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The Child and the Blade: An Archetypal Analysis of Mongolian and Cross-Cultural Hair-Cutting Rituals

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Abstract

Rituals play a significant role in shaping individual life cycles, social relationships, and worldviews, particularly those related to childbearing, blessings, and protection. These rituals not only reflect the customs of families, communities, and ethnicities but also serve as key factors in societal formation. Carl Jung's concept of archetypes as "deep, repetitive, meaningful actions within the human ritual system" forms a core framework for understanding these practices across various fields such as anthropology, psychology, and cultural studies. This study examines Mongolian child-related rituals, focusing on the "Daakhi Ürgeekh" (first hair-cutting ceremony) ritual, through the lens of archetypal pattern. The research draws upon diverse theoretical perspectives, including the works of Jung, Turner, Campbell, and Lévi-Strauss, to explore the symbolic, mythological, and psychological structures underlying these rituals. Utilizing ethnographic observation, oral tradition collection, and comparative analysis, this study reveals shared archetypes and culturally specific adaptations across Mongolian, Greek, Hindu, and Jewish traditions. By analyzing these rituals as rites of passage, this study provides deeper insight into the protective, blessing, and transitional aspects of Mongolian customs and contributes to the broader understanding of ritual and archetypal symbolism in human culture.

Keywords: Mongolia, archetype, ritual, archetypal pattern, structure, rite of passage

1. Introduction

Rituals are intricately connected with the life cycle of an individual, social relationships, and one's worldview. Particularly, rituals associated with childbearing, welcoming with blessings, and protective actions are expressions of the customs of a family, community, and ethnicity, and they serve as key factors in the formation of society. Renowned philosopher and founder of analytic psychology, C.G. Jung, defined the archetype as "deep, repetitive, meaningful actions within the human ritual system," a concept which is widely applied in various fields including culture, rituals, religion, mythology, and psychology. The study of rituals (rituals) has been deemed highly significant in the fields of religious studies (Eliade, Otto, van der Leeuw), philosophy (rituals and symbols, Ricoeur), anthropology and sociology (Durkheim, Turner), psychology (Freud, Jung), and cultural history (Huizinga). Ritual studies have evolved as an interdisciplinary subject, contributing to the development of theoretical frameworks and paradigms across these fields.

Studying Mongolian traditions not only sheds light on the existence of Mongols but also on their relationship with the material and spiritual worlds, their worldview, and the essence of their culture. In broader terms, it is also crucial for understanding the social and cultural fabric of Mongolian society and its roles. As particularly noted by scholar Dulam, Mongolian customs comprise rituals that extend from birth to death, which he refers to as the "Five Rites of a Person's Life," including rituals such as "child's first bath," "cutting the child's first hair," "marriage," "birthday," and "funeral rites" (Dulam, S., Nandinbileg, G., 2007, p. 61). Among these, child-related rituals are a key component of traditional Mongolian customs. Therefore, this study particularly focuses on the "Daakhi Ürgeekh" (hair-cutting) ritual, exploring its protective, blessing, and transitional aspects. By analyzing the symbolic archetypal actions within these rituals, we gain deeper insight into their meaning, function, and essence, offering a clearer understanding of their interconnections. In other words, examining rituals through the lens of archetypal patterns is of great significance for studying the roles and structures of rituals in depth.

Archetypal actions and patterns within rituals have been deeply analyzed by thinkers from various fields, including cultural studies, anthropology, psychology, and religious studies. For instance, Victor Turner's concept of rituals

as “symbolic performances fulfilling archetypal roles,” Joseph Campbell’s “universal archetypal structure of myths and rituals and their repetitive cultural development,” and Claude Lévi-Strauss’s "expression of the fundamental structure of human thought" all contribute to the conceptual frameworks in ritual studies. However, while contemporary research in Mongolian ritual studies is expanding with multiple theoretical perspectives and comparisons, there remains a gap in applying comprehensive theoretical frameworks to analyze Mongolian rituals in the context of ritual theory.

