

The social world-view stereotypes in the literatures of the East and the West

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Abstract: The fact of identity of plot elements in folklore of completely different peoples, geographically distant from one another has been causing interest in scholars since long ago. For a long time generally recognized view point, explaining this phenomenon had been the theory of "migrating motifs" (the theory of migration) put forward by well-known literary theorist Alexander Veselovsky. We argue a different view point. The reason for motif similarity in folklore of various nations is convergence. In ethnography convergence is defined as similar, but independently emerging phenomena in culture of different peoples, geographically distant from one another. Carl Gustav Jung explained such phenomena as common primordial universal archetypes. (Carl G. Jung). The article reveals convergent manifestations that caused similarity of semantic elements of "The book of Dede Gorgout", "The Elder Edda", "The Song of the Nibelungs" through semantic-comparative analysis of texts of the Turkic ("The book of Dede Gorgout"), Icelandic ("The Elder Edda") and German ("The Song of the Nibelungs") peoples. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the "migrating motifs" can sometimes occur when it concerns geographically close peoples ("the Elder Edda", "The Song of the Nibelungs"). The research seemingly confirms the paradoxical fact, namely: the world outlook of completely different peoples (the East – the West), who besides are geographically far apart from each other may have common stereotypes.

Key words: *Theory; Phenomenon of convergence; World perception; Medieval society*

1. Introduction

The issue of similarity and identity of the plots belonging to different peoples has long been within the scope of interest of the researchers. Veselovskiy was the first to introduce the theory of the "migrant theme" in order to explain this specific phenomenon. Even though geographically separated, having different traditions and mentality peoples of North and South, West and East have legends with the same semantic basis and even similar elements of plots and other things in common which could be discovered as a result of careful analysis.

2. Content

The aim of the article is to explain this interesting fact of semantic similarity in plots and its elements belonging to peoples completely different in cultural and ethnical respect. We shall take the liberty to disagree at some points with the A. Veselovskiy's theory of "migrant theme" taking into consideration the important fact that the peoples whose creations we are going to analyze inhabited territories distant from each other. We also exclude the fact of borrowing of plots we research from earlier legends, sagas and myths since this plots and their elements for the first time appeared in the creations of these peoples much later – in Medieval time. (Of course mythology elements have their place in these

creations but they are beyond the boundaries of our research).

What is at issue in this article is the identity and congeniality of plot elements in "Dede Korgut", "Elder Edda", "The Song of the Nibelungs" – medieval epic poems of Turkic, Icelandic and German peoples.

We represent a different point of view which does not coincide with the above mentioned Veselovskiy's theory. As we think the reason for the identity of the plots belonging to different peoples is so called *convergence*, an independent emergency of alike or even similar kinds of phenomena in different cultures. It means that the identity of the plot elements belonging to quite different peoples is not the result of the "migration" of the themes; this would be a simplified way of explanation of this surprising fact. The phenomenon of convergence is rather stipulated by the evolution and transformation of psychological features of a certain people's world-perception. In general these features do not vary considerably from those of other peoples since we all are the inhabitants of the same planet. At the same time each people implicitly has its specific psychological features of world perception.

For a start we shall analyze three medieval epic poems underlining this research.

In "Dede Korgut" life of Oguz tribes, their routine and intestine strife are described in thirteen stories (songs).

"Elder Edda" is an Icelandic saga about Gods and Heroes.

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“The Song of the Nibelungs” has similarities with “Elder Edda”; it is the same story but basically worked over and interpreted in quite a different way. The names differ as well: Siegurd is Siegfried; Gudrun is Kriemhild and etc. “Centuries long their deeds and destinies kept the minds of the Scandinavians and Germans” (Gurevich, 1975). Basically these are the same stories of wonderful love, wicked and sophisticated intrigues, uncontrolled envy, and subtle betrayal, cruel and merciless revenge.

We would like to start the semantic-comparative analysis of the European and the Eastern epic poems with a Woman who even since Troy time was a Great reason for the Great events, though not always positive.

It is interesting how women are depicted in Turkic epic poem “Dede Korgut”. The world perception of the people of that epoch generated image of a woman as a faithful wife and a mother. At the same time they are brave, deft and valiant if it is required by the necessity to defend her honor, her relatives and ... to choose a worthy husband. In general the Turkic peoples’ ideal woman image has something in common with the legendary Amazonians, especially in terms of brutality.

