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OGHUZ KHAN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH OF THE ANCESTRAL HERO

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Summary: *The article examines the motif of the miraculous birth of the representative of the ancestral cult. The miraculous birth of the ancestral hero is interpreted as one of the fundamental structural elements of the mythological system of thought. It is argued that the act of birth, realized through the participation of cosmogonic elements such as celestial light, water, earth, caves, trees, and other primordial forces, symbolizes the divine and sacral origin of the hero. A central focus of the study is the power and sacred potency of the miracle itself. Through miraculous birth, the ancestral hero acquires extraordinary strength and authority, assumes leadership, guides the people toward the righteous path, and teaches the principles of life and social order. Above all, the miracle grants him the capacity for legitimate and spiritually grounded leadership. The article also emphasizes that the ancestral hero, born through miraculous means, bestows names upon warriors and rises to the status of a cultural hero. In this context, the study explores in detail the qualities and powers conferred upon the ancestral hero by the miraculous factor. It becomes evident that the miracle serves as the moral and ideological foundation of leadership.*

Keywords: *ancestral cult, miraculous birth, Grey Wolf, Oghuz Khan, hero, myth, folktale*

Introduction

In Azerbaijani mythological thought, various manifestations of the motif of miraculous birth can be observed. This feature appears particularly frequently in epic narratives and folktales, where it constitutes a recurrent and structurally significant element. Within the Azerbaijani mythopoetic worldview, the motif of miraculous birth signifies not merely the extraordinary beginning of an event, but also functions as an indication of the future destiny and divine mission of the hero to be born. This motif is often realized through the miraculous elimination of childlessness (through prayer, supplication, pilgrimage to a sacred shrine, or conception by means of a sacred apple or holy water), through the participation of natural elements (light, fire, water, the sun, the moon, a cave, a tree, etc.), or through the intervention of supernatural beings.

In folk tales and epic narratives, children born under such circumstances, unlike ordinary individuals, possess extraordinary strength, in-

telligence, or destiny. For example, the motif of parents enduring many years of childlessness and attaining a child only through a miracle foregrounds the hero's salvific role within the community. Such motifs contribute to the formation of the "chosen hero" archetype and symbolically express, within the mythological worldview, the relationship between humanity and the cosmos, as well as between human beings and divine forces. Thus, the motif of miraculous birth in Azerbaijani folklore functions not merely as a plot element, but also as a mythological concept reflecting reflections on the human mission on earth.

In myths related to creation, as well as in epics and folktales, we encounter a number of aspects of miraculous birth. We observe birth emerging from earth and clay, from water, from a cave, from a tree, from a mountain, from an eye, from a bead, from ashes, and so on. Likewise, at the beginning of creation, alongside na-

tural elements and the ancestral human, there are many narratives that, based on the pre-Islamic totemistic worldview, associate origins with the name of the salvific Grey Wolf. The Grey Wolf is a product of the totemistic worldview. The Grey Wolf is remembered both as the savior, guide, and helper of the ancestral ruler and hero such as Oghuz Khan, and as a symbol of the Turk's strength, courage, and warfare. Today, among the people, the expression "**Yevib qurdlarınla uluşım dağlar**" ("Let me howl with your wolves, mountains") is still in circulation, which primarily refers to the ancient Turkic custom of turning toward the forest and howling like wolves before going into battle. Howling together with wolves has naturally been a tradition dating back to ancient times. **The Kipchak Khan Bonyak** would turn his face toward the forest and howl before battle, and if a Grey Wolf responded to his voice, it was understood as a sign that he would emerge victorious from the war. In the epic of Koroghlu, the same expression is used before battle - "Let me howl with your wolves, mountains." That is, if the wolf - regarded by our forefathers as a sacred symbol of war - responded to their call before battle, it signified that the Turk, son of the Turk, would always achieve victory.

