

ON THE HISTORY OF THE GENESIS OF LITERARY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UZBEK AND CHINESE PEOPLES

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Abstract: The socio-historical, religious-philosophical, cultural, and literary ties between the peoples of Uzbekistan and China, located along the Great Silk Road, have very ancient roots. The ancient ancestors of the Uzbeks, like the Chinese, believed that heaven was the kingdom of Tengri. The two peoples shared many similarities in their mythological beliefs about the pantheon of gods. They practiced Buddhism for a time, and, according to Islamic sources, were considered descendants of a single ancestor, Japheth. All of this was rooted in historical and cultural ties. This article comparatively examines the roots and development of the literary and cultural ties that arose between the two peoples.

Keywords: literary ties, mythology, genesis, plot.

At the origins of Uzbek-Chinese literary relations stand the most ancient folkloric materials and myths. The common elements found in myths allow us to identify the very soil from which the roots of both peoples' literatures were nourished, as well as their primary and ancient sources.

In ancient Uzbek-Turkic folklore, myths related to the creation of the world and humankind are in many respects very similar to Chinese myths on the same themes and subjects. Certain legends cited as examples of Chinese folklore also appear in ancient Uzbek mythology, a fact which indicates that they share a common genesis. Among such myths are especially cosmogonic, calendar, heroic, astral, and animal and creature myths. Chinese-Uzbek mythological figures such as Pangu (盘古) and Tengri, Nüwa (女媧) and Mother Umay, the Western Queen Mother Xiwangmu (西王母) and Erlik, the dragon and the horse, the wolf, the archer Yi (后羿) and Alpamish are remarkably similar.

Table 1. Similarities in the Pantheon of Supreme Deities

Supreme Gods	Female Gods	Underworld Gods	Worlds	Gift to the Hero
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Supreme Gods	Female Gods	Underworld Gods	Worlds	Gift to the Hero
		Upper World	Middle World	Lower World
Tengri	Umay	Erlik	journeying to other worlds	
Pangu (盘古)	Nüwa (女媧)	Xiwangmu (西王母)	eternity	element

The ancient Chinese considered the sky, the sun, and the earth sacred. "In the past they performed various rituals so that the forces of nature would show mercy. For this reason, animistic cults emerged among Chinese Neolithic farmers, among which the cults of Heaven (天崇拜), the Sun (太阳崇拜), and Earth (土崇拜) became especially widespread". Similarly, in the worldview of ancient Uzbeks, these same three cosmogonic concepts embodied in the deities Tengri, Umay, and Erlik stood in first place and were considered sacred. Among the Turkic and Mongol peoples, spilling the blood of a respected person on the ground was avoided. For this reason, even when the highest punishment was imposed on someone of royal lineage, a specific form of execution was chosen so that their blood would not touch the earth. This is why in none of the ancient Uzbek epics is execution carried out in the form of "separation of the head from the body." Such concepts were primarily connected to the religion of Tengrism, and the sky, earth, and sun were similarly revered among the ancient Chinese.

The supreme creator in both Chinese and Uzbek mythology is directly connected to the sky. His abode is the heavens, from which he governs all of existence and maintains balance and order. The Chinese view of their homeland as "the land beneath heaven" and the Uzbek understanding of their own people as a nation under the protection of the sky both trace back to ancient mythological concepts. In the Kul Tigin inscription, it is noted that in the beginning the sky and earth were one, that they separated by the will of Tengri, and that their reunion or the splitting of the earth would bring great destruction upon humanity.

Information can be found in other sources as well concerning how Tengri appears as *tyan* (天) in Chinese and as *dingir* in the ancient Sumerian language. The reflections of Zaur Gasanov, author of "*Palace Scythians*" ("*Sarskiye skify*"), on this matter are noteworthy: "The creation of Tengri belongs to the period of Altaic ethnic unity and belongs to the mythological funds of all Altaic peoples. In exactly this phonetic form, according to researchers' estimates, it existed in the 3rd millennium BCE. Its origin is linked to the genuinely Turkic word *chenli*. It has connections with the Chinese '*tyan*' and even the Sumerian '*dingir*.' In all three cases they denote the sky". When the Chinese pilgrim and monk Xuanzang (7th century) wrote: "The Turks worship fire. For this reason, their thrones were not made of wood", he was referring to the ancestors of the Uzbeks' devotion to the Tengrist religion.

