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One historical truth in the korkyt legend

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Abstract

This article describes the historical reality of the legend of Korkyt Ata, one of the most famous people who contributed to the development of the worldview and culture of the Turkic peoples by using historical, philosophical, literary-folklore, and archaeological methods. As a result, exaggerating the power of art, describing everything by metaphorical expressions can be seen in the folk epic, epos, and historical minds of people. In conclusion, in the history of the Turkic peoples, which inhabited Great Steppe, totem concepts and beliefs were reflected both in the political history of the people and in the cultural and ideological regard.

Keywords: Korkyt, Legend, Totem, Metaphor, Culture.

Una verdad histórica en la leyenda de Korkyt

Resumen

Este artículo describe la realidad histórica de la leyenda de Korkyt Ata, una de las personas más famosas que contribuyó al desarrollo de la cosmovisión y la cultura de los pueblos turcos mediante el uso de métodos históricos, filosóficos, literarios, folklóricos y arqueológicos. Como resultado, exagerando el poder del arte, describiendo todo mediante expresiones metafóricas se puede ver

en las épicas populares, los epos y las mentes históricas de las personas. En conclusión, en la historia de los pueblos turcos, que habitaban la Gran Estepa, los conceptos y creencias de los tótems se reflejaron tanto en la historia política de las personas como en el aspecto cultural e ideológico.

Palabras clave: Korkyt, Leyenda, Tótem, Metáfora, Cultura.

1. INTRODUCTION

The common treasury of the Turkic peoples, inhabiting the vast territory from Altay to Anadolu, is the spiritual wealth of Turkic peoples, including Kazakhs. One of the most valuable heritage of our ancestors shedding light on our history is related to Korkyt – a common ancestor of the Turkic peoples, a wise genius, kobyz player, a character of the legend with the deep philosophical content. The information about Korkyt can be found in Rashid ad-Din's *Jami' al-Tawarikh*, and in *The Geneology of Turks and The Book of Korkyt Ata* by Abu al-Ghazi Bahadur. The German scientist Friedrich Dietz translated a part of the Dresden manuscript of *The Book of Korkyt ata* into German in 1815. Afterwards, in 1952 the Italian orientalist Ettore Rossi published a version of the manuscript stored in the Vatican Apostolic Library, Italy (BAYKALOVA ET AL, 2018).

The publication of these two versions attracted scientists to study the seminal written treasury reflecting the Turkic world outlook, literature, culture and history. Particularly, it is worth

mentioning the scientists from Russia, Turkey and Azerbaijan, namely V.V. Radlov, V.V. Barthold, A. Yu. Yakubovsky, Samoilovich, G.Arassli, M.Tahmasib, H.Corogly, O. Gokiya, M.Yergin, E.A. Sultanly, V.M. Jirmunski et al. And works of other researchers. These research works dwell on Korkyt, his era, and his place in Turkic history. Korkyt has become known as a Khan's counselor and an outstanding public figure in the history of Oguz. However, V.M. Jirmunsky conducted a thorough analysis of Oguz's heroic epos, its content and origin in his longitudinal research work called "Oguz heroic epos" (1974). "It is unlikely that Korkyt's historical prototype will trigger a scientific interest. Korkyt is a character developed in legends and stories," he writes (JIRMUNSKY, 1974: 558). The scientist might make such conclusion, since there is a scarce historical record of Korkyt's life. However, the opinions of Myrzatay Joldasbekov and Orkhan-Shaykh Gökyay are somewhat different, while the former says that 'Korkyt is a person who was in history. He is Oguz's great leader, prominent thinker and kuy player' (JOLDASBEKOV, 1989: 113), the latter indicates that

Korkyt ata is a kobyz player, a music teacher of Kazakhs, a great foreteller in their spiritual consciousness, an idol of Kazakh shamans, and a god of worship. Shamans always called him "baba (ancestor)", and worshiped Korkyt (GÖKYAY, 2006: 817-830, 1107-1108).

