

On the Chief Totem of Ancient Turks (mainly on the basis of linguistic material)

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O. As is well known,¹ some Turcologists stated that the ancient Turks had totemic beliefs and that the wolf was their chief totem.² The arguments presented to support this statement are different. One of them is the evidence of Chinese sources relating to one Turkic tribe, the Türkü, which contains the story about a child nursed by a she-wolf, as well as the information in Chapter 50 of the Chou Shu that the Turks used gold wolves' heads on poles as their standards.³ There are also references to the Kirghiz epical poem "Manas", in which the hero is qualified by the epithets *kök cal*, *kök börü*: *kök cal Manas* "blue-maned Manas" *kök börü Manas* "blue wolf Manas".⁴ The most striking demonstration of the totemic beliefs of the Turks is provided by the Uyгур variant of "Oğuz-nāme".

Now, the problem will be discussed in the light of the additional data and I shall try to express my views on the aforementioned arguments.

1. Sir Gerard Clauson, I think, had good reasons to give a new explanation of the evidences of Chinese sources. As should be reminded here, the point is that "the connection between the Western Türkü and wolves seems... ..to rest on very shaky foundations". The passage about the standards with

1 See G. Clauson, *Turks and wolves*, *Studia Orientalia*, Helsinki 1964, XXVIII 2, p. 3.

2 In this connection, F. Köprülü's works must be mentioned first of all. See also Abdulkadir [İnan], *Türk rivayetlerinde "bozkurd"*, *Türkiyat mecmuası* (1926), 2, 1928, s. 132 vbb.; L.N.Gumilyov, *Drevnie tjurki*, Moscow 1967, p. 22; Kh. Koroghli, *Oguzskij geroičeskij epos*, Moscow 1976, ss. 76-77; N.A.Baskakov, *Tjurkskaja leksika v "Slove o polku igoreve"*, Leningrad 1985, s. 101.

3 See N.Ja.Bičurin (Iakinf), *Sobranie svedenij o narodax, obitavšix v Srednej Azii v drevnie vremena, I*, Moscow-Leningrad 1950, ss. 220-222.

4 See R.Z. Kydyrbaeva, *Genezis eposa "Manas"*, Frunze 1980, ss. 28-29.

the “gold wolves’ heads” has not necessarily to be related to Turkic tribes. There are some essential details of special interest. The first of them is that the ancient Turks could kill wolves or, in other words, “there was no taboo on killing wolves”.⁵ One Yenisey inscription gives good proofs of the kind: *yeti bōrū ölürdüm* “I killed seven wolves”.⁶ Then, in the “Divānu luğāti’t-türk” there are some poems which have been compiled by A. Caferoğlu under the title of “Kurt avı”.⁷ After having examined all the native Turkic documents of ancient period we make bold to state the absence of any facts which could be interpreted as showing the respectful attitude of the Turks to wolves. Such facts, however, are attested in Mongolian sources, for instance in “Altan tobchi”: “If a grey wolf (“*börte çinō*”) and a beautiful fallow deer go in [round-up], one cannot kill them”.⁸ So, it is possible that the Chinese sources make pass the Mongols for the Turks. We do not know who were the five hundred families united under the name “Aşina”. There is no information indicating that they were Turks or “Turkish speaking Mongols”.⁹

Sir Gerard Clauson appears to be right also in another respect. In ancient Turkic language *bōri* is the only native word for “wolf” existing in all modern Turkic languages except those of the South Western group:¹⁰ OT *bōri*, Alt., Tuv. *bōrū*, Dolg., Yak. *bōrō*, Kar. *bōrū* ~ *beri*; Az. *gurd*, Gag., Tur. *kurt*; Türkm. *bōri*, *gürt*. Another word is relatively recent: *gürt* ~ *gürt* ~ *kurt* can be traced back to the 11th century. Its earliest use is in the Kāşğari’s “Divān...” which says that so the Oğuz called the wolf and that the word usually meant “worm”. Such a meaning remains up to now: Alt., Gag., Kar., Tuv., Tur *kurt*, Kaz. *kürt*. Euphemistic names for the wolf are used in different Turkic languages. To illustrate this, some examples may be given: Az. *ağziğara*, Kirg. *karışkir*, Tuv. *kızıl-karak*, Yak. *uhun kuturuk*, *tangara uola*, *ahilāx*, *tin-*

5 G.Clauson, op. cit., p. 20.

6 See S.Je.Malov, *Enisejskaja pis'mennost' tjurkov*, Moscow-Leningrad 1952, s. 33 (N 11₁₀).

7 A.Caferoğlu. *Türk Dili Tarihi*, II, İstanbul 1974, s. 48. See also T.Tekin, XI. *Yüzyıl Türk şiiri. Divānu luğāti't-türk'teki manzum parçalar*, Ankara 1989, XXII.

