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About the Unstudied Aspects of Crimean Tatar Literature of the Golden Horde Period

Altın Orda Dönemi Kırım Tatar Edebiyatının İncelenmeyen Yönleri Hakkında

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Assoc. Prof. Aida Babutju
Erciyes University
Department of Turkish Language and
Literature
aidababutcu@erciyes.edu.tr
ORCID: 0000-0001-9606-2086

Abstract

Researching literary works of the ancient and middle ages of Crimean Tatar literature, which is a part of the literature of the Turkic world, still remains indispensable. Of course, after the runic inscriptions, the written heritage of the Turkish-Islamic civilization common to the Turks in the 11th-12th centuries (Divanü Lugati't-Türk, Kutadgu Bilig, Divan-i Hikmet etc.) is also considered the beginning of the art of speech for the Tatars. During the reign of the Great Bulgarian State, the intellectual world of the Tatars - oral literature products were transmitted through the common heritage, and similar works were created in the Bulgarian-Tatar written literature which developed on the basis of urban civilization. Especially during the Golden Horde period, Tatar literature, which experienced the age of civilized adaptation, contained the classical literary contacts of the East and West. In the 13th century Islam, along with participation in the formation in Crimea of the foundations of the longest-lasting Crimean statehood in the history, brought the cult of books, knowledge, and education to Crimea. The presentation of Quranic stories to the Turkish reader in a new evocative content was continued in Tatar literature as a Yesevi tradition and influenced the following literary periods. So, Tatar literature, which took its subject, shape and form features from the common oral and written monuments of ancient Turkish literature, could become a characteristic of the literature of Turkish peoples in a widespread geography during the Golden Horde period. In our study, based on the opinions of both Eastern and Western researchers, the important cultural events of the Tatar literature of the Golden Horde period, the works created based on these events and their authors, literary influences, unsearched pages etc. will be reviewed.

Keywords: Golden Horde, Crimean Tatar, Age of Civilized Adaptation, Turkish Peoples, Literary Influences

Öz

Türk dünyası edebiyatlarının bir parçası olan Kırım Tatar edebiyatının eski ve orta çağlarına ait edebî eserlerin arařtırılması hâlâ zaruri durum olarak kalmaktadır. Elbette runik yazılı kitabelerden sonra Türk-İslam medeniyetinin Türkler için XI-XII yy.larda ortak olan yazılı mirası (Divanü Lugati't-Türk, Kutadgu Bilig, Divan-i Hikmet ve b.) Tatarlar için de söz sanatlarının başlanğıcı sayılır. Büyük Bolgar devletinin hüküm sürdüğü devirlerde Tatarlara ait fikir dünyası - sözlü edebiyat ürünleri ortak miras vasıtasıyla aktarılagelmiş, şehir medeniyeti zemininde gelişen Bolgar-Tatar yazılı edebiyatında benzer eserler meydana getirilmiştir. Özellikle, Altın Orda döneminde medeni intibah çağını yaşamış Tatar edebiyatı doğu ve batının klasik edebi temaslarını ihtiva ediyordu. 13. yüzyılda İslam, tarihin en uzun süreli Kırım devletinin temellerinin atılmasına katkı sağlamanın yanı sıra, Kırım'a kitap, ilim ve eğitim kültürünü de getirmiştir. Kur'an kıssalarının Türk okuruna yeni çağrışımlı içerikte sunulması bir Yesevi geleneği olarak Tatar edebiyatında devam ettirilmiş, sonraki edebi devirleri de tesirinde bırakmıştır. Böylece, konusunu, şekil ve biçim özelliklerini, eski Türk edebiyatının sözlü ve yazılı ortak abidelerinden almış Tatar edebiyatı Altın Orda döneminde yaygın bir coğrafyada Türk halkları edebiyatının vasfı olabilmıştır. Çalışmamızda hem doğulu hem batılı arařtırmacıların görüşlerine dayanarak Altın Orda dönemi Tatar edebiyatının önemli kültür hadiseleri ve bu hadiseler esasında meydana gelmiş eserler, onların müellifleri, edebi tesirler, arařtırılmayan sayfalar ve s. gözden geçirilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Altın Orda, Kırım Tatar, İntibah, Türk Halkları, Edebi Tesirler

