuvan emphatic suffix [daa], which occurs many times in the tale but has not, as of yet, been shown to occur in any sort of structured way. While the patterned appearance of this particular affix is a much more specific example of the overlap between phonology and meaning than the presence of sound symbolism, it is still an important one. The existence of this sort of patterned affixation in the Tuvan tale supports the conclusion reached by Hymes in his discussion of Takelma tales and demonstrates that these sorts of patterns might be cross-linguistically relevant, given their presence in these two very different folkloric traditions.

The final section of the paper will suggest possible implications of the previously discussed linguistic theory to the study of cognitive science, particularly

that of memory. I will work with Rubin's theory of folk literature and memory to demonstrate that the way in which alliterative patterns interact with meaning via sound symbolism, and the way that the emphatic suffix [daa] delineates the structure of the tale, can make the work easier to memorize and transmit, as well as easier for the listener to follow. These connections will pave the way for further research into the interactions between poetic devices, meaning and memory, an area that has been generally understudied, largely because of previous assumptions that studies of folklore are not the work of trained linguists, but rather the province of anthropologists or literary scholars.

### 1.1 Review of Literature

When writing about oral epics, the natural place to start reading is Albert Lord's seminal work *The Singer of Tales*<sup>7</sup>. This book – a study of oral epics as informed by Lord's work with the South Slavic guslars, epic storytellers from eastern Europe – was the first work to treat oral epics as legitimate texts, with poetic structures, motifs, and everything else that being a work of (oral) literature entails. Lord was also the first researcher to hypothesize that some of the seminal works of the Western canon, such as the Homeric epics and *Beowulf*, were originally oral in nature. Using his observations of the poetic structures utilized by the guslars, Lord drew parallels between these epics and the aforementioned Western epics, and in doing so revolutionized the study of orality. However, for the purpose of this paper, Lord's work is not particularly relevant. In restricting himself purely to the traditional Western epics and those of the guslars, Lord created a formulaic model

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<sup>7</sup> Lord, Albert B. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000. Print.



of oral epic that, while fascinating and revolutionary at the time, is not applicable to the epics of many non-Western traditions, such as Tuvan, due to a heavy focus on devices such as rhyme and meter that are simply not present in Tuvan oral epics. Because of this discrepancy, I will not be using Lord's model to analyze *Boktu-Kirish*, but I do not want to ignore the importance of this seminal work in the study of folklore.

Another interesting background work is Foley's *How to Read an Oral Poem*<sup>8</sup>. Foley's discussions of the characteristics of an oral work are useful to my analysis of poetics, despite not being a strictly linguistic analysis. Foley's book contains a chapter on ethnopoetics, the real center of this paper, which provides useful descriptions of some (though not nearly all) frequently employed poetic devices in the context of oral epics, specifically *Beowulf*. While Foley's discussion of ethnopoetics is cursory at best, he does acknowledge the existence of many different forms of poetics, and examines some devices commonly used in oral epics. In addition, his analysis of the poetics of *Beowulf*, while rather speculative, is a useful demonstration of the practice of analysis of the spoken characteristics of oral texts encountered primarily through writing. This analysis will prove useful because, although I do have access to a recording of *Boktu-Kirish*, due to my limited knowledge of Tuvan much of my analysis will be performed using only a textual version.

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<sup>8</sup> Foley, John Miles. *How to Read an Oral Poem*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002. Print.

The formalist, content-based analysis of Tuvan oral works will be performed within the framework of Propp's structural analyses<sup>9</sup> and Thompson's motif-driven analyses<sup>10</sup>. Both Propp and Thompson provide indispensable tools for breaking down the content of folk literature into manageable chunks, which can then be connected to certain phonological phenomena. However, both analyses are rather imperfectly suited to the analysis of the Tuvan oral tradition. Propp in particular deals exclusively with folk and fairytales from the Western tradition, and his analysis is not prepared for the very different and sometimes bizarre occurrences and plot twists of *Boktu-Kirish*. Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* is also somewhat weighted toward the Western tradition, and thus does not contain certain motifs that appear in Tuvan oral literature. These two works, however, are very useful when analyzing the structure and content of folk literature, and I consult both sources, in spite of their few deficiencies.

For this paper, the most important work on oral traditions is Dell Hymes' folkloric study, *In Vain I Tried to Tell You*,<sup>11</sup> and its follow-up, *Now I Only Know So Far*<sup>12</sup>. In this work, Hymes aims to bridge the gap between structural linguistics, on the one hand, and literature and anthropology, on the other. Hymes states in his introduction, "When one looks at linguistic elements from the standpoint of their integration into a higher level of discourse in the service of a higher function, new

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<sup>9</sup> Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Trans. Laurence Scott. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005. Print.

<sup>10</sup> Thompson, Stith. *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989. Print.

<sup>11</sup> Hymes, Dell. *In Vain I Tried to Tell You: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. Print.

<sup>12</sup> Hymes, Dell. *Now I Only Know So Far: Essays in Ethnopoetics*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003. Print.

relationships come to light that are contributions to linguistics itself” (Hymes 8); in other words, looking at the linguistically grounded poetic devices in the context of the narrative and the motifs used therein, we can discover previously unknown uses and meanings of these devices. For example, in *Now I Only Know So Far* Hymes argues that the strict verse structure of the Kathlamet “Salmon’s Myth” is determined by “an analogue in the grammar of the language”:

Some distinctions are within units [of the morphemes that make up the verb]. Thus within the positions of subject (ergative agent), object, and indirect object, there are positional distinctions involved in the marking of number, agency and reflexiveness. The latter differentiations are analogous to the amplification of the verse positions in the third stanza [of “Salmon’s Myth”]. They cohere as a unit in relation to the rest of the structure (Hymes 146).

Hymes’s analyses range from extremely broad, language-wide patterns like the connection between verse structure and verb structure mentioned above, to more tale-specific patterns, such as the pattern of structural affixation in Takelma tales, which is discussed in detail in a later section. In this paper, I will follow Hymes’ philosophy in an attempt to shed light on certain intriguing phonological patterns found in Tuvan oral epics – some specific to the tale or the oral tradition, and some more wide-ranging and relevant to the grammar of the language as a whole – and thus draw a connection between the poetics of these epics and the content of the narratives.

Another source that will aid in forging connections between sound patterns and meaning is Tsur's book *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive?*<sup>13</sup> Like Hymes, Tsur analyzes specific sound patterns – in particular, the acoustic qualities of vowels and consonants – that he believes contribute additional layers of meaning to speech. Tsur also spends a good deal of time analyzing spatial and tactile metaphors conveyed using sound patterns, a phenomenon which is extremely prevalent in Tuvan, and which I will discuss in greater detail later in the paper. Tsur's work, like Hymes', will prove useful by demonstrating that a connection between phonological patterns and meaning does exist, and by giving examples of this connection. These examples will provide some useful guidelines as I look for meaningful sound patterns in Tuvan oral epics.

Two other sources that I will discuss when dealing with sound symbolism are Helen Vendler's *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*<sup>14</sup> and Hinton, Nichols and Ohala's *Sound Symbolism*<sup>15</sup>. Vendler's work, despite dealing with the decidedly un-folkloric Shakespearean sonnets, is a wealth of information about sound symbolism patterns in Shakespeare, many of which are consistent with sound-symbolic patterns found in *Boktu-Kirish*. Hinton et al., on the other hand, provides an overview of sound symbolism in languages around the world, ranging from well-known sound symbolic patterns in English – for example, an interesting discussion by Rhodes of aural imagery and sound symbolism (Hinton et al., 276-292) that is

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<sup>13</sup> Tsur, Reuven. *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive: The Poetic Mode of Speech Perception*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992. Print.

<sup>14</sup> Vendler, Helen. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997. Print.

<sup>15</sup> Hinton, Leanne, Joanna Nichols, and John J. Ohala, eds. *Sound Symbolism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Print.

similar to the patterns demonstrated by Harrison – to lesser-known patterns found in American Indian, Australian and African languages. These works will allow me to demonstrate possible cross-linguistic applications of the study of Tuvan sound symbolism.

Some examples of Hymes' and Tsur's connections between phonology and meaning in the context of Tuvan can be found in Harrison's *South Siberian Sound Symbolism*<sup>16</sup>. In this paper, Harrison documents and discusses a rich, productive system of reduplicative sound symbolism found in Tuvan. Harrison's analysis found that using different vowels in a reduplicative form adds different shades of meaning to the reduplicated phrase, and that these meanings are remarkably consistent, no matter the word being reduplicated. In addition, Harrison finds strong sound-symbolic patterns in consonants, patterns which are applicable to my analysis of sound symbolism in *Boktu-Kirish*. I hope to use Harrison's analysis of the layers of meaning provided by the different vowel sounds to inform my own phonological analysis of Tuvan oral literature. Because this brief paper is my only source that actually deals with Tuvan phonology, it will prove extremely useful in applying Hymes' phonological analyses – which deal only with Native American languages – to Tuvan.

In addition to simply drawing a connection between phonological patterns, I also intend to show the cognitive importance of poetic devices. In his book *Memory*

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<sup>16</sup> Harrison, K. David. "South Siberian Sound Symbolism." *Languages and prehistory of central Siberia*. Ed. Edward J. Vajda. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004. Print.

*in Oral Traditions*<sup>17</sup>, Rubin details the ways in which poetic devices aid in the memorization of epics. The question of how *Boktu-Kirish's* 400 lines, not to mention oral epics such as the 25,000 line *Iliad*, 12,000 line *Odyssey*, and the 500,000 line Kyrgyz *Manas*, could possibly be committed to memory is one that has long baffled literary scholars and cognitive scientists alike. In his book, Rubin's adapts Lord's formulaic theory of Homeric epic by generalizing it into a broader theory, one that can take into account the constraints inherent in different poetic traditions. The formulaic theory in its original form is useless in the discussion of Tuvan epics, as it deals only with the Homeric constraints of meter and theme. Rubin's adapted theory, however, allows us to make use of other prevalent Tuvan devices – such as sound symbolism and alliteration – and ignore devices that are not present in Tuvan oral epics, such as rhyme.

When studied in combination with folk motifs and poetic devices, Rubin's theory of the cognitive psychology of memory could show us how oral poets perform such impressive feats of memorization. Cognitive poetics is a relatively new field of study, and no such study has ever dealt with the epics of South Siberia. This cognitive analysis of poetics could help unravel the cognitive effects that underlie the memorization of oral epics, which could in turn tell us a great deal about the way human memory works.

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<sup>17</sup> Rubin, David C. *Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-out Rhymes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. Print.

## 2.0 Formalist Analysis

The formalist analysis portion of this paper will be carried out according to two frameworks: the morphological framework set out by Valdimir Propp in his seminal work *The Morphology of the Fairytale*, and the folk motif framework detailed in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. Propp's analysis is used to analyze the plot structure of *Boktu-Kirish*, while Thompson's analysis allows for an analysis of the folk motifs that appear in the Tuvan epic. Both frameworks are useful in that they allow for comparisons between Tuvan epics and the Western folk tradition; however, a heavy focus on Western tales makes Propp and Thompson an imperfect analytical tool.

### 2.1 Propp's Morphological Analysis

Propp's work, which was originally published in 1928, analyzes the plot structure and characters of a folktale as archetypal persons and events, the basics of which are remarkably consistent across many different folkloric traditions. According to Propp, his analysis can be applied to any fairy tale; two of the basic tenets of his work are "The sequence of functions [actions] are always identical" and "All fairy tales are of one type according to their structure" (Propp 22-23). Thus, according to Propp, the characters and events of *Boktu-Kirish* should follow the same archetypal structure as the Russian fairy tales explored in *The Morphology of the Folktale*.