8 Lubsan Danzan, *Altan tobçi* (“*Zolotoe skazanie*”), *Perevod s mongol'skogo, vvedenie, kommentarij i prilozhenija* N.P. Šastinoj, Pamjatniki pis'mennosti Vostoka X, Moscow 1973, s. 236 (Gl. XIII, 95).

9 L.N.Gumil'jov, op. cit., ss. 17-21.

10 G.Clauson, op. cit., p. 4.

*giraxtāx*¹¹. It becomes clear, therefore, that the Oğuz used *kurt* “worm” as a euphemistic name for the wolf and that quite remarkable, we have in Türkmen the similiar use of another word: Tur. *böcek* “worm”, Türkm. *möcek* “wolf”.

2. Though our knowledge of the history of “Manas” is fragmentary, its Mongolian flavour is beyond any doubt.

3. Sir Gerard Clauson believed that the Uygur manuscript of the “Oğuz-nāme” was not the original text, but the translation of Mongolian legend. He supposed its author to have been “some enthusiastic Türkmen nationalist” who “got hold of a Mongolian legend of some kind and had it translated into Turkish substituting Oğuz-kağan for Chinggis and his successors and adding some specifically Turkish matter, but retaining a good deal of the vocabulary and flavour of the Mongolian original”.¹² I could not say that my opinion is the same, nevertheless there are a lot of facts showing the great Mongolian influence on the Uygur variant of the “Oğuz-nāme”.

As appears from the study of the text, the traditional form of the genealogical myth contains the primitive description of Chinggis-khan’s campaigns. The history of Oğuz-kağan, the list of his allies and his enemies (*Altun-kağan, Curcit-kağan, Masar-kağan, Urum-kağan, Kağarlığ-beg, Kıpçak-beg, Urus-beg, Kalac, Kangaluğ, Saklab*), and the geographic names (*Baraka, Itil-müren, Muz-tağ, Sindu, Şağam, Tangğut*) give a general idea of the events told in the “Oğuz-nāme”.¹³ J.Marquart, by the way, considered Chinggis-khan to be the main personage of the legend.¹⁴

It is certain that some linguistic features of the “Oğuz-nāme” are of Mongolian origin. I shall start by the vocabulary.

There is a good deal of loan words as enumerated below:

aka “elder brother”, *berke* “grave, terrible” (< MM *berke* < OT *berk*), *buğu* “maral”, *cıda* “lance”, *cosun* “way, mode” (in *Barmakluğ Cosun Billig*, literally “the man who knows the modes of movement”), *cüing* “left”, *çamat* “anger”, *çokur* “skew-bald”, *çubuyan* “a dish”, *kağaz* “manful, brave”, *kalığ* (*a*) “door; gates”, *kalkan* “shield”, *kurikan* “kent”, *kurıltay* “assembly”,

11 On such words see A.M. Şcerbak, “Nazvanija domašnix i dikix životnyx”, *Istoričeskoe razvitie leksiki tjurkskix jazykov*, Moscow 1961, ss. 132-133.

12 G.Clauson, op. cit., pp. 18-20.

13 See A.M.Şcerbak, *Oğuz-nāme. Muhabbat-nāme*, Moscow 1959, ss. 92-98.

14 J.Marquart, *Über das Volkstum der Komanen*, Berlin 1914, S. 142.

müren "river", *müren usuğı* (*müren usunu* ?) "river's waters", *nüker* "fighting man", *ordu* "camp", *şire* "a kind of table", *talay* "ocean, sea", *tüşimel* "magus", *uran* "war-cry". Some of them are originally Turkic words, but they have a specific Mongolian appearance. Some others are formed from Turkic stems by means of Mongolian suffixes: *küriltay* "assembly" (OT *kur-* "to build" + MM *-ltay*), *Tömürtü* - the first element of a proper name (*tömür* < OT *temür* "iron" + MM *-tü*). As to the word *tüşimel* "magus", it is an example for pseudoetymology (OT *tüşe-* ~ *tüşi-* "to dream" + MM *-mel*, see MM *tüşimel* ~ *tüsimel*).