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INTRODUCTION

The history of Muslim scholarship and literature of Crimea during the Golden Horde period remains a very little-studied topic. Meanwhile, we are talking about a period of very active processes in the field of Crimean education, science and literature, which stands out noticeably against the background of previous centuries of the history of the peninsula. In the 13th century Islam, along with participation in the formation in Crimea of the foundations of the longest-lasting Crimean statehood in the history, brought the cult of books, knowledge, and education to Crimea. The Muslim world at this time was at the peak of its development, having survived in the 9th - 12th centuries a period of significant flourishing, characterized by some European researchers as the "Muslim Renaissance". (Mech, 1973) One of the most characteristic phenomena of this cultural upsurge was truly revolutionary changes in the field of science - it was at this time, within the framework of Islamic civilization, that world science (exact disciplines, astronomy, medicine, geography, philology, urban planning, etc.) reached unprecedented levels heights. Respect for knowledge has become a distinctive feature, a kind of "determinant of Muslim civilization" in all its aspects. As the American orientalist F. Rosenthal notes: "Knowledge is one of the dominant concepts in Islam, which gave Muslim civilization its distinctive form and coloring. ... There is no aspect of Muslim spiritual life, Muslim political and religious activity, or the everyday life of the average Muslim that would not be affected by a comprehensive attitude to 'knowledge' as the supreme value of Muslim existence". (Rosenthal, 1978)

The same can be said about the educational and literary achievements of numerous Muslim poets and writers of this era. "The European, especially French, society of the eighteenth century gives us an example of an understanding of education not too far removed from that of the brilliant adibs of Baghdad. In both environments, wit and elegance, especially literary wit and elegance of speech, were achieved; refinement ("zarf") was considered the highest achievement," remarks G. E. von Grunebaum. (Rosenthal, 1978) In the XIII century, Crimea was part of this civilizational space. Cultural bridges from the largest Muslim centers were being built to the peninsula. The new religion brought to Crimea a new understanding of faith in God, high morality and spirituality, a special respect for scientific work, intellectual and literary creativity. New cultural centers emerge on the peninsula, in particular, the city of Crimea, the capital of the Crimean ulus of the Golden Horde.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Despite the surviving sources, during this period we have information about the creation in Crimea, at least three very significant poetic monuments, which can constitute the golden fund not only of Crimean and, more widely, Golden-Ordish literature, but also of the literature of the Turkic peoples as a whole.

We are talking about two poems on the Koranic legend about Yusuf and Zuleikha by Crimean poets Mahmud Kyrymly (13th century) and Abdulmejid Kyrymly (late 14th-early 15th century), as well as an 800-page Sufi poetic tractate in Farsi - "Kalender-name" by Ebu-Bekr Kalender (late 13th-early 14th century). Of these, the first monument is currently known in several lists of translation (the fate of the original is not clear), the second has not yet been discovered, and the third is only now entering the wide scientific circulation.

Mahmud Kyrymly's poem about Yusuf and Zuleikha is currently considered the earliest monument of Crimean Tatar literature. The work survives in several lists of a translation - according to the translator, from "Crimean" (or "Desht") into "Turkic" - by the poet Khalil-oglu Ali, supposedly a younger contemporary of Mahmud Kyrymly. (Konurat, 1996) Several researchers have suggested a possible relation of Mahmud Kyrymly to the followers of a prominent Central Asian spiritual leader and poet - Sheikh Ahmed Yesevi (d. 1166) (Ayan, 1997; 2004). Despite the extreme importance of the monument and even the existence of dissertation studies devoted to it (in Turkey), the problems of dating, authorship and language peculiarities of the work have not yet become a topic of wide scientific discussion and remain extremely topical. In particular, several European, Turkish and Crimean Tatar scholars have suggested that there is a certain connection between the above-mentioned poet-translator Khalil-oglu Ali and the well-known poet Kul Gali. It seems that the solution of these problems is a matter of the near future, but one thing is clear: Mahmud Kyrymly's poem has all chances to be recognized as the earliest experience of poetic processing of a famous Koranic legend in the history of all Turkic literature. (Ertaylan, 1960) The story of Yusuf and Zuleikha (Zelikha) is one of the most favorite in the literature of Islamic (and not only) nations. It is present in the Koran, where a separate sura (No. 12,