It is possible to encounter a considerable number of folklore texts that demonstrate the guiding and salvific functions of the Grey Wolf: *in a myth collected in Fuzuli-an ancient and eternal land of Azerbaijan, liberated from occupation through the bravery and heroism of our valiant sons and the wise, farsighted policy of our Supreme Commander-in-Chief - there is an account of a courageous man named Ughuz who says, "Let me go and howl my grief to the wolf, perhaps it will respond," and then sets out toward the forest. Among the people, it was said of him, "Because of his bravery, everyone says that this man has eaten the heart of a wolf." In this myth, the Grey Wolf shows the way to the man who has lost his path* [6].

Sometimes the association of the word "*ula*" with the howling of the wolf is not coincidental. If we examine the origin of the expression "*the wolf howled*," we arrive at an intriguing

conception related to the wolf. This expression once symbolized the joy and celebration of our compatriots who had longed for their ancestral homeland for thirty years, later, however, during the period of separation and longing, it underwent a transformation in meaning:

Dağlar yayda aladı,
Hər daşı bir aladı.
Elsiz qalan bu yurdda
Dərdin qurdu uladı

"*Dərdin qurdu uladı*" ("*The wolf of sorrow has howled*"). At present, in popular speech, when someone is fortunate, people say, "filankəsin qurdu ulayır!" ("*So-and-so's wolf is howling*"). The fact that our lands remained under enemy occupation for nearly thirty years, and the present moment of freedom, has caused the wolf of sorrow to howl no longer for longing, but for our joy.

The perception of the wolf as sacred and inviolable is a product of the totemistic worldview. Beginning with the first primordial ancestor, Oghuz Khan - perhaps even preceding him - there exist numerous figures that have preserved their presence within the folklore of the region.

However, if we examine Azerbaijani myths and collected folklore materials, we observe that the ancestral hero born through miraculous means leads the people to the place where they are meant to be. In terms of uniting the community, organizing the people, and drawing them forward, the ancestral figure also embodies the functions of the cultural hero. In other words, the figures we refer to as ancestors - such as Oghuz Khan, Dede Korcut, Noah, and Khidr - incorporate, in several respects, the functions of the cultural hero. In some of our epics, alongside khans and national heroes, there appear wise elder figures who, by directly facilitating difficult paths, offering prudent counsel, and making certain discoveries that save the army and the commander, rise to the level of cultural heroes. For example, the wise elder figures such as Ulu Turk and Irkil Khoja, who repeatedly rescue Oghuz from difficult situations, directly symbolize the cultural hero. As a cultural hero, Ulu Turk simplifies the rules of life necessary for

people and the methods of using them, and repeatedly saves his army from danger. *“It was foretold by Irkil Khoja, Dede Korkut, Gökçe-who bore the epithet ‘Tab Tengri’-and a number of Islamic saints that God had granted world sovereignty to Oghuz Khan and to the other Turkic rulers descended from his lineage”* [8, p. 307].

Just as Oghuz Khan’s act of giving names to peoples derives directly from his function as a cultural hero. At the same time, the motif of miraculous birth plays a central role here. The hero who comes into the world through miraculous birth possesses numerous supernatural powers. His word is accepted among the people. His strength and power, even centuries after his time, become legendary in oral tradition and are transformed into myth and epic narrative. The people perceive their ancestral heroes as salvific khans or as rulers of the homeland and the community. As an ancestral hero, Oghuz Khan’s marriage to the maidens who descended to earth in a ray of sunlight and emerged from within a tree, and the birth of his six sons from these unions, point to his primary function as the first ancestor and creator of the people. On the other hand, his act of giving names to peoples, establishing customs and traditions, and similar deeds reveal his function as a cultural hero. Thus, having himself been born through miraculous means, and through the sons he begot thereafter, he laid the foundation of the Turkic lineage and the Oghuz people.

The future cultural hero is born endowed with miraculous qualities. When Oghuz Khan comes into the world, he does not suckle his mother’s milk for three days. He begins to speak and asks his mother to profess faith in God. Then, before completing his first year, he gives himself a name:

Bu bir yaşında uşaq orda rəvan.
Dilə gəlib dedi: bilin ayan.
Adımdır Oğuz-padşahi hünərvər,
Düzünü bilirsiniz hamınız cəsür ərlər
[1, p.52]

As can be observed, the cultural hero born through miraculous means first gives himself a name under extraordinary circumstances-publicly, before the eyes of all, at a tribal assembly.