Besides, an unusual use or an unusual distribution of Turkic morphological elements is to be observed: *bolsunğıl* "may it be" (as a rule, one can use the suffix *-ğıl* only for the second person), *kelgenler kik* "coming animals" (instead of *kelgen kikler*), *uçkanlar kuş* "flying birds" (instead of *uçkan kuşlar*), *belleri* "his waist" (instead of *beli*).

One point requires special mention. There are spellings of Turkic long vowels which are characteristic of Written Mongolian: *kağar* "snow" (*kār*), *kağatur* "mule" (*kātur*), *Şağam* - Syria (*Şām* < ar.), *tağam* "roof" (*tām*).

Now it should be noted that the contents of the "Oğuz-nāme" are also under great Mongolian influence. Indeed some common epical features are widely spread as a result of the similarity of historical and religious evolution. Turks, Mongols and other peoples had totemic beliefs. This means that one or another animal was considered as an ancestor of a tribe. Several tales tell about family relations between men and animals. Furthermore, the epical poems of nomadic peoples furnishes us with the cases of symbolic use of bow and arrows. According to N.I.Veselovskiy who refers to statements of the sinologue A.I.Ivanov, "Already Li-tsz'i's ritual book... ..tells about the ancient costum of hanging out a bow made from mulberry and arrows made from grass at the door of a house where a boy was born. 6 arrows seem to have symbolized the boy's attitude towards the sky, earth and the four cardinal points".¹⁵ Another information about the bow and arrows is given in the "Oğuz-nāme". Oğuz-kağan's elder sons find a golden bow and his younger sons find three silver arrows. Oğuz-kağan breaks the golden bow into three pieces. Here bow and arrows are the symbol of the supreme power. To be

15 A.N.Veselovskij, *Istoričeskaja poetika*, Leningrad 1940, s. 514.

more exact, they are used to explain the division of the power between two parts of the Oğuz: *Buzuk* (“*üç buzguluk kıldı*”) and *Uçuk* (“*üç ok*”) tribes.¹⁶ The Buzuk are ruling, the Uçuk are executing their orders.¹⁷ There are also parallels in the characteristics of epical heroes. Their birth is not usual, their qualities and deeds are exaggerated in enormous proportions. Three-year-old Cangar demolishes the gates of three big fortresses and submits the mighty Gulcing mangas-khan. Forty-day-old Oğuz-kağan begins to walk, to play. He has legs like a bull, a waist like a wolf, shoulders like a sable, and a chest like a bear (“*kırık kündün song bedükledi, yürüdi, oynadı. Adağı ud adağı deg, belleri böri belleri deg, yağrı kiş yağrı dek, kögüzü aduğ kögüzü deg erdi*”). Chingiz-khan, according to the “Secret History of the Mongols”, was born holding in his right hand a clot of blood. The feast is another common feature appearing independently. Finally, it should be mentioned such a common feature as the mysterious ray of light in which appears the father of the three sons of Alan-ğoa in the “Secret History...”, as well as the mother of the three sons of Oğuz-kağan in the “Oğuz-nâme”.

It shows clearly that the resemblance of the separate motives may be fortuitous. The case is somewhat other when there are combinations of similar motives: the unusual birth of a hero, a mysterious ray of light penetrating a tent, the appearance of a wolf, a prophetic dream and so on. Something of the kind appears before us when comparing the text of the “Oğuz-nâme” and that of the “Secret History...”. Here fortuity is hardly probable.