Of course, it is completely legitimate to ask why I consider *Boktu-Kirish* to be a fairy tale, as I've introduced it in this paper as an oral epic. While the story of the Tuvan hero Boktu-Kirish and his (arguably more) heroic sister Bora-Sheelei is

considered to be an oral epic, the version with which I am working is less than four hundred lines long, much shorter than other examples of the genre, such as the Homeric epics. Propp's definition of a fairy tale is not particularly helpful here, as it is somewhat circular; he declares that a fairy tale is "a story built upon the proper alternation of the above-cited functions in various forms, with some of them absent from each story and with others repeated" (Propp 99). In other words, Propp is deciding which tales can be evaluated using his framework by evaluating them to see how well they fit his framework.

However, I have several reasons to classify *Boktu-Kirish* as a fairy tale. For one thing, although it does not fit perfectly into Propp's structure, it contains many of the morphological features described by Propp. For example, the first event of the tale following the description of what Propp calls the "initial situation" is the departure of Boktu-Kirish to go hunting. This corresponds to Propp's first function, *absentation*. I describe the other Proppian functions that appear in *Boktu-Kirish* later, during the actual analysis part of this section. A full list of Propp's morphological functions and their definitions can be found in Appendix A.

In addition to the presence of many of Propp's functions in *Boktu-Kirish*, I choose to analyze this tale as a fairy tale because of the many non-Proppian traits it shares with Western fairy tale traditions. Many of these traits are folk motifs that can be found in Thompson's index, which I describe in the next section. However, I will mention a few examples here. Motif R158, sister rescues brother, is an important motif in *Boktu-Kirish*, as well as being a motif that is shared by many other traditions, including Icelandic and Indian tales (Thompson Vol. 5, 284).



Another example comes in two related motifs, both of which appear in Irish and Jewish folk traditions: Z292, death of hero, and Z293, return of the hero (Thompson Vol. 5, 565). These two motifs appear as bookends of the tale of *Boktu-Kirish*; the main conflict of the tale is set in motion with his death, and that conflict is resolved when he returns (is brought back to life) by the magical princess Angyr-Chechen.

In addition, certain structural aspects of *Boktu-Kirish* correspond very closely to those of fairy tales from the Western tradition, such as Bora-Sheelei's need to complete three tasks in order to win the hand of Angyr-Chechen, the magical princess, and the ever popular motif of the talking animal helper, which is familiar to us from many traditional fairy tales (not to mention their Disney adaptations). Both of these motifs can be found in the traditional Russian fairy tale *Prince Ivan, the Firebird, and the Grey Wolf*<sup>18</sup>: Prince Ivan must perform three tasks – kidnapping Princess Elena, stealing the horse with the golden mane, and finally stealing the Firebird – and he is helped in all his tasks by the Grey Wolf. The overlap between the structure of *Boktu-Kirish* and that of *Prince Ivan* demonstrates the validity of analyzing the Tuvan tale according to the Proppian framework.

Another factor that has influenced my choice to analyze *Boktu-Kirish* using the Proppian framework is that this framework contains many functions that appear in other oral epics. For example, the arrival of Odysseus in Ithaca in *The Odyssey* is the epitome of functions XXIII-XXVII (*unrecognized arrival through recognition*); the disguise of Odysseus as a beggar, the presentation of his bow, his ability to string the bow and shoot it and his recognition by Penelope fit Propp's

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<sup>18</sup> Afanas'ev, Alexander. *Russian Fairy Tales*. Trans. Norbert Guterman. New York: Pantheon, 1945. Print.

structural analysis just as well, if not better, than the events of many more traditional fairy tales. The presence of such a clear example of Propp's functions in another epic tale provides a strong precedent for the analysis of other epics according to this formalist system.

*Boktu-Kirish* in many ways follows the basic structure of Propp's morphological framework. The characters fit the seven archetypal roles (*dramatis personae*) designated by Propp (Propp 79-80), with some interesting doubling. The only characters who clearly fit one role are Shang-Khan's treacherous spy, the villain, and Bora-Sheelei, the hero. The character labeled by Propp as the *donor*, the provider of a magical agent, could be said to be either Angyr-Chechen, the magical princess (who is also the magical agent) or Shang Khan, her father. However, Angyr-Chechen and Shang Khan also clearly fill the roles of *the princess* and *her father*. Meanwhile, the talking horse Ajan-Kulaa fills the roles of both *helper* and *dispatcher* (he sends Bora-Sheelei on her quest, and then helps her accomplish it). This doubling of roles provides for an interesting permutation of Propp's basic tale structure.

I have already mentioned the establishment of the initial situation, in which the wealth, skills and good fortune of the siblings Boktu-Kirish and Bora-Sheelei are described at length, and function I, *absentation*, in which Boktu-Kirish leaves to go hunting. The following two functions – *interdiction* and *violation* – are not present in the tale; rather than Boktu-Kirish's death occurring as the result of the violation of an instruction, it is instead presented as a tragic accident. Functions IV and V, *reconnaissance* and *delivery*, do occur in the tale, but they occur much later, while

Bora-Sheeley is competing for the privilege of marrying Angyr-Chechen.

*Reconnaissance* and *delivery* occur simultaneously, when Shang-Khan's spy, the tale's villain, discloses that Bora-Sheeley is actually a woman.

Actions VII and VIII (*complicity* and *villainy*) don't occur in *Boktu-Kirish*; Bora-Sheeley is herself never deceived by the villain – the Khan's spy deceives the Khan multiple times, but never our heroine – and he never causes harm to her or her family. VIIIa (*lack*), however, definitively occurs in the tale; indeed, Bora-Sheeley's lack of her brother because of his death is the occurrence that drives the plot of the tale. IX, X and XI (*mediation*, *counteraction*, and *departure*) also all occur, and in the correct order: Ajan-Kulaa suggests that Bora-Sheeley must win the hand of Angyr-Chechen (*mediation*); Bora-Sheeley disguises herself as her brother (*counteraction*); and she and Ajan-Kulaa leave for Shang-Khan's camp (*departure*).

The next section of the tale – Bora-Sheeley's participation in Shang-Khan's three tests, victory, and subsequent receipt of Angyr-Chechen's hand in marriage – is by far the longest section, but is subsumed by only three of Propp's morphological features: *the first function of the donor*, *the hero's reaction*, and *provision or receipt of a magical agent* (XII-XIV). It is also during this part of the story that the previously mentioned functions of *reconnaissance* and *delivery* occur, when Shang-Khan's spy attempts to show that Bora-Sheeley is really a woman.

Functions XV-XVII (*spatial transference between two kingdoms*, *struggle*, *branding*) also don't occur in this tale. However, XVIII-XX (*victory*, *liquidation* and *return*) do occur: *victory* (which would probably be better termed *defeat of the villain*) when Bora-Sheeley indirectly defeats Shang-Khan's spy by winning the

competition and the hand of Angyr-Chechen; *liquidation* when Angyr-Chechen brings Boktu-Kirish back to life; and *return* when Bora-Sheeley brings Angyr-Chechen back to her camp. The last two functions, interesting enough, are backwards in the tale; Bora-Sheeley's return happens before the restoration of Boktu-Kirish.

Functions XXI-XXIV (*pursuit, rescue, unrecognized arrival, unfounded claims*) are also not present in this tale; however, the next two functions, *difficult task* and *solution* (XXV and XXVI) can be said to occur several times, just not in this part of the story. I would argue that this short cycle is repeated three times, with each repetition corresponding with one of the tasks Bora-Sheeley must complete to win the hand of Angyr-Chechen. For the archery contest, the *difficult task* is simply winning the contest; for the wrestling contest, the task is appearing to be a hairy-chested man, and the *solution* is achieved through the application of a bear skin; and for the footrace, the difficult task is the necessity for Bora-Sheeley to disguise her female genitals, and the solution comes in the form of her goose-head penis. This method of trebling a series of functions is completely acceptable in Propp's schematic: Propp maintains that a tale remains a single tale "in the event of the trebling of entire moves" (Propp 94).

The end of *Boktu-Kirish* fits nicely into Propp's structure. Functions XXVII and XXVIII (*recognition* and *exposure*) are not applicable, as there is no false hero in the tale. The final three functions (*transfiguration, punishment, wedding*) all appear in the story, although *punishment* happens earlier, when the Khan's spy is punished after Bora-Sheeley wins the competition. *Transfiguration* is the moment when Bora-

Sheelei appears as herself to greet her brother and Angyr-Chechen, and while there is not technically a wedding in the story, the union of Boktu-Kirish and Angyr-Chechen, who go on to rule the “lands to the north,” is close enough to count.

To summarize, there follows a list of the Proppian functions that appear in *Boktu-Kirish*, in the order in which they appear in the tale:

- (1) *initial situation*: The siblings’ wealth, good fortune and skill are established.
- (2) *absentation* (I): Boktu-Kirish leaves the camp to go hunting.
- (3) *lack* (VIIIa): Boktu-Kirish is killed.
- (4) *mediation* (IX) : Ajan-Kulaa tells Bora-Sheeleei that she can save her brother by winning the hand of Angyr-Chechen.
- (5) *counteraction* (X): Bora-Sheeleei disguises herself as Boktu-Kirish.
- (6) *departure* (XI): Bora-Sheeleei and Ajan-Kulaa leave to participate in the contest.
- (7) *first function of the donor* (XII): Shang-Khan announces that whoever triumphs in the three contests will marry his daughter.
- (8) *the hero’s reaction* (XIII): Bora-Sheeleei proceeds to compete in the competition.
- (9) *difficult task* (XXV): Bora-Sheeleei must win the archery competition.
- (10) *solution* (XXVI): Bora-Sheeleei wins the archery competition.
- (11) *reconnaissance* (IV) and *delivery* (V): Shang-Khan’s spy discovers that Bora-Sheeleei is a woman.
- (12) *difficult task* (XXV): Bora-Sheeleei must wrestle shirtless, and somehow disguise her breasts.
- (13) *solution* ((XXVI): Bora-Sheeleei covers her breasts with bear skin, and wins the wrestling competition.
- (14) *difficult task* (XXV): Bora-Sheeleei must race naked, and somehow appear to have a man’s genitals.

- (15) *solution* (XXVI): Bora-Sheeley makes false genitals out of the neck and beak of a goose, and wins the race.
- (16) *provision or receipt of a magical agent* (XIV): Bora-Sheeley wins Angyr-Chechen's hand in marriage.
- (17) *victory* (XVIII): Shang-Khan's spy is discredited.
- (18) *punishment* (XXX): Shang-Khan's spy is banished from the kingdom.
- (19) *return* (XX): Bora-Sheeley brings Angyr-Chechen back to the siblings' camp.
- (20) *liquidation* (XIX): Angyr-Chechen brings Boktu-Kirish back to life.
- (21) *transfiguration* (XXIX): Bora-Sheeley drops her disguise, and reappears as a woman.
- (22) *wedding* (XXXI): Boktu-Kirish and Angyr-Chechen are united, and live on to rule the lands to the North.

As we can see from this list, many (although not all) of Propp's functions appear in *Boktu-Kirish*, demonstrating that, although this tale comes from a tradition that is very different from that of Western folk and fairytales, it contains many similarities to tales that are more familiar to a Western audience. The fact that some of Propp's functions do not appear in *Boktu-Kirish* is simply a result of the fact that Propp's framework was written using a very specific folk tradition – that of Russian fairy tales – to inform his decisions. We would expect to find similar deviations from Propp's strict framework in other folkloric traditions, such as the Native American folk literature explored in Hymes' analysis.

