

MATERIALS AND RESEARCHES

HISTORY

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32653/CH152110-117>

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THE OGHUZ EPIC STORIES IN THE SELJUK ERA

Abstract: The article is devoted to several monuments of the Turkish folklore and literature the formation of which dates back to the time of Seljukids in Asia Minor: “The Book of Dede Korkut”, “The Story of Seyyid Battal” (“Battal-nameh”, or “Seyyid Battal gazavatnamesi”) and “The Tale of Melik Danishmend” (“Danishmend-nameh”).

“Kitab-i dedem Korkut”, “The Book of Dede Korkut” is the only medieval epic of the Turkic peoples which has remained in written form until today. “The Book of Dede Korkut” according to the Dresden manuscript consists of twelve songs-legends (and according to the Vatican manuscript – of six tales which have been called oguznameh), which tell of the Oghuz heroes’ deeds. The main plot which core is framed by these stories, is the struggle of the Oghuz tribes against the infidels, non-Muslims in the lands of Asia Minor and Transcaucasia, as well as strife among the Oghuz themselves. This text reflects both the events of early Turkic semi-legendary history (not only historical facts, but also a set of mythological beliefs) and later events connected with the spread of their power in Asia Minor and with their contacts with Byzantium. The stories that comprise “The Book of Dede Korkut” display a clear connection with both the common Turkic literary and folk tradition and more recent strata.

Battal-nameh and Danishmend-nameh both are monuments of a written epos within the boundaries of oral recently some legends related to the Oghuz epic (both “The story of Battal” and some tales from “The Book of Dede Korkut”) have continued to exist in oral and literal form on the territories of modern Turkey and Transcaucasia.

Keywords: literary epic; Transcaucasia; Byzantium; the Oghuz; Turkish folk narrative; the story of Melik Danishmend; Seljukid; gazavat-nameh; the legend of the Seyyid Battal.

МАТЕРИАЛЫ И ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

ИСТОРИЯ

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32653/CH152110-117>

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ОГУЗСКИЙ ЭПОС В ЭПОХУ СЕЛЬДЖУКИДОВ

Аннотация: Статья посвящена памятникам огузского эпоса, бытовавшим в турецкой традиционной словесности, чье появление и оформление принято связывать с эпохой Сельджукидов в Малой Азии: «Книге моего деда Коркута», «Сказанию о Мелике Данышменде», газават-наме о Сеййиде Баттале.

Книжный эпос «Книга моего деда Коркута» состоит из двенадцати сказаний, повествующих о подвигах огузских богатырей, посвященных в основном борьбе огузских племен против неверных на землях Малой Азии, а также междоусобицам в среде самих огузов. «Книга моего деда Коркута» неоднородна в хронологическом отношении: некоторые ее сказания сложились уже на территории Малой Азии после переселения огузов в Закавказье.

Многие темы и мотивы традиционного турецкого эпического фольклора восходят к древности: это показывают такие его памятники, как «Сказание о Мелике Данышменде» и «Сказание о Сеййиде Баттале», единые с точки зрения жанра и своих сюжетных линий.

В статье также затронута проблема сюжетных взаимосвязей, которые обнаруживаются между тюркским огузским книжным эпосом «Китаб-и дедем Коркут», «Сказанием о Сеййиде Баттале» и некоторыми памятниками византийского фольклора.

Образ Сеййида Баттала-гази и его сподвижников на протяжении долгого времени присутствовал в произведениях, относящихся к различным жанрам турецкого фольклора (народная повесть, исторические легенды, легенды о мусульманских святых). И Мелик Данышменд, и Баттал представляют собой образ эпического героя, многое унаследовавший из традиционных добродетелей тюрка-кочевника, но в то же время обладающий и чертами мусульманского подвижника.

«Баттал-наме» и «Данышменд-наме», подобно сказаниям «Книги Коркута», находятся на грани между устной и книжной традицией, фольклором и историческим повествованием. Элементы, свойственные традиционному тюркскому эпосу, присутствующие в «Баттал-наме» и «Данышменд-наме», также могут прослеживаться и в позднейших исторических нарративах.

Ключевые слова: книжный эпос; Турция; Византия; Закавказье; огузы; сказание о Мелике Данышменде; Сельджукиды; газават-наме; сказание о Сеййиде Баттале.

The Oghuz tribes began their movement to the West across Transcaucasia, Iran and Asia Minor in the first half of the 11th century, and appeared to be the ethnic basis of modern Turks and Azerbaijanis (while the other part of the Oghuz tribes left Central Asia (the Aral Sea) and later became the ethnic substratum of the Turkmen people and the Uzbeks to some extent). The Seljuk Empire emerged in 1077 on the territory of Asia Minor with its capital in Konya and ceased to exist in the 13th century as a result of the Mongol invasion.

