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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 Uygur variant of “Oğuz-nâmê”.

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 mentioned out first of all. See also Abdul-kadır [İnan], Türk rivayetlerinde “bozkurd”, Türkiyat mecmuası (1926), 2, 1928, s. 132 vbb.; L.N.Gumilyov, Drevnie türki, Moscow 1967, p. 22; Kh. Koroghi, Öğuzskij gero-ičeskij epos, Moscow 1976, ss. 76-77; N.A.Baskakov, Tjuruskaja leksika v “Slove o polku igoreve”, Leningrad 1985, s. 101.
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”.

6 One Yenisey inscription gives good proofs of the kind: yeti bōri ńlārdüm “I killed seven wolves.” Then, in the “Divanu luğān’ı-tūrk” there are some poems which have been compiled by A. Caferoğlu under the title of “Kurt avi”.

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 tobi”: “If a grey wolf ("börte čiino") and a beautiful fallow deer go in [round-up], one cannot kill them. 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 “Asına”. There is no information indicating that they were Turks or “Turkish speaking Mongols”.

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; OT bōri, Alt., Tuv. bōri, Dolg., Yak. bōrō, Kar. bōri ~ beri; Az. gurd, Gag., Turk. kurt; Türkm. bōri, giért. Another word is relatively recent: giért ~ giért ~ kurt can be traced back to the 11th century. Its earliest use is in the Kaşgari’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., Turk kurt, Kaz. kiért. Euphemistic names for the wolf are used in different Turkic languages. To illustrate this, some examples may be given: Az. ğızgara, Kirg. kantsır, Tuv. kazı-karak, Yak. uhun kauuruk, tangara uola, ahılxa, tin-

8 G.Clauson, op. cit., p. 20.
9 See S.İ. Malov, Enisejskaja pis’mennost’ tjurkov, Moscow-Leningrad 1952, s. 33 (N 1110).
11 Luksam Danzan, Altan tobi (”Zolote skazanie”), Perevod s mongol’skogo, vvedenie, kommentarii i priloženija N.P. Sastinoj, Pamjatniki pis’mennosti Vostoka X, Moscow 1973, s. 236 (Gl. XIII, 95).
13 G.Clauson, op. cit., p. 4.

 giraxta ı”. 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 similar use of another word: Tur. böcek “worm”, Türkm. mőcek “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-name” 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.”

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-name”.

As appears from the study of the text, the traditional form of the genealogical myth contains the primitive description of Chinggiz-khan’s campaigns. The history of Oğuz-kağan, the list of his allies and his enemies (Altun-kağan, Curcip-kağan, Masar-kağan, Urum-kağan, Kaşarlığ-beg, Kıpçak-beg, Urus-beg, Kalac, Kangalıq, Schkal), and the geographic names (Baraka, Itilmuren, Muz-taş, Sundu, Şagam, Tangış) give a general idea of the events told in the “Oğuz-name”.

J. Marquart, by the way, considered Chinggiz-khan to be the main personage of the legend. It is certain that some linguistic features of the “Oğuz-name” are of Mongolian origin. I shall start by the vocabulary.

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

more exact, they are used to explain the division of the power between two parts of the Oğuz: Buzuk ("üz buzguluk kıldı") and Uçuk ("üz ok") tribes. The Buzuk are ruling, the Uçuk are executing their orders. There are also parallels in the characteristics of epical heros. 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 Guicing mangas-khan. Forty-day-old Oğuz-kâğan 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 ("kâr kündün song bedükledi, yürüdü, oynadı. Adago ud adağı deg, belleri büri belleri deg, yağır kış yağır deg, kögüz adug kögüz 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-kâğan in the "Oğuz-name".

It shows clearly that the resemblance of the separate motives may be fortuitous. The case is somewhat other when there are combinations of similiar 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-name" and that of the "Secret History...". Here fortuity is hardly probable.

The "Oğuz-name" 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 Abûlghazi Bahadır-khan mentions it, but he names the hero of the legend in Mongolian manner. There are some other evidences. So, reproducing the poem recited by Oğuz-kâğan at his feast ("Men senlerge boldum kâğan / Alâim ya takal-

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18 Historie des Mogols et des Tatars par Aboul-Ghazî Béhîdour khan, publiée, traduite et annotée par Le Baron Desmassignes, I.Texte, St.-Petersbourg 1871, pp. 61-62, 67-68.
ON THE CHIEF TOTEM OF ANCIENT TURKS

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 menselidir").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 “Kışsa-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 “Kışsa-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: Alançu - Alanço,26 Bodunay - Bugunotay, Boduncar - Bodoncar, Belgutay - Belgunotay,dslc - Salsi, Shibat - Sokur - Duva-Sokor.

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

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

Oğuz-name

köktün bir yaruk türlü... oğlu yaruknumu arasında bir kiz bar erdi (6);

Oğuz-kağannun kurganıga kän deg bir carak kirdi. Ol camaktun kök tülükü kök calluğ bedük bir erkek börö çıku (16);

Kışsa-i Chinggiz

kän yaruk evge kirdi. Ulmalik Körkili anu körđi, öle kald (3b);

24 Ziya Dingtis-xani i Aksak-Timura, Sostavil I. Kal'fín, Kazan’ 1822. The other publications are: A. İnan, “Çingizzname”, Azerbaycan Yurt Bilgisi III, 1934 (in this case I can not take responsibility for the accuracy of information); Autobioğrafıja Timura i boga-tyskie skazanija o Çingiz-xane i Aksak-Temire, Perevod s türkskogo i jugatyskogo językov, Vstupitel’naja staj’ja i kommentarj V.A. Panova, Moscow 1934.
25 Abdulkadir [İnan], Türk rivayetlerinde “beckard”, ss. 131-137.
26 The first name is taken from the "Kışsa-i Chinggiz", the second that is relating to the "Secret History of the Mongols".

21 "Kışsa-i Chinggiz" and “Chinggiz-name” are the conventional titles.
22 M.A.Usmanov, Tatarskiye istoricheskie istochniki XVII-XIX vv., Kazan’ 1972, ss. 102-104.
IV. The unusual qualities of the heroes:

*Oğuz-nâme*  
belleri böri belleri deg, yağri kiş yağrı deg... (2);

*Kıssa-i Chinggiz*  
özî böri yağrî erdi (3 a).

To sum up, there are solid proofs that the Uygur variant of “Oğuz-nâme” 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.