

ANALYSIS OF THE DRAGON KILLING SCENE IN THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE PEOPLES OF EURASIA

АНАЛИЗ СЮЖЕТОВ УБИЙСТВА ДРАКОНА В МИФОЛОГИИ НАРОДОВ ЕВРАЗИИ

AVRASYA HALKLARI MİTOLOJİLERİNDE EJDERHANIN ÖLDÜRÜLME SAHNESİNİN ANALİZİ

Erdoğan ALTINKAYNAK*

ABSTRACT

In Turkish mythology, a dragon exists in the underworld. In tales, where the legendary bird “zümrüdüanka” or “Symurg” is held, the hero descends to the underworld, where a dragon locks the waters and devours people submitted to it in return for water, manages to kill this dragon and rescues the daughter of the king from death. Symbolically, there seems to be a close relationship between the locking of the water, the dragon and seasons.

Oghuz Khan or St Giorgi kills the dragon that always terrorizes people.

Is the dragon a real beast or does it symbolize a disaster the society has to deal with? Or is it a symbol of the power to get rid of slavery? Or is it related to the renewal of nature? In this study, these issues will be dealt with and some analyses will be made.

Key Words: dragon, death, enemy, mythology, life, water

АННОТАЦИЯ

Дракон, живущий в преисподне, отражён и в турецкой мифологии. Мифологическая птица ”феникс” или ”жар-птица” вместе с героем спускаются под землёй. Герой убивает дракона, которому приносят в жертву людей, и освобождает принцессу от неминуемой смерти. Предполагается, что имеется связь между временами года и околдованием драконом воды.

Огуз Каган и Святой Георгий также убивают беспокоящего людей дракона.

Является ли действительно драконом существо, указанное в сказках или это символ всего негативного, беспокоящего общество? Или же он воспринимается как освободитель пленников? Может быть он связан с возрождением или расцветом природы и жизни?

* Doç. Dr.: Ardahan Üniversitesi, İnsani Bilimler ve Edebiyat Fakültesi, THB. Öğretim Üyesi.

В статье рассматриваются подробности вышеуказанной темы.

Ключевые слова: дракон, смерть, враг, мифология, жизнь, вода.

ÖZET

Türk mitolojisinde var olduğu tasavvur edilen yer altı dünyasında da bir ejderha vardır. Efsanevi kuş “Zümrüdüanka” ve ya “Simurg” geçen masallarda kahramanın yer altına inerek suyu hapseden ve su karşılığında kendisine sunulan insanları yiyen bu ejderhayı kahraman öldürür ve kralın kızını ölümden kurtarır. Ejderha ile suyun hapsedilişi veya mevsimler ile de bir ilişki de düşünülebilir.

Oğuz Kağan veya Aziz Giorgi de toplumun başına musallat olan ejderhayı öldürür.

Anlatımlarda geçen ejderha gerçekten ejderha mı, yoksa toplumun başına musallat olan bir bela mı? Veya bunların dışında bir esaretten kurtuluşun simgesi mi? Veya hayatın ve tabiatın yeniden şenlenmesi, canlanması ile mi ilgilidir? Tebliğimizde bu konu ele alınacak ve değerlendirmelerde bulunacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: ejderha, ölüm, düşman, mitoloji, hayat, su.

In Turkish Folk Literature tale, legend texts based on narrative techniques, there is a section where motifs such as descent to the underworld, recovering water for people by killing a dragon living there, freeing the offspring of a big bird residing in the underworld and ascending to the earth with the help of this bird are narrated. This episode is almost the same in legends or tales of Anatolia, Gagauz, Khazak, Kyrgis, Cyprus, Romania, Tatar, Bulgaria, Yakutsk, or Altai. There are also texts dealing with the underworld among Khaskai Turks in İnan (Aras, 2001; (AB: 186, 187, 207, 208,1758, 1759).

Apart from tales and legends, in the religious story named ‘The Head Cut’, Ex. Ali descends to the underworld, kills the giant that terrorizes the Muslims and ascends to the earth with the help of İsmi Azam (the Great Name) prayer (Ocak, 1989:13-15). An analogy can be drawn between the symbolic value of the events narrated in this story and those in Old Greek, Hindu, Japanese, Arabic, Indian, Armenian or Georgian mythologic stories and the legend of Daughter of Shan (Baştu, 1991: 26-28, 78-79).

