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A Study of the Proto-Turkic tor 'general'

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Despite all attempts to explore the proto or ancient Korea, there still remains many unveiled or unsolved that are considered very important. For example, what tribes ancient Korean states consisted of, what ethnic groups played the main role in the early stages, and the relation of the early Korean states and states of northern tribes. To solve these problems, two different approaches have been applied up to the present, i.e., archaeological and philological or historical methods. The archaeological approach has been always useful. However, archaeological evidences were often not sufficient to make a matter entirely clear nor to solve alone the problem without assistance of other scientific methods. In Korean studies, especially in case of ancient Korean matters, most frequently applied approach was historical approach based on philological studies. The philological studies in Korean studies largely depends on Chinese materials which are greatly rich in resources than any others. After the Orkhon inscriptions which are the oldest inscriptions of Turkic were found, however, some doubts began to arise about the credibility of Chinese sources concerning so called history of barbarians, against whom Chinese had consistently confronted as most annoying enemies¹. Nowadays most scholars accept that Chinese sources about history of barbarians were based on ethnocentrism. Therefore, Chinese materials can be useful resources, but not a conclusive or extensive in studying the history of barbarians.

I would like to suggest and place stress again on the importance of historical and comparative linguistical approach in studying the proto or ancient Korean history. For example, many of the ancient Korean

¹ In Chinese history, it is very interesting that since the 1st century A.D. almost half of its period China was ruled by the northern Altaic tribes whom Chinese called barbarians.

place names, official titles and animal names still remains vogue in terms of etymology. Regarding this matter, some connection between Korea and Tungus or Mongolian has often been proposed but Turkic influences on the early Korean societies have not been so seriously considered by any scholar. Before Tungus and Mongolian tribes emerged around the 8-9th century, the most influencing tribes in Central Asia including Mongolia and Manchuria were Turkic tribes since Hyung-nu empire, a confederation state of the Altaic tribes, whose ruling tribe was probably of Turkic.

In series of my articles dealing with this problem, I have already given some Turkic loan-words in ancient Korean, e.g., kočuka 古雛加 (< koču-ka) "a title of the supreme leader of Kokuryŏ", koy 古爾 (< kony) "title of the first king of Paekje", kakkan 角干 (< ka-kan) "a title of high rank official of Silla", əlaha 於羅瑕 (< *elik-ka) "a ruler's name of Paekje", əluk 於陸 (< *älük) "a title of paekje queen", toksuri (< tok-suri) "eagle", ori (< or) "duck", turumi (< *tununya) "crane", wəri (< böri) "a big and wild dog or wolf", etc.²

In this paper, I present an additional evidence of close relation of Korean and the Altaic tribes, especially Proto-Turkic in studying the etymology of *tori*.

In a Runic manuscript from Miran and Tunhuang in Eastern Turkestan which is one of the oldest Turkic manuscripts, we find the word *tor* in the ancient Turkic official title *bayator*³ meaning 'hero'. The word *bayator* also occurs in an Uygur text in two forms; Uyg. (USp 22:18) *bayator* and Uyg. (ThS IV:12) *bator*. Kuman which is a middle Turkic

² See the author's articles; "Notes on some Ancient Korean Titles", Central Asiatic Journal, 36, 1992; Notes on some Titles of Ancient Korean Kingdom Paekje", Central Asiatic Journal, 38, 1994; "On some Altaic animal names in Korea", reading paper in the 38th Permanent International Altaistic Conference, Kawasaki (Japan), 1995.

³ Most scholars read the Turkic word *bayatur* with the last vowel being /u/, not /o/. Actually it is very difficult to determine the exact qualities of Proto-Turkic labial vowels in many cases. However, in this case, we can determine the vowel from the Chinese transliteration of the word 都利 (*tori*). See the article, Choi Han-Woo, "On the determination of labial vowels of Ancient Turkic", Central Asiatic Journal, Vol. 35:1-2, pp. 41-53.

has the form *bayatur* meaning 'brave man'. On the other hand, this Turkic word was borrowed into Mongolian; Mo. *bayatur* 'hero, warrior', MMo. *ba'atur* id. In Middle Korean, there is *pator* 'hero, warrior' which was borrowed from Mongolian in the 13th century. The word *bator* (< **bayator*) in Mongol continues in the name of capital city of the Mongol Republic, *Ulan Bator*.

I think that this word consists of two words; *baya* and *tor*. The word *baya* is probably the same word as *baqa* 'frog, toad'⁴. In Turkic, the phonetic change of /q/ and /ɣ/ is very common between vowels, e.g. Uyg., MK *buqa* 'bull', Chag. *buɣa* id., Kum. *boɣa* id. Actually, the word *baqa* in Uygur is attested in the form of *baya* in both Kypchak and Osman. Here we can induce that the word *bayator* might mean 'prince of toads or frogs' or the like, designating a hero metaphorically.

It is not surprising that *baya* in the word *bayator* is the same as the word *baqa* meaning "toad or frog". As is well known, in the ancient period, Hyung-nu and Turkic peoples took their titles from animals' names, for example, *baqa tarqan* 'ruler of frogs', *boqa qayan* 'king of bulls', *böri kayan* 'king of wolfs', *sonkor tigin* 'prince of hawks', etc. This tradition seems to have something to do with their totemism. We can find this kind of example in an ancient Korean state Puyə. In the Puyə state, the ruling organization of the state was based on the four-governors system under the reign of ruler-king. We call the system *Sachulto* 四出道 meaning 'four out-way'. The four governors' titles took after animals' names, i.e. horse, bull, fig and wolf. It is very interesting that, although the animal toad never seems to be a symbol of hero or warrior, we Koreans also have the term "*Tukkəbi Chang'kun*(將軍)" meaning 'warrior or hero of toads' literally. This term must be a Korean translation of the Turkic term *bayator* 'hero of toads'.