The Turkic medieval written epic “The Book of Dede Korkut” (Kitab-i dedem Korkut) is undoubtedly an important source on the social and cultural life of the Oghuz Turks. The constituent part of the stories from “The Book of Korkut” is usually referred to the 11th c., though their written language appeared later, approximately in the 15th century. Thus, “The Book of Dede Korkut” reflects the events of the early Turkic legendary story, and the later ones were associated to the spread of their power in Asia Minor and Transcaucasia and contacts with the Byzantine Empire [1, p. 384-400; 2, p. 169-172]. Tales that compose “The Book of Dede Korkut”, are quite clearly clustered around main heroes of this epics – Salor-Kazan, Bamsi Beyrek, the so-called “Junior heroes” (Amran, Yigenek). “The Book of Dede Korkut” is heterogeneous in chronological terms (for more details see: [1, p. 384-400]), the most recent legends that form the monument that has already developed in Asia Minor after the resettlement of the Oguz tribes in the Transcaucasia.

The main plot – the core of which is surrounded by these stories, is fight the Oghuz tribes against the infidels, non-Muslims (infidels, kafir) in the lands of Asia Minor, as well as numerous civil strife among the Oghuz. Some stories of “Kitab-i dedem Korkut” (such are “How Salur Kazan’s House was Pillaged”; “Bamsi Beyrek of the Grey Horse”; “Segrek Son of Ushun Koja”) refer to the “king of the infidels”, the Christian Shukli-Melik, “King Shokli” (tur. Şökli Melik), who named there “the worst of the kafirs”: “The infidel’s spy espied them and brought the news to the worst of the Gyaurs Shukli-Melik. Seven thousand infidels mounted their dappled horses, men of foul religion, enemies of religion, the backs of their caftans slit, their black hair streaming down to their waists. Speedily they galloped and at midnight they came to Kazan-bek’s orda” [3; 4]. Associates of King Shokli are also mentioned with him: “On the right wing Wild Dundaz son of Kiyas Seljuk met King Kara Tuken and brought him down with a sword cut in the right side. On the left wing, Kara Budak son of Kara Gune met King Boghachik and smashed his head with a mighty blow of his six-ridged mace” [3; 4]. It is not quite clear in what degree these characters are historical ones, although some researchers (in particular, Ettore Rossi) believe that the prototype of the epic Shukli-Melik could be the leader of the Turkmen in Syria in the 11th century by name Şökli [5, p. 359–360]. In the tale of the Salor-Kazan and other tales of “The Book of Korkut” the infidels – the Christians appear as hostile to the Oghuz-Muslims “people of impure faith” (tur. azgun dinlü, which is one of the usual epithets of infidels in the epic), although the historical basis of the plot of “Tale of the looting of the house of Salor-Kazan” in “The Book of Korkut” are some echoes of the legends about the wars between the Oghuz and the Pechenegs in the 9-10 centuries on the territory of the lower reaches of the Syr-Darya river, recorded from Abu-l-gazi in his “Shadjara-i Tarakima” (see: [6, p. 181]).

Possible connections of “The Book of Dede Korkut” and the Byzantine epics can be seen first of all on several stories of “Kitab-i dedem Korkut”; among them – “The Song of Kan Turali, son of Kazilik-koja”. Kan-Turali, the main hero of this story decides to marry the daughter of the Trapezunt tagavor¹ Tagavor is a word of Armenian origin, meaning one of the titles of monarch. Seljan-Khatun, and in order to get it, he must fight with a fierce lion, who is guarding her, black bull and black camel; after that, he enters into battle with tagavor himself. Having won with the help of Seljan-Khatun in the battle of the army of tagavor, Kan-Turali with her returns to the camp of the Oghuz to his father. “The Song of Kan Turali, son of Kazilik-koja” is closely connected with Trapezunt² and Byzantium not only by its plot twists, but from the point of view of literary continuity: apparently, the plot of Kan Turali’s courtship has a very close connection with medieval European chivalric romances, which glorify the beauty of Trapezund brides (see, for example, late “Calloandro Fedele” by Giovanni Ambrogio Marini (1596–1668), where we are talking about the matchmaking of the Turkmen knight Safar to Leonilda, the heir to the throne of Trapezunt), but also not least with Byzantine folklore [7, p. 1–18]. In this respect, it is interesting to compare the plot of the “Song of Kan Turali” with a Greek epic tale of Xanthine that emerged in medieval Trapezunt (see: [8, p. 80–82; 9]). On the other hand, the motives of the search for the bride, the fight against the beasts, the battle of the bride with her fiancé against her father, who came out in pursuit, are peculiar to the entire Turkic heroic epic (and also the motive of the father as a matchmaker also goes back to ancient Turkic traditions).