In Turkey, Tahir Alangu, (1990:118-157), Ali Berat Alptekin (1982), Umay Günay (1975:326-334, 501-508), Esma Şimşek (2001:52-59.) and Pertev Naili Boratav (1992:87-92) have published the collected and published texts containing descent to the underworld, the life in the underworld, the great bird, the blocking of the water by the dragon, all of which are presented in the narrative technique. This technique can be observed in tales told in İstanbul, İzmir, Çorum, Edremit/Balıkesir, Kırşehir, Eskişehir, Sivas, Çankırı, Kastamonu, Ankara, Gümüşhane, Bayburt, Erzurum, Tunceli, Kars, Gaziantep, Yozgat and Adana. Elazığ can also be added to this list (Boratav 274-275. 1968, s.75-86). Many tales and legends focusing on descent to the underworld have been published in tale catalogues, studies, compilations and theses.

In Egyptian legends, Apofi, which lives in heaven, goes around to the god Ra, and one day it bites and kills him. Scandinavian God, Votan frequently masquerades as a snake. Vseslavich, a hero of Slavic legends, is a son of a snake. Asklepios, who heals sick people,

and Agatbodaemon who protects houses and cities, are also snakes. Worshipping to snake was very common and seen in various societies in the first age. It was thought that snake that lives underground was in relation with the dead ancestors, and carried their souls. Snake symbolized mostly the underground and the ground. In Greek Mythology, those which were created from soil were all snake shaped.

For American aborigines, all the underground powers are snakes. Among today's primitive tribes, worshipping the snake is an ongoing practice.

In almost every belief in the world, souls, gods or lords of waters are dragons or snakes. Dragon is god of water in Chinese beliefs (Mackenzie, 56). In Turkish beliefs, "evren", the snake with horn, lives in wetland areas.

In Ancient Egypt, the snake was the soul of the river. Just like the Nile, Osiris was also a snake. So, its mother was also snake shaped (Mackenzie, 59). There are pileous (or horned) snake figures carved on stones, seen in the temples scattered along the Mississippi river. Similar snake figures were carved on animal and tree shells, and engraved on potteries. This snake, just like in the Mississippi region, can be seen in the main valley of Mexico. The Red Indian villagers from the area beginning from Rio Grande Valley, and stretching to the center of Arizona in the West, also worship a pileous snake (Marriot - Rachlin, 1995,74). In fact, the snake or dragon here is a young man from Cheyenne Tribe who was transformed into the soul of Mississippi because of his improper actions to the taboo (Marriot - Rachlin, 78). These snakes, i.e. gods of water, want sacrificial rituals and should be given gifts. After death of these snakes, waters come up and the life begins again, just like the blurred waters coming from the uncultivated lands in the spring months. We can say that there is a relation between blurring of these waters because of erosion, and death of the snake (Mackenzie, 55).

"Dragon wells" of the Chinese are usually included in a deep mountain cave. It is believed that this well is connected to the dragon for its source.... A famous Dragon Well is located on the top of Pien Mountain in Hu-Cheu. It flows from a cave, and its name is "Golden Well Spring". The cave is known as "Golden Well Cave" and it is believed to be too deep to reach its bottom.

There is one more Dragon Well near Jerusalem. Other Dragon Wells were found in Western regions such as Ireland, and Scotland. There is a devil at the deepest points of the cave named "Drop Cave". Anatolian Typhoon's cave is a similar one, too. According to the Greet Legends, one day, this hundred-headed monster, shedding light with its eyes, will send rivers made of hail, flood, and fire in order to devastate the farms in Sicily. The cause of the overflow of Rhone River is believed to be "drac". In Egypt, Set was transformed into a roaring snake which creeps into the soil, and lives there hiding itself. To be able to escape from Horus, an Egyptian "dragon killer", it had previously transformed into crocodile and hippopotamus forms. (Mackenzie, 56-57). In my childhood years, while there were no water supply networks, there used to be wells in our neighborhood, and all the water needs of the house were supplied by these wells. It was believed that there was a snake in each house's well. If the water diminishes, or runs out of water, the reason was believed to be that the snake migrated, or arrested water intentionally.

The king of Samoan Gods was a dragon. According to Brown, "This god had a body of a human above its chest, and the rest was a snake's body. The lower part of its body was in

the ocean, and the part from chest to head was laid at home. This was the god everything was bound to. The following gods were its servants (Mackenzie, 67).

