

Contemporary Issues of Textual Analysis of Turkic-Tatar Literary Monuments of Western Siberia

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Abstract: The article deals with to the study of Turkic-Tatar Sufi literature of the Middle Ages. The authors demonstrate the interweaving of traditional beliefs of the Siberian Tatars with Sufism, which has been further developed on the Siberian ground. Analyzing the artworks of poets Ikani, Huvaydy and Amdami, some tales and epics (collected by V.V. Radlov), the authors come to the justification of mythological synopsis concept as the basis for creating of an extensive network of mythological subjects in Sufi Siberian-Tater literature.

Key words: Discourse ethnography • Folklore • Mythological synopsis • Literary heritage • Textual studies
• Medieval Sufi poetry

INTRODUCTION

Textual research of literary monuments of antiquity and the Middle Ages are focused on studying the artworks of scripts and literature to recover the history and critical verification of the texts, which are used for further research, as well as their interpretation that becomes especially important when creating interactive systems of various types on Turkic sources.

Especially difficult are the artworks of Sufi literature, associated with medieval Siberian-Tatar written monuments, as well as materials of V.V. Radlov expeditions, belonging to the second half of the XIX century; though, due to recording of these materials in Siberian-Tatar language, they have not been included into the scientific exchange in full.

In the first half of the XIV century, the toponym Ibir-Sibir was known to Arab authors. Ibn Fadlallah Elomari, who was the contemporary of Uzbek, Khan of the Golden Horde (1312-1341), uses this toponym not as a paired name, but as two separate independent names or as Sibir and Ibir. The same author also points out that "the borders of Siberia and Iberia touch Chataysk bounds", *i.e.* Chinese board [1]. Another Arab scholar of the first half of the XIV century Mesalek-al-Absar notes Siberia and Iberia as Siberia-and-Aberia and

Ibn-Arab-Shah (1388-1450) mentions these names as Abir-and-Sabir [2]. Siberia was anciently a place exorbitant for the human spirit.

Renowned scientist and historian of the late XIX century Rizautdin Fakhruddin believed that Muslims in Siberia do much more useful for fathers' and grandfathers' heritage preservation than Muslims of the Volga region [3]. Some historians believe that Karagay yurts in Tobolsk province were "strongholds of Sufism", "center of the Muslim district", "a kind of residence of Siberian-Tatar or Siberian-Bukharian Hajjes, one way or another associated with the Naqshbandiyya congregation" [4].

Philosophical basis of the Sufi-based Naqshbandiyya includes classical theology "wahdat ash-shuhud", defined by Ahmed Farooqi Sirhindi (1564-1624), one of its spiritual founders, as following: "all that is in this world is the creation of Allah". Doubtless, "the influence of the Naqshbandiyya Tariqa teachings on the Tatar community due to the complex historical, political, social and other factors led to the emergence of a generation of poets, who accepted this teaching or worked under its fruitful influence" [5: 210].

Up to date more than 350 sacred places, the graves of Naqshbandiyya generation sheikhs, called Astana, are found in this region. In the Siberian Tatars culture "Astana is an integral part of the local cult of saints,

not recognized by the Quran, though being an important element of the so-called folk Islam, which organically includes a variety of archaic beliefs and practices" [6: 83]. The word "Astana" is of Arab origin, it means "cill" and "entrance to the palace" [6: 84]. This explains the symbolic meaning of Astana as a sacred space. Each Astana is surrounded by many beliefs, omens and legends.

Mythological storylines about the sacred realm coincide with fairy tales and stories, recorded by V.V. Radlov, such as, for example, tale about Tsontay Mergen. This tale tells the story of a girl with golden nails (Pi Kis), who was in love with Tsontay Mergen, the younger Khan's son. The image of the girl has something in common with the image of the Golden old woman of the local Ugrians. Pi Kis lives beyond the reality and Tsontay Mergen appears in her kingdom naked, without clothes. Khan says to Tsontay Mergen that Pi Kis will kill everyone who comes after him to their country. But Tsontay Mergen becomes a husband of Pi Kis and a ruler not only of his country, but also the country of Pi Kis. This is the folk understanding of the otherworldly country, which has something common with the myths about Belovodye, Shambhala, etc. The tale is vividly portrayed dichotomy of concepts such as "Origin"- "End", "Life"- "Death" and "Purgatory" - "Transfiguration" that captures the essence of cognitive metaphor theory [7, 8].

These texts allow us to establish ethno-genetic ties and reconstruct mythological synopsis (term of I.S. Karabulatova and E.A.Fedorova) based on keywords of myths and artworks. We also understand under the mythological synopsis a set of keywords of conceivable legends, myths and other artistic interpretations of one or another myths highlighted during the analysis and comparison with related associative reactions [9]. Chain of keywords association of myths is encountered in various kinds of mythological artworks, syncretically connecting pagan beliefs, spiritual traditions of shamanism and religious beliefs. «Material on traditional religious mysteries invites a degree of creative explanation unwise in other dimensions of ethnography and unusual individuals often are attracted to the subject» [10: 19]. That is why Sufism was developed on Siberian ground.