Along with existing among the Oghuz tribes Korkut tales (which began to be cyclized) so-called “military epic stories” began to take shape in the Turkish literature.

In the 11th century, at the time of the appearance of Turkish invaders, Anatolia was under the rule of the Eastern Roman Empire, as the Byzantine Empire was known. Following the battle of Manzikert (Malazgirt) in 1071, Turkoman leaders (beys) such as the Artuk, Saltuk, Danishmend and Meng’ucek beys, conquered lands in Anatolia and set up a number of small states there: the Saltuks in Erzurum, the Menguceks in the region of Erzincan and Sivas, the Danishmends in the region of Tokat, Niksar and Malatya, and the Artukid state around Mardin and Harput. The Danishmend conquests in Anatolia created great admiration among the Turks of the time and was the subject of a large anonymous epic called the Danishmend-name which described the conquests.

Battal-name and Danishmend-name are both considered to be referred to the period of the beginning of the formation of the Turkish literature itself (from the 14th century). This time is usually associated with the emergence of the Ottoman state, the unification of separated Anatolian beyliks, accompanied by expansion, aggressive campaigns of Turks to the Byzantine lands.

Battal-name and Danismend-name are united from the point of genre and by its

¹ Tagavor is a word of Armenian origin, meaning one of the titles of monarch.

² The Trapezund Empire is a Greek state in the North of Asia Minor, which existed from 1204 to 1461 with its capital in Trapezunt. In 1204 the descendants of the Byzantine Emperor Andronikus I Comnenus occupied Trapezund and the surrounding coastal lands. In 1461, the Trapezund Empire finally ceased to exist, being conquered by Mehmed II.

plot: thus, one of the main heroes of Danismend-name (along with Melik Danishmend himself) is the grandson of Seyyid Battal and his name is Sultan Dursan. These stories depict the campaigns and battles and are imbued with ideas of gazawat as the holy war for the faith.

Gazavat-name about Seyyid-Battal has its own historical basis – most probably, it can be historical memories about a man (probably, Arab) who were the participant of the Umayyads campaign in Asia Minor [10, p. 175] or related events that led to the centuries of the Arab-Byzantine wars. The main events about which narrated in the legend, date back to the 9th–10th centuries, the most recent – to the 12th century. In the centre of the story of Battal-name – the legendary history of Battal, who was the son of a noble warlord who is sent for feats to the “land of the Greeks” from Malatya (or Mytilene).

There was an opinion (V. Gordlevskiy referring to H. Gregoire) [10] among different scholars that the image of Seyyid Battal-gazi had a great influence on the Byzantine epics about Digenis Akrites, that was extremely widespread in the territory of Asia Minor and the Caucasus³. But the interference between Turkish epics (like Battal-name and Kitab-i dedem Korkut) and Byzantine epics has not been studied in detail yet.

The image of the hero in both texts – Melik Danishmend and Seyyid Battal Gazi respectively – endowed with the typical features which are peculiar to the character of the traditional Turkic oral epic (which appear in the hero since early childhood): one kick he knocks the opponent on the ground, a flick of the wrist down on the enemy's head in a club five thousand batman weight (Seyyid Battal Gazi).

Melik Danishmend and his associates are permanently compared with a lion, tiger or dragon, his war horse is always compared with an eagle:

ملك دانشمند دخی کافر لر ار اسنده ار صلان کبی اکر دی

“Among the infidels Melik Danishmend growled like a lion, rushed like a tiger” (149b)⁴

اتنه مهموز اوردی ات عقاب کبی صچردی

“[Danishmend] spurred the horse, it soared like an eagle” [12, p. 164].

The enemies of Melik Danishmend and Seyyid Battal-Gazi (mostly “infidels”) liken with dogs, donkeys and sheeps.

The number “40” which is also traditional for the folklore of the Turkic peoples, is often used in Danismend-name: “Melik... by his sword struck such a blow that the head flew off on the 40 steps”, “one after the other came out 40 infidels, and Melik Danishmend killed them all” (262a, 161a) [12, p. 168].

3 The poem “Digenis Akrites” is a monument of the Byzantine heroic epos, extant in several variants; rather, it is based on processing of folklore material. The original version apparently went back to the end of the 10 – beginning of 11th cc.; the number of layers in the surviving versions indicates a different period from the second half of the 11th to the 14th century Digenis (greek “Two-blooded”) by his origin is associated with the East, he is the son of a Greek woman and Syrian Emir. It is also known about the Armenian legend of Kagan Arslan and his bride Margrit, which is a version of the song of Digenis and his fight with Charon (see: [11, p. 199]).