## 2.2 Thompson's Motif-Index Analysis

The Proppian analysis of *Boktu-Kirish* helped break down the structure of the tale into identifiable chunks. However, while the basic structure of the tale is now

understood, the content of the tale has not yet been analyzed. Using Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, I look at some of the motifs that appear in *Boktu-Kirish*, which allows me to compare the Tuvan tale to more widely known oral epics and tales. This analysis will also break the content of the tale down into manageable chunks, a process which proves useful when, in the next section, I attempt to draw connections between bits of meaning and phonological patterns.

Before I begin this analysis, a word about the *Motif-Index*. The index catalogues motifs that appear in many different folk traditions by categorizing them into groups; for instance, one group deals with motifs that involve animals, another deals with family relationships, a third deals with magical helpers, and so on. A motif itself is basically a chunk of information that appears in a tale; it can be a character, a place, an action, etc. The *Motif-Index* is quite lengthy; it runs to six volumes, one of which is simply an index for the others. In this paper I examine some of the more and less common motifs found in *Boktu-Kirish*; some of these motifs are commonly found in folk literature from other traditions, while others are previously undocumented and do not appear in Thompson's index.

The first motif that appears in the tale is an extremely common one, identified by Thompson as A1101.1, golden age: a former age of perfection. This motif is found in traditions ranging from ancient Greek mythology to native American creation myths to the Hebrew Bible (Thompson Vol. 1 194); thus, it is not at all surprising to find this extremely popular motif in *Boktu-Kirish*. This motif, however, is presented with some specifically Tuvan twists (all text from *Boktu-Kirish* is taken from Harrison 2005):

- (23) 16. Once upon a time Boktu-Kirish and Bora-Sheelei, 17. these two siblings had meat (piled) higher than their shoulders, 18. and livestock reaching higher than their heads.

These particular descriptions utilize specifically Tuvan formulations, such as the description of “meat piled higher than their shoulders,” to describe the abundance that blesses the siblings.

Another extremely common motif found in *Boktu-Kirish* is that of the animal helper, specifically that of the helpful horse, classified as motif B401 (Thompson Vol. 1 432). This motif, like the golden age motif, is found in a huge variety of folk traditions: according to Thompson, helpful horses appear in European, Filipino and Indian myths, just to name a few. Ajan-Kulaa is the epitome of the helpful animal; he tells Bora-Sheelei how to save her brother, he suggests she disguise herself as a man, and he knows what to do when her true gender is about to be exposed. In addition to the basic helpful horse motif, Ajan-Kulaa’s actions conform to several other animal helper motifs. When the reader first encounters Ajan-Kulaa he is weeping over the body of Boktu-Kirish:

- (24) 43. When [Bora-Sheelei] had laid out the diving bones, she saw (that) 44. her elder brother, on a northern slope named Arzaity in the Ala mountains, 45. had died. 46. And his horse Ajan-Kulaa stood crying at his side, so it seemed.

This description fits motif B301.4.3, faithful horse joins in keen [expression of grief] at hero’s death (Thompson Vol. 1 423). Then, when Bora-Sheelei does not know how to bring her brother back to life, Ajan-Kulaa tells her how to win the hand of the sorceress Angyr-Chechen, which conforms to motif B505.2, animal tells hero where to find magic object (Thompson Vol. 1 442).



Because I already performed a Proppian analysis on this tale, I will be largely avoiding motifs that have already been analyzed according to Propp's formalist theory. When these motifs are discounted, the third extremely common motif to appear in *Boktu-Kirish* is the disguise of a woman as a man, specifically motif K1837, the disguise of a woman in man's clothes (Thompson Vol. 4 440). Bora-Sheeley's willingness to disguise herself as a man is shared by women in Greek, Icelandic, Chinese and Indonesian traditions, as well as many others. In addition, Bora-Sheeley's disguise fits into another motif, K1821, disguise by changing bodily appearance (Thompson Vol. 4 436), a motif found in French Cajun folklore.

*Boktu-Kirish*, in addition to containing the previously mentioned common motifs – not to mention the many other motifs it shares with other folk traditions – also contains certain motifs that appear nowhere in Thompson's seemingly exhaustive index. For example, although the motif of a woman disguising herself as a man is extremely common among folk traditions, there are no motifs that specify a woman disguising her female genitalia as male genitalia using any method, much less the head and neck of a goose as Bora-Sheeley does:

- (25) 275. Then her horse said: 276. "As for that, it's just fine. 277. Way over there in a striped mountain forest called Arzaity, 278. on its northern side in a lake are swimming a lot of white geese. 279. Among those white geese, 280. there's a white gander with a big red bill like a fist. 281. Having killed that white gander, 282. and peeled off its skin, take the white gander's parts, 283. and make from them a man's testicles, 284. and take its fist-like big red beak, 285. together with its neck, and make from them a man's genitals, 286. and when you've magically glued shut your woman's genitals with them, 287. that's that!

This motif – which is extremely bizarre to a Western listener, but which gives no pause to an individual accustomed to the Tuvan folk tradition – is extremely unique

and found only in the Tuvan oral literature, at least as far as is indicated by previous research on the folk motifs found in oral traditions.

The Proppian and motif-based analyses of *Boktu-Kirish* demonstrate not only the similarities between the structure and content of the tale and that of better-known Western tales and epics, but also shows the places where *Boktu-Kirish* diverges from these better-known tales. This analysis is useful in that it allows us to analyze the tale through comparison, using the tales with which a Western reader is familiar to elucidate the structure and content of a tale that, at first glance, might seem very foreign. The divergences between the structure of the Tuvan tale and the structures of these better-known tales can be used to ask questions about the way in which Tuvan culture influences Tuvan oral literature: for example, is it significant that, in *Boktu-Kirish*, *lack* is brought about not through the work of a villain, but rather through a tragic accident, an accident, no less, for which Ajan-Kulaa, the helper, is to blame? This questions, and others of its type, are not within the scope of this paper to answer, but they could create interesting topics for future anthropological research.

As far as the linguistic scope of this paper is concerned, some might question the linguistic value of a formalist, decidedly non-linguistic analysis. However, I would argue that a true folkloric analysis cannot be completed without the completion of such a formalist aspect. In order to bridge the gap between folklore and linguistics, an analysis must include both a folkloric and linguistic component. The linguistic component – that of phonological poetics, in particular an exploration

of sound symbolism – comes in the next section. A linguistic analysis, however, is meaningless without knowledge of the larger structure of the tale.

### 3.0 Phonological Analysis of Poetic Structures

When analyzing any kind of literary or poetic work, it is important to analyze not only the structure and content of the work, but also the poetic devices used by the poet or teller. Poetic devices in Tuvan provide a good deal of material for new analysis, as they differ greatly from the two most prevalent Western devices: rhyme and meter. Tuvan oral epics, in common with much other Tuvan folk literature, do not use rhyme. Due to the language's extremely regular case system and verbal conjugation system, as well as an unusually strong system of vowel harmony, it is remarkably easy to create rhyming lines in Tuvan, and thus rhyming is not considered a mark of poetic skill. Rhyme is occasionally used in more contemporary Tuvan poetry, but there are always other poetic devices at work. Meter is also rather unimportant in Tuvan epics; while Harrison believes that *Boktu-Kirish* can be transcribed using heptasyllabic line scansion<sup>19</sup>, there is no distinct meter when the tale is spoken, and it is unclear if the aforementioned line scansion is actually in use in the tale.

In the place of rhyme and meter, *Boktu-Kirish* relies heavily on the use of formulaic names, formulaic speech, alliteration, and emphatic suffixes that draw the listener's attention to certain words. I will be examining each of these phenomena in this section of the paper; the following section will deal with two poetic devices – alliteration and the emphatic suffix [daa] – and demonstrate the ways in which these suffixes contribute to the meaning of the tale.

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<sup>19</sup> Harrison, David. "A Tuvan Hero Tale, with Commentary, Morphemic Analysis, and Translation." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125.1 (2005). Print.

A quick note about orthography: all Tuvan examples in this text are written using a system of orthography traditionally used by Turkic linguists rather than I.P.A. In this system, sounds that do not appear in the Roman alphabet are marked with diacritics, with the exception of /ŋ/ which represents the same sound that this symbol represents in I.P.A., the “ng” found in the English “sing.” An example of a letter that utilizes a diacritic is the phoneme written as /š/, which represents the “sh” sound found in the English “ash,” and the phoneme /č/, which represents the “ch” of “child.”

The first poetic device – that of adding a formulaic description onto the name of each character – is reasonably well known to any reader of the Homeric epics. Those of us who are familiar with wily Odysseus and Hector, breaker of horses, will not be surprised to learn that many of the characters in *Boktu-Kirish* are always identified using not only their names, but also some sort of epithet that describes that character’s role in the story. Most notably, Boktu-Kirish and Bora-Sheelei’s names are constantly accompanied by “elder brother” and “younger sister (for a listing of the morpho-syntactic tags used in excerpts from the tale, see Appendix B):”

- (26)            *šjāan am boktu-kiriš akč-zč*  
                   FORM FORM B-K            elder.brother-3  
 29.            And so it was that elder brother Boktu-Kirish
- (27)            *bora-šeelej kčs dčjma-zč*  
                   B-S                    girl            younger.sibling-3  
 33.            Bora-Sheelei his younger sister

It is worth noting that [bora], as appears in the name Bora-Sheelei, can also be used to mean *gray*. However, in the tale, this form of *gray* only appears in the context of

Bora-Sheelei's actions when she runs with the speed of a gray hare during the footrace section of the story:

- (28) *am bora -toolaj bo-op xuul-up al-gaš-t#j*  
 now gray hare PROB-CV change-CV SBEN-SS-GEN  
 310. But while she was changed into a gray hare,
- kiži-ler=bile čarž#-#-ga taar-#-pas bol-gan-da*  
 people-pl=INS compete-PF-DAT suit-RCP-NEG/F be-PST-LOC  
 311. it wasn't proper for her to compete with people.
- #ndža-ar xuul-ba-jn*  
 do.thus-PF change-NEG-PST  
 312. So, she didn't actually change into one,
- a bora -toolaj-n#j maŋ-#-n ke-ep ap-kaš-t#j*  
 but gray hare-GEN run-3-ACC CLOC-CV take-SS-GEN  
 313. but simply took on the running speed of a gray hare.

However, earlier in the tale the teller refers to gray horses, and a different word for *gray* is used:

- (29) *öle -bula č#g#-#-lig*  
 gray -gray horse.herd-ADJ  
 20. the herd of gray horses.

In this tale, Bora-Sheelei's name itself might be an indication of her powers of shapeshifting, as [bora] is only used to mean *gray* when it applies to Bora-Sheelei, not when it applies to gray horses. It should be noted that these two examples are the only places in the text where any word meaning *gray* is used; however, despite the small sample size, the pattern here is clear. Bora-Sheelei, then, in addition to being described by the epithet [k#s d#ŋma-z#], *his younger sister*, also has a name with specific connotations about her abilities.