This study aims to analyze traditional Mongolian child-related rituals through the lens of archetypal patterns. In order to uncover the deep-seated symbolic, mythological, and psychological patterns embedded in these practices, the research draws on multiple theoretical foundations and methodological approaches.

2. Method

This study combines the following qualitative research methods:

- Ethnographic observation and documentation: Direct observation and video/audio recording of actual rituals were conducted to capture their structure, content, and performance dynamics.
- Oral tradition collection: Interviews were conducted with elders, ritual specialists, and local practitioners to document oral knowledge and cultural memory related to child-related rituals.
- Symbolic-archetypal analysis: Ritual forms, gestures, expressions, and objects were examined for their symbolic meanings and underlying archetypal structures.
- Mythological analysis: Related folk narratives, blessings, legends, and epics were studied to identify mythic motifs and archetypal figures.
- Comparative analysis: Mongolian child-related rituals were compared with similar practices among Central Asian and other world cultures in order to reveal shared archetypes and culturally specific adaptations.

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato introduced the concept of the “ideal form.” According to him, everything that exists in the material world is a reflection or shadow of a true essence, which resides not in the physical realm but in the mind—as an "idea" or "form." He illustrated this with concepts such as the “image of the mother” and “eternal beauty.” In this view, the “mother image” is not merely one’s individual mother, but the highest form of all mothers, while “eternal beauty” exists on the level of being, yet only appears as a shadow through our senses. This notion of an original, perfect pattern or form underlying all real things is seen as the philosophical basis for the later concept of the “archetype” (Copleston, 1993).

Subsequently, the influential scholar of mythology and anthropology, James Frazer, whose work profoundly shaped early twentieth-century studies, explored the interrelation between ritual and myth in his seminal work *The Golden Bough*. He proposed that human intellectual development progresses through three stages: magic, religion, and science, stating that “...in magic, religion, and science alike, the highest conception of the universe and man’s place in it has been slowly elaborated through the ages by the gradual accumulation of experience” (Frazer, 1890). In essence, he argued that while myths and rituals may appear diverse, they share a common symbolic pattern or abstract pattern—what we would now call archetypes.

Later, in the field of psychology, the renowned thinker Carl Gustav Jung brought the concept of the “archetype” into scientific discourse by linking it with the idea of the collective unconscious. In his work *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, he wrote: “Archetypes are the universal, archaic patterns and images that derive from the collective unconscious and are the psychic counterpart of instinct. They are expressed in myths, dreams, hallucinations, and religious visions...” (Jung, 1959). Jung conceptualized archetypes as foundational elements of the human psyche, explaining the recurring appearance of religious symbols, myths, fairy tales, fantasies, and dreams across cultures and eras. Among the innate archetypal figures, he identified were the mother, the Shadow, the Child, the Hero, the Animus, and the Anima. For example, “The hero’s main function is to overcome the monster of darkness—it is the long-awaited triumph of consciousness over the unconscious...” (Jung, 1959, p. 284). Furthermore, “Archetypes are universal and can never be directly experienced; they reveal themselves only through symbolic representation” (Jung, 1964, p. 57). Thus, archetypes manifest through metaphor and symbolism rather than direct expression, and serve to represent instinctive, recurring actions within human life. These archetypes are shaped by inherited cultural traditions, customs, and values, and play a significant role in influencing human aspirations and behavior, representing the structural foundation of ritual expression.

The concept of the archetype has since been widely used by many scholars studying ritual. Notable figures include Victor Turner, Catherine Bell, Joseph Campbell, Mircea Eliade, and Matilda Zuesse. For instance,

cultural anthropologist Mircea Eliade introduced the concept of the "sacred and the profane" in his religious and mythological studies, exploring the interplay between ritual and myth. He wrote: "A myth describes how the sacred—whatever its source—suddenly broke into the world. In truth, such intrusions created the world itself…" (Eliade, 1963, p. 6), and "In religious rituals, by imitating the actions of gods or mythic heroes, or by recounting their stories, people in traditional societies suspend ordinary time and return to a mythical 'sacred time'…" (Eliade, 1957, p. 68). In his view, religious rituals unconsciously reenact mythological events. Through this repetition, participants symbolically return to the primordial, sacred time.