Thus, in the “Song of Bogach-Czhan, the son of Derse-khan” it is told how Bogach-Czhan was slandered by his envious enemies and consequently beaten by the arrow of his father for as a betrayer he deserved death. Derse-khan’s wife blames him, casting reproaches, but even these reproaches are full of respect to the head of the family and the clan. This is how she starts her speech (just the same way as all the women characters of the epic poem address to their husbands):

“Come to me my happiness, the support of my house, the son in law of my father khan, the favorite of my sovereign mother, given to me by mother and father, the one I loved and gave my heart to ever since I opened my eyes!” (Dede Korgut, 1950) etc.

Nevertheless, this kind of seeming obedience did not prevent her from riding her Bedouin horse and making her way accompanied by forty maidens in search of her son whom she eventually finds wounded on the bottom of a chasm.

In the “Song of capture of Uruz-bek, the son of Kazan-bek” when Uruz’s mother Burla-khatun found out that her son was treacherously captured by the enemies, without thinking she “took her forty maidens, ordered to bring her black horse, rode it, took her sword and set out tracing her son” (Dede Korgut, 1950). Even more, from this story it becomes clear that Burla-khatun participated in the battle with *giaours* (a man of a different religion, not Muslim) side by side with her husband Kazan-khan. Each of daring beys performed a heroic deed in this battle. “It was the day when the heroes – jigits revealed their courage, the day when the cowards were looking for a place to escape; it was a terrible battle, the field was covered with heads, it was the day like the Day of Judgment... Burla-khatun cut the

black banner of *giaours* with her sword and threw it on the ground” (Dede Korgut, 1950).

In the “Song of Kan-Turaly, the son of Kan-Kodzha” fearless beauty Seldzhan-khatun timely warns her fiancé about danger he is exposed to. When they found themselves surrounded by *giaours* “Seldzhan headed her horse past Kan-Turaly exclaiming: “There is a lot of *giaours* against us; we shall battle, we shall fight. The one of us who is going to die, let him die, the one who is going to survive, let him come back to the tent” (Dede Korgut, 1950, p. 101). Her words and deeds were not at variance. “She headed her horse forward and defeated the enemy.” But doing so, she, nevertheless, remained a woman for “she did not pursue the enemy and did not kill those who asked for mercy” (Dede Korgut, 1950).

In another battle the situation got even more dramatic. The way that Seldzhan-khatun showed herself in the violent fighting with *giaours* remains beyond description and imagination. Even for Kan-Turaly it became clear that “it was Seldzhan who was overpowering and scattering the enemy troops” (Dede Korgut, 1950). Heroism she was displaying had no boundaries. She even rescuers Kan-Turaly from death taking him out of the middle of a furious battle on the saddle of her horse. With the centuries passing by human’s world perception, world-view, and psychology are being transformed, but it seems that the men’s feeling of injured pride and wish to revenge for it remains the same. As soon as he felt himself secure, Kan-Turaly started to suffer from the injured pride and soon this feeling grew into the wish to kill his rescuer-fiancée. Even the arguments hers that “a man is always a lion; a woman’s boast is always a lie” (Dede Korgut, 1950, p. 102-103), which were quite reasonable in that dangerous situation she found herself in, did not help. Once again Seldzhan was forced to save her life, but this time from her too proud fiancé and again she easily wins out over him. In their single combat she wounded him with her arrow but of course not lethally. Afterwards Kan-Turaly tried to make excuses, but even though his explanations were primitive “...I did not mean to kill, I was testing you” (Dede Korgut, 1950), eventually they made peace.

In the “Song of Bamsi-Beyrek, the son of Bay-Bura” and in the “Song of Kan-Turaly, the son of Kan-Kodzha” the fathers ask their sons about the kind of girl they wish to get married with and their sons reply: “Father, find a girl who would be up on her feet before I stand up, the one who would ride her horse before I straddle my black warhorse, the one that would bring me the head of our enemy before I start to fight” (Dede Korgut, 1950). That was the ideal image of a woman in Turkic tribes of the medieval times, which was the expression of their world perception within the view of the issue – a woman as a warier, fighting side by side with her husband and the sons. Nevertheless, even in those remote times there was some kind of gallantry towards women and young heroes-jigits treated women like those who were weaker than men. Here

is an example from the epic poem: when Kan-Turaly competes in deftness and strength with Seldzhan-khatun he offers her to be the first to shoot the arrow, while both of them were the targets for each other. She says: "Jigit, shoot your arrow", Kan-Turaly replies: "This is the maidens' right, be the first to shoot the arrow" (Dede Korgut, 1950).

The theme of competition between a young man and a girl in order to acquire the right to be a spouse to each other can be traced both in "Dede Korgut" and in the "The Song of the Nibelungs".