In addition to formulaic names, formulaic speech patterns often appear in *Boktu-Kirish*. The clearest example of these speech patterns comes at the beginning

of the story, when the teller introduces the story with an extremely formulaic line that is akin to – but much more complex than – the familiar Western formula “once upon a time”:

- (31)            *šĵaan am, ertengi-niŋ erte-zin-de, burungunŋ*  
                   FORM FORM morning-GEN early-3-LOC long.ago-GEN  
 6.            Once upon a time, in the very earliest morning of time, before  
  
                   *murnun-da*  
                   before-LOC  
                   the long, long ago,

This formulation is a common one, seen in various other tales, even those of different genres such as origin myths and scary stories. In addition to the entire line serving as a formulaic beginning to the story, this large chunk of formulaic speech contains a smaller, even more formulaic piece; the phrase [šĵaan am] is, according to Harrison, completely meaningless – it is glossed simply as FORM FORM. However, the phrase is part of the tale for a reason; it is clearly symbolic of something akin to the traditional Western *once upon a time*, which is the translation that Harrison uses for these enigmatic words.

The phrase [šĵaan am] is used several more times in *Boktu-Kirish*, in the section that Propp would call the *initial situation*. This formula appears no less than five times in the first forty lines of the tale, and each time it begins a section that describes a different aspect of the initial situation. The first use of the formula, which is seen in example (30) above, begins the tale, and simply describes the state of the world as it was during the time of the tale:

- (32) 6. Once upon a time, in the very earliest morning of time, before the long, long ago, 7. at the end of the bad times, before the good times, 8. when the deer and doe, the wild elk stag and elk doe overflowed from

their woods, 9. the mountain goat, the hare, and the grouse overflowed from their forests, 10. a rich, wonderful, and plentiful good time it was, so they say.

The second two sections of the initial situation are similar to the first; the second section describes the physical characteristics of Boktu-Kirish, and the third section tells of the great material wealth of the two siblings. The fourth initial situation section is, once again, similar. It is another descriptive section, in which the siblings' respective skill sets are described.

The fifth [šjjaan am] section, however, is slightly different. In its last usage in the tale, the formula is used to end the description of the initial situation and to jumpstart the action of the story:

- (33)            *šjjaan am*    *bir-le*            *kattap Boktu-Kiriš ak+zí*  
 FORM FORM one-EMPH    once    B-K            elder.brother-3  
 38.    Once upon a time, her elder brother Boktu-Kirish
- àrga sñ-dan*                    *aŋna-p*            *čoru-t-kaš*  
 forest mountain.ridge-ADL hunt-CV            go-PERF-SS  
 39.    went hunting on the forested mountain ridge,
- šuuut-la*                    *is*    *čok*    *čid-e*            *ber-ipt-ir*  
 completely-EMPH    track    NEG    disappear-CV    INCH-PERF-PF  
 40.    and disappeared without a trace.

At this point, it is clear that, while the formula [šjjaan am] is, in one way, performing the same function as it does in the four previous occurrences – that is, to indicate the start of a new section of the tale – it is also doing something slightly different. The previous instances of this phrase were all used to set up the background of the story. In this instance, however, the phrase is being used to indicate the end of one function, the *initial situation*, and to signal the beginning of another, *absentation*. It is clear, then, that the meaning of [šjjaan am] is fluid, and can change depending on the





dictated by Tuvan's extensive system of vowel harmony, and thus is not as significant as it initially appears. Some vowel patterns could be considered alliterative; any pattern that contained multiple uses of [ö], the least common vowel in Tuvan, would be worth considering. The vowels [a] and [ɨ], however, are the two most commonly occurring vowels in Tuvan, a fact which, when combined with the knowledge of vowel harmony, makes their multitude of appearances in these lines unremarkable. However, even when these vowels are disregarded, the phonetic structure of the line is clearly worth discussing.

The pattern in example (35) is, despite the conventions dictated by vowel harmony, extremely poetic. The three words that make up the line clearly have very similar structures, with each root word containing two syllables, starting with [a], which is followed by either [kɨ] or [ʒɨ], which creates very strong repetition within the line. The second two words, [aʒɨɨ-n] and [aʒɨ-p] echo the sound pattern found in [akɨ-zɨ], *elder brother*, which emphasizes the importance of *elder brother* in the line, thus creating a beautiful, alliterative line to express Bora-Sheeley's sadness over the loss of her brother. I also argue later in the paper that the repeated phoneme in this line, [ʒ], is strongly sound symbolic and likely helps to emphasize Bora-Sheeley's weeping through its associations with both running water and speech. This line is similar in its poetics to the Shakespearean line elucidated by Vendler: her example is ten syllables long and contains three instances of the same phoneme, while the Tuvan line, which is slightly shorter at eight syllables, also contains three instances of one phoneme, which clearly constitutes a poetic pattern.

Another, more extensive alliteration pattern is found later in the story, when Bora-Sheelei uses her powers of shape-shifting to change her appearance to look like her brother. This passage is an example of both within-line alliteration and line-initial alliteration, which contains sixteen instances of the phoneme [k] in just three lines:

- (36)            *köründžük-ke* *kör-dü-n-gen*                            *köründžük-ke*  
                  mirror-DAT look.at-CAUS-PASS-PST            mirror-DAT  
 83.            she looked at herself in the mirror. When she looked at herself

*kördün-er-ge*  
 begin-PST=DEIC  
 in the mirror,

- kirbej*            *kara sal-tiġ*,            *čoon kara kežege-liġ*  
                  short/thin    black beard-ADJ    thick black braid-ADJ  
 84.            she had a thin black beard and a thick black braid of hair,

- kadır* *xavak-tiġ*    *kalčan baš-tiġ*            *ajak=deg*            *ala*  
                  steep forehead-ADJ bald head-ADJ tea.bowl=like striped  
 85.            her forehead was steep, her head was shaved bald in front, and

*karak-tiġ*  
 eye-ADJ  
 her eyes were striped and big as a tea-bowl.

It is clear that there is a very strong alliterative pattern here, given that no less than sixteen instances of the phoneme [k] appear in these three lines. If we include the voiced counterpart of [k], [g], that number rises to a whopping twenty-five instances within three lines.

It should be noted that, in this passage, [g] is always part of a grammatical morpheme, mostly case endings and adjectival markers, and these markers generally change in order to conform with the final consonant of the previous morpheme. However, even if we discount the appearance of [g], the sixteen

instances of [k] still provide a strong example of an alliterative pattern. Even if we discount instances of repetition – for instance, the second repetition of *she looked at herself in the mirror*, there are still twelve instances of [k] in this excerpt, a true pattern by any measure.

A strong example of beginning-of-line alliteration – one which also has a clearer link to the meaning of the passage than either of the two previous examples – can be found later in the story, during the scene in which Bora-Sheelei handily dispatches all her opponents in the wrestling competition. In this twelve-line section, each set of three lines starts with the same letter, and each set of lines corresponds with the defeat of one opponent in the competition:

- (37)            *dendii šīrak möge devi-p ke-er orta*  
 very strong wrestler perform.eagle.dance-CV come-PF while  
 242. When a very strong wrestler came up, waving his arms in an eagle dance
- deeldigen-niŋ dezi-i=bile degele-eš-tiŋ*  
 kite-GEN speed-3=INS trip.up-SS-GEN  
 243. she tripped him with the speed of a kite,
- tej-i-n kudu kŋ-dī-r düžür-üp*  
 top.of.head-3-ACC downwards make-CAUS-PF fall-CV  
 244. and dropped him upside down on top of his head.
- emin orta šīrak möge eškeded-i-p kel-ir orta*  
 very middle strong wrestler strut-CV CLOC-PF while  
 245. When another very strong wrestler strutted up to her,
- ezir kuš-tuŋ erez-i=bile eežeen-den al-gaš-tiŋ*  
 eagle bird-GEN courage-3=INS heel-ABL take-SS-GEN  
 246. she took his ankle with the courage of an eagle,
- etk-i-n ažīr šīvada-p*  
 shoulder-3-ACC across throw.down-CV  
 247. flung him over her shoulder, and threw him down.

248. *kajgamčĭk šĭrak möge xal-ĭp ke-er orta*  
 amazing strong wrestler run-CV CLOC-PF while  
 When an amazingly strong wrestler ran up to her,
249. *xartĭga-nĭŋ kašpĭgaj-ĭ=bile kattaj kak-kaš-tĭŋ*  
 falcon-GEN agility-3=INS together start.running.to-SS-GEN  
 she ran towards him simultaneously with the agility of a falcon
250. *xajt kĭl-dĭr düžür-üp*  
 SYMB do-CAUS-PF make.fall.down-CV  
 and made him fall down in a flash.
251. *kondžug šĭrak möge korgu-du-p kel-ir orta*  
 very strong wrestler fear-CAUS-CV come-PF while  
 When another very strong wrestler approached, trying to  
 frighten her,
252. *koj-gun-nuŋ kašpĭgaj-ĭ=bile xos öde xala-aš-tĭŋ*  
 hare-GEN agility-3=INS empty-space through run-SS-GEN  
 she slipped between his legs with the agility of a hare,
253. *kurug čer-ge kuruguldaj-ĭn kuruldur olur-t-a*  
 empty earth-DAT tailbone-3-ACC painfully sit.down-CAUS-CV  
 and she made him fall very painfully on his tailbone on the  
 bare ground.

As can be seen from this example, the first phoneme of each line follows a very distinct pattern: *d-d-t, e-e-e, k-x-x, k-k-k*. These sounds follow not only a specific phonemic pattern, but the initial words of each line also follow a pattern within the section. This pattern is *very, animal name, body part*. The only occasion where the semantic pattern is violated is in the last line of the last section, in which the final word, [kurug], is not the name of a body part, but rather means *empty* or *bare*. In the first section, the words are [dendii], *very*, [deeldigen-niŋ], *kite*, and [tej-i-n], *top of the head*. The next three sections follow the same pattern, with the one exception mentioned previously: [emin], *very*, [ezir], *eagle*, [etk-k-in], *shoulder*; [kajgamčĭk],

*amazingly*, [xartıga-nıŋ], *falcon*, [xajt], a symbolic word translated here as *in a flash*; and, in the final section, [kondžug], *very*, [koj-gun-nun], *hare*, [kurug], *empty*.

This section is a very strong example of line-initial alliteration as a poetic device. This device serves several purposes in the tale; it helps keep the structure organized by clearly delineating Bora-Sheeley's defeat of each separate wrestler; it serves a mnemonic device for the poet; and, I will argue later in this paper, the specific phonemes used to differentiate the sections both echo and add to the meaning evoked by the animal metaphors in each section.

The fourth important poetic device used in *Boktu-Kirish* is the repeated use of emphatic suffixes that draw attention to certain important words and phrases. For example, two emphatic suffixes appear in the following line:

- (38)            *čaa, küžür er-ler=daa        beletken-i-le        ber-gen*  
                   DISC poor male-PL=EMPH prepare-CV-EMPH AUX-PST  
 139.    So, even the poorest men began to prepare for the competition

In this example, emphatic suffixes appear attached to both *men* and *prepare*, thus emphasizing (some might say over-emphasizing) that every man is preparing for the competition. This device serves two purposes: it adds dramatic tension to the story, by showing that Bora-Sheeley will face significant competition in her attempt to win Angyr-Chechen for her brother, and it removes the tale from common conversational style and marks it as being a form of art.