When Tengri is compared to the supreme deities in other mythological pantheons, the Chinese deity Pangu (盘古) is most similar to him in every respect. The remarkable degree of correspondences between the two deities which have escaped the attention of folklorists cannot simply be attributed to coincidence. It is clear that certain historical, migratory, and evolutionary processes within the mythological matrix have exerted their influence on such similarities.

According to "*Sanwu Liji*" (三五历记 "Historical Notes on the Three [Sovereigns] and Five [Emperors]") by Xu Zheng (3rd century), in ancient times, in the region of the Pacific Ocean, the world consisted of darkness resembling a great egg. In that world a great hero named Pangu (盘古, Pángǔ) was born. Pangu (盘古) slept inside the egg for eighteen thousand years and finally awakened. When he opened his eyes, darkness still enveloped everything around him. He tried to break through the egg with his body, but the egg was extremely strong... From the blow of his axe a thunderous sound was heard, and this egg covered in darkness cracked open. All light and pure things rose upward and the sky came into being. Heavy things fell downward and the earth was created. Fearing that the sky and earth would reunite, Pangu propped up the sky with his hands and braced his feet against the earth and began to grow upward. In this way, after another eighteen thousand years had passed and the distance between the earth and sky had reached its present form, he stopped growing.

In ancient Uzbek mythology there are similar variants of the Chinese myth about the Egg and Pangu. In one of them, it is told that long ago the bird Umay came flying from somewhere. Flying repeatedly over the vast sea, it found no place to land. The eggs it laid in the air fell into the water and sank. After that, Umay began plucking feathers from its breast and building a nest on the water's surface. But the waves kept breaking apart the nest and carrying the feathers to the depths of the sea. Then Umay realized that it first needed to create solid ground. Gathering courage, it dived to the bottom of the ocean and carried mud up in its beak. From this clay the earth gradually came into being. The earth grew and became dry land.

In another Turkic myth connected with the Egg and the creator, it is told that long ago there was neither sky nor earth, only a vast sea. Within it a White Light appeared. From it a shimmering egg came into being. It had no limbs, no head, yet it moved; it had no wings, yet it flew; it had no mouth, yet it made sounds. The creator of humanity, Tengri, spent a long time sleeping inside it, and upon awakening, sought a way to exit the egg. Inside the egg he found only a steel hammer and a spear. With their help he broke through the egg and emerged. From the upper part of the egg the sky was formed, and from the lower part the brown earth was created.

In ancient Turkic mythology, the image of the Egg was understood not only as the origin of the world but also as an impenetrable fortress and a source of power. The reason for the immortality of Koschei a figure in Russian fairy tales who has Turkic roots is that his soul is kept inside an egg; similarly, it is no coincidence that the custom of feeding eggs to

women who have just given birth has been preserved among Uzbeks. The myth about Pangu affirms the existence in China of a cosmogonic system concerning the great universe the macrocosm and the small universe the human being. This concept of the unity of the macrocosm and microcosm (or the great world and the small world) later found its reflection in other fields of knowledge related to the human being, particularly medicine and physiognomy.

The renowned 20th-century Chinese mythologist Yuan Ke (袁珂) connects the image of Pangu with Panhu, considered the ancestor of the Miao and Yao peoples, and calls him Pangu. In sources created in the 4th and 5th centuries CE, this Pangu (Panhu) is depicted as a "five-colored dog," and it is noted that he married a woman and had children.

This recalls the story in ancient Uzbek (Turkic) legends of a child whose limbs were cut off by enemies and who was thrown into a swamp, only to be rescued and raised by a female wolf, who later took him as her husband and bore children with him.