In Tibet, snake and bird were combined and a horned human head was put on this "combined creature" (Mackenzie, 70). A question occupies our minds about the relation between water, tree, and snake; and the connection between the birds that build nests onto trees, and about whether that relationship represents a debate between bird and snake. Nagas in India were not only gods of water, but they were also souls of trees, just as Dr. Rhys Davids emphasizes. Behind worshipping the dragon, there are usually beliefs about the events such as "tree and well worshipping". In the Welsh tales, the divine tree is kept by a "creature" living in the divine well, and one form of this "creature" is salmon fish, and "thunder bird at tree" (Mackenzie, 72).

Dragon killer Sigurd in Icelandic tales eats the dragon's hearts, and begins to understand bird language. Siegfried from German literature does the same thing. Tyano's Apollonius gains wisdom through eating hearts of dragons (Mackenzie, 74).

The conflict between Bird Gods and Snake Gods is in one way related to their feeding and struggle for life. Even in the oldest texts, there are such conflicts. In India, Bird Gods (Garudas) are enemies of Snakes (Nagas) and in the ordinary reliefs, it was pictured that the eagle shaped Garudas carry the snake shaped Nagas. This eternal conflict between birds like eagle and snakes is one of the themes in Babel Mythology (Mackenzie, 68). In Polynesia, the eternal struggle between bird-gods and snake-gods were engraved on wooden carvings. In Egypt, in the middle of the winged disc which is adopted by the islanders, there is a bird keeping a fluttering snake in its mouth. Likewise, there are such bird and snake myths in the Middle America communities (Mackenzie, 69). Even in the Iliad, bird and snake tales are encountered. When Hector rushes forward to climb over the walls of Ancient Greeks, an eagle which carries a blood red and monster-like snake, appears on the air. The struggling snake manages to bite the eagle and after that the eagle drops the snake immediately (Mackenzie, 69). The only country in which the big bird hunts snakes is Africa. This bird mentioned is the famous secretary bird which is domesticated by Southern African farmers today to struggle against snakes (Mackenzie, 69-70).

In an alternative presentation of legend of Zu, the eagle is punished by a snake that hides itself in an ox's body. When the eagle comes to eat meat, it gets caught and killed by the snake. In the contention between birds and snakes, human always supported birds (Makas, 2000:170). This situation is the same for verbal texts. Snakes or reptile dragons which know the underground secrets have godlike powers like eagles or birds underground. "Dragon spit" has healing features, and the life quick in a god's body (Mackenzie:76).

In Turkish Mythology, we know snakes for their creation and wardership mission. On the other hand, name of one of the horoscopes in the Twelve Animal Turkish Calendar is Snake (Yıldırım, 1998: 145). In the creation legend of Altai Turks, God places snake and dog for wardership to other creatures not to eat the fruits from other than five branches of the Nine Branched tree. Because the snake falls asleep, and the fruits get damaged, it is punished by God. Since then, the snake should be killed by human wherever it is seen (Çınar, 1996: 160).

Other than these, there is one more legend named Şahmaran. Seyidoğlu's article about this is mentioned here (Seyidoğlu 1998: 86-92). However, the legend of Şahmaran and the watcher snake of tree of life of underground world are very different from each other. It

seems that there might be a parallelism between the snake's watching the tree of life and extinction of the huge bird of underground, and the snake which have a role in Adam and Eve's being expelled from the heaven. This reminds us of the question whether we can find any relation between the snake which waited the tree of life and ancient Turkish religion.

Indeed, what is mentioned here as God of water, is simply a dragon; and we encounter such an event in various belief systems, and mythologies. The tradition of sacrifice of a virgin for the Nile emerged in the ancient Egypt (Mackenzie:287). We know that in very old times, people were sacrificed for Japanese river, lake and pool dragon gods (Mackenzie: 294).

Inkas, used to sacrifice living humans to Virakosha, the god of rain (Hançerlioğlu, 1975: 676). The black skinned people living on Antil Islands used to sacrifice white skinned girls to Voodoo (Hançerlioğlu: 677).

Hakhor-Sekhet, in the Egyptian Mythologies, was made drunk to stop him from killing people, and for this reason, jars of red blood beer was poured. Susa-no-wo provides sake (rice beer) to intoxicate the dragon which comes regularly -apparently once a year- for the daughter of an earth god. When he killed it, River Hi became a river of blood (Mackenzie: 286,287). After Susa-no-wo is expelled from the Heaven, he meets the god of soil, Ashi-nadzu-chi (foot hitter) who is son of the god of Mountains. His virgin daughter Kush-inada-hime (Wonderful-rice-field-sun-virgin) is requested by a dragon. Susa-no-wo kills the eight tongued dragon in return for marrying Kush-inada-hime, and their marriage gives birth to Oho-toshi-no-komi (the great god of crops), Uka-no-mitama (Magnificent food soul), and Ohonamichi (Great name owner) god of Idzumoun who can turn to snake or human whenever he wants (Mackenzie: 305-306-307).