Another example of the use of emphatic suffixes – this time in combination with alliteration – comes earlier in the poem, when Ajan-Kulaa is explaining to Bora-Sheeley why, despite the fact that she has physically changed into her brother, she cannot change her breasts and genitals:

- (39) *sen ol iji emi-iŋ-ni=daa kʃ xindi-iŋ-ni=daa*  
 you these two breast-2-ACC=EMPH girl genitals-2-ACC=EMPH  
 99. “Those two breasts of yours and your girl’s genitals,
- kandža-ar=daa ösker-ti-p šida-vas sen*  
 do.thus-PF=EMPH change-CAUS-CV be.able-NEG\F you  
 100. you cannot change in any way.
- ʃndžalza=daa janzʃ-bürü arga-lar-nʃ*  
 nonetheless-EMPH different-QUAN methods-PL-ACC  
 101. However, by using
- ažig-la-p tur-gaš-tʃ*  
 use-VSF-CV AUX-SS-GEN  
 various methods,

In this example, the emphatic suffix [daa] is repeated four times. This repetition makes possible an alliteration pattern built around the phoneme [d]. This pattern is not as strong as the alliterative passages discussed in examples (35), (36) and (37), featuring only eight usages of the phoneme [d] in three lines, a figure that is raised to eleven when the phoneme’s devoiced counterpart [t] is included. However, this constitutes an alliterative pattern as per the earlier definition, which only calls for three instances of a particular phoneme in one line. The emphatic suffix, then, which provides four of the eleven instances of the alliterative phoneme, is truly what makes the passage alliterative; without it, the frequency of [d] would not be high enough to demonstrate a clear pattern.

The emphatic suffix in this example, in addition to creating an alliterative pattern, also emphasizes the importance of Bora-Sheeley’s femininity. The suffix is attached to four different roots: [emi], *breasts*; [xindi], *genitals* (specifically female genitals); [kandža], *do thus*; and [ʃndžalza], *nonetheless*. The first two instances of the suffix add emphasis to Bora-Sheeley’s breasts and genitals, meaning her

femininity, which is a very important topic throughout the story. Indeed, her inability to change these two features drives much of the plot of the tale, and a good deal of time is spent describing how she goes about disguising her feminine features. These emphatic suffixes, then, are drawing attention to a very important element of the tale. Much the same function is served by the third emphatic suffix, which emphasizes Bora-Sheeley's inability to change her feminine characteristics into masculine ones.

The fourth use of the suffix, however, is slightly different. Rather than drawing the listener's attention to Bora-Sheeley's inability to complete her disguise, it signals Ajan-Kulaa's ability to help his mistress disguise herself completely. This suffix, then, signals a change in the topic of Ajan-Kulaa's utterance, from a simple description of the problem to said problem's solution. In this way, the emphatic is used to draw the listener's attention to this shift in topic, much in the same way that the speech formula [šjjaan am] is used first to make the listener pay attention to the description of the initial situation, and then to signal the shift from this description to the action of the tale. Thus, in this example, the emphatic suffix [daa] again removes the tale from the common conversational style and adds dramatic tension by focusing the listener on the apparently insurmountable nature of Bora-Sheeley's problem; however, it also contributes to the alliteration present in the passage, and works to signal the shift from description to action.

The use of the emphatic suffix [daa] in this passage is also important to a structural pattern that encompasses the entirety of Bora-Sheeley's transformation, and her subsequent participation and victory in the Khan's competition. This



structure will be discussed in much more detail in the next section of the paper; suffice it to say that the use of the emphatic in this passage sets the pattern for a pattern in which [daa] delineates the structure of each of the three events in the competition, in terms of the obstacles faced by Bora-Sheeley, specifically in regards to her gender and the difficulty of disguising it.

The four poetic devices discussed above – formulaic names, formulaic speech, alliteration and the use of emphatic suffixes – are four of the most common poetic devices found in *Boktu-Kirish* and other Tuvan literature. Of these devices, I will focus the most on alliteration and emphatic suffixes in the following section, where I will attempt to show that alliterative patterns are not only connected to, but add to the meaning of the lines or sentences through the use of sound symbolism, and that the regular use of patterned emphatic suffixes follows the structure of the tale in a meaningful way. However, it is important to note that these devices are not the only poetic devices used in Tuvan epics, tales and poems. *Boktu-Kirish*, in addition to the previously mentioned poetic devices, also contains archaic forms and a special narrative past form that is only used in tales, not to mention the special prosody and intonation used by the teller when reciting the tale (Harrison 4). While these features are extremely important to the tale as a whole, they are not as prevalent as the previously discussed devices, and thus have less relevance to the larger discussion of the role that sound symbolism plays in adding to the meaning of the tale.

#### 4.0 From Phonology to Meaning

Of the four important Tuvan poetic devices mentioned above, two of them – alliteration and the emphatic suffix [daa] – have very clear additional meanings, and make important contributions to the tale as a whole. Alliterative patterns allow for the use of sound symbolism; Tuvan contains a range and prevalence of sound symbolism found in very few languages, and the alliteration detailed above allows for this symbolism to come to the forefront of the tale. The first part of this section will discuss the possible occurrences of sound symbolism in the alliterative patterns that appear in *Boktu-Kirish*. The second part of this section will show that the emphatic suffix [daa] plays a very important role in structuring the tale, in addition to its other functions, which were described in the previous section. These two examples of the concurrent phonological and semantic functions of these poetic devices will demonstrate the importance of analyzing the linguistic patterns found in folk literature, and the previously unexamined functions that these poetic devices might serve in studying oral epics.

#### 4.1 Sound Symbolism

Discussing sound symbolism in any sort of authoritative way is a very tricky proposition. After all, sounds are often, according to Tsur, “‘double-edged’: that is, they may be expressive of vastly different, or even opposing, qualities” (Tsur 2). As an example of the multiple expressive possibilities of one particular sound, Tsur provides the reader with two examples of sibilant alliteration that make use of the phoneme /s/, one taken from Poe’s *The Raven* and the other from Shakespeare’s sonnets:

- (40) And the **silken, sad, uncertain** rustling of each purple curtain
- (41) When to the **sessions of sweet, silent** thought,  
I **summon up remembrance of things past**

Both of these examples make extensive use of /s/ alliteration, but this alliteration adds completely different elements to the verse: the first uses /s/ as onomatopoeia to echo the sound of the rustling curtains, and to create an atmosphere of sorrow and dread, while the second uses /s/ to conjure up an image of a quiet and contemplative, but happy state. Clearly, even within the poetic tradition of one language, there is immense variation in the sound symbolism of this one phoneme.

Even greater variation in the meaning of sound symbolism is apparent when we take into account systems of sound symbolism in other languages. For example, in his discussion of sound symbolism in English, Rhodes notes that the high front vowel [i] is, at least in English, often indicative of “high-pitched... sounds. Generally they have a diminutive sense.<sup>20</sup>” Some of his examples follow:

- (42) a. *clink* (from *clank* or *clunk*)  
b. *jingle* (from *jangle*)  
c. *plink* (from *plunk*)

However, an essay on sound symbolism by Diffloth – this one dealing with Bahnar, a member of the Mon-Khmer family spoken in Vietnam – argues that, in this particular language at least, high vowels such as [i] and [u] tend to indicate large things, while low vowels such as [a] imply that the object in question is small. For instance, Diffloth notes that, in Bahnar, the word [çriil] indicates *a pair of large spherical objects*, while its almost identical counterpart [çrööl] means *a pair of small spiritual*

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<sup>20</sup> Rhodes, Richard. “Aural Images.” *Sound Symbolism*. Ed. Leanne Hinton, Joanna Nichols, John J. Ohala. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 276-292. Print.

*objects*<sup>21</sup>. Diffloth's article contains a variety of other examples, which provide solid evidence in favor of the pattern for which he argues. From these examples, we can see that different sounds can symbolize different things in every language, not to mention the earlier point that sounds can have a variety of meaning in the literature of one language. How, then, is it possible to determine the layers of meaning added to *Boktu-Kirish* using sound symbolic devices?

It turns out that, despite the many difficulties inherent in finding sound symbolic patterns, there are some associations with certain sounds that appear to be universal. Now, these arguments may not be fully researched, and it is possible that they can be proven wrong; for example, many linguists, led by Edward Sapir, have argued that there is a universal correlation between high vowels and small things, and low vowels and big things. This assumption was demonstrated in at least one language to be false by Diffloth (Diffloth 107-108). However, this does not mean that there is not evidence in favor of, if not a universal association, a strong pattern, and does not rule out the existence of other cross-linguistic patterns.

For instance, there is evidence that, when talking about vowels, the front-back continuum can be conceptualized, in terms of meaning, as being analogous to a light-dark continuum, with the front vowels seeming lighter and the back vowels more likely to symbolize darkness. In addition, when placing the vowels on a height continuum, the front vowels tend to be universally characterized as being higher; when asked if one moves down or up to get from /u/ to /i/, almost everyone agrees that /i/ is a step up from /u/, despite the fact that, as far as vowel height in the

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<sup>21</sup> Diffloth, Gérard. "i: *big*, a: *small*." *Sound Symbolism*. Ed. Leanne Hinton, Joanna Nichols, John J. Ohala. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 107-114. Print.

linguistic sense is concerned, /i/ and /u/ are the same height. This indicates, according to Tsur, “that certain perceptual aspects of the acoustic signal, irrelevant in principle to the speech mode, do enter consciousness in spite of it all” (Tsur 20). LaPolla’s research also supports this argument; when performing experiments in which English speakers were asked to choose the word that meant “small” from a pair of Mandarin or Cantonese antonyms, of which one contained a rising-tone syllable (a higher-pitched sound) and the other contained a falling-tone syllable (a lower-pitched sound). The English speakers had a similar rate of success on this task as the native Mandarin or Cantonese speakers, demonstrating that this association is not language-specific, but rather at least somewhat universal,<sup>22</sup> although Diffloth would probably like to try a similar experiment on Bahran speakers and see what their success rate would be.

Vendler also argues for a similar use of vowel height sound symbolism, this time in Shakespeare’s sonnets. For example, in Sonnet 29 (“When in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes”) Vendler shows that the strict hierarchical structure of the poem corresponds to vowel height, peaking with a series of words including /i/ to represent the speaker’s rising state in the sonnet’s hierarchy. Vendler explains that “the drama of the poem occurs in the speaker’s moving himself out of the first (social) world and the into the second (natural) one; the puzzle of the poem... is how he managed to pull himself up by his own bootstraps, mired as he is in the social world.” The culmination of this drama arrives in the final lines, when the speaker

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<sup>22</sup> LaPolla, Randy J. “An experimental investigation into phonetic sound symbolism as it relates to Mandarin Chinese.” *Sound Symbolism*. Ed. Leanne Hinton, Joanna Nichols, John J. Ohala. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1994. 130-147. Print.

reaches the highest point he can, represented by “new present participles where the letters are arranged ‘right’ [i.e., in the correct order to correspond with the key work ‘sing’]: *despising*, *arising*, and then the verb *sing* – *sing*, *sing*, *sing*! The poem fairly carols” (Vendler, 161-163). The repeated use of /i/ in these lines is evocative of the final, elevated state of the speaker, the climax of his journey through the ranks of the poem’s hierarchical structure.

The opposite end of the front/back spectrum appears in Sonnet 51 (“Thus can my love excuse the slow offence”), in which the phoneme /o/ is used to emphasize the slow pace of the speaker’s journey. Vendler argues, “The long *o* of *no* is reiterated in the triple use of *slow*, twice in the rhyme position... (*slow*, *no*, *slow*, *go*), and in the presence of *motion* and *going*” (Vendler 251). These two examples convincingly support the front/back vowel hypothesis: in the first, the high front vowel /i/ represents the culmination of a climb through the poem’s strictly hierarchical structure, while in the second example the mid back vowel /o/ emphasizes the slow pace of the speaker’s journey, which to him is the greatest depth of misery.

