

SOME SIMILAR AND PARALLEL POINTS BETWEEN THE TURKIC LEGENDARY “CREATION” AND SIMILAR TEXTS OF JAPAN

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Introduction

The first information about Japan in Turkish sources was seen in *Diwan Lugat at-Turk* which was written in 11th century. This dictionary is an encyclopedic dictionary. Kashgarli Mahmud, who is the author of *Diwan Lugat at-Turk*, denoted Japan as an island that takes part in the east and pointed that the sea prevents to learn Japanese language (Atalay I 1939: 29). According to Italian voyager Marco Polo’s (1254-1324) remarks, the principal homeland of Japanese who thought they were the superior race is Middle Asia. According to Polo, there was a relationship between Japanese and Turks in their old homeland. In addition to this, according to Altaic Languages Theory, Japanese and Turkish are related languages (Ramstedt 1951, Räsänen 1949, Räsänen 1957, Poppe 1960, Poppe 1965, Menges 1975).

As a result of examination of the texts, it is seen that mythological elements in

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the epic texts of Turkish and Japanese have some similarities. In this paper, Japanese mythology and Turkish epics will be handled in terms of creation and tried to ascertain common traits between Turkish epic texts and similar texts of Japanese.

1. Sources

There are a lot of records about creation in Turkish resources. The first of these records is *Bilge Kaghan's* expression in *Kul Tigin* Inscription. According to these expression, blue sky and black land were created firstly and then mankind was created in between blue sky and black land (Tekin 1988: 8-9). The second of these records appeared in *Dureru't-Tican ve Kenzu'd-Durer*. This text was written by the famous Egyptian historian Aybek Devâdârî ođlu Abdullah ođlu Ebûbekir. In this text, it is mentioned that there was a book named as *Ulu Han Ata Bitigçi* and there were some records about the creation of man and woman in this book (Ercilasun 2003: 37-40).

Apart from all these, there were some records about creation in *Oghuz Kaghan* epos (13th-15th centuries), migration epic of Uighurs and the legend of creation belonging to Altai Turks compiled by Verbitski in 19th century, legend of creation belonging to Altai Turks compiled by Radloff in 19th century (Verbitski 1903: 102-103, Radloff 1866: 159-166).

As for the sources of Japanese mythology, it is seen that the old Japanese myths were located in two literary works basically. The first of these is *Kojiki* (the records of old events) which was presented to the court in 712. The other is *Nihongi* or *Nihonshoki* (the diaries of Japanese) which was completed in 720. Besides, it can be found some records in *Fudoki*. In *Kojiki*, the events until 5th century were described. In *Nihongi*, the events until 697 were described (Naumann 2005: 14). The basic trend of these two works is same: Having a dynasty based on divine foundation and constitute a unique dynasty which will continue for eon (Naumann 2005: 21).

1. The Creation of Universe and Mankind

When Turkish epic is generally examined, there is a vast water or ocean before the creation of the earth, the heaven and the other things. In the other words, there is a great gap before the creation. The God decides to create the heavens and the earth to fill this gap. This creation is seen in different ways. In *Kul Tigin* inscription, it is mentioned that the heaven and the earth are created at first, human beings are created between the two (Tekin 1988: 8-9). There is a vast ocean in the legend of creation belonging to Altai Turks compiled by Verbitski in 19th century, too. *Ulgen* (the God) can not find to settle a solid place on the sea and want to create the world. *Ulgen* (the God) sees a piece of land floating on the water, there is a piece of land similar to human body on this land. *Ulgen* gives an order to return a piece of land to human being. Thus, human being was created (Verbitski 1903: 102-103, İnan 1972: 19-21).