“Yusuf”) is dedicated to this story. The love story of Yusuf and Zuleikha is characterized here as “the most beautiful of stories” – “ahsen-ul-qasas”. The reason for this was the personality of the main character - the prophet Yusuf, who according to religious legends is considered to be the most beautiful human creature: Allah bestowed 99 out of 100 parts of his divine beauty on Yusuf, and distributed only one part among the rest of mankind. Of course, it is not only about external beauty - Yusuf is also the possessor of inner beauty, i.e. a set of high moral qualities that made him a model for all Muslim believers. Again, according to legend, Yusuf, guided by Allah, undergoes numerous trials and, each time demonstrating his qualities, becomes the ruler of Egypt. As for Zuleikha, having fallen in love with Yusuf in a dream as a young girl, she also overcomes many hardships but remains faithful to her lover despite them. In the end, after many decades, by Allah’s will, Yusuf and Zuleikha find each other and are happily married.

In Russian literary studies, Mahmud Kyrymly’s poem (translated by Khalil-oğlu Ali) was first touched by P. Falev in his article “Old Ottoman” translation of the “Crimean” poem”, published in 1925 in the journal “Notes of the College of Orientalists at the Asian Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences” (Falev, 1925). The scholar briefly presented the list of 908/1502-1503, stored in the Herzog Library of Gotha (Germany), with a significant Arabic fragment.

In 1960, the text of the poem (facsimile) was published in Istanbul by the famous Turkish literary scholar İ. H. Ertaylan. The publication was made on the basis of another list (1235/1819-1820) found in the private collection of the famous Turkish bibliophile Raif Yelkenji (Ertaylan, 1960).

The text is preceded by an article by İ. Ertaylan with the catchy title “The First Turkic Language Poem about ‘Yusuf and Zuleikha’ ”; the work contains 1406 quatrains written in seven-syllable verse. In recent years, additional folios of the poem have been discovered in Turkey, some textological work has been carried out, and hypotheses have been proposed regarding the authorship, language and other issues. However, the problem of dating the monument still remains.

Starting from the 13th century, the story of Yusuf and Zuleikha would be addressed quite often by very famous poets in the literatures of Turkic peoples. In total, about eighty poems will be written on this plot in Turkic languages. Including another Crimean author - the poet of the end of the fourteenth - beginning of the fifteenth century Abdulmejid Kyrymly. His poem in the form of mesnevi will be called “The Friend of Lovers” (“Munis-ul-ushshak”), an indication of it is present in Ibn Arabshah, who met with the Crimean poet in his homeland in 1412. Interestingly, Abdulmejid's poem was once recognized as the best on the relevant subject - this is how the famous Ottoman biobibliographer of the XVII century, Kâtip Chelebi, referred to it. The fate of the monument remains unknown. Speaking about Abdulmejid, we should add that in addition to information about the above poem, sources have also brought us one of his ghazals. It is present in a manuscript volume containing the text of a famous literary monument of the Golden Horde period - a Turkic translation of Saadi’s “Gulistan”, completed in 1392 in Egypt by the outstanding Golden Horde poet Seif Sarayi. The manuscript is currently in the library of Leiden University (Kingdom of the Netherlands) (Seyf-i Sarayi, 1989). After the text of “Gulistan” directly, it contains separate poems of some Golden Horde poets, with imitations of nazire Seif Sarai on each of them. One of such poems is the ghazal of Abdulmejid Kyrymly. As for the “Kalender-name” by Ebu-Bekr Kalender, it has not yet become a discovery in the world science due to the geography of the writing of this, no doubt, a very significant monument, and it was written, according to the author himself, in the Crimea (apparently, in Kyrym) in the period of 1320-1340s. Although at the time of its discovery, in 1966 in Namangan, the manuscript was characterized by the staff of the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan Beruni in Tashkent as “priceless” and “unique” (Kalandar, 2014; Mirgaleyev, 2014).

Preliminary research has shown that the author, Ebu-Bekr Kalender (variant name given in the work: Pir Kalender Rumi al-Aqsarayi), was apparently of Anatolian origin, a native of Aksaray (near Konya), but spent his life and probably reposed in Crimea, which may be indirectly indicated by the absence of references to him in the currently known biobibliographical directories. The work was written, according to the author himself, in the form of a response to the famous six-volume collection of Sufi parables and individual poems of the outstanding spiritual master and brilliant poet Jelaleddin Rumi (Mevlana, 1207-1273) – “Mesnevi-i Manavi”. The text also reveals that the author considered Rumi his spiritual mentor and was also acquainted with his son, the Sufi mentor and poet Sultan Veled.

