

# **THE IRANIAN INFLUENCE INTO THE TURKISH MYTHS OF ANCESTOR FOUNDER**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The relations between The Iranians and the Turks go back to a very ancient time. Meanwhile a good part of these cultural exchanges deals with mythological and epic purposes, one of the most important fields of these cultural exchanges is the myth of hero founder, according on them the mythic hero of a people is considered as their ancestor who generally has a relationship with a sacred and totemic animal.

The writer tries in this article to talk about some myths of the hero founder among the Turks in antiquity and the influences they born from the similar Iranian myths.

Key words: Iranians, Turks, cultural exchanges, the myth of hero founder, fereydoon, Ughooz khaghan.

### **-The origin of the myth of Oghooz Khaghan from a bull and its relation with Iranian mythology.**

One of the myths currently believed among deferent tribes and nations and specially those of the nomadic ones is the example that has animal origin. Many tribes attribute their ancestry to an animal that they respect and consider as sacred. In anthropology this phenomenon is usually called "Totemism". Totem is an animal that a tribe and clan consider as its mythical ancestor and patron. This is believed among the Turkish and Iranian tribes. The Turkish tribe of Oghooz as it has been registered in the Islamic texts as "Ghoz or Toghoz Ghoz" consider their ancestor as "Oghooz Khaghan". The book Oghooz is a text about the mythical origin of oghooz khaghan which is been preserved in some of the Islamic sources. Among the scholars of Turkish culture, Sinor <sup>(1)</sup> and Jean Paul Roux have contributed to research of the Oghooz khaghan Tale.<sup>(2)</sup> According to the Translation and report of Jean Paul Roux, we read that a cow gave birth to a child that the colors of which were as follows, its face blue, its mouth red like fire, its eyes bright and the aye eyebrows black. The child nursed the Aghooz (the first milk after birth) from the mothers breasts and refrained from drinking eat and started eating cooked meat and meals and drank wine began to talk, of the forty days he grew up as

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big as to walk and play. Its feet were like bulls hoofs.<sup>(3)</sup> Although the gender of the creature is not specified. In this tale we comply with J.P.Roux Statement that considers it a cow. But sense the female creature (cow) among the tribes is a symbol of stupidity and bull represents power and strength it is more probable that Oghooz Khaghan actually descends from a bull father.

In this book the tendency is to relate the name of Oghooz Khaghan etymologically to Aghooz (the first milk) but Sinor explains that oghooz khan is actually a "bull king" and the tern oghooz is derived from "Öküz"<sup>(4)</sup> which means bull (Oxen) and since the Turk tribes were very much influenced by Iranian system of nomadic, it seems that the Turkish myth must have an Iranian mythological origin as well. Bull is a very sacred animal among all the Indo-European peoples and we know that the main activity of Arian people was dairy farming and specially those of the cows and the horses. The importance of a cow is well appreciated among the Indo Europeans, cow has maintained its importance in India until today to the extent that they still don't kill and eat it, among the Iranians it is discoursed from its mythology that says that bull was created even before human beings the sole created bull is placed on the right side of the "Daity River" and Kiumarsh is the first created human appears on the left of the river and both of them are originated from the earth<sup>(5)</sup>, and this sole created bull is killed by Ahriman (evil) and from its corps grow tens of herbal medicines, its sperm ascends to the moon, is purified there and from it many useful species are originated, at first time, one male and one female and from each of them a couple on the earth in Iran Vidje (Land of Iran). Ourmazed says as follows: "because of the dignity of bull, I created it twice. Once in the form of a bull and once a progenitor".<sup>(6)</sup> The myth actually claims that bull is the progenitor of all the other species on the earth and all species have originated from its sperm, these for one can see the divine importance of bull in Iranian mythology.

Also an important verses of Gathas (Zoroastrian hymns) known as (Gaushuron) is dedicated to the soul of the bull. the soul of bull cries to Ourmazed and the other divinities how have descended him to the earth and materialized him, he also complains for the harm that has accused to him, but Ourmazed by showing the glory of Zarathushtra that will protect him on the earth calms the bull and convinces him to descend.

This important status that the bull has in the everyday life of Iranian peoples and their religious believes can show that we can expect that the bull has had a totemic status among the Iranian peoples. We think the same belief can be found in the myth of "fereydoon" in the legend of fereydoon and zahak in the book of king (shahnameh) by ferdosi it is written that zahak dreams that a child is born that rises to fight with him and overthrow his kingdom, this child is fereydoon. Zahak dispatches envoys to find the child and the mother called "faranak" and kill the child. Faranak finds out and escapes with the child to a pasture and asks the keeper to feed the child with the milk of the "fertile cow", and ask the cow to nurse him. But there are evidences and other

indications that fereydoon is originated from a paternal bull, but in the version of ferdosi the original myth was metamorphosed into a rational form of a mother and a cow.