Later, upon growing up and becoming a khan, he bestows names upon various heroes in accordance with their deeds, and ultimately those names become associated with the great Turkic peoples. Oghuz Khan first presents himself to the society and names himself, and thereafter establishes laws and regulations concerning the Oghuz community.

- The first ancestor comes into the world through miraculous means,
- In certain instances, he names himself (as in the case of Oghuz Khan),
- He ascends to the rank of ruler,
- The ancestor/hero born miraculously founds a homeland for himself and his people and consolidates the community into a unified polity,
- In the territories he conquers, he engages in constructive activity and establishes cities,
- He assigns names to warriors and to tribes,
- He institutes rituals,
- He directs the people toward the right path,
- He formulates new laws,
- He instructs humanity in the principles of life and social order.

Oghuz Khan acquires the authority to lead his people, to guide them along the righteous path, and to establish norms of living and conduct.

The principal factor that grants Oghuz Khan the status of an ancestor is his ability to organize his people into a unified community/state, to protect them, to lead them forward, to bestow names upon warriors, heroes, and tribes, to establish them in their homeland, to prevent foreign invasions, and to conquer lands together with his brave companions. On the other hand, Oghuz’s miraculous birth, his descent from the sky within a ray of light, and the celestial elements associated with him demonstrate that he is a direct manifestation of the ancestral cult. The fact that Oghuz gives his sons-born from his marriage to the daughter of the sky and later to the maiden who emerged from a tree-such names as Göy, Dəniz, Dağ Tufan, Gün, Ay, Ulduz (Sky, Sea, Mountain, Storm, Sun, Moon, and Star) reveals the primordial connection of these figures with the ancestral cult.

In the Uyghur version of the *Oghuz Khan* epic, it is indicated that Oghuz Khan possesses a genealogical lineage-*şacərrə*-tracing back to the Prophet Noah. Here, reference is also made to the division of lands among Noah's sons and to the methods of preserving sovereignty. This, in turn, reveals the ancestor's status as a cultural hero. Two points merit particular attention here. First, the figure we refer to as the Great Ancestor and cultural hero is a wise elder, an exalted personality. At times, the ancestral figure and the cultural hero are distinguished from one another, at other times, both images converge in the person of a single supreme figure. For example, in all his campaigns, Oghuz Khan succeeds in overcoming difficult challenges thanks to the wisdom and foresight of Yushi Khoja. Thus, Yushi Khoja emerges as the guide on the path to victory, the wise elder who removes obstacles, the savior who directs the army along the righteous path, and the cultural hero who points out the easier ways to attain prosperity. He is also the wise elder who determines who should go where, how, and at what time.

In the *Kitabi-Dede Korkut* epic, Bayandur and Kazan Khan are presented as the great ancestors of the Oghuz and as the principal source of their spiritual unity. The origin of the Oghuz is directly connected to Oghuz Khan, and this connection constitutes the ideological foundation of the epic. The cult of the primordial ancestor, embodied in the sacred image of Oghuz Khan, transforms into a national-spiritual principle that determines the unity of Oghuz society and the power and grandeur of the Oghuz state. In this context, the motif of the people's descent from a great ancestor is not merely a genealogical legend, but a mythological-ideological system that ensures the social-political and spiritual integrity of the people. Oghuz identity is constructed upon the idea of belonging to the people created by Oghuz Khan, and this idea shapes the Oghuz as a unified ethno-political community. At a later stage, the image of Oghuz becomes the foundation of the genealogical lineage of all Turkic peoples, playing a significant role in the formation and development of a common Turkic identity.

