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THE SYSTEM OF SUPPORTING CHARACTERS IN THE "OGHUZNAME" EPIC

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Abstract: This article examines the secondary characters that surround the central hero of the "Oghuzname" epic, Oghuz Khan: the blue wolf, Oy Qaghan, Ulugh Turk, and the hero's two wives and six sons. Rather than treating these figures as isolated decorative elements, the study approaches them as an interconnected symbolic system in which each character reinforces a distinct source of the hero's authority - divine, genealogical, cosmic-territorial, and intellectual-political. The analysis shows that, taken together, these images form a three-tiered cosmological model (sky - earth - horizontal political space) that artistically substantiates Oghuz Khan's status as ruler of the entire world.

Keywords: Oghuzname, secondary character, blue wolf, Ulugh Turk, symbolic system, totemism, cosmological model.

Introduction

Most existing scholarship on the "Oghuzname" cycle concentrates on the central narrative line of Oghuz Khan - his birth, self-naming, and conflict with his father. A closer reading of the epic, however, reveals that the figures surrounding the hero - the blue wolf, Oy Qaghan, Ulugh Turk, along with his wives and sons - are not incidental artistic details but components of a tightly organized symbolic system. This article sets out to trace the internal connections among these figures and to demonstrate the single cosmological and ideological function they collectively perform.

Analysis

The blue wolf as totemic guide. The image of the blue wolf recurs four times in the epic - in stanzas XVI, XVII, XXV, and XXXIII [1:6] - which elevates it from a passing detail to a permanent institution present at every major political and military turning point of the tribe. Notably, the same narrative motif appears in the Tonyukuk and Kul Tegin inscriptions, which suggests that the wolf totem is not a feature unique to the "Oghuzname" but a stable element of the broader Turkic epic-mythological layer. This also connects to the wider Turkic tradition of tracing descent from a wolf: Abdurahmonov records the legend of a child, orphaned when his kin were slaughtered, who is raised by a she-wolf and becomes the ancestor of the Turkic peoples [4]; Boboyorov, in turn, grounds the sanctity of the blue-wolf totem in archaeological evidence such as wolf imagery on banners and coins [5]. The wolf's function is not merely to guide the way: it signals divine patronage of the tribe, implying that victory comes not from Oghuz Khan's personal valor alone but from support sent down from the sky (from Tangri). In this sense, the wolf serves as a device that elevates the ruler's authority above the merely human.

Oy Qaghan: a trace of matriarchy or a symbol of sovereignty. In existing scholarship, the figure of Oy Qaghan has often been read as a remnant of an ancient matriarchal period; A.

Bernshtam, for instance, compared her to the Sumero-Akkadian goddess Ishtar. This comparison, however, is not entirely convincing: where Ishtar's image is dominated by volatility and unpredictability, Oy Qaghan instead embodies a pure, creative, order-giving force. D. Oripov likewise rejects the Ishtar comparison, arguing that Oy Qaghan is better matched with the Sumerian figures of Aruru or Ninsun [6:115]. In our view, the application of the title "qaghan" to a woman is better explained not by matriarchy but by the need to affirm the dynasty's legitimate descent from both lines - paternal and maternal: Qara Khan represents political power, while Oy Qaghan represents the sacred purity of the bloodline.

Two wives, six sons: an artistic blueprint of the cosmos. Oghuz Khan's marriages to the "daughter of the sky" and the "daughter of the earth," and the naming of the six sons born to them - Kun (Sun), Oy (Moon), Yulduz (Star), Kok (Sky), Tog (Mountain), and Dengiz (Sea) [2:14] - are far from a decorative poetic flourish. Through this act of naming, the epic constructs an entire cosmic geography: three names point to celestial bodies (the upper world), while the other three point to the great elements of the earth's surface (the middle and lower worlds). Nasimxon Rahmonov likewise notes that these names encode a three-tiered model of the universe - Kok (Sky) as the upper world, Tog (Mountain) as the middle world, and Dengiz (Sea) as the lower world [7: 115]. As a result, Oghuz Khan's lineage comes to "possess" every layer of existence, not only in political but in cosmological terms - laying the groundwork for the later episode in which the golden bow and silver arrows convert this cosmic order into a system of military command.

Ulugh Turk: the archetype of the counselor. Ulugh Turk, who determines the tribe's future through dream interpretation - a dream of a golden bow and three silver arrows [3:20] - foreshadows the succession of power itself. This figure reappears in later historical sources, including Mirzo Ulughbek's "History of the Four Uluses," under the name Arqil Khoja, now holding the position of vizier. This shift is itself worth noting: the "wise elder" archetype of oral-mythological tradition is gradually transformed, within the written historical tradition, into a state institution - the vizierate. Through the figure of Ulugh Turk, then, we can trace the step-by-step transformation of mythological thinking into an emerging concept of statehood.

Placed side by side, these four figures each reinforce a distinct pillar of Oghuz Khan's authority: the wolf supplies divine-military support, Oy Qaghan supplies purity of lineage, the wives and sons supply cosmic-territorial right, and Ulugh Turk supplies intellectual-political legitimacy. Together, these four pillars produce the image of a complete ruler - not merely a courageous commander, but the earthly representative of cosmic order itself.

Artistic devices used to construct the symbolic images. All four figures discussed above are not merely named but are built up through a distinct system of artistic devices. The blue wolf's description "a wolf with blue fur and a blue mane" relies on repeated epithets and the device of saj' (alliterative word-pairing), which lends it a rhythmic, musical quality and elevates it from an ordinary animal to the level of a sacred sign [8]. Oy Qaghan's role as a symbol of genealogical purity is likewise intensified through hyperbole (mubolag'a) in the portrait of the "sky maiden": "A radiant light came down from the sky, brighter than the sun, more brilliant than the moon" an instance of hyperbole of the tablig' type, difficult to picture yet not strictly impossible [2:14]. The cosmic symbolism embedded in the wives-and-sons system is further enriched through simile (tashbeh): the maiden's hair is compared to the waves of a river, her teeth to pearls, turning an ordinary portrait into a device serving the epic's cosmic idea.

In this way, each of the four figures is distinguished not only in content (through its divine-military, genealogical, cosmic-territorial, or intellectual-political function) but also in form through an artistic device suited specifically to it. This suggests that the author or compiler of the

"Oghuzname" gave each figure its own distinct "artistic signature," and that the system of secondary characters was crafted with as much stylistic care as it was thematic.

Conclusion

Reading the secondary characters of the "Oghuzname" as a unified system, rather than as isolated figures, brings out a deeper layer of meaning in each of them. The blue wolf, Oy Qaghan, Ulugh Turk, and the hero's wives and sons are not supplementary ornaments around the protagonist but a functional system that legitimizes his rule on four distinct grounds: divine-military, genealogical, cosmic-territorial, and intellectual-political. This approach can serve as a methodological basis for future comparative study of how these same secondary figures are preserved or transformed across the other works of the "Oghuzname" cycle.

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