Symbolic anthropologist Victor Turner also addressed unconscious actions in rituals, arguing that rituals are symbolic dramas that enact archetypal figures. He paid particular attention to the "liminal" or transitional phase of rituals, stating: "A ritual is not just a social action—it is a symbolic performance that expresses the archetypal process of transformation…" (Turner, 1969, p. 94), and "Liminality is a space filled with pure potential—it is where cultural archetypes dwell…" (Turner, 1967, p. 97).

Similarly, anthropologist Joseph Campbell believed that myths and folktales from all cultures share a common archetypal structure, which he called the "Hero's Journey." He described it as follows: "The hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder… he returns from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons upon his fellow man…" (Campbell, 1949, p. 28). For Campbell, this structure consists of the stages of departure, initiation, and return, populated by Jungian archetypal figures such as the Shadow and the Guide. This structure represents a universal pattern of ritual action shaped by archetypes.

Structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss believed that anthropology is the study of the hidden structures underlying social life—structures that people are often unaware of (Bumochir D., Munkh-Erdene G., 2018, p. 143). Using examples from myth and language, he argued that kinship terms, kinship systems, and customs function much like linguistic grammar—existing unconsciously and regulating human relations (Bumochir D., Munkh-Erdene G., 2018, p. 144). While Lévi-Strauss did not use the term "archetype" directly, his binary logic and mythic structures parallel Jung's archetypal ideas in many ways. For example, he noted, "Myths operate in the unconscious…" (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 210) and are "codes" embedded in society and culture, manifested through binary oppositions such as life–death, male–female, etc. He wrote: "Mythical thought begins with a sense of binary oppositions and evolves toward an intermediate stage of reconciliation" (Lévi-Strauss, 1964, p. 224). In this view, mythic structures express primary, archetypal modes of human cognition.

Thus, ritual is not merely a form of social action—it also reflects a culture's worldview, values, and symbolic logic. For this reason, many scholars have interpreted ritual through psychological, symbolic, and structural lenses using the concept of the archetype. These researchers—despite their diverse disciplines—have collectively contributed to cultural studies, anthropology, mythology, and the study of religion by articulating the shared symbolic logic, recurring figures, and performative structures found in ritual through the lens of archetypal theory.

3. Discussion

Within the field of ritual studies, numerous scholars have developed typologies of rituals based on various aspects such as their function, purpose, structure, belief systems, and social roles. These typologies often include: *rites of passage* based on structural transitions; *liminality* based on symbolic meaning and social function; *fertility rituals* and *life cycle rituals* categorized by purpose; as well as *worship rituals*, *solidarity rituals*, and *affliction rituals*. However, ritual theorist Catherine Bell has critiqued such rigid classifications. Instead, she emphasized analyzing rituals in terms of their role and application, proposing categories based on their relational contexts—individual, social, and political (Bell, 1992, pp. 69–72).

The present study aims to examine Mongolian rituals through the lens of the archetypal pattern. According to Carl Jung, an archetype is "a recurrent psycho-cultural pattern with a universal structure." This notion finds resonance with the theoretical perspectives of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, who regarded rituals as structured processes of transition. Their emphasis on the symbolic and structural essence of ritual provides a suitable theoretical foundation for our analysis.

Arnold van Gennep, in his foundational theory of *rites of passage*, conceptualized rituals as processes marking transitions across the stages of the human life cycle. He classified these into three fundamental phases: separation, liminality, and incorporation. Victor Turner further elaborated on van Gennep's tripartite structure by emphasizing the *liminal phase*—the ambiguous, transformative stage that lies between states of being.

Following this theoretical framework, we have analyzed child-related Mongolian rituals as forms of *rites of passage*. These include rituals associated with childbirth, the first washing of the newborn, protective rituals for

infants, and rituals of blessing and gifting. Among these, we focused on the *Daakhi' ürgeekh* ritual—the first haircutting ceremony—as a significant tradition intended to protect, bless, and mark the child's transition into social life. This ritual was comparatively examined alongside similar practices in Greek, Indian, and Jewish cultures.

