HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

PARI AND FAIRY AS DOMINANT MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGES IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH FOLKLORE AND LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Kholikov Bakhodir
DSc, Professor of the Department of Comparative Literature
Rector of the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1817-3611
xoliqov-b@samdchti.uz
doi:**https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23377276**

Abstract. The article compares the Uzbek pari and the English fairy as dominant mythological images. Etymological, comparative-typological and linguoculturological methods are applied to folklore, dictionaries and literary texts. The two images share a function as mediators between the human and the unseen world, but differ in moral value: the pari is mainly benevolent and a symbol of beauty, while the fairy remains ambivalent. Both images move from belief to literary metaphor and fantasy.

Keywords: pari, fairy, mythological image, folklore, ambivalence, shape-shifting, literary transformation, Uzbek, English.

Introduction. Every national culture keeps a small group of mythological images that appear again and again in its folklore, its literature and even its everyday language. Such images may be called dominant, because they organise a whole field of beliefs, plots and metaphors around themselves. In Uzbek culture one of these images is the pari. In English culture a comparable place belongs to the fairy. Both are supernatural female or mostly female beings who live close to people but belong to another world. Both can help or punish a human hero, and both have become common words for beauty, magic and the unreal.

The similarity of the two words, pari and fairy, often leads non-specialists to think that they have one common origin. Historical linguistics does not support this idea, but the functional and semantic closeness of the images is real and deserves explanation. A comparative study of the two images helps to see how different peoples imagine the border between the human and the non-human world, and how this picture changes when belief turns into literature.

The aim of the article is to compare the pari and the fairy as dominant mythological images in Uzbek and English folklore and literature. The objectives are: 1) to describe the origin of the two names; 2) to compare the main features of the images in folk belief; 3) to show how the images change in written literature; 4) to explain the differences from a linguocultural point of view.

Literature review and research methods. The English fairy tradition has a large scholarly literature. K.M.Briggs collected and classified the fairy beliefs of the British Isles in two classic works [1], [2]. She showed that the word fairy covers many different beings, from household brownies and hobgoblins to the aristocratic fairies of romance, and that many of them are dangerous to people. D.Purkiss wrote a cultural history of fairies from ancient times to the twentieth century [3]. She argues that early fairies were frightening beings connected with death, birth and the loss of children, and that the small, pretty and harmless fairy is a late literary product.

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The history of the Iranian image behind the Uzbek pari is described in Encyclopaedia Iranica [4]. In the Avesta, the pairikā is a female demonic being, a sorceress or enchantress. In Middle Persian the parīg still keeps mostly evil features. In Modern Persian, however, the parī has lost almost all its negative attributes and has become a beautiful and usually benevolent fairy or nymph [4]. This change from demon to beauty is very important for understanding the Uzbek image.

In Uzbek folklore studies, the genesis and poetics of the pari image were studied in a special dissertation by O.Qayumov [5]. Ethnographic material on pari beliefs among the Uzbeks of Khorezm, including water fairies and their link with pre-Islamic cults, was collected by G.P.Snesarev [6]. The general method of linguoculturology, which treats words and images as carriers of cultural meaning, is presented in the work of V.N.Teliya [7]. However, a direct comparison of the pari and the fairy across folklore and literature is still rare, and this article tries to fill that gap.

The material of the study includes three groups of sources. The first group consists of dictionary and etymological data: the Online Etymology Dictionary for English [8], the explanatory dictionary of the Uzbek language [9] and the Encyclopaedia Iranica article on the Iranian background [4]. The second group consists of folklore descriptions: the reference works of K.M.Briggs [1], [2], the ethnographic data of G.P.Snesarev [6] and the Uzbek folklore research of O.Qayumov [5]. The third group consists of literary texts: Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream [10], Spenser's The Faerie Queene [11], Barrie's Peter and Wendy [12] and Conan Doyle's The Coming of the Fairies [13]. On the Uzbek side, images of pari from folk tales and dastans are considered.