Problems of Siberian Turkic people's ideology was considered by P.B. Golden. He analyzes in detail the Turkic civilization era and pagan beliefs of the Turks before the era of Chingisids [11]. His artworks seem to us

important in terms of consideration of syncretism of religious beliefs of Siberian Turks and pagan archetypes [12], because pagan beliefs are organically woven into the so-called "folk Islam" of the Siberian Turks [13]. This aspect was very important for the nomadic warriors, allowing them to enter without fear into the unknown world [14].

One of the early writers of the writing Siberian-Tatar literature is a poet Ikani, whose creative artwork is introduced for a scientific use owing to our textual research. The poet's verses were included into the so called "Bakyrghan Book", a book of poems, popular in the Middle Ages among the Tatar population. This book unites artworks of Sufi poets of XII-XVIII centuries.

Publication of N.F. Katanov "On religious wars of Sheikh Bagaudinn apprentices ... " [15] prompted us to further searches. Along with the names of many sheikhs, who preached Islam in these regions, this historical source refers to the mausoleum of "venerable sheikh Aykani/Ikani", located "in Isker". This forced us to raise the issue about personal identity. Genealogy protograph of Siberian Tatar saints, so called shedgere (literally "genealogy"), whose list was published by N.F. Katanov in his day, was found by the members of our research team in the Karagay village of Vagaysk district in 2004 during field expeditions. This gave an answer to our questions. Our textual analysis of Ikani artworks helped us to uncover evidences supporting our hypothesis.

In the "Bakyrghan Book", consisting of 143 lyrical and philosophical epical artworks, poems numbered from 90 to 108 were written by the poet Ikani. Poems are written in Turkic-Tatar language with extensive use of Sufi-religious terminology. At that, 298 lines of Ikani poems comprise 142 verses. They are focused on searching for "absolute truth", which is in the soul of a man, similarly to faith in Allah. Semantics of the verses shows that Ikani lived in exile and was already at an advanced age. In our opinion, the poet could be one of 366 sheikhs, arrived in Siberia in 1394, to propagate Islam, because Sufism is a special spiritual "key" to the heavenly gates of the Almighty [16]. Confessional knowledge and experience of Sufi practices are passed from teacher (murshid) to disciple (murid) orally. In addition, the murid must not be confided to the essence of the tasks ahead. Plod to Siberia for enlightened Sufis provides a true spiritual practice. Way of their spiritual and moral quest is reflected in works of art, clearly illustrating the specificity of the Sufis' world view of the real and the surreal world.

We assume that new literary writings of up to now unknown authors can still be found in Siberia. In the introduction of the medieval poet Huvaydy's book "Rahate-Dil" ("Soul Grace"), prepared for publication, it is indicated that this artwork, created in the genre of poetic epos, has "Siberian origin" [17]. The introductory chapter of Huvaydy's book is traditional for the Turk-Tatar literature of this period; it also begins with praise for Allah the Almighty:

Praise be to Allah - the Creator of worlds,
Who will appreciate everything: good and evil.
He holds sky overhead without any strings,
He gave the sun and the moon to light the world;

As is stated in the literary text (chapter "About the book and its author (let him be blessings of Allah)", the real name of the author is Khuzha-Nazar, son of Gaib-Nazar. Poet calls himself Khuzha-Nazar, as noble personalities of the Siberian Tatars were represented themselves. This fact also caused a natural interest. According to the authors, exploring a poet's oeuvre, "the assumption that the father of the poet Huvaydy was none other than Sheikh Gaib-Nazar, one of 366 sheikhs who preached Islam in Siberia, receives indirect confirmation in the analyzed text" [18:31]. Name of the poet's father indicates Sufi dignity, as Gaib is a religious addition to the name. Moreover, in the known Siberian Tatar manuscripts "Shedzhire" (genealogy), which concern the history of the Islam expansion in Siberia, the name of Sheikh Nazar is also mentioned among many other names of sheikhs. The poet writes about himself that he was born in the "Dzhemyan" countryside and immediately recalls that he was separated from his native land and longs in exile. Compiler of the book admits the idea that this area is hidden under modern city of Dem'yanka, situated on the same tributary of the Irtysh River [17], although the settlements with the same name are also in Uzbekistan and Iran. The poet writes that he was worshipping Allah the Almighty and decided to create poetic artwork in the language of local Turks, based on the prose. Sufis proclaimed that God abides only in "pure heart". They meditated upon the meaning of the Koran verses, strictly followed the rules and the Sunnah of the Prophet in prayer and fasting, adhering to the cult of poverty. Sufis sought to understand the subtle human feelings.

We have also analyzed the "Nasihatname" artwork ("Catechizing Book") of Amdami poet (Hodge Shukur bin Gavazi-bai, the end of XVII-beginning of XVIII century).

We believe that Amdami was the spiritual mentor of Tobolsk Tatars, being Akhund-clergyman; therefore his artwork is directed to the "old and young of Tab people". The artwork is of a religious character and therefore the book was forgotten in the Soviet period. Interestingly, the author of the artwork calls himself a native of Tab people, living on the banks of the Tobol River.