Although Greek, Indian, and Jewish cultures differ historically, religiously, and culturally, they all contain rituals with archetypal structures and rich systems of symbolism. As such, they are particularly well-suited to archetypal analysis, where symbolic, ritualistic, and mythological patterns are often grounded in the theory of rites of passage. For instance, in the context of Greek culture, studies such as Walter Burkert's *Greek Religion* (1985), Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel's *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* (1992), and Jean-Pierre Vernant's *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* have examined ritual through this structuralist perspective. Similarly, within Jewish cultural studies, works like Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* (1966) and Jonathan Klawans's *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple* (2006) have employed the transition theory framework of van Gennep and Turner to interpret ritual meaning.

Our study primarily draws upon these scholarly sources through textual analysis while also incorporating limited first-hand participant observation. This dual approach enhances the comparative ritual analysis and provides valuable insight into both the structure and symbolic content of child-related rituals across cultures.

3.1 First Hair-Cutting Rituals for Children in Greek, Hindu, and Jewish Traditions

In ancient Greek culture, ritual practices marked children's transition into adolescence, particularly through ceremonies such as *Koureion* for boys and *Arkteia* for girls, typically performed between the ages of 7 and 10. These were not merely symbolic but sacralized rites that denoted the end of early childhood and the beginning of a socially recognized maturity. The *Koureion* ceremony involved the shaving of a boy's hair and its dedication as an offering to the god Apollo, usually performed in a temple setting. In some instances, the hair was cast into the sea as an offering to Poseidon, the god of the sea. This ritual was a prerequisite for the boy's formal integration into his *phratry* (kinship group), and it was traditionally conducted on the third day of the annual *Apaturia* festival, known as *Koureotis*. The act of shaving the hair and making a votive offering marked the youth's first step toward adulthood (Cole, 1984). Some scholars have suggested that the origins of this ritual are linked to the military training system for *ephebes* (adolescent males undergoing civic education and martial training) (Dodd & Faraone, 2003). Rooted in sacrificial practices dedicated to deities, the *Koureion* exemplifies a transitional rite (rite of passage) that signifies the boy's departure from childhood and his entry into the civic and religious life of the community.

In the Hindu tradition, the child's first hair-cutting ritual is known as *Mundana* or *Chudakarana*, which is one of the sixteen *samskaras*—the sacraments or rites of passage that structure an individual's spiritual life. This ritual serves not only as a symbolic purification but also as a protective measure believed to positively influence the child's health and future. *Mundana* is typically performed for boys at the ages of 1, 3, or 5, often in a temple or at a sacred river, most commonly the Ganges. The ritual involves immersing the child in holy water, dressing them in white garments, and applying *bindi*—a paste made of turmeric and sandalwood—on the forehead. With the permission of a Brahmin priest, a family member then shaves the child's head while Vedic mantras are recited and offerings are made to the gods. A tuft of hair known as *shikha* is usually left at the crown of the head. The shorn hair is either submerged in the Ganges or buried at the base of a sacred tree. Following the ritual, family and relatives gather for a ceremonial feast (*prasanna*) and blessings are offered to the child. Scholar Rajbali Pandey explains that this ritual is most often performed at an odd-numbered age (one, three, or five) because the hair is believed to retain impurities from the womb and birth, and its removal signifies both physical and spiritual purification (Pandey, 1969, p. 157).

In Jewish tradition, the first haircut of a child—typically a boy—is conducted at age three in Ashkenazi communities and at age five in Sephardic communities. This ritual marks the end of infancy and the beginning of early childhood as a phase of religious and social development. Known as *upsherin* in Ashkenazi practice and *halake* in Sephardic tradition, the haircut is often performed in a synagogue or sacred space, and in some cases at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Israel. Unlike in other traditions, the boy's hair is not fully shaved; rather, side-locks known as *peyot* are deliberately left uncut, in adherence to Jewish law. The ceremony typically involves family and community members, each taking turns to snip a lock of the child's hair while offering sweets and gifts. Scholar Schachter-Shalomi interprets the *upsherin* as a significant *rite of passage* that reflects the boy's entry into religious education and social responsibility, signaling his readiness to participate in the Jewish communal and spiritual life (Schachter-Shalomi, 1995, pp. 123–126).