Similar sound-symbolic patterns have been supported by data from South Siberian languages, Tuvan in particular. Harrison, in his investigation of Tuvan sound symbolism, examined both reduplicated words and single, highly symbolic words. The standard (and highly productive) pattern of Tuvan reduplication consists of a word being repeated twice, the first repetition using its original vowels and the second repetition using a different set of vowels to create a phrase meaning

[noun] and the like: for example, the word [teve], *camel*, is reduplicated to [teve tava], *camels and the like*. (Harrison 3).

The second sound-symbolic system in Tuvan, which is the system relevant to my discussion of alliterative sound symbolism in *Boktu-Kirish*, consists of onomatopoeic words that indicate specific sounds. Harrison conducted an interesting and highly relevant experiment using these words, an experiment which showed clear patterns of sound symbolism in both vowels and consonants. In this experiment, Harrison took consonant combinations that represent a specific type of sound – for instance, turbulence sounds, which are symbolized with a combination of /x/ and /l/ – placed different vowels in the predetermined consonant pattern, and asked Tuvan speakers what the novel words symbolized.

The results that Harrison comes up with are quite striking. In every case that the construction using the high front vowel /i/ is a meaningful construction, it symbolizes either a high-pitched sound, a high-frequency sound, or some combination of the two (all examples taken from Harrison 2004):

- (43) kingir – falling and clanging noise/small bell ringing
- (44) xilir – fluttering, flapping as a skirt or flag in the wind
- (45) dildir – sound of feet shuffling quickly
- (46) šingir – sound of stirrups jangling

All these examples demonstrate that there are, at least to some extent, meanings to these sounds that, in the context of Tuvan, are fairly universal. The phenomena of the high front vowel /i/ related to high-pitched or high-frequency sounds is also supportive of the previously discussed assertion that there is a strong cross-

linguistic tendency for high front vowels to indicate smaller, higher-pitched, or higher-frequency ideas.

In addition to the clear patterns of meaning to the vowels, there are also symbolic meanings associated with consonants in Tuvan. I have already mentioned that turbulence sounds are associated with /x/ and /l/: in addition, impact sounds may be symbolized with /k/ and /ŋ/, and speech- and water-related sounds are symbolized with /š/ and /l/:

(47) koŋgur – sound of a large object ringing; sound of a pile of wood or rocks falling to the ground.

(48) šolur – sound of water in a babbling brook; to be a blabbermouth

So, it is clear that the Tuvan system of sound symbolism gives rise to a phonetic inventory with clear symbolic meanings. This, in turn, allows a user of the language – in particular, a storyteller who is concerned with making his words not only convey the meaning of a story, but sound poetic in doing it – to utilize this arsenal of sound symbolism to strengthen the meaning of his words, and possibly to add meaning as well.

To connect Tuvan sound symbolism to the common Tuvan poetic devices, we can look at the phonetics of the alliterative examples discussed earlier. For instance, in example (34), which is an example of within-line alliteration, the phoneme /ž/ appears twice. This phoneme is the same as /š/ in every aspect except voicing, suggesting that it probably has similar sound symbolic properties. The main semantic properties associated with /š/ are those of speech and running water; the line in example (34) describes Bora-Sheelei's grief over her brother's death, specifically the fact that she is crying after discovering Boktu-Kirish's body. This fits



in very nicely with the symbolic meanings associated with /š/ and, by extension, /ž/, demonstrating that there is most likely sound symbolism at play in the alliteration that makes this line so poetic and evocative.

The pattern of line-initial alliteration found in the wrestling scene in example (37) is also full of sound symbolic patterns. The line-initial phonemes in this section follow a strict pattern of d-d-t, e-e-e, k-x-x, k-k-k, with each three-line segment corresponding to a different wrestler whom Bora-Sheeleei must defeat. In addition, there is a semantic pattern in each three-line segment: the initial word of the first line means *very*, the second line starts with an animal, and the third line starts with a body part.

The phonemes that begin these three-line patterns are each symbolic in some way that corresponds with the semantic meaning of each three-line segment. In particular, the different consonants used in the first, third and fourth segments have sound-symbolic meanings that correspond closely to the action of the tale. For example, Harrison notes that the [k] phoneme, which appears in the final segment of this excerpt and once in the third segment, is often indicative of impact sounds, as shown in example (47), as well as the following examples (Harrison 7):

(48) kizirt – sound of wood breaking; sound of a bone breaking

(49) qazürt – sound of large rocks (falling, etc.)

In the wrestling scene, the phoneme [k] often appears in words that are related to impact, not to mention that this phoneme is widespread in a passage in which much of the imagery centers on people falling or landing on the ground. For example, in line 253, the phoneme appears three times, in each instance at the beginning of a

word that relates to the impact of the wrestler's tailbone on the ground: [kurug], which means *empty* or, in this case, *bare* as in bare or uncovered ground; [kurguldaj], *tailbone*; and [kuruldur], *painfully*. These three words are all about the impact of Bora-Sheeley's opponent's tailbone on the ground, and they all utilize a phoneme with a strong symbolic meaning of impact. The [k] phoneme also appears in line 249, in the evocative word [kak-kaš-tiŋ], which means *start running towards*. It is very possible that the repetition of [k] in this word is symbolic of the impact sounds made by running feet, particularly in the context of this scene, in which symbolism dealing with impact sounds is found all over the place, and in which the imagery largely evokes falling to the ground.

The phoneme [x] is often used to symbolize sounds of turbulence, such as the flapping of wings or the rustling of cloth (Harrison 5):

(50) xilir – fluttering or flapping, as a skirt or flag in the wind

(51) xitir – the whine of a propeller; sound of a bat's wings

This phoneme is used in the third section of the scene in which Bora-Sheeley is likened to a falcon. Indeed, the word *falcon* is [xartiga], which begins with a phoneme that, in Tuvan, often symbolizes turbulence, including the flapping of wings. This is another example of an extremely evocative image, one that is rendered more imagistic and poetic by the presence of a powerful symbolic sound.

The first section of this passage utilizes the phonemes [d] and [t], which can symbolize sounds of friction, locomotion, and breaking:

(52) dildir – sound of feet shuffling quickly

(53) daldür – sound of something heavily thudding along, i.e. a horse

In addition, one symbolic example using [d], [düldür], means *the sound of a big bird's wings flapping*. In this part of the passage, Bora-Sheelei's speed is compared to that of a kite. The word for *kite* is [deeldigen], a word that, similar to [xartıga], utilizes a phoneme that is evocative of the sound its wings make. In addition, in the first line of this passage one of the wrestlers performs the eagle dance; the verb for *to perform the eagle dance* is [devi-p], which again contains the [d] phoneme, indicating that the symbolic meaning of *bird's wings flapping* is being utilized in this passage.

The third line of the wrestling scene contains sound symbolism in almost every word:

- (54)            *tej-i-n*                      *kudu*                      *kɰ-dɨ-r*                      *düžür-üp*  
                   top.of.head-3-ACC downwards make-CAUS-PF fall-CV  
 244.            and dropped him upside down on top of his head.

In this line, the [t] in [tej], *top of head*, and the [d] in [düžür], *fall*, as well as the [d] in [kudu], *downwards*, are all symbolic of breaking sounds, one of symbolic meanings of [d], which adds to the painful imagery of this passage. In addition, this line contains two instances of [k], the aforementioned [kudu] and [kɰ-dɨ-r], *make* or *cause* (used in relation to *fall*). These [k] sounds add a symbolic meaning of impact to this line, which, in combination with the three instances of [d] or [t] that imply breaking, add a sound-symbolic dimension that is very evocative, and that probably makes the listener wince.

It is also possible that, in addition to the alliterative devices containing a sound-symbolic aspect, some of the other common Tuvan poetic devices – namely formulaic names, formulaic speech, and emphatic suffixes – also have additional

meanings provided by sound symbolism. For example, the formula [šjaan am], which appears no less than five times in the first section of the tale, contains the evocative /š/ sound which, as previously mentioned, is symbolically connected to speech. This formula comes at the beginning of the tale, and starts different sections of description of the initial situation. Given the speech-related meaning associated with the /š/ sound – indeed, the Tuvan work for speech, [tšugaa], contains this phoneme – it seems entirely possible that this formula, starting as it does with this evocative sound, is calling on the listener to pay attention to the teller’s speech. However, further evidence is needed to demonstrate that this is the case.

#### **4.2 The Emphatic Suffix [daa]**

In his discussion of the poetic devices in Native American ethnopoetics, Hymes illuminates the use of several meaningful prefixes that appear at the beginning of lines of dialogue spoken by various characters in traditional Takelma tales. These prefixes, [s-] and [L-] (in Hymes’ orthography, [L] is the voiceless lateral fricative) were originally analyzed by Sapir, who claimed that they were nothing more than stereotyped markings that indicated the animal species of the speaker: [s-] came at the beginning of all utterances by Coyote, and [L-] came at the beginning of any line of dialogue uttered by a bear.

Hymes, however, demonstrates that this analysis bears little resemblance to the reality of the tale. Through an in-depth analysis of several Takelma tales that I will not repeat here, Hymes determines that that expressive prefixes have a characterizing and intensifying function that is invoked at various key structural points in the story. According to Hymes, “the resulting intensification sometimes

serves as initial framing, sometimes as culmination, sometimes as pervasive characterization, within which a further moment of intensification can occur by change of prefix” (Hymes 69). In other words, these prefixes, which Sapir thought of as simply a stereotyped form of speech, similar to the way English literature often portrays a lower-class Englishman as speaking with an exaggerated Cockney accent, is in reality an important cue to the structure of the tale and the characterization of the speaker.

The emphatic suffix [daa], which appears in many different contexts in *Boktu-Kirish*, serves a similar structural function to Hymes’ expressive prefixes, with the difference that that suffixes in the Tuvan tale show a much more rigid connection to the structure than do the Takelma prefixes. In *Boktu-Kirish*, the emphatic suffix is used very specifically during the contest to delineate the action in terms of threats to Bora-Sheeley’s disguise as her brother.

In example (39) I discussed how the emphatic suffix is used to emphasize the impossibility of fundamentally altering Bora-Sheeley’s gender, as well as the possibility of using trickery to disguise her true feminine nature and carry out the task of winning the contest and saving her brother. In particular, in this excerpt the suffix [daa] is used three times to illustrate that Bora-Sheeley remains a female, and one time (the final usage) to present the possibility that trickery will still allow her to compete in the Khan’s contest. This section uses the suffix [daa] to present a dichotomy between Bora-Sheeley’s innate femininity and the means by which she can successfully disguise herself as a man. This dichotomy is continued by a very specific, structural use of the suffix during the section of the tale that deals with the

actual contest, in which the emphatic suffix is used at three key moments: first to cast doubt on Bora-Sheeley's ability to successfully continue the disguise; second, to demonstrate the success with which she carries out the disguise; third, to show the advantages that come with that success; fourth, to signal the start of the competition.

This pattern is strongest during the second two parts of the contest, the wrestling competition and the horserace, so I will showcase the pattern as it appears in those sections first. Both sections use very similar wording to include the emphatic suffix, which is attached to the word *khan* [xaan] during the announcement that puts Bora-Sheeley's disguise in jeopardy:

- (55) *xaan=daa čarlĥk-tĥ ündür-gen dĥr*  
 khan=EMPH announcement-ACC go.out-CAUS-PST DEIC

208. So, the Khan put out an announcement:

- daarta šuptu xöljeŋ čok čanagaš xüreži-ir*  
 tomorrow everybody shirt NEG naked wrestle-PF
209. "Everybody will wrestle shirtless and naked tomorrow!"