Danae's son Perseus saves Andromeda, the beautiful daughter of Kepheus, king of Abyssinian, and marries her (Can, 227).

Challenge of humans by snakes and the tales telling these challenges are included in the folkloric religion, too. By benefitting from negligence of snake, the watcher of heaven, Devil leads Adam and Eve to be expelled from heaven by eating the forbidden fruit. Reportedly, the snake was a creature with feet. Because of being a part of the Devil's plan, it is punished to crawl forever. There is a belief in Anatolia as "Who sees foots of snake, goes to the heaven" which is related with the snake which is left without legs and expelled from heaven. According to another tale, Devil enters heaven in the shape of a snake. There are a variety of beliefs about snakes. It is believed that if a snake is killed and thrown into a fire, or thrown in a fire alive, rain would fall. We observe that there are similar beliefs in Uzbeks and Kazaks who moved in Anatolia a short time ago (Çevik: 12).

Saint George, who has got an important place in Christian belief, was also pictured as holding a spear in his hand, and on a horse, and killing a dragon. In addition, this depiction is encountered as sculpture in Ukrain'sL'vov, Kiev, Russia's Moscow, Georgia's Tbilisi cities, and pictures as icons in the shops selling icons. This is a legend. In fact there was no such a struggle in the real life of Saint George. Saint Geofry's real struggle was saving the Christian belief against the tyrant governors. In this context, the snake represents the Emperor Diokletioane.

Oghuz Khan, the ancestors of Oghuz tribes, kills a snake which pesters the public and damages the horse herds; and he is given the title "Khan" by the public. We assume that he

does not beat the dragon or monster here, but he beats a taboo, and confronts us with the rule "who touches the taboo, becomes a taboo" as an ideal type.

CONCLUSION

Unexplainable means unknown. Humans animate events, entities, behaviors in mind via similes (similitude, metaphor, hyperbole). Fables and myths seem like different versions of these tales. After getting out from its spring, water flows meandering. There is a relationship between snake shapes and water's meandering. Another likeness can be expressed for their movement. Such a relationship can be established between dragon's blood and color of the water in the effervescent time of spring. We think this should be seen as the reason of tales about the snake arresting water.

In verbal based genres, heroes are not accepted as hero without achieving a supernatural job. In the same time, the heroes demolish a taboo and replace it with themselves, and extraordinarily become a hero. Dragon can be seen as the taboo here.

Underground is about death and rebirth. In the verbal texts, it is seen that the people who travel between-worlds, are not simple personalities. These people, who have got divine powers, can resist in difficult conditions, can fight with frightening creatures and beat them. These people's entrance to the underground should be interpreted as their ascension. The ones who get to the underground, in the same time, beat the tyrant-scary evils in the fight of good and evil.

There are evils, representatives of evilness, and innocent ones underground. Indeed, the conflict of evil and good underground is about the god's empery rights. The ones who beat the evils underground are the ones who are given a divine power, and those holding that power. It can be said that their switch to underground is directly about their maturation, and absoluteness. Intricateness of the underground world and beliefs about underground are related with the switch to settled life and agriculture. In nomadic and forager societies, rather than underground, the beliefs about heaven and sky have stronger influence; these beliefs as well as the people are more sophisticated. After passing to settled life, changes occur in underground, and their belief system about underground. Both views are acceptable.

This switch to underground and beating the evil creature can also be interpreted as an overcome of a big danger which the society encounter, salvation, or destroying the enemy. These struggles end up with the victory of the good one.

There is a relation about food chain between birds and snakes. However, in the conflict between them, storks are never mentioned.

Exaggeration of waters implies the coming of spring, or re-animation of the life. There is a relationship between blurriness of waters in the effervescent times of spring, and killing of the dragon; and this relationship is in connection with the blood of dragon. Based on this start point, sacrificing of humans (especially virgins) can be observed in various societies. However, this tradition has come to an end in some way. (Human sacrifices are not observed among Turks). About the ending up the tradition of sacrificing a virgin for dragon or the god of waters, it can be said that memories of this event took place in verbal genres. The term "virgin" here can refer to a higher sentimental value such as public, mother, country, idol or taboo.

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