Four methods were used. The etymological method traced the history of the two names. The comparative-typological method compared the features of the images: appearance, moral value, abilities, source of power and relations with people. Motif analysis, based on the international folktale tradition described by S.Thompson [14], helped to identify common plots such as the supernatural bride. Finally, the linguocultural method explained the differences through the cultural and religious history of each people. The analysis is qualitative; no statistical counting was used.

Results and discussions. Origin of the Names. The two words have different histories. The English word fairy comes from Old French faerie, formed from fee, fay, and the suffix -erie. It first meant the land of the fays, then enchantment, and only later a supernatural being living in that land [8]. The French fee, in turn, goes back to Latin fata, connected with the idea of fate. The Uzbek pari came through Persian from the Iranian parīg and the Avestan pairikā [4]. Therefore the similarity of form is mainly accidental. What unites the two images is not a common root but a common function: both names describe a being of another world who can control human fate.

The semantic histories of the two words go in opposite directions. The Iranian word started with a negative meaning, a female demon, and moved to a positive one, a beautiful fairy [4]. The English word started with a neutral meaning, a magic land or enchantment, and was used for beings of all kinds, many of them harmful [1], [8]. Only in the early modern period did fairy begin to denote small winged creatures of children's stories [8].

The Images in Folk Belief. In Uzbek folk belief and folklore the pari is mainly a positive being. The explanatory dictionary defines it as a legendary being in the form of a very beautiful girl and calls it a symbol of beauty [9]. In tales and dastans a pari often helps the hero, becomes his bride or protects him from devs and other evil spirits [5]. At the same time she is not fully safe: if offended, she can become angry and take revenge. A typical plot shows a pari who takes the form of a bird, often a pigeon, and loses her magic power when a man takes her hair, comb, ring or feather dress. This plot

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belongs to the wide international type of the swan maiden, or supernatural wife [14]. Snesarev showed that in Khorezm pari beliefs were also connected with water and with healing and shamanic practice [

In English folk belief the fairy is clearly ambivalent. People called fairies the Good People or the Fair Folk, but these names were euphemisms used out of fear [1]. Fairies were believed to steal human children and leave changelings, to lead travellers astray, to cause illness and to take mortals away to fairyland for many years [1], [3]. Some household spirits, such as the brownie, could help a family, but only while they were treated with respect [1]. Iron, bread and salt, and turning one's coat inside out, were believed to protect people from fairy influence [1].

Thus both images live on the border between the human and the other world, and both are female or connected with women. Both can change shape, both have power over love, birth and fate, and both demand respect. The main difference lies in moral value: the Uzbek pari is mostly good, while the English fairy is equally capable of good and evil. The main features are summarised in Table I.

TABLE I. Comparison of the Pari and Fairy Images

Feature	**Uzbek pari**	**English fairy**	**Relation**
Origin of name	Avestan pairikā > Persian parī [4]	Old French faerie < fee [8]	different roots
Moral value	mostly benevolent [4], [9]	ambivalent, often dangerous [1]	difference
Appearance	beautiful girl [9]	varied; later small, winged [8]	partly similar
Shape-shifting	bird (pigeon), snake [5]	animal, light, human form [1]	similarity
Source of power	hair, comb, ring, dress [5]	taboo, name, objects [1]	similarity
Relation to people	helper, bride, protector [5]	helper or abductor [1], [3]	partial
Literary path	myth > poetic metaphor	myth > children's fantasy [3]	parallel

The Images in Literature. In English literature the fairy went through a clear evolution. In Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Oberon, Titania and Puck are still powerful and whimsical beings who can confuse lovers and change human fate, but they are already lighter and more playful than in folk belief [10]. Spenser's The Faerie Queene turned fairyland into an allegorical world of virtue and chivalry [11]. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the fairy became small, pretty and mostly harmless. Barrie's Tinker Bell is a typical example [12]. The story of the Cottingley photographs, which Conan Doyle accepted as evidence in The Coming of the Fairies [13], shows how strong this new image was in popular culture. Purkiss sees this change as a taming of the older, frightening fairy [3].

In Uzbek literature the pari moved from myth to poetic metaphor. Already in folklore the word pari is used for a beautiful girl, and in classical and modern poetry it becomes a standard image of the beloved [5], [9]. Derived words such as parizod and parichehra, meaning a fairy-born or fairy-faced beauty, show that the positive and aesthetic meaning became dominant in the language. The magic

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side of the image is kept mainly in folk tales and dastans, where pari still act as helpers and brides of the hero [5].