The opinions of these scientists about Korkyt are very important for us. If Korkyt had not existed, it would have been impossible to convey Korkyt's wise words from generation to generation during

several centuries and his musical heritage that became a tradition among the people of Syrdariya region, an ancient land of Oguzs, and the folklore about Korkyt would not have survived these days. It is obvious that Korkyt's musical legacy and legendary stories about him have been restored in Kazakh and Turkmen lands. Legends serve as an important data that enable us to reveal the historical personality of Korkyt.

There are several legends that say "Being afraid of death Korkyt looks for eternal life, and finally he dies from snake's bite". Thus, the research questions include the following "Why did Korkyt attempted to escape death?" and "how do we understand the image of the snake in the legend?", "What is a place and function of the snake in Turkic worldview?". By answering these questions, we will revise the worldview and genealogical data of ancient Turkic peoples, and dwell on their essence and historical importance.

2. METHODOLOGY

Oral history, folklore is a tradition with deep roots and widespread among the Kazakh people. Moreover, history, culture, worldview, Turkic art is encoded in symbolic images, metaphors, and laws. The main goal of the current scientists is a comprehensive study of these ciphers. Therefore, we must determine in a comparative

analysis of historical artifacts, metaphors and the symbolic depiction of the historical foundations of Kazakh mythology about Korkyt Ata.

The main idea in the myth about Korkyt Ata is Who lived for a hundred years and sought eternal life, avoiding death, laying down his carpet on the bank of the Syr Darya and playing on this carpet in his kobyz. On Dean, a beautiful day when he fell asleep, a snake took his life. Also, in 1864, the traveler Vasily Vereshchagin wrote down the following words:

The Kazakhs tell legends about the ancient city. According to these legends, all the local houses were destroyed by snakes. The ruler of this region in those centuries got married to the daughter of the ruler of a neighboring state, but he condemned her to ruin. In response, the ruler of a neighboring state sent a serpent to the region. Thus, these snakes destroyed not only the ruler but the people of this region (TOLSTOV, 1948: 18).

It is the capital of the state Oguz - Zhankent. All the famous people of the region, such as Korkyt ata, Sarman Kusa, San Jacques Sultan and his wife Bikem, their victims were killed by a snake bite (MARGULAN, 1985). Such a legend about the history of Oguz on the bank of the Syr Darya is passed on from generation to generation. Are there historical values in these legends? What is the role of these snakes in the history and worldview of the Turkic peoples? Such questions attract a lot of attention to not only scientists but also ordinary readers. In world folklore, the serpent plays a role, firstly, bringing death and hardship, and secondly, it is a totem. And the

totem, in turn, plays a very important role in the worldview of the Turkic peoples.

We can note that in folklore mythology, ethnographic and archaeological materials, as well as in dictionaries, the Turks gave a very important role to beasts, birds and considered them to be their totems. But these totem legends were regarded only as folklore, and not as historical evidence. Because of this, many complex ethnopolitical problems in the history of the Turkic peoples could not find a solution. How can you find a solution to these problems? How can one find historical truth in these historical processes? The scientist, historian, and ethnographer Artykbaev said the following: “The complex ethnopolitical aspects of the Oguz-Kimak times can be solved in one way - check the ancient totem legends” (ARTYKBAEV, 2007: 90).

Studying these aspects, artifacts of the Turkic peoples, we can rethink the standards of values of the nomads of Eurasia. Images of birds, snakes, fish, dragons in ancient monuments and artifacts of those times can help shed light on the historical events that took place at that time. One such historical monuments are the tomb Syrly tam located on the banks of the river Zhylanshyk, Central Kazakhstan. This tomb is one of the most beautiful buildings in the steppes of the Kazakh people. The inner part of the tomb is lined with gold and various wall drawings are painted on them. The most important image is a huge

snake-like dragon in pursuit of fish. There is no doubt that this reflects the relationship between the Oguz-Kypshak peoples:

The fish reflects the Oguz, a huge dragon with a large mouth reflects the Kypshak. The sacred totem of the snake in the people of Kypshakov is among the volunteer authors Kai, and among the western authors is the serpent (ARTYKBAEV, 2007: 102).