The “Oğuz-nâme” is the only ancient Turkic text dealing with the legendary wolf, with the genealogy of the Turks. In the early Turkic literature, with one exception, there is no reference to this subject. Only Abulğazi Bahâdur-khan mentions it, but he names the hero of the legend in Mongolian manner.¹⁸ There are some other evidences. So, reproducing the poem recited by Oğuz-kağan at his feast (“*Men senlerge boldum kağan / Alalm ya takı kal-*

16 See V.P.Kurilyov, “K voprosu ob etimologii slov ‘buzok’ i ‘uçok’”, *Sovetskaja etnografija*, Moscow 1965, 6, ss. 115-119; K.Eraslan, “On the names of Oghuz branches *Boz-ok* and *Üç-ok*”, *Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yılığı, Belleten* (1986), Ankara 1988, s.1-14.

17 See, O.Turan, “Eski Türklérde okun hukukî bir sembol olarak kullanılması”, *TTK, Belleten*, IX, 35, Ankara 1945, ss. 305-318.

18 *Historie des Mogols et des Tatares par Aboul-Ghazi Béhâdour khân*, publiée, traduite et annotée par Le Baron Desmaisons, I.Texte, St.-Petersbourg 1871, pp. 61-62, 67-68.

kan / Tamğa bolsun bizge buyan / Kök böri bolsunğıl uran... ..”), Sir Gerard Clauson calls attention to the rhyming words: *kağan, kalkan, buyan, uran, orman, kulan, müren, kurikan*. At last, he discusses the signification of the word *uran* “war-cry” for the general characteristic of the “Oğuz-nāme” and supposes that “this poem is a translation of a piece of Mongolian poetry, in which case the “blue-grey wolf” is easily explained: it is just the *Börte Çinō* referred above”.¹⁹ The most interesting information, however, is contained in the third line of the cited poem: *Tamğa bolsun bizge buyan*. In the “*Kıssa-i Chinggiz*”²⁰ *buyan* is considered to be a *savut* of Chinggiz-khan himself.

Besides the “Secret History of the Mongols”, there must have existed the prototype of a legend about Chinggiz -khan taking an intermediate position. For the time being it is difficult to find out the circumstances relating to the origin of this legend. Maybe it was a part of the “Secret History of the Mongols” essentially remade, or a legendary variant of the biography of Chinggiz-khan based on the “Secret History ...”. In this connection, the importance of the Turkic version known as the “*Kıssa-i Chinggiz*”, or the “*Chinggiz-nāme*”, is beyond doubt.²¹

Manuscripts of the “*Kıssa-i Chinggiz*” are known in a great number and there is a brief description of them.²² They are kept in the British Museum (London), in the library of the Institute of Oriental Studies (Leningrad-St.-Petersburg), in the Bibliotheque Nationale (Paris) and in other places. For my work I used the manuscripts of the Institute of Oriental Studies: B 744, B 343, B 344.

The part of “*Kıssa-i Chinggiz*” narrating about Chinggiz-khan is a legendary version of his Mongolian biography. The appearance of a Turkic variant seems to be connected with attempts to reestimate the Turkic medieval history in the light of the military campaigns of Chinggiz-khan. Although having been made very long ago, such attempts became extremely intensive in the XVII th -XVIIIth centuries. Lately they tend to be continued, but there are changes in the main orientation. Now, it is the conception of Turkic-

19 G.Clauson, op. cit., p. 19.

20 B 344, 25 b, in the Institute of Oriental Studies in St.-Petersburg-Leningrad.

21 “*Kıssa-i Chinggiz*” and “*Chinggiz-nāme*” are the conventional titles.

22 M.A.Usmanov, *Tatarskije istoričeskie istočniki XVII-XIII vv.*, Kazan’ 1972, ss. 102-104.

Mongolian historical unity which comes to the foreground. Without taking into account any concrete sources, Chinggiz-khan is believed to be of Turkic nationality (“Zaten Cengiz’in kendisi de bazı rivayetlere göre, Türk menşelidir”).²³

The Turkic variant enjoyed wide popularity in the Volga area, where it was published for the first time in 1822 by I.Khalfin.²⁴ It should be added that a very interesting and important commentary to the contents of “Kıssa-i Chinggiz” belongs to A.Inan;²⁵ however his conclusions are not well-founded and for the present cannot be accepted.

The connection between the “Kıssa-i Chinggiz” and the “Secret History of the Mongols” is obvious. It is enough to look through the similar names and compare them with each other: *Alaŋu - Alaŋoa*,²⁶ *Boduntay - Bugunotay*, *Boduncar - Bodoncar*, *Belgutay - Belgunotay*, *Salcut - Salcı*, *Shiba - Sokur - Duva-Sokor*.