When the daring Beyrek met his betrothed one – Banu-Chichek, the girl offered him to go through three trials, one harder than another. Beyrek easily passed through two of them. To pass through the last one was harder for he had to fight with Banu-Chichek who was neither less strong nor less deft. But eventually wasn't that the kind of girl he dreamed of, whose description he gave to his father? Beyrek won and that proved Banu-Chichek to be a kind and a faithful wife for him.

The same theme of single combat between future spouses in order to get the right to marry as we already mentioned is vividly represented and can be traced in "The Song of the Nibelungs".

The complexity of the plot here is in the fact that in all of three trials instead of deft and strong king Gunther brave and invincible knight Siegfried is competing with Queen Brünhild under magic cloak, which renders him invisible.

Brünhild shows herself a strong opponent.

"The maiden was immensely strong" (Song of Nibelungs, 1975).

Several times during the competition with the warrior-maiden the brave knight feels himself close to death. Nevertheless Siegfried wins that competition, but Brünhild thinks King Gunther, not Siegfried, defeated her and agrees to marry Gunther.

Really, it is not a new motif that maidens or their relatives challenge the husband-to-be to a trial of strength with maiden's hand in marriage as a reward or kill him in case the hero fails. This theme is vividly represented in the medieval epic poems "Dede Korgut" and "The Song of the Nibelungs".

In the epic poem "Dede Korgut" the young men who wooed Seldzhan were brought to trial of strength and deftness by her father giaour: "In order to have this maiden's hand in marriage as a reward you have to defeat and kill three beasts, in case you fail to do this I will cut your head". Thus the heads of thirty two sons of giaour beys were cut and set on the merlons of the castle towers. (Dede Korgut, 1950) Daring Kan-Turaly was the only one who managed to win the reward, though it was not easy.

The motif of bringing young men to trial in such a specific medieval way is also represented in the "The Song of the Nibelungs" (Song of Nibelungs, 1975).

There is no more reliable obstacle than a double-edged sword, at least due to the stereotypes of medieval world-perception. This obstacle remains insuperable even for the loving hearts.

In the epic poem "Elder Edda" ("the Short Lay of Sigurd") the knight Sigurd puts the sword between

him and Queen Brünhild whom he wooed for the Hun King Gunnar. The sword covered with deadly poison separated two loving hearts. (Elder Edda, 1975)

The same symbolism of "separating loving hearts with the sword" can be observed in the epic poem "Dede Korgut". In the "Song of Sekrek, the son of Ushun-Kodzha" the hero Sekrek unsheathes his sword and puts it between himself and his beloved young wife. In response to her righteous indignation he exclaims: "Listen to me, a daughter of a scoundrel! Let my sword hew me to pieces and my son not be born if I enter this wedding tent before I see my elder brother's face, or if he is dead, revenge for his blood" (Dede Korgut, 1950).

The motif of so called "clan consciousness" as the vestige of matriarchal past of the mankind is apparent in the epic poem "Elder Edda". For Queen Gudrun it is vital to take vengeance on her second husband Atli for the death of her brothers while she does not think of taking vengeance on her brothers for the death of her first husband Sigurd. This fact we observe is the matriarchal tendencies in the society, the reign of mother's right, when relatives from mother's side are reckoned important enough to be revenged for even on husband and son.

There is no such a motif in the epic poem "Dede Korgut" for in Turkic society matriarchal tendencies were eliminated by then. A woman totally belonged to her husband's family; once she became its member, blood relationship were of no importance for her any longer. A woman even could accept her relatives as enemies if they were accepted as enemies by her husband. In the "Song of Kan-Turaly, the son of Kanly-Kodzha" brave hero Kan-Turaly managed to go through the most difficult three trials and deserves right to marry Seldzhan, the daughter of giaour. Soon after the maiden becomes his fiancée she rescues him using her sword against the people of her clan. Now she calls them enemies (Dede Korgut, 1950) and, what is interesting, she calls them giaours. "There is a lot of giaours coming against us; we shall battle, we shall fight" (Dede Korgut, 1950). We find it necessary to emphasize that the fact of a complete absence of the "clan consciousness" turns to be natural and stands to reason in the epic poem which could be explained by the specific character of the world view inherent in that medieval Turkic society.

3. Conclusion

Thus, the semantic-comparative analysis showed that the Medieval European and the Medieval Turkic epic poems may have common or even similar stereotypes of world perception, even though the peoples are completely different in cultural aspect, they differ in their national mentalities and occupy distant territories. We took the responsibility to explain this fact not by the Veselovskiy's theory of the "migrant theme" but by the phenomenon of convergence.

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