If we turn our attention to our ancient myths and legends, we observe that the mythological worldview of the ancient Turkic peoples, their historical path, and their way of life are most comprehensively reflected in the *Oghuznamas*. As Seyfeddin Rzasoy notes, Oghuz time and space begin with the sacred Oghuz Khan and are organized in the form of his paradigmatic repetition. According to him, all derivations originate from a single center, namely Oghuz Khan. The invariant of Oghuz Khan, through an anthropological code, generates a series of paradigms: Oghuz Khan – Bayandur Khan – Kazan Khan – Alp Aruz. The author states that, through this invariant and temporal code, Oghuz time is paradigmaticized as Bayandur time, Kazan time, and Alp Aruz time [9, p. 19]. Fuzuli Bayat, in turn, notes that in ethnogenic and epic myths Oghuz is presented as the first human, a cultural hero, the son of God, and an alp (heroic warrior). The Oghuz are depicted as gigantic human beings [2, p. 13]. If we examine our ancient myths, folklore materials collected at various times, as well as human skeletal remains discovered during archaeological excavations, it is possible to obtain information suggesting that in ancient times people were very tall and gigantic.

Ramazan Gafarli describes the descent from one Oghuz to six sons, and from them to two branches and twenty-four tribes, and writes: "In ancient Oghuz-Turkic mythology, we encounter a complete, perfect, and comprehensive model of the world structured according to a numerical system: – One Being gives birth to another (Oghuz), and from him two triads (which together make six) are born. – Concerning the first triad, the text states that a ray descends from the sky. Oghuz sees that within a light brighter than the Sun and more radiant than the Moon sits a beautiful maiden. – From this maiden, whose head bears the golden Pole Star, three sons are born to him: Sun, Moon, and Star. The lineage of these three brothers later becomes known as *Bozoxlar* (*Bozokhlar*). – Regarding the second triad, the myth indicates that Oghuz sees a tree in the middle of a lake. In the hollow of the tree sits a beautiful maiden. From this maiden—whose eyes are bluer than the sky, whose hair is like

waves, and whose teeth are like pearls—Oghuz also has three sons: Sky, Mountain, and Sea. —The descendants of these three brothers bear the name Üçoxlar (Uchokhlar).” [5, p. 35].

Dede Korkut, who belongs to the group of Oghuznamas and is presented as a descendant of Oghuz Khan, is both a mythological and historical figure, as well as a common hero of the Turkic peoples. If in Rashid al-Din’s *Oghuznama* we encounter wise elder figures such as Yushi Khoja and Irkil Khoja among the guides of the successors who came to power after Oghuz Khan, alongside Tuman Khan we see the figure of Korkud the Elder.

In the Uyghur version of the Oghuznama, there exists the motif of Oghuz being born from the eye of his mother, Ay Khagan.

Kene künlərdən bir gün Ay kağanın gözü yarıb bodadı, erkək oğlu toğuldu (One day, Ay Khagan’s eye shone and she gave birth to a male child.) [10, p. 10].

We frequently encounter the motif of miraculous birth in our myths and folktales as well. In texts collected from the territory of Azerbaijan, there are also references to the creation of the world from water. In one of the texts it is stated: “In the very beginning, there was no one but God. The surface of the earth was entirely water. Because God felt lonely, He turned this water into clay. Then He dried the clay and made it into earth. Afterwards, He caused plants to sprout from the earth. Then He made mud from the earth and created human beings.” The elements of water, wind, earth, and cave that participate in the miraculous creation of the first human also take part in the awakening of nature associated with Novruz, which is regarded as the New Day. As paradigmatic figures of Oghuz Khan, there appear in the epics creative and wise elders who occupy a leading and prominent position in assisting the hero.

In general, following the miraculous birth of the epic hero, the main plot of the epic unfolds as follows:

1. The extraordinary and miraculous birth of the hero,
2. The stage in which sacred figures arrive and bestow a name upon the hero,

3. The stage of receiving the *buta* (symbolic token of destiny or love),

4. The stage of confronting emerging obstacles and struggling against them,

5. The stage of undergoing trials, competition, and achieving victory [7, p. 6].

In folktales, we encounter the motif of miraculous birth through conception from an egg, water, ashes, a dry skull, saliva, and similar elements. In these tales, children born from the red apple given by dervishes possess extraordinary strength and intelligence. As for the apple, this is naturally connected with its position at the foundation of the world and of beginnings, as well as with its close association with the Tree of Life. V.M. Zhirmunsky writes: “In magic tales, particularly among Eastern peoples (Arab, Persian, Turkic), the principal means of magical fertilization is the apple. This apple is presented to a childless king (and sometimes to his vizier) by an old dervish encountered during a journey (or appearing in his dream)” [4, p. 229].