"At the end of XVII - beginning of XVIII centuries, in a time of Amdami, Tatar public life was characterized by a revival of the Sufi movement that was caused by pressure from the church and the oppression of crown. Necessity of faith, which is the mainstay of life and gives vital strength, generates new impetus to the development of Sufi literature. Sufi poets take responsibility for the people education and explanation of the religious ideas" [19: 124-127]. When analyzing "Nasihatname", we see that the poet is one of the brightest representatives of Sufi literature, who continues the tradition of Sufi poets under the new conditions of Siberia. In the very beginning of his artwork Amdami notes five gifts of Almighty given to human; these are eyes, tongue, power of words, hands and feet. The poet writes that everything is dependent on God, so we are not able to discern God's design. However, "to understand the idea of this artwork, the reader has to have a deep knowledge in Islamic mythology" [20: 1376].

The composition of the book reflects the tradition of medieval Turk-Tatar literature: an introduction and numerous protreptic tales are combined with each other by a single problem-religious oracles and edification.

The central problem in the artworks of Sufi poets is the freedom of the soul. Great Persian Sufi poet Rumi once said that the soul on the Earth is shut in a jail and remains there as long as it lives on the Earth. Some lines of chapter "Munajat" in Amdami's book also call for freedom of the soul that will help one to be closer to the absolute Truth.

Poet warns the reader against the following undesirable actions: never be a friend of kings and dukes - one fine day you will not even notice how your blood is spilled; never be a friend of the tyrants, the bad people and the madmen-only friendship with a clever and wise man will protect you against the bad intentions; do not believe women and not pursue wealth, otherwise it will swallow you up like a snake. Wealth of worldly life is compared with the tempting snake. It should be noted that this image in Sufi symbolism is the most common. Snake embodies all the vices of mankind, which poison the man and alienate him from the Allah the Almighty. In this artwork there is an image of a woman, who also is

conformed onto the image of a snake. Author teaches men and compares worldly wealth with a beautiful, decorated woman, who lures and plays the devil with a man. This image of the tempting woman is one of the most ancient in human culture [21, 22].

"Nasihatname" represents a peculiar set of ethical and moral codes, based on the ideas of Sufism. Amdami's artwork served to bring teachings of the Sufis and the deeper meaning of the Quran sayings to people by means of poetry.

Sufism, representing a secret doctrine, contains the "key" to all knowledge. Its task is to raise man to a higher level of perfection. This explains the special level of methods and means of Sufi practices, which is difficult to comprehend. In this regard, the journey to Siberia, in our opinion, was one of the ways to implement the Sufi practices.

Complexity of Sufi creativity lies in the fact that much of this teaching is indescribable. There are things that Sufi sees and knows, though cannot impart this knowledge to people. In this regard, much remains to be a sort of "behind the scenes", though is guessing by the addressee, leaving ample room for interpretive explanation, dependent on the recipient's preparation level. Adherent of Sufism, as a true hermeneutic, displays own mind beyond the traditional perception of the world, for the acquisition of a psychometric knowledge. Thus, Turks of the south part of Western Siberia are given new interpretation of human civilization awareness through the Sufi tradition [23]. For acquisition of higher knowledge and understanding, Sufi needs superior abilities; such abilities he can find during real-surreal traveling to semi-mythical Siberia. We live in a world of cultural codes, which date back to the archetypal ideas, or deep base oppositions. Indeed, "these and other facts confirm our assumption that we are dealing with invariants of Turkic-speaking person" [24: 856], implemented in medieval Siberian-Tatar literature. All abovementioned makes us to define wider "the problem of formation of polylinguomental Eurasian linguistic personality" in the south part of Western Siberia as multiaspect megaconceptual personality, affecting the whole Turkic society in principle [25: 158].

Thus, our field data show that the Turks of south part of Western Siberia have gained a new awareness in interpretation of human civilization through the Sufi tradition [26]. Thus, the artworks, analyzed in present article, are reflective of the ideas of Sufism, they are morally didactic, philosophical and ethical views of their time.

In the course of artworks analysis, discourse ethnography, as comparative discourse studies [27], recreates the certain lyrical persona, for whom spiritual freedom, which manifests itself in the choice of living priorities, is the highest consideration. For Sufi literature, peace of mind and harmony in the world between "I" and Allah is the most important thing. For Sufi poet, a believer, many-sided happy man, who builds his life based on the requirements of the Koran, is an ideal man. A good example for these poets are dervishes, who have withdrawn from worldly goods, all the temptations of life, won a "nafs", *i.e.* greed, for the sake of knowing the Truth and thus became closer to Allah the Almighty.

Sufi poets usually depicted visionist as a Majnun, crazed of love. "Divine Love" is considered a cornerstone in the theory of Sufism and this is a base for their theory of perception. Sufis consider love as a gift from God. Literary monuments of the Middle Ages are one of the most interesting phenomena, though poorly studied by Turk-Tatar Sufi literature, created in Siberia. However, the question arises, whether sheikhs, who moved to Siberia, sought in this difficult trip "spiritual enlightenment", or they saw their most important task in carrying the torch of their faith into the cold world of Siberia?.

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