The ancient Chinese were well acquainted with the myth about the Turkic peoples' descent from wolves and recorded the earliest information about it in their own sources. The people belonging to the branch of the ancient Huns called Ashina were annihilated by a neighboring ruler and their population completely wiped out. Only a ten-year-old boy survived. "The warriors, taking his young age into account, did not kill him, but cut off his limbs and threw him into a marshy lake. A she-wolf fed him meat. When the ruler learned that the boy was still alive, he sent warriors again to kill him. Seeing the wolf beside the boy, they tried to eliminate her too, but the mother wolf appeared in the mountains to the northwest of Gaochang, east of the western sea. In the mountains there was a cave... Hidden there, the mother wolf gave birth to ten sons. They grew up, married, and all had children. Later, each of them became the head of a separate clan. Among them was one with great potential named Ashina, and they made him khan: to remember his origins, he hung a wolf-head banner on the gate of his dwelling" [8, 220–221]. In one legend cited by N. Ya. (Iakinf) Bichurin, a human child becomes the wife of a wolf: "Some say that the ancestors of the Gaoche family descended from the granddaughter of the Hun family. It is told that two peerless beauties were born into the family of the Hun Shanyu. The servants considered them goddesses. The Shanyu said: 'Shall I give such daughters to ordinary people? I shall entrust them to the will of Heaven.' So they built a tall yurt in a place north of the capital where no one lived and placed the two girls there, praying: 'I worship Heaven so that it may receive them!' Three years later, the mother wished to bring the girls back. The Shanyu said: 'That is not right, the time has not yet come.' After another year had passed, an old wolf dug a lair beneath the yurt and, not leaving it, began howling day and night, guarding the yurt. The younger girl said: 'Our father placed us here to give us to Heaven, but a wolf has come perhaps its coming is a sign of good fortune.' She was about to go down to the wolf when her elder sister said in fear: 'This is an animal do not shame our parents.' The younger one did not heed her words, went down to the wolf, became his wife, and gave birth to a son. Children multiplied and a state was born. That is why the people of this land love long songs

or howl like wolves'.

In the *Oghuzname*, the wolf is the central image that drives the narrative of the work. It appears as a helper, protector, and sheltering force for the tribe. Such a depiction is connected to the Ashina clan, who considered themselves descended from the wolf.

The common plot about the world egg in Chinese and Turkic myths shares a genesis that has taken on complex similarities with myths of other peoples as well. Russian literary scholar V. N. Toporov created a dedicated study on the problem of the world egg and its reconstruction in Slavic tradition. According to him, the soul of Koschei the Deathless – a character in Russian fairy tales with Turkic roots – is hidden in a magical egg. To kill Koschei entirely, one must find that egg, crack it open, and break the needle inside.

Like the heroes of Chinese mythology, some of the main figures of ancient Uzbek folklore have physical appearances composed of features from various animals. The appearance of Oghuz Khan serves as an example: "His feet were like the feet of an ox. His waist was like the waist of a wolf, his shoulders like those of a sable. His chest was like the chest of a bear. His entire body was covered with thick fur.". In the Kyrgyz epic *Manas*, Manas had the neck of a tiger, the eyebrows of a snake, and the ears of a wolf. Like Oghuz Khan, Manas is also interpreted in connection with China.

The elements characteristic of Chinese myths present in the mythological images of Oghuz Khan and Manas emerged as a result of these heroes' direct interactions with China. If attention is paid, the figures of the Chinese deity Fuxi (庖犧), the great goddess Nüwa (女媧), Oghuz Khan, and also Greek mythological figures all share common totem animal features. Fuxi and Nüwa: serpent body bovine head tiger snout human face. The wife of Zeus in the legend of "Targitai": half serpent, half woman. Oghuz Khan: ox feet wolf waist sable shoulders bear chest. The Scythian mother and companion of Heracles: human above the waist serpent below. Manas: tiger neck snake brows wolf ears.

The myth about the collapse of the sky exists in Turkic mythology as well, where the shattering of the heavens, as in the Chinese myth about the goddess Nüwa, occurred as a result of a quarrel among giants. "And so it came about that Angur and Tangur came to blows. They both took long staffs in their hands and began chasing each other from one end of the world to the other, fighting and wrestling. Each time the staffs of Angur and Tangur struck upward they would pierce the sky, tearing great gashes across it. The streak in the sky called the Milky Way actually appeared when Angur and Tangur grappled. Then God seized Angur and Tangur, saying 'Are you trying to destroy my sky?!' and threw them into the sea". In Chinese mythology, when the gods fought and shattered the sky, the goddess Nüwa killed a giant tortoise, cut off its four legs, and set them up as pillars for the heavens. These supports were so strong that there was no need to fear the sky would collapse.