We encounter the motif of birth from an apple in dozens of folktales such as “Şəhzadə Mütəlib” (“*Prince Mutalib*”), “Məlik Məmməd” (“*Malik Muhammad*”), “Məlik Əhməd” (“*Malik Ahmad*”), “Cəlayi-vətən” (“*Jalayi-Vatan*”), “Şəms-Qəmər” (“*Shams-Gamar*”) and others. Miraculous birth is achieved through the sudden appearance of the representative of the ancestral cult and through the apple bestowed upon the hero. Likewise, upon the dervish’s departure, lightning sometimes flashes across the sky, storms break out, and the world trembles. This, quite naturally, is conditioned by the dervish’s connection with the divine realm—as a saintly figure, one of the Forty Saints (Piri of the Forty), or as linked to Hazrat Ali—and by his cosmogonic contact. Whether through his arrival or his departure, this figure, exalted in the eyes of the folktale heroes, creates in them a sense of faith through the miracle he performs.

In folktales, we also encounter elements such as dryness, a skull, and ashes as causes of miraculous birth. The dry skull is significant in that it reveals events that occurred in the past and serves as a source of information within itself. In this respect, in Azerbaijani folktales, mi-

raculous heroes such as Malik Jumshud, Jeyran, Kesikbash, and Imran are born to girls who, unaware of its nature, grind the dust of a dry skull brought home by their fathers as if it were flour and consume it. In the folktales “*Göy mincix*”, “*Kəsik baş*”, “*Quru kəllə*”, “*Ceyran*”, “*Kəl Həsənin nağılı*”, “*Reyhanın nağılı*” and “*Qaraqaşın nağılı*” the hero is born precisely without the participation of the male gender—through the dust of the dry skull bone of a deceased ancestor, in some variants, through the saliva dropped into the mouth of a woodcutter’s wife by a dervish, in certain tales, through the swallowing of a bead or a pea by a girl, or through fertilization by a ray of light descending from the sky or by a seed carried by the wind. In the folktale “*Tapdıq*” the hero descends from the sky through sunlight. Here, although a woman does not play a role, the sunlight represents the paternal principle.

It should be noted that in Azerbaijani folktales, alongside the dry skull, we also encounter other elements that cause fertilization and miraculous birth.

In the epic “*Koroghlu*,” the foaming miraculous water renders Koroghlu invincible. Here, the principal factor is the importance of the father’s (Ali Kishi’s) counsel, who represents the ancestral cult. By fulfilling his father’s instructions, Rovshan transforms into the invincible hero-Koroghlu. This signifies his rebirth as a hero. Among the elements participating in Koroghlu’s rebirth, one is the element of earth and mountain, another is the element of air—the collision of stars in the sky, and the third is the element of water—the miraculous water of Qoshabulag.

As is evident from the *Kitabi-Dede Korkut* epic, the birth of Bugach takes place through a ritual. God grants Dirse Khan a child. This de-

monstrates the significant role that rituals held among the Oghuz.

When Bugach reaches the age of fifteen, he fights a bull and defeats it. Dede Korkut comes and gives him his name: “The Oghuz beys gathered around the boy and said, ‘Well done!’ They said, ‘Let Dede Korkut come and give this boy a name, let him take him and go to his father. Let him ask his father to grant the boy the rank of bey and bestow upon him a throne.’ They summoned him, and Dede Korkut came. He took the boy and went to his father. Dede Korkut spoke to the boy’s father, let us see, my khan, what he said. He said: ‘This boy has fought in the great square of Bayindir Khan. Your son has slain a bull, let his name be “Bugach.” I have given him his name, may God grant him long life.’ Dirse Khan granted the boy the rank of bey and gave him a throne” [3, p. 134].