In another epic, there is a creator named as *Kayra Khan*. There is only water in the face of *Kayra Khan*. *Kayra Khan* creates human being. This human being begins to fly over the water. Then, *Kayra Khan* removes a star from the bottom of water and he tells human being to take a handful of soil from this star and wants to sprinkle on the water. Human being do it, but he also takes a handful of soil for their own. He keeps the soil in his mouth. When the soil is sprinkled on the water, the soil turns into an island and

the land is created. On the other hand, the soil in human being's mouth begin to grow and does not fit into his mouth. *Kayra Khan* notices this and says "spit" to human being. When human being spits the soil in his mouth, mountains are created and then the other things are created (Radloff 1956: 6-7).

The other creation myths are generally based on this main framework. Only names and creation shapes can be changed.

When it is looked at the Japanese myths, creation is generally expressed as followed:

"In the beginning, the heaven and the earth were not divided. Then, from the ocean of chaos, a reed arose, and that was the eternal land ruler, *Kunitokotatchi*. Then came the female God, *Izanami no mikoto*, and the male, *Izagani no mikoto*. These wanted to create the world and to animate it. They stood on the floating bridge of the heaven and stirred the ocean with a jewelled spear until it curdled, and so created the first island, *Onogoro*. They built a house on this island, with a central stone pillar that is the backbone of the world. *Izanami no mikoto* walked one way around the pillar, and *Izagani no mikoto* walked the other. When they met face to face, they united in marriage. Their first child was named *Hiroko*, but he did not thrive, so when he was three, they placed him in a reed boat and set him adrift, he became *Ebisu*, God of fishermen. Then, *Izanami no mikoto* gave birth to the eight islands of Japan. And finally, *Izanami* began to give birth to the Gods who would fashion and rule the world, the Gods of the sea and the Gods of the land, the Gods of wind and rain. But when *Izanami no mikoto* gave birth to the God of fire, she was badly burned and died" (Mackenzie 1996: 286-294).

As it is seen that water is an important element in both Japanese mythology and Turkish epics. There was water in both mythologies before. This water appeared as a vast ocean. There was a vast ocean before the creation of the heaven and the earth.

"Great White Creator *Urung-ayig-Toyon* stands up the highest point of the great sea..." (Soroşevskiy 1896: 653, Ögel 1993: 448).

"Previously, there was only water, the earth, the heaven, the moon and the sun were not" (Radloff 1896: 159-166).

"Before the creation of the earth and the heaven, everything was from the water..." (Radloff 1956, 6-7).

"The Japanese Gods, *Izanami no mikoto* and *Izagani no mikoto*, stood on the floating bridge of heaven and stirred the ocean with a jewelled spear until it curdled, and so created the first island, *Onogoro*" (Mackenzie 1996: 286-294).

According to Bahaddin Ögel, it is normal that there is such a motive in the close regions and counties to the great seas such as China, Japan, India and Greece. But, it is not normal for Turks which had only steppe lakes (Ögel 1993: 467). For this reason, in ancient Turks, when the great sea is called, firstly comes to mind the great lakes. Turks came across the oceans after meeting the great civilisations.

The God or the Gods created human being, then created the heaven and the earth through this gap. Ocean and water represent the infinite void. This is the most striking common element on the subject of creation in both Japanese mythology and Turkish epics. In fact, this concept is seen in most of the world's mythologies.

One of the common traits between Japanese mythology and Turkish epics is mud or clay which is thrown into the water or got out of water or appeared as a result of mixing of the water.

“Japanese Gods, *Izanami no mikoto* and *Izaganı no mikoto*, stood on the floating bridge of the heaven and stirred the ocean with a jewelled spear until it curdled, and recovered spear when water and oiled mud began to roast, then, a knob of mash fell from the tip of the spear and so created the first island” (Mackenzie 1996: 286-294).

“In the first era, floods occurring after the rain washed away mud into a cave in a mountain called as Karadagci and these mud was flew into slits which was similar to human mould. The water and the soil stood into these slits. The sun roasted the water and soil waste. The aboved named cave had the duty of a woman’s belly. The wind blew on this heap which contained the water, the soil and the fire (the heat of the sun). Thus, four elements combined. After nine months, a creature like human being emerged from this creature” (İnan 1972: 21).

