

Epic <Kyrk kyz> and <Baridegi>

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This paper aims to compare epics of Karakalpak <Kyrk kyz> and Korean <Baridegi>. The Karakalpakstan is an autonomous republic in Uzbekistan. The Karakalpak nation belongs to the Turkic group of languages and uses the Karakapak. According to the statistics administered by the Soviet Union in 1979, the population of Karakalpak totaled 281,800 and out of them, 21,000 live in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. The Karakalpakstan locates in the lower reaches of the river Amudariya. The total area of its territory is 164.9 square kilometers. The capital city is Nukus.¹

The origin of Karakalpak nation seems to be originated from Sako-Masagets having lived on the southern coast of the sea Aral in 7-11 century BC. Later, when Western Turkic Khanates were formed and occupied the coastal areas of the sea Aral, tribes such as Huns, Hionits etc. frequently came into this area. In 8-11 century people called Oguz as a common name for their tribal ancestor. The Oguz, at the beginning of their history, had relations with Pechenec Khanates of the eastern region. The Pechenec and part of Oguz people have lived nearby Kiev Rus' and people called them 'black klobuk. We consider the multiracial tribe formed by them to be the ancestor of Karakalpak nation of medieval.²

Turkic people in Central Asian share each other their tradition and culture. The oral epic is not an exception. Therefore each nation has oral epics on the same hero, but the content is slightly different each other. From this point of view, oral epics of Turkic people in Central Asian are to be considered as a common literary heritage of Turkic people.

The oral epic of Karakalpak nation divides into heroic, romantic and societal epics. Among these, the heroic epic occupies a particular position. This is because that the content of heroic epic is mainly of orally transmitted activities of hero, who save and protect their nation suffering hardship by foreign invasions. For Karakalpak who had no writing system, the oral tradition of heroic epics was the unique method of transmitting their history to the future generations.

All national epics of Central Asia including those of Karakalpak people play a role of encyclopedia, which describes in detail the tradition and culture as well as social situation of each nation of that time through the activities of hero. The oral heroic epics of Turkic nations in Central Asia are therefore the best in diversity of content as well as in length.

The <Kyrk kyz> (40 ladies) is a unique epic, which other Turkic nations in Central Asia do not share. The protagonist of <Kyrk kyz> is the princess Gulaim. In this paper, we aims to compare the <Kyrk kyz> and Korean shamanistic oral epic <Baridegi> (Abandoned princess) to investigate the similarities and differences. It is possible to compare these two epics in various fields such as structure, process of transmission, changing aspect etc. Nevertheless we limit here to compare the image of heroines of these two epics.

The content of <Kyrk kyz> is as following. The Karakalpak king, Sarkop has six sons and one daughter Gulaim. The king presented to his daughter an island named Miuyelli having a symbolic meaning of 'bearing fruit'. Gulaim builds a fortress and decorated it with flowers. She lives there with her 40-lady friends. In this island, together with her friends, she learnt how to fight against foreign invasion and prepare to protect her mother country. At no very distant day, she had a chance to display her hidden talent improved all the while. During the absence of these ladies, the Kalmyk king Surtaiasha started a war against Sarkop. The Kalmyk king occupies cities, killed Gulaim's father, and

¹ Phil KIM, <Origin and Folklore of Karakalpak nation>, *Proceedings of the 9th Seoul International Altaistic Conference*, The Altaic Society of Korea, pp. 219-229.

² Tolstov S.P., *Po drevnim del'tam Oksa i Yaksarta*. Moskva, 1962, p. 273.

captured Karakalpak people. The 40 ladies under the commandship of Gulaim pursued Surtaiasha's army and revenged their parents, relatives and nation. Gulaim won the war. A warrior of Khoesem, Aryslan participated in the war together with these ladies. Taking this opportunity, Gulaim and Aryslan loved each other. Afterwards, Gulaim and Aryslan left for Khoesem under Nadirshakha's rule in order to set the territory on their feet. They won the battle there against Nadirshakha. Thanks to Gulaim, Khoesem restored peaceful and happy life.

Taking the historical circumstances into consideration, the <Kyrk kyz> is supposed to be a medieval epic created in 17-18 century by the time of the Dzhunggarian Khanates, while the <Baridegi> is rather an epic which keeps ancient aspects of oral tradition. At a glance, the period of creation of these two epics seems to be completely different. However, we can't overlook the tradition and particularity of ancient epics reflected in the <Kyrk kyz>. As we are not able to fulfill this task in this paper, we will cover this subject in another study.

The Karakalpak people are descendants of Turkic tribe. Historically, the Turkic people had relations with Korean people since long time, and the two nations have similarities in common in their tradition and language. Thus, there is possibility that their oral epics had a certain relation and influenced each other. Bearing these aspects in mind, we investigate the similarities and differences in the image of heroines of <Kyrk kyz> and <Baridegi>.

Regarding social status of heroines, both are of royal birth. However, there is a critical difference that the heroine of <Kyrk kyz> Gulaim is a unique daughter grown up in prosperous circumstances and being loved by her father king, while Baridegi, the heroine of the <Baridegi> being born as the seventh daughter is abandoned by her father king and is brought up in a difficult situation facing with life-threatening crisis.

It is similar that activities of heroines in both epics are very devotional and heroic. However, the purpose of their activities is completely different. The protagonist of <Kyrk kyz> is a patriotic and intrepid heroine, who fights for the independence of her nation and for protecting the territory of her nation against foreign invasion, while the main character of <Baridegi> is a heroine of perseverance and of filial piety, who overcomes various ordeals to obtain medication to save her ailing father who abandoned her to die.

In general, females in oral epics of Turkic tribes in Central Asia are described as an image of wise and obedient helper to the hero. However, the image of female in <Kyrk kyz> shows completely different aspect. The female protagonist of the <Kyrk kyz>, Gulaim is illustrated as a wise and brave warrior equal to male protagonists in the heroic oral epics of Turkic tribes such as <Manas>, <Koblandy batyr>, <Alpamysh> etc. Moreover, it is unusual that a male named Aryslan appears as assistant to a female protagonist Gulaim. Per contra, the protagonist of the <Baridegi> is in adversity due to male characters and experiences many hardships to surmount it.

The image difference of heroine in <Kyrk kyz> and <Baridegi> could be explained as a phenomenon occurred by a different demand of female image needed for the nation or society by the time of its creation, or by a different criteria for female virtue according to the religion and tradition of a specific time in the changing process of oral epic. Contrary to the content of <Baridegi> orally transmitted so far, the image of heroine Baridegi might be changed into another image having her revenge on her father king or usurping the throne.

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