

A Study of the Ancient Turkic "TARQAN"

Choi Han-Woo

Handong University

In the ancient Chinese source Tangshu(唐書), there appears 達干 Tarkan which is a title of the ancient Turkic state Göktürk or Toukiue(突厥) with some other titles. In Chinese sources, there is any single comment or explanation on the title 達干 Tarkan. This title occurs in the Orkhon inscriptions. In the Bilge Kagan inscription(S13) which is one of the Göktürk, the title tarqan is mentioned among the titles of the rulers of the eastern part of the state : öŋre tölis begler apa tarqan bašlayu ulayu šadapit begler bu taman tarqan tonyuquq buyla бага tarqan.

In the Ongin inscription(F4), the title tarqan appears: qapyan el-teris qayan eliqa qillintim. el-etmis yabyu oxli isbara tamyan čor yabyu inisi bilgä isbara tamyan tarqan. Besides these, the title Tarqan appears in the other Orkhon inscriptions, Tonyukuk(W6, N10), Kültekin(W2, N12) and Bilge Kagan(S14). From the Ongin inscription, we can know that Tarqan is a high official. According to G. Clauson, though the title Tarqan is not same as the titles such as Tegin and Shad which belongs to royal family, it is of very high position. After the 11th century, the title disappeared in the Turkic society.

This word was widely borrowed into the other languages except the Altaic languages; Indo(Panjabi) tarkhan, Kurd. terxan, Armen. t'arxan, Grek. ταρχανος, Tibet. t'ar-k'an, Rus. tarchan, etc.

On the other hand, the title Tarqan also was used as the term designating "a blacksmith, a handcraftsman". This word occurs as the form of darxan in Mongolian meaning "a blacksmith, a handcraftsman".(Laufer 1919: 593). Besides this, Mongolian darxan has the other meaning 'a privileged person who is exempt from all government taxes'. This word was borrowed into Chagatay in the form of tarxan. In Sanlax's dictionary it is written that this title is given to a

person who is exempt from taxes. According to the dictionary, Tarxans can commit up to nine offences without being called to account.

G. Clauson(1972: 539) argued that Tarqan in Ancient Turkic was considered to be the supreme title and was not even, like Tegin and Shad, peculiar to the royal family, but that it was still a high title, carrying administrative responsibility.

In the Kyrghyz's tale Manas, this word occurs too meaning 'a blacksmith', which is probably borrowed from Mongolian. In Mongolian, the meaning 'a blacksmith' is more original than the meaning 'a person who is exempt from taxes'. Lessing(1960: 236) adds to the above mentioned meanings "area or place set aside for religious reasons and therefore inviolable". In Lessing's dictionary, the word darxan also is used as adjective meaning 'sacred, celebrated'. This implies that the word has something with a certain ancient religion or shamanism. Why were darxans not only exempt from all taxes but also so free from judgement? Because they performed religious duties for their governments as official priests.

Concerning this, there is an interesting Yakut's proverb; Yakuts in Siberia believe that smiths and shamans are from the same nest (Us da oyun bir uyalah). Also Yakuts often say about a smart girl that she will be a well matched spouse with a blacksmith or a shaman. "A shaman's wife is respectable, a smith's wife is venerable" says Yakuts. (W. Jochelson 1933: 172ff).

On the other hand, according to the Dolgan Yakut, smiths have power to heal and even to foretell the future. Dolgans believes that shamans can not swallow the souls of smiths because smiths keep their souls in the fire. On the other hand, a smith can catch a shaman's soul and burn it. (A. Popov 1933: 258-60).

According to Yakut myths, the smith received his craft from the evil god K'daai Maqsın, the chief smith of the underworld. He lives in an iron house, surrounded by fired slag iron. K'daai Maksın sometimes takes part in initiating the famous shamans of the other world. K'daai Maqsın is a famous master of smiths.(Popov 260). He sometimes takes in initiating the famous shamans of the other world, by tempering their souls as he tempers iron. (Popov 1933:260-261).

In the Altay shamanism in southern Siberia, there is Erlik Khan who is the ruler of the underworld corresponding to K'daai Khan of Yakuts. According to Sandschejew 1928: 953), the Altay shaman hears metallic noises in his ecstatic descent to the underworld of Erlik Khan. Erlik puts iron chains on the souls captured by the evil spirits.