On this subject, Japanese mythology and Turkish epics have a parallelism.

One of the common points between Japanese mythology and Turkish epics is the separation of the earth and the heaven. Hereof, there are some expressions in the prolog of *Kojiki* which is one of the most significant sources of the Japanese mythology. As follows:

“However, the heaven and the earth were divided first and three Gods formed the beginning of the creation, then passive and active souls grew and two souls became the ancestor of everything (Mackenzie 1996: 288).

As it again, it is mentioned that the heaven and the earth were not divided at whilom in the introduction part of *Nihongi* which is one of the most significant sources of the Japanese mythology (Mackenzie 1996: 288).

In the legends of creation belonging to Turks, it is mentioned that there were not the heaven, the earth and the moon and the sun at first and then these were created and divided from each other (Radloff 1866: 159-166; Verbitski 1903: 102-103; Radloff 1956: 6-7; İnan 1972: 14-19).

Another common threads in both Japanese mythology and Turkish epics is the number of human beings who the God or the Gods created. In both Japanese mythology and Turkish epics, the Gods or the God has created eight people. In the texts of Japanese mythology, *Izaganı no mikoto* and *Izanami no mikoto* had eight childs and these children were the eight islands of Japan. After that, Japan is called “the country of eight great islands (oho-ya shima-kuni)” (Mackenzie 1996: 291).

In some Turkish epos, *Ulgen* (the God) creates a person named Erlik, then creates seven people else. Together with *Erlik*, the number of created people becomes eight. But, this number may vary in some of Turkish epics. For intance, the God creates *Erlik* at first in the legend of creation belonging to Altai Turks compiled by Radloff in 19th century, then plants a tree without branchless and creates nine branches on these trees and says that nine people should be derived from nine roots of nine branches and should appear nine nations from them (Radloff 1866: 159-166).

One of the common traits between Japanese mythology and Turkish epics is the creation of human being. The creation of human being is connected with four elements that is the water, the fire, the soil and the wind in Turkish epics. The most common elements among them are the soil, the clay layer and the clay. In addition, according to

some Turkish epics, the human being was created from tree (the branches of tree). The soil and the clay are significant about the creation of human being in Japanese mythology (Mackenzie 1996: 290).

In Turkish epics, the God gives shape the piece of the soil on water and inflates the mountains or sweep the soil towards the cavities of cave with floodwaters and creates human being. In all rumours, there are the soil, the water and the light in the creation. The soil and the water are very significant in Japanese mythology, too. It is considered that the first human being was a Turkish in the legend of creation belonging Turkish and then this human being directed the other people. In Japanese mythology, there is not such a claim.

2. Processing of Issues of the Heaven and the Hell

Another parallelism between Japanese mythology and Turkish epics appears on the subject of the heaven and the hell. Both Japanese mythology and Turkish epics have the concept of the heaven and the hell.

According to Turkish epics, the heaven is in the sky and the hell is in underground. The people who do a kindness somebody is sent to the heaven, namely, paradise; evildoer is sent to the underground, namely hell. In some of the legends of creation belonging to Turkish, there are ninety nine worlds than the world of the moon and the sun. There are the heaven and the hell in each other. The largest world is *Khan Kurbustan Tengere*. The heaven of this world is *Altın Telegey*, the hell of this world is *Mangız Toçiri Tamu*. There are thirty three storeys in the heaven which take place the paradise (Verbitski 1903: 102-103; İnan 1972: 19-21).

In this regard, the Turkish epics show some similarities with the Islamic faith. But, according to Islamic faith, it is not clear exactly where the place of the heaven and the hell is.