On the other hand, there are some traits which are common for the “Oğuz-nâme” and the “Kıssa-i Chinggiz”. They can be distributed into four groups:

I. The mysterious ray of light, the appearance of the blue-grey wolf:

Oğuz-nâme	<i>köktün bir yaruk tüşti... oşbu yaruknung arasında bir kız bar erdi (6);</i> <i>Oğuz-kağannung kurkanığa kün deg bir caruk kirdi. Ol caruktun kök tülüklüg kök calluğ bedük bir erkek böri çıktı (16);</i>
Kıssa-i Chinggiz	<i>kün yarukı evge kirdi. Ulmalik Körikli anı kördi, öle kaldı (3b);</i>

23 A.Temir, “Türk-Moğol imparatorluğu ve devamı”, *Türk Dünyası El Kitabı*, Ankara 1975, s. 912.

24 *Žizn’ Džingiz-xana i Aksak-Timura*, Sostavil İ. Xal’fin, Kazan’ 1822. The other publications are: A. İnan, “Çingiznâme”, *Azerbaycan Yurt Bilgisi* III, 1934 (in this case I can not take responsibility for the accuracy of information); *Avtobiografija Timura i bogatyrskie skazanija o Čingis-xane i Aksak-Temire*, Perevod s tjurkskogo i jagatayskogo jazykov, Vstupitel’naja stat’ja i komentarij V.A. Panova, Moscow 1934.

25 Abdulkadir [İnan], Türk rivayetlerinde “bozkurd”, ss. 131-137.

26 The first name is taken from the “Kıssa-i Chinggiz”, the second that is relating to the “Secret History of the Mongols”.

*Ulmalik körikli aydı bayağı körgen kündin kursağıma
bala boldı (4a);
kursagımdağı bala adamdan bolğan degüldür, nurdın
kıyaşdan payda bolğandır (5b);
men ölgendin song xatunum Alanğuğa tüş tül bolub iner-
men, anda yurtğa layık yaxşı oğul payda bolur (8a);
men ölgendin song kün bolub inermen, böri bolub
çıkarmen (8a);
belgüsi oldur kim kün bolub iner, böri bolub çıkar (12a);

havadın bir yaruk kün indi, kördiler erse işleri ketdi, bu-
lar yana birancadın song islerin yaftıb erse... (12a);
kördiler kim yıldı yallı kök böri çıka keldi, artına karab
“çingiz çingiz” teb avaz berdi (12b).*

II. The distinctive marks showing the birth of male child:

Oğuz-nāme	<i>Ay-kağannung közü yarıb bodadı, erkek oğul toğurdı (1); künlerden song keçelerden song yaradı, üç erkek oğulnı toğurdı (8);</i>
Kıssa-i Chingiz	<i>andın song Alanğunın közi yaradı, er oğlan toğurdı (12b);</i>

III. The unusual qualities of the female personages:

“Oğuz-nāme”	<i>andağ körüklüg erdi kim külse kök tengri küle turur, yığlasa kök tengri yığlaya turur (6);</i>
Kıssa-i Chingiz	<i>körki andağ erdi külse kuru ağaçğa yaprak biter erdi, ta- kur yerge baksa ülen biter erdi, saçın tarasa yincü tökülür erdi, tükürse altun kümiüş biter erdi (3 a).</i>

IV. The unusual qualities of the heroes:

Oğuz-nāme *belleri böri belleri deg, yağrı kiş yağrı deg... (2);*
 Kışsa-i Chinggiz *özi böri yağırlı erdi (13 a).*

To sum up, there are solid proofs that the Uygur variant of "Oğuz-nāme" had Mongolian basis.

Conclusion

Having been for a long time under Turkic influence, Mongolian borrowed a number of Turkic lexical and morphological elements. As for the epical traditions, we have evidences of the influence in the opposite direction. In brief, there are reasons to suppose the legend about the "blue-grey wolf" to be of Mongolian origin. It is perhaps early to decide whether this conclusion corresponds entirely to the facts. The Turkic totemism requires further investigations. Nevertheless, uncertainty on this subject must be eliminated as soon as possible.