In archaeological studies in the 3-1 centuries BC and in the 8-11 centuries AD show that there was a cult of the snake among the Turkic peoples (BAYPAKOV & ERZAKOVICH, 1971). According to the data, the Taiman tribe of Kimak-Kai, which was of high significance in the Middle Ages, had a snake as their totem and considered themselves to be the country of snakes. In addition, Bashkortostan (the country of snakes) was a part of Kipchak. They worshiped snakes. The writer of the X century, Ibn Fadlan, wrote about it: While one group worshiped snakes, the other group worshiped cranes. (ZUEV, 2002; HAMIDULLIN, YUSUPOV, ASYLGUZHIN, 2015; IBN FADLAN, 1939).

The fish totem was also strong in the era before Islam in the world's views of the Amu Darya and the Aral Sea people (SNESAREV, 1969). The dignity of fish, the worship of which was widely spread in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Caucasus region, reached the peoples of the Mediterranean and was absorbed by their ancient beliefs and practices (ROBAKIDZE, 1948). They were one of the state building peoples of the Oguz, Kipchak era, and they had both

political conflicts and cultural ties with each other. The Syr Darya temples, mentioned above, are also a manifestation of Oguz art, the symbol of the Oguz-Kipchak heroism. The images there symbolize it. The death of the great Oguz leader, because of the snake bite of Korkut, who denied death, the siege of Zharkent town by snakes, the escape of people, is supposed to be the result of political relations and conflicts between Oghuz and Kipchaks.

The legendary historical events have been described in metaphorical terms of the worldview and belief of the Turkic era. Kipchaks were called the Dragon land, while Oguz was defined as big fish land. Thus, if the whole city was destroyed as a result of the clash between snake and fish people, it seems that their prominent figures could also die in the hands of the enemy. Exaggerating the power of art, describing everything by metaphorical expressions can be seen in the folk epic, epos, and historical minds of people (FILOSOFIYASI, 2014). It is still found in the world view world and literature of Turkic people.

In the midst of this turbulent conflict, the Oguz community solved the difficulties. Whatever issue appeared, it was not solved without consultation with the father Korkyt. Whatever he had said, would have been accepted and done (ERGIN, 1958). The highly respected Oguz figure Korkyt could be killed by their enemies. We are affirming so, as Kaskabasov, a scientist who studied Korkyt's personality, having analyzed the etymology of Korkyt, says that

Korkyt does not have anything to do with the Kazakh word korku, meaning scared. If we consider the history of the word, it will lead us to the words sor and kut in the ancient Turkic language. In ancient Turkic, the word kor means harm, suffering, while kut means soul, happiness, power of life, spirit.

At that time, these two words lost the blessing, suffering soul being summed up could mean and be used as a dead soul, dead person (KASKABASOV, 2011). Because, according to Shamans' worldview, a human has three kinds of blessing: the earth blessing, the air blessing, and the mother blessing. If one of them gets stolen, the man dies. KASKABASOV (2011) concludes that "the ability to see dreams by Kazakh Korkyt and his death does not require any explanations: his enemies stole his blessing (his soul)" (KASKABASOV, 2011: 356). Considering the phenomena of Shaman ideology and traditional beliefs in the Korkyt legend, we have decided to consider them, taking into account the real life phenomena. Who is the enemy here? The snake mentioned in the legend, respecting the serpent in the sources above, which was believed the totem of the snake land people, allows us to conclude that it is one of the tribes of the so-called snake people of that time.

Our opinion seems to be supported by the data given in the V.V.Barthold's comment to I. Marquart book: at Kypchak times on Altay. They were defeated by snake people, and later having mixed with that people, they crushed Oguz and Pechenegs and together they opposed Byzantium. (BARTHOLD, 1968: 393).

3. CONCLUSION

Based on the political and social events of the Oguz-Kipchak epoch, comparing their religious beliefs and world view, comparing the symbols and legends in the historical monuments, we have tried to disclose the historical foundations of the widely spread legends, which have a deep meaning and are told along Syr river, that are directly related to the history of Oguz and life of Korkyt.

The reason to say so is the historical data, which prove, that in the history of the Turkic peoples, which inhabited Great Steppe, totem concepts and beliefs were reflected both in the political history of the people and in the cultural and ideological regard. Facts and historical records, as well as archeological artifacts, prove that very well.

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