On the other hand, it is surprising, in Korean source that the title **tor* appears in the name *sɔibɔrtori* (蘇伐都利) who was the leader of an

⁴ On the other hand, the word *baqa* is not of Turkic origin, but of Chinese origin; compounded of ACh. *ma* > M. *ma*, C. *ma* "frog", Sino-Jap. *ba* id. (Giles 7590), Sino-Ko. *ma* id., and ACh. *ra* > M. *ha*, C. *ha* "frog, toad", Sino-Jap. *ka* id. (Giles 4199), Sino-Ko. *ha* id. cf. Mo. *baxa* "frog, toad".

ancient Korean village Kohə (古墟) of Silla⁵. In another ancient Korean source, this man was called 蘇伐公 in Chinese. From this we can see that the Chinese word Kung 公 meaning "prince, duke" is a translation of *tori* (< **tor*).

The word *tor* which does not occur except in the word *bayator* in Turkic, continues to survive in Korean in the form of *tori* meaning 'a brave boy' or the like. The word *tori* consists of **tor* and a denominal suffix *-i* which is very common in Korean. This *tori* was used as the symbol name of Koreans twice recently, as the name of mascots, i.e. *ho-tori* 'little tiger like boy, brave boy' in 88 Seoul Olympic and *kkum-tori* 'boy of vision' in EXPO 94. Koreans must have been sure that *tori* is of Korean origin.

On the other hand, the word *tor* was found in the ruler's name of Hyung-nu empire muktor 冒頓, the most powerful emperor who reigned in the 2nd century B.C.. Interestingly, the Korean people would have pronounced the Chinese word 冒頓 'muktor', instead of 'mao-duon'. Ancient Korean who had a close relation with Hyung-nu people must have known the ruler well. For this reason, the Korean people usually called and pronounced the ruler 'muktor', even though they would have written mau-duon 冒頓 in Chinese according to the Chinese tradition because there was no Korean writing system. As we know well, there was a strong military alliance between the first Korean state Kochosen and Hyung-nu to fight against China.

Then what is muktor? Conclusively speaking, muktor is a Korean translation of Hyung-nu title *qarator*, meaning 'black tor' or 'sacred tor'. In the ancient Altaic tribes, the colour black was considered strong or sacred. We know well that many old place names in Central Asia use the word in front of them as adjective. Ancient Koreans only translated *qara* into the Chinese basic word, 墨 mouk, but they didn't translated *tor*, because it was already well known to Chinese as a barbarian ruler's

⁵ ᄃᆞᆫᄃᆞᆫ ᄃᆞᆫᄃᆞᆫ which was developed to səl or seoul came from sərabər, i.e., sərabəl > sɔɪbəl > sɔɪvəl > səwul > səl. On the other hand, we don't know the original meaning of sɔɪrabəl whose meaning was developed into capital city in later periods. All I can say here is that the possibility it mean originally capital city or the like is very slim.

title⁶. From this, we can induce that the word *tor* is of proto-Altaiic. Koreans didn't translate *tor* probably because the word *tor* was very familiar or already became one of Korean vocabularies.

The Korean word *tori*, which was transliterated by two different Chinese characters, appeared in the 12th century. The meaning of the word, however, has significantly evolved from hero to a young man who becomes a Buddhist priest. This semantic change reflects social change in that period: Beginning from the 5th century, Buddhism spread rapidly and exercised its strong influence over the Korean peninsula in the 8th century and on. Shamanism and totemism had been popular religiously in Korea before Buddhism. In this society, the ultimate leadership was given to shamans in the earliest period and then to warriors who gradually replaced shamans. In the times of the warriors' rule, *tori* or *tor* was given to heroes or strongest warriors.

We can find the similar case in the Turkic word *böge*. The word *böge* is only found in the title of the 10th century ruler of Uighur *böge kaghan* who was the first Turkic ruler accepting Manichaeism. The title *böge* meaning "a sage" originally comes from *böge* "diviner". There is another example of *bakši* 博士. This Chinese word was borrowed into the Altaic languages. In Ancient Turkic, this word designated a healer or shaman who has a shamanistic or divine spiritual power. In the later period the meaning of the word *bakši* was changed into "religious teacher" both in Turkic and Mongolian⁷. In the 10th-12th century, this word began to mean a scribe. In Old Uighur and Middle Mongolian, it gives more specific meaning, i.e., a scribe able to write in the Uighur or Mongolian script⁸. In Middle Turkic, the meaning of the word became more diverse,

⁶ In accordance with this, we can give another example, i.e., Chinese translation of the rulers' titles of Puyə state in Chinese texts. As I mentioned above, the titles of the four governors of Puyə were derived from various animals' names, i.e. *maka*, *uka*, *cəka* and *kuka*. In referring to these titles, Chinese writers translated all animals' names in the titles except *ka* meaning "ruler or leader" which was a barbarian's title probably very familiar to the Chinese people.

⁷ One of the oldest Mongolian scripts hP'ags-pa gives the form *baγši* for the Chinese loanword.

⁸ Both Uighur and Mongolian alphabets were originated from Sogdian alphabet. Mongolian alphabet is a slightly modified one of Uighur alphabet.

i.e., scribe, secretary, singer, surgeon, etc. Interestingly, the word 博士 in modern Korean designates a person with a doctorate degree.

Concerning the etymology of the Korean word *tori*, one believes that the word *tori* came from the similar Korean word *tor* meaning "stone". He argues that *tori* therefore contains the metaphorical meaning of stone, i.e., the longevity in good health⁹. This theory based on its mere similarity of the form is not persuasive at all.

⁹ Ch. Y. Choi, *Urimal Өwənyəngu*, 1986, p.307.