- (56) *xaan=daa čarlĥk-tĥ ündür-gen-ne*  
 khan=EMPH announcement-ACC go.out-CAUS-EMPH

267. So the Khan made an announcement:

- daarta šuptu šaldaŋ čarži-ĥr*  
 tomorrow everybody naked ride.horse-PF
268. "Tomorrow everybody will race on horseback naked!"

The emphatic suffix appears again after Bora-Sheeley has used Ajan-Kulaa's trickery to disguise the female anatomical feature in question, and has arrived at the site of the next day's competition:

- (57) *kuluguruŋ=daa čüü bo-or daarta xöleŋ-i-n ušt-a*  
 hero-EMPH what PROB-CV shirt-3-ACC take.off-CV

226. the next day, our poor hero took off his shirt,

- (58)            *daarta=daa*            *xöj*    *er-niŋ*            *ara-z#n-ga*  
                  tomorrow=EMPH    many    male-GEN    space.between-3-DAT  
 292.    the next day among the numerous men,

Unlike in examples (55) and (56), the emphatic [daa] is here attached to two different words: *hero* and *tomorrow*. However, these suffixes appear in the same context in both sections of the competition – the moment when Bora-Sheelei, having found a way to keep up her disguise, arrives for the competition and exposes her false male features for all to see – which clearly constitutes a structural pattern.

The emphatic suffix appears in two more structurally significant places in each repetition of this basic structure: when the men are gaping at Bora-Sheelei's strange anatomy, and when the contest actually begins. I will only include one example of each location, the example from the second repetition of the competition structure, the wrestling match:

- (59)            *bo=daa*            *xaj#rakan-dan*    *uktal-gan*            *anaa*    *čerle*  
                  this=EMPH    bear-ABL            originate-PST    just    still  
 235.    He must still have some bear ancestry,
- kiži*                    *xüreži-ir=daa*            *arga*    *čok*  
                  person                wrestle-PF=EMPH    means NEG  
 236.    so there's no way a man can wrestle with him.
- (60)            *xüreš=daa*                    *egele-en-ne*  
                  wrestle-EMPH                begin-PST-EMPH  
 239.    So the wrestling began!

This structural pattern is repeated in a very similar way in the horse-race repetition of the contest structure. The use of the suffix in example (53) shows that the men fall for Bora-Sheelei's disguise, and are even intimidated by her extreme masculinity, while example (54) contrasts with the previous use of the suffix (which

is only two lines away in this scene, and which is not separated at all in the horse race scene) by starting the competition at the moment when the men are most frightened by their extremely masculine competitor.

The emphatic suffix, then, appears in four different places in each repetition of the contest cycle: the moment at which a threat to Bora-Sheelei's disguise is presented; Bora-Sheelei's arrival to the competition, wearing her new and improved disguise; a section showing the reactions of the other participants, in which they clearly fall for her disguise and are even intimidated by her masculinity; and the start of the contest itself. Both of these repetitions use the suffix not only to draw attention to the problems inherent in Bora-Sheelei's disguise but the ways that these obstacles can be overcome, a precedent laid out in example (39), just after Bora-Sheelei's transformation. They also serve to clearly delineate the structure of the competition sequence and to show that the events of the tale hinge on Bora-Sheelei's ability to successfully disguise herself as a man.

This device is also used in the first repetition sequence, but the ordering of events is slightly different, given that there is no direct threat to Bora-Sheelei's disguise during the archery competition. However, the same elements are present despite the different order: the beginning of the competition, the threat to Bora-Sheelei's disguise, a reaction, and her demonstration that she is masculine enough to win the competition. In this scene, the beginning of the context is the first suffix-marked event:

- (61)            *čaa*    *möörej=daa*            *egele-en*  
                   okay    competition=EMPH    begin-PST  
 156.    Okay, the competition has begun!



The beginning of the contest is followed by the threat to Bora-Sheeley's disguise, this time not in the form of an announcement from the Khan, but the taunts of the other competitors who accuse Bora-Sheeley of being a woman by way of insulting her refusal to shoot:

- (62)            *aa*    *sen=daa*    *anaa*   *ešpi-dej*  
                   EXCL you-EMPH    just    woman-DIM  
 169.    "Oh! You're just a little woman,

This accusation is followed by a reaction. The major difference is that the earlier reactions were the reactions of the other competitors to Bora-Sheeley's extreme masculinity, while in this case the reaction is that of Bora-Sheeley to the taunts of the men:

- (63)            *aa*    *ešpi*            *čüü=daa*    *bol-gaj-la*            *men*  
                   EXCL woman            what-EMPH    COP-CNCL-EMPH    I  
 171.    "Well, I can be a woman, I can be whatever,

It is interesting to note the progression of Bora-Sheeley's power as shown in the three repeated contest structures. Not only does her appearance become more masculine, but she also becomes more confident; in this, the first challenge of the competition, she must defend herself from the taunts of others, while in the second and third stages of the competition it is the other competitors who are afraid of Bora-Sheeley. The changed order of the [daa]-inflected plot points draws attention to this transformation.

The final use of the emphatic suffix in this repetition resolves the threat to Bora-Sheeley's disguise by demonstrating her masculinity, in this case not through the presentation of her body, but rather through her success in the archery contest where everyone else failed:

- (64) *ḥndža-ar-ga=daa kuluguruŋ kezen-ip*  
 do.thus-PF-DAT=EMPH hero prepare.to.shoot-CV  
 181. Only after that the hero began to prepare himself

*kir-ip<le>-t-ken*  
 INCH-PERF<EMPH>-CAUS-PST  
 for shooting.

- küžür eriŋ=daa čüü boor deerzin küžür boktu-kiriš*  
 poor male-EMPH what PROB DISC poor B-K  
 182. What could the poor guy do, poor Boktu-Kirish?

This excerpt marks the beginning of a long passage which shows Bora-Sheeleei's superior archery skill, and which culminates in her victory in the archery competition. It is also interesting to note that the emphatic suffix is used three times previously in the passage outside context of one of these structurally important moments, which is not the case in the other two repetitions of the cycle. These instances are as follows:

- (65) *čangis=taa kiži-niŋ sogun-u čet-pes*  
 single=EMPH person-GEN arrow-3 reach-NEG\F  
 159. but not a single man's arrow reached the targets.

- (66) *at-pass=taa kḥlašta-p tur-ar mḥndiŋ*  
 shoot-NEG=EMPH walk-CV AUX-PF thus  
 162. [Bora-Sheeleei] did not shoot, but simply walked around like this.

- (67) *čangī-zī-niŋ=daa sogun-u čet-pe-en*  
 single-3-GEN=EMPH arrow-3 reach-NEG-PST  
 176. but not a single one of their arrows reached the target.

These uses of the emphatic suffix may seem to be outside of the previously identified pattern, but I argue that they actually fit with the pattern perfectly. These disparate lines are all part of the demonstration of Bora-Sheeleei's masculine skill, and the advantage that she has over the other competitors. These three lines – two

of which show that none of the other men can make the shot, and the other of which demonstrates that Bora-Sheeleei has not yet tried to shoot – are all leading up to the passage that begins with example (38), in which Bora-Sheeleei wins the competition. Examples (59) and (61) show that, in contrast to Bora-Sheeleei, none of the other competitors are able to make even one shot, no matter how many times they try, while example (60) emphasizes the fact that Bora-Sheeleei makes each shot on her first try, rather than after a day of wasting arrows like the other men. These seemingly unrelated appearances of the suffix [daa], then, are actually simply an extended piece of the structure detailed above.

The emphatic suffix [daa], in addition to elevating the style of the tale from the everyday and emphasizing certain important facts or actions in a poetic manner, is actually deeply connected to the structure of the tale, in particular the structure of the competition. The words that are used with the emphatic suffix also emphasize the way in which much of the action of the tale is driven by Bora-Sheeleei's attempt to convincingly disguise herself as a man, and the threat that an imperfect disguise poses to her. It is clear from this emphatic suffix pattern that the suffix serves a much greater, more important purpose than one might think from simply reading the tale and noting some of the surface aspects of the emphatic suffix. Like Hyme's expressive prefixes, the Tuvan emphatic suffix serves a structurally important purpose by guiding and standardizing the structure of the tale, in addition to its more obvious role of emphasizing important pieces of information. Indeed, this suffix emphasizes information on three different levels: on the smallest level it emphasizes pieces of information or actions; at the middle level the repetitive

structure of the largest section of the tale is emphasized; and at the macro level, the emphatic suffix [daa] emphasizes the driving force behind much of the tale, namely the constant tension between the functionality of Bora-Sheeleei's disguise and the possibility that her true gender will be discovered. This suffix provides an important tool for both the teller and the listener to keep track of the events and structure of the tale, a tool that will become important in the next section, when I discuss the cognitive implications of these poetic devices.

## 5.0 Cognitive Implications of Sound Symbolism and Structural Suffixes

Both linguists and folklorists have long been interested in the feats of memorization necessary to learn oral epics like *Boktu-Kirish*, or the much longer epics found in Greek, Old English, and South Slavic traditions. These seemingly impossible (at least to a modern mind) feats are often aided by poetic and structural devices such as those described in the previous sections. Rubins in particular argues that “schemas exist for surface form as well as for meaning,” despite the fact that many theorists argue that surface-form schemas are irrelevant, due to the fact that oral epics are very rarely (if ever) transmitted verbatim from teller to teller. In addition, Rubins argues that “such schemas aid memory,” (Rubins 72), a claim that I will be examining in more detail as it relates to the sound-symbolic alliteration and structural emphatic suffixes described above. I will argue for the role of these poetic devices in the memorization and transmission of oral epics, and speculate that the ways in which the poetic devices are connected to the meaning in Tuvan epics could open up new areas of study in the field of cognitive linguistics, particularly as it relates to folklore and oral traditions.

Rubin divides the poetic devices of oral literature into three classes: meaning, imagery and sound. Rubin defines these three devices as “constraints,” arguing that they “provide forms of organization that cue recall and limit choices” (Rubin 88). I will argue that alliterative devices and emphatic suffixes – which Rubin would classify as sound constraints – each interact with one of the other two areas to provide a strong aid for memorization, and that the ways in which these interactions occur are somewhat unique to Tuvan oral literature. Rubin has noted several cases

in which constraints interact in the Homeric epics; for example, he notes that in the *Iliad* the use of formulaic names, such as “swift-footed brilliant Achilles” and “aged horseman Nestor” are used not only to help identify the characters, but also provide additional syllables that can be used to fit the tale to the very strict metrical pattern required by Greek convention. In this case, a sound constraint (the requirements of the meter) is working with a meaning constraint (formulaic names) to fit the tale into the required form, and thus make it easier for the teller to sing and the listener to hear. This interaction is also, I propose, prevalent in Tuvan oral epics.

Tuvan alliterative devices – which, as was discussed above, are often heavily sound-symbolic – interact most frequently with the imagery constraint. Imagery as defined by Rubin as a tale, or passage from a tale, told in a series of “concrete, imageable actions,” accompanied by a shift in the action every few lines that provides a spatial layout to help keep track of the story. The example he uses is one from the *Iliad* that will most likely seem structurally familiar to any reader of *Boktu-Kirish*:

Consider the following passage from the *Iliad*... in which Patroclus is killing one of a long series of Trojan warriors. Each of these killings will occur in a slightly different part of the battlefield... (Rubin 39).

