

Mythology and Turkic Literature of the Middle Ages

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ABSTRACT

Inhabiting Europe, North Africa and some parts of Asia are a collection of ethnic groups known collectively as the Turkic peoples. According to research, the earliest Turks are descendants of agricultural communities in Northeast China. The article presents myths, legends and beliefs of ancient Turkic people.

KEYWORDS: *language shift, deities, God, lifestyle, culture, epics.*

At the end of the 3rd millennium BC, these communities moved to Mongolia and adopted a pastoral lifestyle. By the 1st millennium BC, the groups had become equestrian nomads. In the centuries that followed, numerous ethnically diverse groups became part of the Turkic people as a result of conquest, language shift, religious conversion, adoption and intermingling. Some Turkic peoples have common cultural traits, historical experience and origin from a common gene pool. Today, the most prominent Turkic-speaking ethnic groups include Turks, Uyghur people, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Turkmen, and Azerbaijanis.

Mythology of the Turks. The group's beliefs in Tengrism, Animism, and Shamanism, as well as various other social and cultural ideas that emerged from their nomadic existence, influenced major portions of Turkic mythology. Many tales were later enhanced to some measure due to the impact of Islamic symbolism, particularly after the Turks were resettled. Turkic and Mongol mythologies have a much in common, and it's thought that they came together when nationalist mythology was mixed with Tibetan Buddhism. Turkic mythology was also affected by other local mythologies.

All of the major religions of the time, including Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, and Manichaeism, were practiced by the early Turks. The vast majority of them converted to Islam. These faiths' elements have always been linked to their prevailing mythical ideas.

Deities in Turkic mythology

Deities, as personified creative and controlling energies, are always prominent in Turkic mythology. Unlike Greek or Roman polytheism, Turkic belief does not have a pantheon of gods. Many of the deities are seen to be more like spirits or angels who roam between humans and their spirit realm settlements in current Western use. Turkic peoples believed in Iya, or guardian spirits, who were believed to control various natural elements. Geniens (or genies) and devils are two other beings (Abasi).

Tengri. The Creator God (yüce or yaratic tengri) is the first of the early Turkic peoples' basic deities, Kyok Tengri. Monotheistic religions affected Turks when they began to travel and depart Central Asia. Tengrism, a pagan or polytheistic religion, resembled Zoroastrianism following its transformation. Only Tengri (a benevolent god) and Erlik (a bad god) remained from the countless original gods (an evil god of the underworld). Uchmag resembled paradise or Valhalla in appearance.) Tengri has complete influence over everyone's fate and acts without restraint. People's

well-being is determined by his will. Because he rewards and punishes, he is just. Tengri's physical characteristics are unknown.

Tengri is the first and most important god in Turkic mythology, but they also revere a variety of other gods.

Tengri's daughter is Umai. She is the fertility goddess and the goddess of virginity. Her name symbolizes her ability: the Türkic root "umai" originally meant "placenta, afterbirth" in the Türkic language. Umai looks like earth goddesses or mother goddesses from various religions. Tengri has three sons, all of whom are gods. Od Tengri is the time's ruler or god. Boz Tengri is the deity of the steppes and regions, and is a lesser-known son of Tengri. Kaira, Tengri's third son, is the Spirit of God. He is the founder of the gods of the highest air, sky, space, light, and atmosphere.

Kaira has three sons. Ülgen is the Goodness God. In Altai and Turkic mythology, he is in charge of all arugs (ari), or benevolent spirits. They perform wonderful actions on this planet. Mergen, Yulgen's brother, is the god of logic and reason. It is assumed that he knows everything and can afford it because he sits on the seventh floor of the sky. Mergen's brother, Kizagan, a god of war, resides two stories above him in the sky. He is depicted as a youthful man who rides a red horse and wields a spear. Other gods include Ak Ana, or White Mother, the Turkic peoples' original creator goddess.

Symbols in Turkic mythology

Much of their mythology is influenced by the Turkic nomadic lifestyle, culture, and other global faiths. The following are a few of them.

In Turkic mythology, the horse is one of the most important characters. Horses are incredibly significant to them; they regard the horse as a man's extension (usually attributed to the man). With his horse, a guy is considered whole. This may explain why the Turkic people were known as at-bey, or "lord of horses."

Evren (or Ebren) is also represented as a lizard or a serpent. It is a symbol of authority and power. The Turkic peoples, particularly those who reside in Central Asia's mountainous region, believe that dragons live in the Tengri Taga and Altai mountains. Dragons were worshipped as gods in ancient Turkic tradition, but they were not revered as gods themselves.

Turkic mythology revolves around the World Tree, often known as the Tree of Life. The White Mother, according to the Altai Turks, sits at the foot of the Tree of Life, and the Yakuts think that people are descended from trees. Various supernatural beings feel at home among the tree's branches, which extend to the heavens. The serene atmosphere of the country is reflected in the blue sky that surrounds the tree. All of the elements are surrounded by a crimson ring, which signifies Turkic beliefs in rebirth, development, and growth.

The deer was seen to be an intermediary between the earth (humans) and the spiritual kingdom by the animal Turkic peoples (gods). As a result, deer sacrifice is an integral part of funeral ceremonies. The soul of a deer is thought to be a psychopomp (guide of souls to the place of the dead). To the underworld, or tamag, the deceased's soul is accompanied by the spirit of a deer. The deer motif first arose in Turkic mythology in the 13th century. The century-old legend of Khoy's Sufi mystic Geyiklu Baba (meaning "father of a deer"). In the final years of his life, he retired to the Bursa mountain forests and lived as an ascetic. Various accounts recount different stories about Geyiklu Bab, one of which claims that he rode reindeer and explored the wild with herds of reindeer clad in skins.