According to Japanese mythology, the heaven is in the upstairs, namely, in the sky. It can be understood from the part of *Kojiki* which explained events between *Izagani* and *Susa-no-wa*: This part is quoted in *Kojiki* as follows:

“Immediately, he rose up to the heaven, whereupon all the mountains were rocked and all countries and cities were shaken. Thus, *Ama-Terasu* was alarmed and said that: ‘The rising of my big brother there was not with honesty of purpose, his sole aim was to get my country and capture it (Mackenzie 1996: 301-302).

Amatsu and *Kami* who live above the surface of the earth are the Gods of the heaven in Japanese mythology. They are associated with the heaven due to their duties and immortality. The God of the hell is *Ama-No-Minaka-Nushi*. The hell is under the earth.

3. The Symbol of Evil

Another parallelism between Japanese mythology and Turkish epics is the symbol of the evil. In both Japanese mythology and Turkish epics, the symbol of the evil is demons and satan. The God creates one called *Erlık* in Turkish epics. Then, this person revolts the God. The God also says:

“Now, you have been a sinful. You thought evil against me. Even the people who believe you will think badness. The people who obey me will be clean and pure.

They will see the sun. Hereafter, your name will be *Erlık*, the people who hide their sins from me will be your public; the people who hide their sins from you will be my public” (Verbitski 1903: 102-103; İnan 1972: 19-21).

Erlık leads people to be expelled from the paradise. *The devil* is sentenced to live at the threefold bottom of earth in the dark world. According to Bahaddin Ogel, *Erlık* in Turkish epos was taken from Maniheim or Iranian mythology. *Erlık* corresponds Ehrimen in Iranian mythology (Ögel 1993: 422).

In Japanese mythology, the demon is the symbol of the badness. *Susa-no-wa* is a demon who is known as rogue among the Gods. He is an ally of the forces of darkness and destruction. He was expelled from the holy country.

According to Shintoism, *Ika-Zuchi-no-Kami* is a group of devils who live at the bottom of the earth. In Japanese mythology, it is believed that its noises show itself with volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. However, according to Shintoism, *Fujin (Ryobu)* is the God of the wind. This God carries a windbag on his shoulder and appears as a devil who has leopard skin. He is terrible and black (Mackenzie 1996: 301-302).

4. The Sacred Objects

Another parallelism between Japanese mythology and Turkish epics is sacred objects. In one of the legends of the creation of Altai Turkish, the God gives a sacred spear *Mangdaşire* to struggle with *Erlık* who is the representative of badness. *Mangdaşire* defeats *Erlık* with this spear. The helpers of *Erlık* are fallen to the earth. (Radloff 1866: 159-166). However, in Japanese mythology, the earlier Gods give a sacred spear called *Ame no tama boko* “sacred jewelery spear” to *Izagani no mikoto* and *Izanami no mikoto* (Mackenzie 1996: 289).

In addition, there are sacred trees in both Japanese mythology and Turkish epics. The God creates *Erlık* at first in the legend of creation belonging to Altai Turks compiled by Radloff in 19th century, then plants a tree without branchless and creates nine branches on these trees and says that nine people should be derived from nine roots of nine branches and should appear nine nations from them (Radloff 1866: 159-166). However, *Erlık* wants to get the people who are created by the God and made them eat from the forbidden fruits of four branches. As a result, the God throws *Erlık* at the threefold bottom of the earth (İnan 1972: 14-19). In Japanese mythology, *the eternal odorous tree* is holy. This tree is found in the west heaven. This tree is an orange tree. In Chinese mythology, the sacred tree appears as peach tree (Mackenzie 1996: 311).

Another notable point between in both is salivary. In one of the legends of creation belonging Turkish, salivary takes place as follows:

“*Kayra Khan* thought to create the world by thinking that the human being could not fly no more. The God ordered the human being to remove a handful of soil from the bottom of water. But human being thought badness by removing it. He hid a piece of the soil into his mouth. He thought to create a hidden world with this soil. When he sprinkled a handful of soil to the surface of the water, *Kayra Khan* ordered the soil to grow. This soil became the earth. But then, the hidden soil in the mouth of human grew. At last, it did not fit into his mouth. The God said him “spit!”. If the God does not say him “spit”, he will suffocate.