3.2. The Mongolian First Hair-Cutting Rituals (Daakhi Ürgeekh) for Children

Among Mongolian communities, the ritual of cutting a child's hair—referred to variously as *daakhi ürgeekh*, *sebleg ürgeekh*, *örövlög avakh*, *üs khaichlakh*, *ürver ürgeekh*, *siimeg khaichlakh*, *örlöög avakh*, or *zuumag yasakh*—is a culturally significant rite of passage. This ceremony is typically performed at specific ages depending on the child's gender: boys undergo the ritual at odd ages (commonly 3 or 5 years old), and girls at even ages (such as 2 or 4).

While the ritual is most commonly conducted within the family home, certain ethnic groups, such as the Oirats, maintain a tradition of conducting the ceremony at the maternal uncle's house (*nagatsyn ger*). A historical source records: "When the boy turned three, his mother returned to her natal family for a grand celebration. His maternal grandfather, content and serene, named him in peace and honor while mounted on a white stag, a sacred steed of the Mahgalan incarnation" (Namjil, 2017, p. 229). Likewise, the *Jangar* epic mentions, "A blade was brought to his head, and a name was ceremoniously conferred upon his radiant body," signifying the importance of the act.

Although the ritual is widely practiced across Mongolia, variations exist depending on region, season, kinship roles, and symbolic acts. Among the Khalkha Mongols, for instance, boys' hair is traditionally cut in the autumn, coinciding with the rutting season of deer, while girls' hair is cut in the spring, in accordance with the first call of the cuckoo. In contrast, Oirat groups do not always distinguish between the seasons or even the child's gender when performing the ritual.

Those permitted to cut the hair include the paternal grandfather, father, a relative born in the same zodiac year (*iveel jil*), the birth attendant, or—more rarely—a respected individual outside the kin group believed to possess a righteous or prosperous life path. The ritual often begins by offering a taste of milk to both the child and the person cutting the hair. In some cases, milk or curds (symbolizing fertility and abundance) are applied to the hair before cutting. A small wooden knife may be used in place of metal, adhering to traditional taboos.

Following the first haircut, guests take turns cutting locks of the child's hair while uttering blessings (*yerööl*) for health, fortune, and a successful future. Gifts—such as sweets, silver, or livestock—are given in return. The verbal blessings offered during the ritual reflect both the act itself and the hopes for the child's future character and life path.

In some traditions, symbolic tufts of hair are left on the child's head, each with specific meaning. For boys, the *teveg* (the nape of the head) and *khökhöl* or *sanmai* (the temple and sides of the forehead) are preserved. For girls, tufts known as *ever (antlers)*, *jimee*, or *sonjuul* are maintained. In certain cases, especially for noble or high-born boys, additional tufts may be added yearly until the age of eight. A ritual knife would then be ceremonially worn, paralleling the practices of male initiation. As recorded by Namjil (2017, p. 232), this tradition may be linked to an older custom of designating boys as future "men of state" (*töriin khar khün*) by maintaining five sacred tufts of hair. These untouched tufts symbolized spiritual protection and potential civic or military authority.

In Mongolian folk beliefs, the crown of the head is considered the most sacred and vulnerable part of the body. It is thought that the *daakhi* should be spared from contact with blades unless ritually appropriate. This belief echoes other traditions in which a small patch of scalp on a sheep's head is referred to as *baatar khuikh* ("hero's scalp"), consumption of which is forbidden for fear of invoking misfortune (Sampildendev, Urtnasan, & Dorjdagva, 2006, p. 116).

Once cut, the child's hair is placed in symbolic locations: behind the northern side of the *toono* (central smoke hole) of the ger or in a white felt pouch, and in some groups, such as the Durvud, it is wrapped in silk and tied to the groom's ger during the son's wedding ceremony. Ultimately, the first hair cutting ritual reflects an integration of folk medical knowledge, symbolic purification, early socialization, and moral education. As such, it is not only a family event but also a cultural institution deeply rooted in Mongolian worldviews about health, social identity, and the spiritual maturation of children.