The prominent Iranian scholar Abureyhan Birooni talking a bout the genealogy of fereydoon, refers to fereydoon's ancestors that are often dominated by bulls: "Afreydoon ibn Athfian ibn Gaw (cow) ibn Nigaw (cow) ibn ... Akhnab Gaw (cow) ibn Jam the king".<sup>(7)</sup> Also about the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Day that is called "Mehr" and Iranians used to celebrate it, Birooni tell us that the reason of the feast is that on that day fereydoon freed the bulls that zahak had stolen from his father and returned them home. On that day fereydoon ride on the bull and on the night of that day their appeared a bull of light in the sky for an hour with golden horns and silver legs that pulled the chariot of the moon.

On that night the silhouette of a white bull is seen on the great mountain and if this bull cries twice it is a sign of abundance, and people will drink milk on that day to bless their lives.<sup>(8)</sup> From what Biroony says fereydoon's bull ancestry and his relation to the animal are clarified also fereydoon's bull needed mace shows his close relation to the animal in the book of kings we read.

To tighten the belt and march majestically

To hold the bull headed mace in the fist

Wrathfully went towards zahak to fight

Hit him on the head with the bull headed mace

fereydoon hits zahak with the mace on the heed and ties him up. In another verse, fereydoon says:

"Nobody saw such a bull in the worth

Niether they heard from any wise man"<sup>(9)</sup>

We mustn't forget that fereydoon is the ancestor of Iranian people (from the side of Iranian), father of Touranian (From Tour) and father of the Romans (from salm), therefore we can claim that fereydoon as bull king and bull ancestor is the totemic symbol of same of the Iranian Tribes that trace their genealogy through fereydoon to a bull, and practically the battle of fereydoon and zahak should he considered the battle between different tribes of Iran, each of which has its own totem.

Azhi dahak is a combination of the words, Azhi meaning Snake and dahak who are certain tribes, the term dahak is actually the snake totem of the tribe who are known as "Daha" and the battle is between the tow totemic symbols of bull and snake that has a religions back ground as well, thus the bull origin of the myth of Oghooz khan can be drived from the bull origin of fereydoon. In this regard historical Linguistic can help. There fore the word oghooz is derived from the Turkish term *öküz* that means bull. But this word *öküs* is not originally Turkish and it is actually Indo European.

In Sanskrit it is written as "OKSEN", In Avestian "uxšan", in old Irish "oss", old German, OHSO, in new English, "OX" and in Tokharian "okso", from the

Indo-European “uksōn” meaning bull.<sup>(10)</sup> It seems that the Turkish have borrowed it from the Tokharian, which look to be geographically correct. This etymological borrowing of the bull totem and the bull origination of the oghooz tribe proves its relation with the Iranian myth through Tokharian and Scythian.

**-The myth of genealogy of swan or the goose of lake.**

The story of having goose origin among the Turkish tribes is comparatively recent or at least present form of the Legend is new. According to this legend which is correctly believed among different Altaic tribes, a man goes to the side of a lake and sees that three girls are swimming in it and have left their garments beside, the man humorously pinches one of the garments and hides it, the girls stop swimming and put their clothes and turn to a swan or a goose and fly away, except for the one who had lost her clothes, so she is forced to marry the man and gives birth to a son and then finds her clothes and escapes like a bird and the child becomes the ancestor of many Turkish tribes,<sup>(11)</sup> this narration is a theme that can be frequently found in Iranian stories, for example in the story of prince Bahman who is handsome and brave. While hunting finds his way to a garden, in which three moon like beautiful girls are swimming in the pond, jumping and crawling, the prince hides and rubs one of the garments. Two of the girls turn to brides and fly away but the third one can't find her clothes and prince Bahman who is fallen badly in love with her (the girl is actually a fairy) and tries to pass her.