On the other hand, Buryats also have the similar belief regarding the smith. According to Buryat beliefs, the nine sons of Boshintoi, the celestial smith, came down to earth to teach men metallurgy. Their first pupils were the ancestors of the families of smiths. Boshintoi's sons married daughters of earth, and thus became the ancestors of the smiths. Accordingly no one can become a smith unless he is descended from one of these families. (Sandschejew 1928: 538-539).

Both Kazakhs and Kyrghyzs also have their belief that the iron can drive evil spirits out. (Hassan 1986: 307). In Eurasia there widely spreaded the concept of the celestial smith Tarqan Tengri.

The Chinese sources Jushu 周書 and SuShu 隨書 mention that Göktürks who were under the rule of Yuan Yuan were engaged in smith's work. From this, we can deduce the fact that the title Tarqan originally has something with the vocational identity of Göktürks. As it is well known that Ashina 阿史那 the legendary father of the Ancient Turkic people was engaged in metal working.

Besides this, the destan Ergenekon of the Ancient Turkic people is also closely related to this smith-shamanism. Ergenekon is the name of a valley which became a secluded homeland to the Göktürks or Ancient Turkic. In this location, the remnants of the Göktürks, threatened with extinction elsewhere, multiplied and thrived. In one of the two known variants of the destan Ergenekon, a she-wolf rescues a Göktürk warrior who has been mutilated by the enemy and takes him to Ergenekon. There, conceiving sons from him, they repopulate this oymak. The population of the oymak becomes so large that Ergenekon can no longer hold it. The population desires to leave, but no one knows the way out. Finally, a blacksmith notices that a portion of the mountains surrounding this valley is composed of iron ore. The people of the valley pile wood and coal high in front of this section setting it ablaze. The ore melts and a passageway from Ergenekon is secured.

From this destan or legend, we can understand how the smith played an important role as a spiritual leader in the ancient Turkic community.

Traditionally in Korean shamanism, the smith has a special position, along with the shaman. According to the legend of ancient Silla kingdom, the king Suk-Thalhae 昔脫解 acceded to the throne, because of his craft of the smith. He was immigrated from the other country. As a foreigner or an outsider, it was very hard to be accepted by the ancient Silla community. However, as he presented himself as a smith, he began to be welcomed and treated as a novel man. In the end, he succeeded to become a king, getting rid of traditional royal family Park which was the founder of the ancient Silla kingdom.

From this legendary history, we can deduce the fact that the smith was highly respected in the Korean society in the early period when the shaman had a strong leadership.

In the period of the transition from the Stone Age to the Iron Age, it is well known that he who had a craft of the smith was amazingly respected by the community, having the power and leadership politically as well as spiritually.

As it was in the Altaic people groups in Eurasia, this tradition of shamanism had been continued in history in Korea. Even in the end of the Chosun period, the trace of the this tradition concerning the smith had been continued. According to a western missionary C.A. Clark who for the first time introduced Korean shamanism to the west in 1929, Chosun or Korean people believed that the evil spirits were very afraid of iron, and that just by mentioning the name iron, the evil spirits felt seriously threatened as it is seen in Kyrghyzs and Kazakhs. For this reason, mudangs or shamans in Korea used to wear cloths ornamented with small iron dishes and iron arrows in their shamanic performances, with knives in their hands.

A trace of smith-shamanism is also found in the legend of Tangun who is known as founder of Kochosun, the first ancient Korean state: In olden times Hwanin's son, Hwanung, wished to descend from heaven and live in the world of human beings. Knowing his son's desire, Hwanin surveyed the three highest mountains and found Mount T'aebaek the most suitable place for his son to settle and help human beings. Therefore he gave Hwanung three heavenly seals and

dispatched him to rule over the people. Hwanung descended with three thousand followers to a spot under a tree by the Holy Altar atop Mount T'aebaek.

Most of Korean scholars agree to that three heavenly seals(or instruments) which celestial god Hwanin gave his son Hwanung in the legend are mirror, knife, and drum or bell. (N.S. Choi 1954: 59-60; J.Y. Kim 1957). All these three heavenly seals were major and popular instruments which Korean mudangs or shamans enjoyed to use in their shamanic performances. From this fact, many scholars does not avoid to say that tradition of Korean shamanism especially related with mudang originally has relationship with Tangun. (J.K. Jang 1982: 81-84, N.H., Yun 1994: 17).