4. Results

The ritual of child's first hair cutting is a widespread tradition among many peoples of the world, representing an archetypal practice that reflects the religion, social structure, and worldview of the respective society. This study conducted a comparative analysis to examine how the child first hair-cutting rituals are structured in Mongolian, Greek, Hindu, and Jewish traditions. Within the limited scope of this research, both similarities and differences were observed among these traditions.

The similarities include the following:

1. First, the ritual of cutting a child's hair symbolizes the transition from early childhood to becoming a member of society. For instance, in Greece, the child is considered to be taking the first step into adulthood and officially entering the *phratry*, or clan. In Hinduism, cutting the child's hair signifies the completion of karmic ties from previous lives and the beginning of human existence. Among Jews, it marks the start of acquiring Jewish education and the assumption of religious responsibilities.
2. Second, the hair-cutting ritual is commonly regarded as a sacred act. In Greece, the child's hair is offered to the god Apollo or the god of the sea; in the Hindu tradition, it is cut near a sacred site or by the Ganges River; in Judaism, the ritual is performed at a synagogue or at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon. These acts are not merely practical but are deeply connected to belief and symbolism.
3. Third, the ritual is performed only for boys, and the ceremony is specifically intended for male children.
4. Fourth, since hair is considered to be connected with the human soul, the cut hair is not discarded but is offered at a sacred place, to a deity, or in a temple.
5. Fifth, the child's hair is cut at an odd-numbered age—such as 1, 3, 5, or 7 years old.
6. Sixth, the ritual is a family- or clan-based event and is celebrated with festivity and honor. After the hair-cutting ceremony, the family hosts a feast with shared food and drinks in a communal setting.
7. Seventh, in the *Upsherin* ritual, the child is dressed in *yachad* (holy clothes), *kippah* (skullcap), and *tzitzit* (sacred fringes), while in the *Chudakarana* ritual, the child wears white garments and turmeric, oil, and other substances are applied to the body.

Differences in symbolic meaning and performance are as follows:

- In the *Koureion*, the child's entire head is shaved, while in Hindu traditions, a lock of hair on the crown (*shikha*) is left; in the Jewish ritual, the side-locks (*peyot*) are preserved.
- In Greek belief, after the ritual, the child is considered to be under the protection of a god. In *Chudakarana*, the child is believed to be purified and reborn. In contrast, in Judaism, the child is not protected by a deity but is prepared for sacred duty—beginning to study the Torah and take on spiritual responsibilities.
- The structure of the ritual also differs: In Greece, it follows the pattern of purification, cutting, and offering. In Hinduism, it involves purification, hair-cutting, offering, and celebration. In Judaism, it includes cutting the hair, preserving the *peyot*, reciting Torah verses, and holding a communal feast.

When comparing these traditional rituals to the Mongolian practice, several similarities and differences are observed:

1. In Greek, Hindu, and Jewish traditions, only male children undergo the ritual, whereas in Mongolian culture, the hair-cutting ceremony is performed for both boys and girls. Among certain ethnic groups, it is even performed regardless of the child's age.
2. While some cultures offer the hair to deities or throw it into the sea, Mongolians preserve the child's first hair (*daakhi*). Later, it may be tied to the roof-ring (*toono*) of the child's wedding ger, or stored in the household. If the child suffers from mouth sores or injuries, a small piece of the preserved hair is burned and used as a healing salve—indicating that the hair is never discarded but reused in various rituals.
3. In Greek, Hindu, and Jewish traditions, the ritual is held at sacred locations such as shrines, the banks of the Ganges, or synagogues, while Mongolians typically perform it at the child's birth home or, among Oirats, at the maternal uncle's ger—demonstrating a spatial distinction rooted in familial custom.