Legends of Turkic Mythology: The Legend of the Gray Wolf.

The mythological wolf gave birth to ten sons in Turkic mythology, one of them was named Asen. The wolf is a sign of dignity, and most Turks regard it as their mother.

The child was said to be the only survivor of the raid on his community. The she-wolf locates and heals the injured boy. Later, he impregnates a wolf, which flees foes by crossing the Western Sea and seeking safety in a cave near the Kocho Mountains. She gives birth to ten half-wolf, half-human children. One of their descendants, Asen, becomes their king and establishes the Asen clan, which ruled over the Turkic nomadic empires. The first Turks arrived in the Altai Territory later.

Legend of Ergenekon.

The mythology of Ergenekon tells of a great catastrophe during the ancient Turks' reign. The Turks retreated to the fabled Ergenekon Valley after military defeat, where they remained besieged for four centuries. Finally, the blacksmith assisted them in escaping by melting the mountain and opening a way. The Turks were brought out by Asen. During the New Year, a ceremony commemorates the Turks' epic escape from Ergenekon.

Mythology of the Siberian Turks.

The Turkic peoples of Siberia are the ones who have the most vibrant and colorful mythology. They continue to revere the mystical spirits of Tengrism and believe in their legends to this day. Dolgans living in the Arctic region of far northern Siberia, for example, came upon mammoth carcasses during their nomadic journeys. On Earth, these species haven't melted in almost 10,000 years. The mammoths were taken to the underworld by Erlik, the lord of the underworld, according to the Dolgans, so that they could serve him. These mammoths have always been locked in the underworld, and those who attempted to return to the surface were frozen to death and buried as punishment. The bodies of the mammoths they have encountered from time to time will be half buried and half thrown away.

The Yakuts and other Siberian Turks believe in the existence of both good and evil spirits who manage the Turks' advantages. Prayers and sacrifices are offered to keep the spirits pleased.

Buddhist Turkic mythology.

The Turks acquired Buddhism in the 9th century and built the first major Turkic culture around it. Thousands of Buddhist scriptures have been translated into Turkic by Uyghur monks from Sanskrit and Chinese. Many foreign legends were translated into Turkic and old Turkic epics, and history was written down at that period. The city of Khotan had the largest library at the time, but it was regrettably destroyed during a Kyrgyz attack (ethnic groups regularly fought and raided each other). Only a few pages of history and Turkic epics remain, but they demonstrate how detailed and extensive the volumes were before they were destroyed. Among the remaining pages are legends describing material life as evil.

Buddha reborn in other forms, such as a gazelle, according to some Turkic mythologies. One of the legends describes how the emperor and his people hunted and slaughtered hundreds of gazelles. The golden gazelle, the leader of the gazelles, punishes the people following warnings to the ruler to mend himself.

The impact of Turkic mythology on European culture.

The ancient Turks' migration to Europe resulted in the incorporation of their mythology into numerous European cultures. Many fairy tales and epics feature Huns and Proto-Bulgarians, sometimes known as Turkic Bulgarians. The legend of Asparuh, which the Turkic Bulgarians

introduced to the Balkans, is taught in schools. Plays that carry out the fairy tale of Asparuh, in which children play the roles of characters, are presented during the spring celebration known as "Mother March."

Asparukh Khan built the first Bulgarian state and wished to dedicate it to Tengri, the deity of creation, according to legend. However, he had to perform a religious ceremony involving the burning of dill (herb). Because dill is nearly impossible to come by, Asparukh's sister from the Volga's banks brought him a handful. She accomplished this by tying him to the hawk's legs and dispatching Asparuh. The hawk is still revered by the Turks as an important animal in their mythology. Hun Attila is also a main figure in some epics.

Other epics of Turkic mythology

Some of the other epics of Turkic mythology include:

- **Manas Epic:** The epic narrates the story of Manas and his descendants, who achieve great victories against their foes. There are three books in the epic. The first narrates Manas' story, while the second and third tell the stories of Semetei (Manas' son) and Setek (grandson).
- **Battal Gazi:** A Muslim holy figure, Sayyid Battal Gazi was an Anatolian warrior. Battal Gazi's epic is based on the real ruler and accomplishments of Abdullah al-Battal, the ruler of the Umayyad commander in the 8th century. Legends play a vital role in Turkish folklore.
- **The Koroglu Epic:** The Koroglu Epic is a heroic tale that has a significant position in the oral folklore of Turkic peoples, particularly the Oguzes. The legend of a hero who seeks out and punishes wrongdoers. The story is frequently adapted to music and performed at athletic events to motivate competitors. Koroglu is the epic's protagonist, the one who opposes unjust rulers and accomplishes great exploits. Many Turks regard him as a Robin Hood figure. The epic about Koroglu became immensely popular due to the migration of Oghuz Turks and their assimilation with other ethnic groups.
- **Danishmend Gazi** was a Turkmen general who subsequently became the founder of the Dannishmend. The Tale of Danishmend is a 13th-century Turkish epic novel about Danishmend Gazi's life, as well as the exploits of Seyyid Battal Gazi and Abu Muslim, a Persian hero.

Conclusion

The Turkic peoples' daily lives are heavily influenced by mythology and its figures. Every ethnic group, no matter how small, has mythology and stories about their ancestors and beginnings. There isn't always a clear distinction between community religion and mythological ideas. Turkic mythology continues to have a fascinating and essential influence on other civilizations today.

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