On the other hand, among these instruments, heavenly knife comes from the tradition of the Altaic smith-shamanism which has long tradition in the Altaic peoples, i.e. Turkic and Mongolian.

Turning to the etymology of Tarqan, Räsänen(JSFOu L, 7,5) proposed that this word was borrowed from Sino-Korean 達官 tar-kwan "emeritus", referring to Ramstedt's article(Ramstedt, 1935: 87). However, both Gabain(1950: 48) and Ramstedt(1951: 63) suggested another theory that the word consisted of two morphemes, *tar and qan. The latter is the same as Old Turkic qan in burqan "Budda" (< 佛 bur + qan) and Middle Turkic xan "king, ruler". According to Sinor(JA 1939: 548, 1963: Nr.2564), this word was derived from the verb tar- "disperse, divide up".

Mongolian has some variants of this word; There are two nouns, darxad and darxaci. While the former consists of the root *darxa and the plural suffix {+ d}, the latter consists of the same root and the denominal noun suffix {+ ci}, both designating "a blacksmith". Besides these, there is a verb darxala- which has some different meanings, i.e. 'to do the work of a smith, a craftsman or an artisan; to exempt from taxes and official duties; to set aside as sacred'. This verb is formed with the denominal verb suffix {-la-}.

In Orkhon Turkic, there is the form tarkat which consists of *tarka and the plural suffix -t. In the text Mahramag, there appears the term Tarkhan Khaqan. The word Khaqan is the same with the ancient Turkic Qagan. This implies that the title Tarqan is not formed with the ancient Turkic title qan 'king'.

In Korean, there appears a word which is supposed to be originally related to the title Tarqan; In Middle Korean there is a homonym which has two different meanings with the same form tarho- ~ tarku- 'to heat (a piece of iron, etc)' and 'to deal with (person, problem, etc.)'. The latter one developed into the form taru- with the same meaning 'to deal with' in Modern Korean. In my opinion, these two words are not different but originally same. Of these two meanings, I think the former one 'to heat' is original, while the meaning 'to deal with' is secondary. This change of the meaning probably is closely related to the shamanistic feature of a blacksmith which was originated from the ancient Turkic or Proto-Altaic.

As for the Korean form *tarkW- with the last vowel being rounded, the Sogdian form of the word tarqan may give answer. Interestingly, Turkic tarqan occurs in the form of trɣwn in Sogdian. (Tolstov 1955:138).

We come to the conclusion that Korean tarho- ~ tarku-, Turkic tarqan and Mongolian darxan are of the same origin. This manifests that there were a close cultural relationship between Central Asia and Korean peninsula in the ancient period.

Bibliography

- Choi N.S., *"Tangungogijunsuk"*, Sasanggye, 1954.
- Clark C. A., *Religions of Old Korea*, 1929, New York.
- Clauson G., *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*, 1972.
- Gabain, A., *Alttürkische Grammatik*, 1941.
- Hassan Ümit, *Eski Türk Toplumunu Üzerine İncelemeler*, 1986.
- Inan Abdülkadir, *Türklerde Demircilik Sanatı - Tarihte ve Folkloreda*,
- Jang J.K., *"Samgukmusoku Musokgirok Kochal."* *Samgukyusau Yongu*, 1982
- Jochelson W., *The Yakuts*, 1933.
- Kim J.Y., *"Tangunsinhwau Minsokhakjuk Kochal"*. *Chungjudae Nonmunjip*, 1957.
- Laufer B., *Sino-Iranica, Chinese contributions to the history of civilization in ancient Iran*, 1919.
- Lessing, F.D., *Mongolian-English Dictionary*, 1960.
- Popov A. A., *"Consecration Ritual for a Blacksmith Novice among the Yakuts"*, JAFI, xlvii, 181, (July-Sept.), 1933, pp. 257-271.
- Ramstedt, G.J., *Über den Ursprung der türkischen Sprache*, SFAW, 1935.

Sandschejew G., *"Weltanschauung und Schamanismus der Alaren-Burjaten"*,

Anthropos, xxviii, 1928, pp. 538-560.

Tolstov u.a., *Istorija uzbekskogo naroda*, Tashkent, 1955.

Yun N.H., *Kochosun Yongu*, 1994.