There is a similar story among the Russian as well and the very famous legend that Tchaikovsky has composed from into a ballet and is terribly popular is actually derived from this Russian folkloric story. Jean-Paul Roux explains that the Turkish and Mongol folkloric story is recent and the origin of it is Russian,<sup>(12)</sup> but we believe that this myth has Iranian origin and relates to the stories about Jamshid, who is actually a king is the cause of creation of many myths God and legends, a number of which can be found among the neighboring nations, out of which some are attributed to Salomon the Jewish king. In Pahlavi scripts some of the narrations about Jamshid (Jam) and his sister Jamak we read:” when Jam was bestowed with the Holy Spirit. He escaped from the assembly of Zahak (Dahak) with his sister Jamak and went to Lake “Zereh”, then Ahriman (great devil) said: I think that Jam will go to Zereh lake, a devil and a fairy stood up to go and find Jam, so they ran and went and when they reached the lake the water darkened and Jam asked them: who are you? They said: we are like you and we have escaped from the devils like you, so you give your sister to me and I will give my sister to you, and because Jam didn't recognize the fairy from human married her and gave his sister Jamak to the devil and from Jam and the fairy were born a bear, an ugly looking man key, and from Jamak and the devil, a turtle, a lizard, a leopard, a frog and many insects, and Jamak saw that the devil was nasty and she had to separate and one day when Jam and the devil were drinking wine, Jamak

changed her place and her clothes with the fairy, when Jam came home, he was drunk and unconsciously slept with Jamak.<sup>(13)</sup>

In this mythical narration, we find the elements of the previous Turkish legend completely, the scene of the drama is the lake which shows that water is at concern as symbol of fertility, a man and a woman sleeps with a devil and a fairy and give birth to progenies, more ever like the other stories, she steals the fairy's dress and dresses up like her, so we can deduce the origin of the tail from the Iranian source and not the Russian one, on the other hand linguistic studies can help us in this respect as well, we saw that story talks about a bird that most sources think to be a goose, but the word has not been Turkish origin but has Indo-European origin, in Sanskrit "Hamsa", in old Greek "Khen", in latin "Hamser" in old Irish "geiss" in Russian "Gus", in upper German "gan" in litvanian "žasis" in English "gooz" from the Indo-European "ghans"<sup>(14)</sup>. Therefore because the Turkish word "q̄haz" is from an Indo-European origin, one can conclude the stories related to this animal also originate from an Iranian source, another point worth not icing is the sacristy and worship of Jamsheed among the Turks of southern Siberia (shal yama) from Iranian word "shad" or "shal" meaning 'shah' the king, to them is the god of quadrupeds, which is another reason for the Iranian origin of the nomadic dairy farming of the Turkish. The two of the nations sanctify Jamshid that shows that the Turks have been influenced by the Iranian legend.

**- On the issue of the myth of Manchus:**

People of Manchuria have a myth about the origin of the formation of their tribes, which probably originates from the Iranian religion and specially Zoroastrian one, in brief the Manchu story narrated that three virgin and illuminated girls were swimming in a lake, a sacred and spiritual raven appears who is a divine envoy and throws a red piece of fruit to them, the youngest of the girls eats it and became pregnant and gives birth to a child that is considered to be the ancestor of the Manchu people,<sup>(15)</sup> this story is similar to the birth of the savior hero or the Zoroastrian and most probably is taken from it. In Zoroastrian texts, there are stories told about millennia and birth of three creatures who are children of zarathushtra in the lake of "kiansse" (HAMOON of to day), three virgin who are from a religious and sacred family swim at the end of the ninth, the tenth and the eleventh millennia and join the sperm of zarathushtra which is preserved at the depth of the lake and become pregnant and the three children of zarathushtra are born. Each one of which is a child of his millennium the first one is "Hoshidar", the second "Houshidar mah" and the third "soshians", the last one is born at the end of the third millennium.<sup>(16)</sup> Both legends refer to the sacred lake; the three pious virgin girls and the method of pregnancy are the same with little difference. In Manchu tale the three girls are swimming contemporary, while the Iranian girls each belong to a different periods never the less the substantial structure of the two myths are the same and most probably the Iranian one as the mother culture has influenced the Manchu one.

### Conclusion

The myth of founder ancestor of the Turks has different traditions, mostly with numerous totemic concepts. The Oghooz khagan's myth and the myth of goose and swan are included in these traditions. The role of the Iranian myths, especially Fereydoon and Jamshids' myths and some of the Zoroastrian traditions concerning the birth of saviors exercised a vast influence in formation of such notions among the Turks and their neighbors, thus this reality shows the deep impact of the Iranian religious concepts in the Turkish myths.

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- 4) Roux, ibid , p 341
- 5)see: Bundahišn, translated from middle Persian to modern Persian by Mehrdad Bahar , p 41, 1990 , Tehran.
- 6)ibid
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pahlavi texts, f.ex Dinkard and Bundahišn, also says about genealogy of fereydoon: Frēdōn ī xwanirah xwada yē ī purr-gāw ī asfyān ī su ī gāw, asfyān ī bōr-gāw asfyān kardār – gāw, asfyān ī syā-gāw, asfyān ī spēd-gāw , asfyān ī dawr-gāw, asfyān ī ramag – gāw, as fyān ī wan- frōšn – gāw asfyān ī j am.
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