If we pay attention to the Uzbek myth, it says: "The streak in the sky called the Milky Way actually appeared when Angur and Tangur grappled." In Chinese mythology there is a beautiful legend about the Milky Way called "The Heavenly Weaver Girl and the Cowherd Boy." In it, it is told that the weaving daughter of the Jade Emperor and the Heavenly Mother

Goddess, Zhinü (織女) ("the weaving, sewing woman"), wove and cut various colorful clouds in the heavens. She learned weaving from her mother, who had woven the Milky Way that spreads light across the earth and sky. Every day Zhinü would descend from heaven with her six sisters using a magical cloak and bathe in a lake. One day a cowherd boy named Niulang (牛郎) saw the girl swimming like a fish in the water and fell deeply in love with her; to win the beauty over, he hid her magical cloak (made of bird wings and feathers). When Zhinü came ashore, Niulang caught her and took her to his home. The Jade Emperor, learning of this, was furious, but when his daughter married the cowherd, he swallowed his anger.

Zhinü and Niulang lived happily, having one son and one daughter. After some time, Zhinü grew homesick for her home and parents. She found the magical cloak Niulang had hidden, and with its help returned to the heavenly palace. The Jade Emperor, overjoyed that his daughter had returned, quickly scattered the Blue Sea (the Milky Way) that his wife had woven across the sky, blocking Zhinü's path back. The weaver girl was unable to return home and remained a prisoner in the sixteenth heaven. The faithful cowherd rose to the heavens with his children after his beloved, but was unable to reach his sweetheart's dwelling. For the Milky Way had blocked his path.

The wonderful love of Zhinü and Niulang, and myths and tales related to marriage between a human and a being of another kind, are phenomena that existed in ancient Uzbek (Turkic) folklore. Examples include the marriage between Go'ro'g'li (the epic hero of Uzbek epics) and his fairy sweetheart, or the images of *alvasti* spirits who play with young men at night, and the yellow girl who lures traveling young men to remote places. Among the ancient Turkics, beings of another kind who descended from heaven were symbols of benevolent forces, and water birds in particular were venerated as totems. The motifs of Mother Umay transforming into the Humay bird, or of a swan turning into a beautiful girl and becoming a hero's companion, are indeed an inseparable part of ancient folk oral literature.

In these wandering plots found in Chinese mythology and ancient Turkic legends and fairy tales, the Uzbek mythological goddess Umay's descent to earth in the form of the Humay or other birds and her becoming an ancestor are being interpreted.

The parallel depictions in these myths support the idea that ancient Chinese and Uzbek cosmogonic mythology share a common genesis.

A phenomenon similar to the love of the fairy goddess Zhinü and the human Niulang the marriage or close relationship between representatives of two elements, earth and fire exists in Uzbek-Turkic folklore. The relationship between Go'ro'g'li and the fairy Yunus (Misqol) is a vivid example of this. Sometimes a child can also be born from the union of a fairy and a human, as in the myth of Zhinü and Niulang, but such a child tends to take after its giant relatives on the fairy side and does more harm than good. The figure of Tepagöz in the work *"The Book of My Grandfather Korkut"* can be cited as an example. In the work it is narrated that a man named Aruz had a shepherd named Qonurxo'ja Sariq. One day, as he was passing by a lake, he saw fairy girls beating their wings and flying over the water. The shepherd threw his cloak over one of the fairies and caught her, and lay with her. As the fairy

was leaving, she told the shepherd that a year later he would come to collect the result of this violent act, and that what he had done would bring calamity upon the Oghuz people. The frightened shepherd turned pale. A year later, a one-eyed giant named Tepagöz was born from the union of the human and the fairy.

The one-eyed giant the Cyclops is a figure that appears not only in Greek mythology but also in Turkic and Chinese mythologies, yet has not been studied comparatively. The battle of the forty warriors in the *Manas* epic against one-eyed people also confirms that such figures were not foreign to ancient Turkic mythology.