Generally, in comparing the Mongolian *daakhii ürgeekh* ritual to similar hair-cutting traditions, such as those in Greek, Hindu, and Jewish cultures, we find shared themes of purification, protection, and the marking of critical life transitions. In ancient Greek culture, the *koureion* (for boys) and *arkteia* (for girls) rituals also represent a transition from childhood to adolescence, with boys' hair often being sacrificed to Apollo, and in some cases, thrown into the sea as an offering to Poseidon. Similarly, the Hindu *mundana* or *chudakarana* ceremony, which takes place at 1, 3, or 5 years old, is performed as a purification rite, with the hair-cutting symbolizing the removal of negative influences from birth and the beginning of a new, auspicious phase of life.

In the Jewish *upsherin* (Ashkenazi tradition) and *halake* (Sephardic tradition), the cutting of a boy's hair at 3- or 5-years old marks the end of early childhood and the entry into the spiritual and communal responsibilities of

Jewish life. Like the Mongolian ritual, these hair-cutting ceremonies signify an important developmental milestone and the child's movement from one phase of life to another.

These cross-cultural similarities underscore the universal nature of hair-cutting rituals as rites of passage, which serve as critical social and spiritual markers for the individual's growth, the acceptance of new responsibilities, and the reintegration into society with a new identity.

From this perspective, if the concept of the archetype is understood as an eternal and universal idea—an original pattern or image that resides permanently within the human psyche—then the child hair-cutting rituals in Greek, Hindu, and Jewish cultures can be seen as parallel expressions of a common archetypal structure. Within the comparative analysis, both shared and distinctive features of these rituals emerge, each reflecting a particular enactment of archetypal meaning.

In addition to the archetypes articulated by Carl G. Jung—such as the father archetype, the mother archetype, the Hero archetype, the Shadow archetype, and the Wise Old Man archetype—this study also draws upon expanded patterns proposed by scholars like Joseph Campbell and Vladimir Propp, including the Villain archetype, the Sacrificial archetype, and the Conflict archetype. Through this analytical lens, the child hair-cutting rituals across Mongolian, Greek, Hindu, and Jewish cultures commonly reflect the Child archetype, the mother archetype, and the Shadow archetype.

Most directly, the ritual of cutting a child's hair corresponds to the Child archetype, which signifies new beginnings, growth, and future potential. In a broader sense, these rituals symbolically mark a child's transition into a new life phase—whether as a member of the clan, a spiritual initiate, or an autonomous human being. In all four cultures, the ritual reflects societal acknowledgment of the child's development and formal entrance into the human or social world.

The Mother archetype, which embodies care, protection, and nurturing, is also prominently reflected in these traditions. The act of cutting a child's hair is not only a symbolic rite of passage but also a demonstration of parental care and recognition. It signifies a process in which the child, under the guidance and emotional investment of parents (especially the mother), is integrated into society and supported in their journey of growth and development. This dimension of the ritual is evident across all cultures under study.

The Shadow archetype—associated with internal fears, limitations, and the confrontation of change—is likewise relevant. While in Hindu culture the ritual is closely connected to bodily purification and karmic renewal, and in Jewish and Greek traditions it is linked to divine dedication and spiritual responsibility, the Mongolian version does not emphasize religious obligation or bodily transformation. Rather, it centers on the psychosocial roles of the parents and extended family, emphasizing the community's collective role in affirming the child's place in society.

Beyond individual archetypes, each ritual action in these traditions carries archetypal significance. Common ritual components such as purification, social recognition, symbolic transformation, and role redefinition point to the presence of archetypes related to transition, rebirth, and communal integration. The child, following the hair-cutting rite, is recognized not only as a biological offspring but as a legitimate social being—an accepted member of the community. This reveals the function of the ritual as a form of social certification.

Thus, in all of these cultures, the hair-cutting ceremony expresses a deeply rooted belief that the child has now fully entered human life, initiating their life cycle within society. Through the involvement of kin, relatives, the religious community, or the ancestral lineage, the child's existence is validated and embedded within a collective framework. In this sense, the ritual conveys profound symbolic meanings related to social value, existential belonging, and the reaffirmation of life. More broadly, it reflects the human concern with life-death transitions, ontological renewal, and the symbolic logic of socialization that is shared across human cultures.

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