The particular passage alluded to here details the very structured way in which the tale presents Patroclus’ rampage through the Trojan ranks. Specifically, each death is covered in a certain amount of time and described in a structurally similar, imagistic way. This kind of structure is extremely similar to the structure of the wrestling scene in *Boktu-Kirish*, in which each wrestler is dispatched in three lines using a strongly imagistic, very structural description. It seems very likely that this

kind of imagistic device is also at work in the Tuvan epic, and according to Rubins, imagery is the best predictor of recall out of the three constraints, which would imply that this device helps the teller to recall the tale.

In addition to the structural use of imagery, the wrestling scene also makes use of line-initial alliteration, as well as some within-line alliteration. Rubins notes that alliteration is an extremely common memory aid that is roughly as effective as rhyme in recall tasks, despite the fact that many theorists focus on rhyme to the point of ignoring alliteration (Rubin 74). Thus, it is very likely that the alliterative passages of Boktu-Kirish are strong memory aids on their own, even without an interaction between alliteration and imagery provided by sound symbolism.

However, I propose that the alliterative devices are also working with sound symbolism to strengthen the imagery of the tale and provide an additional aid to memorization. For example, the previously discussed associations with three of the alliterative phonemes used in the wrestling scene – [d] with breaking sounds, [x] with fluttering or flapping sounds, and [k] with impact sounds – strengthen the imagery of the passage, which is largely of falling and collision, by drawing additional, sound-symbolic associations with the already present imagery of the passage. In this way, the sound constraint of alliteration interacts with the imagery constraint in a beautiful, poetic way that deepens the imagery of the story for the listener and aids memory of the passage for the teller.

The other major poetic device utilized in Tuvan is the emphatic suffix [daa], which, as noted earlier, also serves an important structural function by delineating a particular sequence of events that occurs three times during the competition section

of the tale, and by drawing attention to the possibility that Bora-Sheelei's disguise will be found out, a major source of plot development in the tale. The story structure delineated by this suffix fits Rubin's definition of a script, "a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation" (Rubin 24). While the script outlined by [daa] – a threat to Bora-Sheelei's disguise; the successful continuation of the disguise; a reaction; and the start of the contest – is not necessarily a "well-known situation" in the sense of a common, everyday occurrence, it is a situation fairly typical of folk literature and oral epic, and thus fits the description of a script, which is an example of the meaning constraint.

In the case of this example, the meaning constraint is connected to the sound constraint, the emphatic suffix [daa], through the suffix's role as a marker of the important events of the script. Thus, the teller is provided with a convenient phonetic marker that indicates the important events that are repeated in each cycle of the competition. The combination of the emphatic suffix [daa], the sound constraint, with the script, the meaning constraint, is likely another way in which the poetic devices of the Tuvan tale contribute to the ability of the teller to memorize and transmit the epic to other tellers, as well as to his audience.

The interaction between the meaning, imagery and sound constraints that occurs in Tuvan thanks to the deep connection between poetic devices and other aspects of the tale is an interaction that has not previously been studied. While it is possible that this is because Tuvan oral literature is unique in its usage of these constraints – after all, the Tuvan system of sound symbolism, which is extremely important to this interaction, is rare in its pervasiveness and productivity – it seems



more likely that such systems exist in other folk traditions, but that these traditions have not been studied enough to reveal these patterns. Very few oral traditions have been widely studied by Western scholars, and the study of oral epics is even rarer, largely limited to the Homeric epics, old English epics such as *Beowulf*, and some examples of South Slavic and Siberian epics. If, for example, Western scholarship were to take a closer look at the Kyrgyz *Manas*, the longest recorded epic at over half a million lines, it seems certain that its structures and devices could demonstrate many unique uses of poetics, as well as many poetic devices that have applications to folklore, linguistics, and cognitive science. In addition, because Kyrgyz is, like Tuvan, a Turkic language, any exploration of the *Manas* would be likely to yield Turkic-specific poetic devices that could be applied to the study of Tuvan epics.

## 6.0 Conclusion

It is clear now that the Tuvan oral epic of Boktu-Kirish draws heavily on certain poetic devices, specifically alliteration, formulaic naming, formulaic speech, and the use of emphatic suffixes, to both make the tale easier to memorize and place it in a poetic, artistic milieu, rather than simply rendering the story in conversational Tuvan. However, two of these devices (and possibly more) also have significant contributions to the meaning of the tale, as well as the form. Alliteration allows for Tuvan's extremely rich system of sound symbolism to deepen the meaning of a passage and provide additional imagery to the tale, while the use of the emphatic suffix [daa] not only emphasizes important information in the tale, but serves a broad structural purpose by marking repeated events during the Khan's competition and showing the development of Bora-Sheelei's character.

The study of these devices may lead to the discovery of other applications for alliterative sound symbolism and structural emphatic suffixes, or find other poetic devices that contribute to the meaning of Tuvan tales. There may be sound symbolic applications to other poetic devices; further study of Tuvan sound symbolism could shed light on the meaning of formulaic speech, such as the extremely common Tuvan storytelling phrase [š+jaaŋ am]. Further study of the structural function of the emphatic suffix will lead to further insights into the way this suffix helps to structure the tale. Additional study of Tuvan texts could also find other morphemes that function in a similar way to the emphatic suffix [daa] by structuring the tale and focusing the listener on important actions or pieces of information.

In addition to the connection between phonologically based poetic devices and meaning through the medium of sound symbolism, these poetic devices could also help to illuminate the cognitive processes that allow storytellers to orally perform epics that are thousands of lines long. It seems clear that alliterative patterns can help memorization by providing easily recognizable patterns; it stands to reason that, if these patterns are connected to the meaning of the tale, this would further aid memorization and recitation. It is equally easy to see how the use of the emphatic suffix to mark the structure of the tale and draw attention to important information can aid memorization by providing a framework that keeps the teller focused on the structure of the tale and prevents him from leaving out any important information. Further research into the poetic devices of Tuvan oral epics, as well as those used in other understudied folk traditions, could lead to new insights into human memory and language; insights that would not be possible without a rigorous study of epics using both a traditional folkloric approach and a less traditional linguistic analysis. These insights would also not be possible without knowledge of the language of a small band of nomadic yak herders in Siberia, who share stories about a man named Boktu-Kirish and his heroic younger sister Bora-Sheelei.

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**Appendix A – Proppian Functions**

- I. ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF A FAMILY ABSENTS HIMSELF FROM HOME (*absentation*)
- II. AN INTERDICTION IS ADDRESSED TO THE HERO (*interdiction*)
- III. THE INTERDICTION IS VIOLATED (*violation*)
- IV. THE VILLAIN MAKES AN ATTEMPT AT RECONNAISSANCE (*reconnaissance*)
- V. THE VILLAIN RECEIVES INFORMATION ABOUT HIS VICTIM (*delivery*)
- VI. THE VILLAIN ATTEMPTS TO DECEIVE HIS VICTIM IN ORDER TO TAKE POSSESSION OF HIM OR HIS BELONGINGS (*trickery*)
- VII. THE VICTIM SUBMITS TO DECEPTION AND THEREBY UNWITTINGLY HELPS HIS ENEMY (*complicity*)
- VIII. THE VILLAIN CAUSES HARM OR INJURY TO A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY (*villainy*)
- VIIIa. ONE MEMBER OF A FAMILY EITHER LACKS SOMETHING OR DESIRES TO HAVE SOMETHING (*lack*)
- IX. MISFORTUNE OR LACK IS MADE KNOWN; THE HERO IS APPROACHED WITH A REQUEST OR COMMAND; HE IS ALLOWED TO GO OR HE IS DISPATCHED (*mediation, the connective incident*)
- X. THE SEEKER AGREES TO OR DECIDES UPON COUNTERACTION (*beginning counteraction*)
- XI. THE HERO LEAVES HOME (*departure*)
- XII. THE HERO IS TESTED, INTERROGATED, ATTACKED, ETC., WHICH PREPARES THE WAY FOR HIS RECEIVING EITHER A MAGICAL AGENT OR A HELPER (*the first function of the donor*)
- XIII. THE HERO REACTS TO THE ACTIONS OF THE FUTURE DONOR (*the hero's reaction*)
- XIV. THE HERO ACQUIRES THE USE OF A MAGICAL AGENT (*provision or receipt of a magical agent*)

- XV. THE HERO IS TRANSFERRED, DELIVERED OR LED TO THE WHEREABOUTS OF AN OBJECT OF SEARCH (*spatial transference between two kingdoms, guidance*)
- XVI. THE HERO AND THE VILLAIN JOIN IN DIRECT COMBAT (*struggle*)
- XVII. THE HERO IS BRANDED (*branding*)
- XVIII. THE VILLAIN IS DEFEATED (*victory*)
- XIX. THE INITIAL MISFORTUNE OR LACK IS LIQUIDATED (*liquidation*)
- XX. THE HERO RETURNS (*return*)
- XXI. THE HERO IS PURSUED (*pursuit, chase*)
- XXII. RESCUE OF THE HERO FROM PURSUIT (*rescue*)
- XXIII. THE HERO, UNRECOGNIZED, ARRIVES HOME OR IN ANOTHER COUNTRY (*unrecognized arrival*)
- XXIV. A FALSE HERO PRESENTS UNFOUNDED CLAIMS (*unfounded claims*)
- XXV. A DIFFICULT TASK IS PROPOSED TO THE HERO (*difficult task*)
- XXVI. THE TASK IS RESOLVED (*solution*)
- XXVII. THE HERO IS RECOGNIZED (*recognition*)
- XXVIII. THE FALSE HERO OR VILLAIN IS EXPOSED (*exposure*)
- XXIX. THE HERO IS GIVEN A NEW APPEARANCE (*transfiguration*)
- XXX. THE VILLAIN IS PUNISHED (*punishment*)
- XXXI. THE HERO IS MARRIED AND ASCENDS THE THRONE (*wedding*)

**Appendix B – Morpho-Syntactic Tags** (taken from Harrison 2005)

\	Boundary between tags in portmanteau or zero morpheme
-	morpheme boundary
=	enclitic boundary
<>	infix element
1(SG)	first person singular
2(SG)	second person singular
3	third person singular
ABL	ablative case (enclitic)
ACC	accusative case
ADJ	adjectival suffix
ADL	adlative case
AGENT	agentive
ALL	allative
AMEL	ameliorative
AUX	auxiliary verb
BEN	benefactive voice
CAUS	causative
CLOC	cislocative
CNCL	conciliatory mood
COMP	complementizer
COND	conditional mood
COP	copula
CV	converb
DAT	dative case
DEIC	deixis marker
DIM	diminutive
DISC	discourse
DIST	distal
DUAL	dual (1 & 2 SG)
EMPH	emphatic
EXCL	exclamation
F	future tense
F\1	future tense 1SG
FIG	figurative element
FORM	formulaic speech
GEN	genitive case
IMP	imperative
INCH	inchoative aspect
INS	instrumental enclitic
LOC	locative case
LEX	lexical item found only in compounds, has no meaning
MOD	modal
NEG	negation
NOM	nominative case



ORD	ordinal number
PASS	passive
PERF	perfective aspect
PF	present/future tense
PL	plural
PN	predicate noun
POST	postposition
PROB	probabilitive mood
PST	past tense
QUAN	quantifier
QUES	question tag
QUOT	quotative
RCP	reciprocal
REC.PST	recent pas tense
RED	reduplicant
SBEN	self-benefactive voice
SS	same subject
SYMB	sound symbolic element
TLOC	translocation
VSF	verb stem formant