The Images in Everyday Language. Dominant mythological images do not stay only in folklore and literature. They also enter the vocabulary and phraseology of the language, where their cultural meaning becomes visible in daily use. In Uzbek the word pari forms a small but productive group of derived words and fixed comparisons. Parizod, parichehra and parivash all describe a woman of rare beauty, and the comparison pariday go‘zal, beautiful as a pari, is a common compliment [9]. In all these units the supernatural meaning is weak and the aesthetic meaning is strong. The speaker does not think of a dangerous spirit but of an ideal of beauty.

In English the word fairy also takes part in many compounds and fixed expressions: fairy tale, fairy godmother, fairy ring, fairy lights, fairyland [8]. Their meanings are more varied. A fairy godmother is a helper who solves problems by magic, and fairy lights are small decorative lamps, so here the meaning is positive and connected with smallness and charm. A fairy tale, however, can also mean an untrue or unrealistic story, and the expression away with the fairies means that a person is dreaming and not paying attention. The older dangerous meaning survives in folklore terms such as fairy ring and elf-shot, which Briggs connects with beliefs about fairy dances and sudden illness [1].

Another linguistic difference concerns naming taboo. In English folk belief people avoided the word fairy and used euphemisms such as the Good People, the Gentry or the Fair Folk, because direct naming could attract the beings [1]. This practice shows the fear behind the image. In Uzbek the word pari itself is not a taboo word and is freely used as a girl's name element and a compliment, which again shows its positive value in the culture [9]. Taboo and euphemism in Uzbek belief are connected more with dangerous beings such as the jinn and the alvasti than with the pari.

The results show that the pari and the fairy are typologically close images that developed in different directions. The closeness can be explained by common human ideas about another world that lies next to ours, about female beings who control love and fate, and about the danger of breaking a taboo. The international motif of the supernatural bride whose power lies in an object [14] connects the Uzbek pari tale with many European fairy and swan maiden stories.

The differences can be explained by cultural history. The Iranian and Central Asian image passed through Zoroastrian, then Islamic and Sufi poetic traditions. In Islamic belief the pari was often contrasted with devs and jinns, so her positive side was strengthened, and Persian and Turkic poetry turned her into a symbol of ideal beauty [4], [5]. In Britain, by contrast, Christian thought often placed fairies close to demons or the souls of the dead, which kept their dangerous side alive [3]. Only Romantic and Victorian culture, with its new idea of childhood, made the fairy small and innocent [3],

From a linguocultural point of view, the two words now carry different connotations. The Uzbek pari has a strong positive and aesthetic connotation and is used freely as a compliment. The English fairy has a mixed connotation: it can mean something delicate and charming, as in fairy tale or fairy lights, but also something unreal or naive. These facts are important for translators, because a direct equivalent between pari and fairy can transfer the denotation but lose part of the cultural meaning.

The comparison also shows that the two images changed in the same general direction, from belief to art, but at different speeds and with different results. In Uzbek culture the aesthetic side of the pari became dominant very early, already in classical poetry, while the magic side was kept in oral epic. In English culture the change came later and was linked with printing, children's literature and, in the twentieth century, with film and fantasy. In both cases, however, the image did not disappear when

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belief weakened. It lost its religious seriousness but gained new artistic and linguistic functions. This is a common way in which dominant mythological images survive in modern culture.

Conclusion. The study shows that the pari and the fairy are dominant mythological images in Uzbek and English culture. Their names have different origins, but their functions are close: both are beings of another world who stand between people and supernatural forces, change shape and influence love, birth and fate. The Uzbek pari developed from a negative Iranian demon into a mainly benevolent being and a symbol of beauty. The English fairy kept its ambivalence in folklore and became small and harmless only in later literature.

Both images moved from belief to literature and from literature to everyday language. This process shows how mythological images survive by changing their function. Further research may compare other images of the same group, such as the dev and the giant or the alvasti and the hag, and may study how these images are rendered in English–Uzbek literary translation.

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