Folklorist H. G. Ko'ro'g'li, studying plots connected with "one-eyed beings" comparatively, makes the important observation that "the similarity down to the details between the Kyrgyz steppe myth about the Cyclops and the Sarmatian version involuntarily prompts one to accept Herodotus's report as a historical fact: the Scythians carried this Central Asian myth westward, as a result of which it found its place within ancient Greek epic." In our view, the role of the Hun tribes, who were in constant contact with the Chinese empires, was significant in the westward migration of this plot. There is also a basis for the view that the "land of the one-eyed" in Chinese mythology was located to their west in the territory inhabited by the Huns and Scythians. Chinese mythologist Yuan Ke, providing information about the land of one-eyed people, notes that their land was located to the west, that they had a single eye in the middle of their face, and that all of them bore the surname Wei.

In ancient Uzbek-Chinese mythology, the images of Tengri–Pangu and Umay–Nüwa share a common genesis; however, as a result of national distinctiveness, the people's mentality, and various historical and social factors, they have undergone changes from their original primordial state and have in parallel experienced certain evolutionary processes in some of their manifestations.

While Pangu's existence within an egg at the creation of the world, his breaking it apart with a hammer, and his role as the founder of existence resemble the supreme Turkic creator Tengri, his struggle against enemies in the form of a dog, his marriage to a girl of human descent, and the offspring produced from their union evoke the wolf totem in ancient Uzbek mythology. The fact that among the ancient Turks the wolf was considered Tengri's animal, that it led the army at the head of Oghuz Khan's campaigns, and that in another legend there is the motif of a wolf bearing offspring from a human being should not simply be attributed to mere resemblance. For the wolf was understood in ancient Turkic mythology as a symbol of power and might, as recorded in the Kul Tigin monument: "*Tengri kuch birtuk uchun qang'im qag'an susi bo'ri teg armis.*" (KT.50: "Because Tengri gave strength, my father the khan's army is as powerful as a wolf.")

On the basis of the similarities existing among the supreme deities in mythology, we can understand that the ancestors of the ancient Chinese and Uzbeks historically held closely related demiurgic concepts. As a result of our observations, it became clear that although mythological concepts share a common root, they may undergo separate parallel development,

and in some cases a process of plots and characters migrating from the folklore of one people to another, or finding their place in the myths of several peoples in a spiral form and then returning again.

As we study the genesis of Chinese-Uzbek folklore through the example of myths, we can observe certain similarities between the image of the Buddha and the figure of the Turkic legendary hero Korkut Ata. According to legend, Korkut Ata was greatly afraid of death; wherever he went, he saw the vision of a grave being dug for him and immediately changed his location. To protect himself from death in the form of a snake, he climbed onto a miraculous carpet and spent his days in the middle of the Syr Darya river [15, 265]. The Buddha lived in a wondrous palace. His father tried to shield him from unpleasant realities such as death and old age through various comforts and entertainments, striving for him to live a life of pleasure and joy. But one day Buddha went outside the palace with a companion and suddenly came upon a corpse. At that moment he understood that death and suffering existed, and began seeking ways to struggle against them [16, 304]. The Buddha, like Korkut Ata, played a stringed instrument and meditated; Korkut Ata, like the Buddha, entered a state that was neither truly living nor dead, and became aware of great truths. Buddhists call this nirvana.

It is not right to attribute such similarities in the myths of the two peoples to coincidence they indicate that the roots of the artistic history of both peoples are connected to a common trunk.

Today, not only in our region but throughout the world, under the auspices of UNESCO, special attention is being paid to interest in the cultural heritage of peoples along the Silk Road, to illuminating the causes and processes behind the emergence of literary connections, and to promoting universally human noble ideas derived from them. Until now, the literary heritage of the Uzbek and Chinese peoples had not been studied in a comparative manner. In this article, the similarities in the ancient mythological views of the Chinese and Uzbek peoples, the historical stages of the emergence of cultural connections, the transformation of mythological images, the emergence of parallel wandering plots, and their causes and processes have been examined comparatively.

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