The director of the Manuscripts Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, PhD in historical sciences Mahmud Khasanov (Khasaiy) translated the

chapters of this book and also compiled a list of personal names found in it. Here are the names of some of the chapters: “Soul”, “Love”, “Reason”, “Peace”, “Man and Humanity”, “Patience”, “Great-heartedness”, “On the Word”, “Conversation and Interlocutor”, “Instructions to the People”, “Scholars who adhere to their knowledge”, “Scholars who do not adhere to their knowledge”, “Respect for Quran reciters and scholars”, “What is Justice and Beneficence”, “The Dignity of a Virtuous Man”, “The Greatness of the Human Mind”, “Conscience is the Basis of Shame”, “What is Nobility and Who are Noble People”, “On Self-Dignity”, “On Modesty”, “On Dignity”, “On Fidelity”, etc., and others. Researcher draws attention to the bias towards ethical issues, which is a good illustration for one of the titles of Sufism as a “science of morality”. (Khamzin, 2007) As for personal names, it presents a long list of past and contemporary rulers, famous scholars, spiritual leaders and saints (including Crimeans): Sultan Muhammad Uzbek Khan, Sultan Mahmud Janibek Khan, Emir Tulek-Temur, Sheikh Hasan Basri, Fakhriddin Attar, Mansur Hallaj, Sheikh Shibli, Mevlana Jelaleddin Rumi, Sultan Veled, Sheikh Saltuk, Haji Muhammad Kyrymy, etc.

The development of poetic art in the Crimea during the period of the Golden Horde can also be evidenced by the data of Crimean epigraphy, namely the samples of poetic epitaphs on the above-mentioned grave monuments of the XIII-XV centuries preserved in the city of Old Crimea (Akchokrakly, 1929). Moreover, we are talking about poetic fragments performed in the local, using the terminology of Khalil-oglu Ali (see above), “Crimean” or “Desht” language.

Another interesting evidence of lively literary processes on the peninsula can be seen in a curious episode that took place in 1427 in diplomatic relations between Crimea and Cairo. In the well-known chronicle of al-Ayni, in part of the description of the reign of Sultai al-Ashraf Sayf ad-Din Barsbey (1422-1438), there is the following fragment: “In the month of Jumadi el-Evwel of 830 (March 1427) a letter arrived from the possessor Crimea, a person named Dauletbirdi, consisting of beautiful phrases that contained couplets and (more) long poems and sayings, overflowing with various rhetorical ideas, phrases and decorations. It was read to the Sultan and (your) humble servant was present at the meeting. But neither the reader nor anyone else understood the subtleties contained in it (in the letter)” (Tizengauzen, 1884).

This example may indicate the unambiguous presence in Crimea of what can be called court literature. Indeed, taking into account the many examples of attention to the art of speech on the part of representatives of the ruling circles and aristocracy of palace, Khorezm and other Golden Horde centers (this can be judged, among other things, by a number of works of Golden Horde literature dedicated to various high-ranking persons), it is difficult imagine the lack of the same interest in poetry at the court of the Crimean ulus bey, as well as representatives of the Crimean aristocracy and the learned class. By the way, the above-mentioned “person who took possession of Crimea” was Devlet-Berdi - the uncle of the founder of the Crimean Khanate by Hadji Geray, the brother of his father Giyaseddin. The poetic successes of the Gerays themselves will be quite eloquent: currently, the corresponding passions, moreover, often unambiguous poetic talents of about thirty representatives of the dynasty are known.

CONCLUSION

The entry of Crimea into the Golden Horde, with the parallel spread of Islam on the peninsula, led to extremely beneficial consequences for the cultural development of the region. The Crimean Ulus has turned into a region in which science is developing (both religious and, relatively speaking, secular disciplines - with the appearance of the first famous Crimean scientists), a network of educational institutions is being formed, and conditions are being created for the creation of significant literary memorials. In terms of its scale, this activity was unprecedented in the foreseeable past of the peninsula (and should be assessed accordingly by specialists and lovers of the history of Crimea). In a broader context, Crimea, having raised a galaxy of spiritual mentors, scientists and poets who were involved in the creation of significant works of Muslim scientific thought, theology, mysticism and literature, made a significant contribution to the scientific, educational and literary treasury of not only the culture of the Golden Horde, but also the entire Muslim culture as a whole.

Authorship Contribution

This study was conducted with a single author.

Ethics Committee Statement

Ethics committee approval is not required for this research.

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