If we observe carefully, we see that the birth of a child is realized through the performance of specific rituals. Until the age of fifteen, the boy does not possess a distinct name. At the age of fifteen, he must demonstrate bravery and earn a name. His heroic name must be bestowed by the elder of the community. When the name is given to Bugach, Dede Korkut—the elder of the Oghuz people—also requests the rank of bey for him.

The ceremony of granting a name to Bugach, who earns it through bravery, is carried out by Dede Korkut, who appears as the wise elder of the community. By him, not only is the name bestowed, but the request for the status of bey is also made, thereby legitimizing the individual’s socio-political position. This fact demonstrates that the naming ceremony is not merely nominal in character, but also carries symbolic meaning connected with authority and social hierarchy.

Conclusion

Thus, the elements associated with miraculous birth are rooted in the primordial beginning. They are grounded in the creation of the world and existence itself, in the first ancestor, and in his coming into the world through mira-

culous birth. It becomes evident that in the lives of heroes born through miraculous means, traces of this miracle continue to manifest themselves. Through the power of the miracle, the primordial ancestor emerges, the figure we recognize as

the first ancestor-Oghuz Khan-and his descendants are endowed with strength and authority, elevated to the throne of sovereignty, unite the people around themselves, and establish a state. In this respect, the concepts of statehood and an-

cestry are inseparably interconnected. Miraculous birth renders the hero more powerful and grants his words authority and persuasive force within society.

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ƏCDAD QƏHRƏMANIN MÖCÜZƏLİ DOĞULUŞ KONTEKSTİNDƏ OĞUZ XAN

Zümrüd Mənsimova

Xülasə: Məqalədə Əcdad kultu nümayəndəsinin möcüzəli doğuluşundan bəhs olunur. Əcdad kultu nümayəndəsinin möcüzəli doğuluşu mifoloji düşüncə sisteminin əsas struktur elementlərindən biri kimi şərh olunur. Məqalədə göstərilir ki, göy şüası, su, torpaq, mağara, ağac və digər kosmoqonik ünsürlərin iştirakı ilə gerçəkləşən doğuluş aktı qəhrəmanın ilahi və sakral mənşəyini simvollaşdırır. Burada əsas amil möcüzənin gücü və kəraməti məsələsidir. Əcdad qəhrəman möcüzəli doğuluşla yüksək gücə, qüvvətə malik olur, xalqı arxasınca aparır, doğru yol göstərir, yaşamağın yollarını öyrədir və əsas da liderlik qüdrətini qazanır. Məqalədə həm də möcüzə ilə dünyaya gələn əcdad qəhrəmanın igidlərə ad verib mədəni qəhrəman statusuna yüksəldiyidə xüsusi vurğulanır. Burada möcüzə faktorunun əcdad qəhrəmana nələri və hansı gücü qazandırdığı geniş şəkildə araşdırılır. Məlum olur ki, möcüzə faktoru liderliyin mənəvi-ideoloji əsasını təşkil edir.

Açar sözlər: əcdad kultu, möcüzəli doğuluş, Boz qurd, Oğuz xan, qəhrəman, mif, nağıl

ОГУЗ-ХАН В КОНТЕКСТЕ ЧУДОТВОРНОГО РОЖДЕНИЯ ГЕРОЯ-ПРЕДКА

Зумруд Мансимова

***Аннотация:** В статье рассматривается чудотворное рождение представителя культа предков. Невероятное рождение представителя культа предков интерпретируется как один из основных структурных элементов мифологической системы мышления. В статье показано, что акт рождения, сопровождающийся участием небесного луча, воды, земли, пещеры, дерева и других космогонических элементов, символизирует божественное и сакральное происхождение героя. Основным фактором здесь выступает сила и благодатная природа чуда. Герой-предок, рожденный таким образом обладает великой силой и мощью, ведет за собой народ, указывает верный путь, учит жизни и, самое главное, обретает лидерскую власть. В статье также особо подчеркивается как герой-предок, рожденный чудесным образом, дает имена героям и возвышает их до статуса культурного героя. В результате выявляется, что фактор чуда составляет духовно-идеологическую основу лидерства.*

***Ключевые слова:** культ предков, чудотворное рождение, Серый Волк, Огуз-хан, герой, миф, сказка*