4 149b is a folio of the manuscript of Danismend-name (from Sankt-Petersburg State Public library, copied at 1622/23) that was used in publication and research by V.S. Garbuzova. See at [12, p. 163].

Companions of the main characters are also endowed with the heroic features.

As about the style of the narration in Battal-name and Danismend-name, the simplicity of its syntax, conciseness of presentation, brevity – all of that features also demonstrate the definite archaism of those texts.

سنیلره یغمورکی اوق دوکدیلر

“Arrows flew over Sunnis like a rain” (209a).

اول یازی طولو ادم کودمس اولمش سیل کبی قان روان اولمش

“The plain was full of people, the blood flowed like a stream” [12, p. 165].

The connection of the water and the blood which finds expression in the various figures of speech (metaphor, hyperbole), apparently, is fairly stable in the Turkic literatures, and may date back to ancient Turkic monuments (see Qul-Tegin monument: “Your blood runs like a water” // Qanyñ subča Jügürti [13, 14]; “Kitabi Korkut”: “Kanlu kanlu sulardan geçit versün”; “Oguz-name”: “Fights and battles were so fierce that the water of the Itil river turned red as a cinnabar” (Oguz-name 19, III-IV) [15, 40].

Battal-name and Danishmend-name kept their popularity in the Ottoman Turkey up till 19th – beginning of the 20th century. Thus, some known handwritten copies of Danishmend-name are related to the late time (in addition to copies of 1577, 1622, 1607), to the 19th-20th century (MS 685 from Milli Kütüphanesi copied at 1910)⁵ and this first of all indicates the popularity of the text.

Both Battal-name itself and different legends about Seyyid Battal-Gazi and his companions existed in Turkish folklore and literature even up till the beginning of the 20th century. Battal-name, or “Gazavat-name about Battal”, often published as lithography of typical Turkish prose narrative folk tale⁶. So, it continued its existence in another late genre of the Turkish folklore⁷. Folk texts of hikayats began to be printed in the form of lithographies (later – in typographies) in the first half of the 19th century (mainly in Istanbul). The technique of lithography (taşbasması), which also was significantly cheaper than the printing typography press, got wide distribution.

V.A. Gordlevsky in his paper “Ottoman stories and legends. Part 1” brings several texts of legends connected with different worshipped places in Turkey and Seyyid Battal and his companions. These legends were recorded by him during the travel to Turkey in 1910–1911 [18, p. 338]⁸:

“№ 46. Yediler (“the Seven”). In Eskişehir, in the old burial vault seven ascetics of Seyyid Battal Gazi was buried; one of them, Yusuf, known as Kesikbaş (“Severed

⁵ See more: [12, p. 30–31].

⁶ Turkish prose narrative folk tale (*halk hikâyesi*, or *hikayat*) takes a special place in Turkish folklore and Turkish literature in general. Frequently texts of those narratives represent folklore versions of well-known plots from different literary traditions of the Middle East). See, for example, lithographic edition of *Battal-name* of 1881 (MGIMO library collection Scientific Library of MGIMO – Moscow State Institute for international relations, no. 351): “*Gazavat-name sultan Seyyid Battal-gazi mükemmel hikayesi*”. Istanbul, 1298 h./1881 (see more: [16, p. 64–73]).

⁷ Sometimes these historical legends, gazavatname and menakıbname are reasonably considered as one of sources (for example, see: [17, p. 77]) of the formation of the late genre of the Turkish folklore – *halk hikâyesi*.

⁸ See also: [18, p. 448–449 (№№ 167–168)] about legendary companions of Seyyid Battal: Husseyin Gazi and his brother Şerafettin, Ahmed Tarrak, Abdul Wahhab Gazi.

head”)... Before the war, the saints leave the grave and raise a lot of noise. Such was the case before the last Russian-Turkish war (1910). [...] № 47. There is a dry well in a deep cave carved into the cliffs, high above the village of İnönü (around Eskişehir)... this is the tomb of Kesikbaş. [...] In front of the cave on a high cliff, there lived a princess named Marty. She worked in the Palace yarn. Seyyid Battal Gazi fell in love with her and kidnapped her”.

Thereby, we see that the image of Seyyid Battal and his companions as epic heroes retains its features and characteristics regardless of the genre (hikayat, historical legends and the legends about the saints) and for quite a long time. Both Melik Danishmend and Battal represent the image of the epic hero empowered with the traditional nomadic Turkic virtues that contaminated with features of a Muslim devotee.

Thus, Battal-name and Danishmend-name both are monuments of a written epos is found on the border between oral and literary tradition and even between folk narrative and historical chronicle.

Elements of traditional epic narrative represented in Danishmend-name and Battal-name can be seen later in chronicles that use folk canons for construction of a

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Статья поступила в редакцию 04.04.2019 г.