Kayra Khan designed a world. This world was a smooth earth. But, the mud which fell from the mouth of human being sallied and covered the world with marsh areas and little hills. The God was very angry for him and dismissed human being from the light world and named him *Erlik* “the devil” (Radloff 1956: 6-7).

In Japanese mythology, it is believed that saliva has the power which bestow the life (Naumann 2005: 159).

5. Dualism

One of the common traits between Japanese mythology and Turkish epics is dualism. The principal of dual thought is seen in both. In the course of the creation, it is seen that there were two entities called as *Ulgen* (the God) and *Erlik* (mankind) in Turkish epic texts. Besides, it is seen that there were two entities called *Izaganı no mikoto* ve *Izanami no mikoto* (these are the Gods). Further to that, it can be seen a lot of contrasts as light and dark, the God and demon, height and lowness, compassion and cruelty, patience and anger, scholarliness and ignorance, fidelity and disloyalty in both mythologies.

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Abstract

**SOME SIMILAR AND PARALLEL POINTS BETWEEN THE TURKIC
LEGENDARY “CREATION” AND SIMILAR TEXTS OF JAPAN**

Turks and Japanese nations have lived in close geographic regions through long ages. Some similarities and common features can be found between mythologies of different nations that lived next to each other or in close geographic regions for centuries. In this context, Turk and Japanese nations are two community which have some common features and similarites in terms of cultural and mythological elements. In this paper, we will make a point of Turkic and Japanese mythologies in terms of creation and compare Turkic legendary “Creation” and similar texts of Japan and ascertain common features of them. It will firstly checked the features of Japanese mythology which have been affected by other religions (Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism etc.) and beliefs in the basic sources about Japanese mythology. Because, a lot of elements which fall within the other religions and beliefs may have been put in Japanese and other Asian mythologies. Ultimately, common mythological features will be identified. After identifying these features, the connections and relationship between Turkic and Japanese mythologies will be revealed. Creation, the beginning of creation, the process of creation, processing of heaven and hell, sacred places, sacred objects, views on nature, particular names in mythologies (person, animal, object, etc.), extraordinary events, cases and elements, view of humans to Gods, view of Gods to human beings can be considered from a comparative perspective.

Keywords: Japanese mythology, comparison, mythology, Turkic mythology, creation.

Özet

**TÜRKLERİN YARATILIŞ EFSANESİ İLE JAPONLARIN BENZER
METİNLERİ ARASINDAKİ BENZER VE PARALEL NOKTALAR**

Türk ve Japon milletleri tarih boyunca birbirine yakın coğrafi bölgelerde yaşamışlardır. Asırlar boyunca birbirine komşu olmuş ya da birbirine yakın bölgelerde yaşamış olan farklı milletlerin değişik kültürel öğelerinde olduğu gibi mitolojilerinde de çeşitli ortaklık ve benzerlikler bulunması çok doğal bir durum olarak görülebilir. Bu bağlamda Türk ve Japon milletleri de coğrafi yakınlıkları dolayısıyla hem kültürel açıdan hem de mitolojik öğeler açısından benzerlik ve ortaklıklar gösteren iki topluluktur. Bu çalışmada temel olarak aralarında kültürel bağlamda yakınlık bulunduğu düşünülen Japon ve Türk milletlerinin mitolojileri yaratılış açısından ele alınmış, Türklere ait Yaratılış destanı ile Japonların benzer metinleri arasındaki ortak özellikler değerlendirilmiştir. Öncelikli olarak Hıristiyanlık ya da diğer dinlerin (Musevilik, Budizm vb.) etkisi ile Japon mitolojisine girmiş mitolojik özelliklerin bulunup bulunmadığı, Japon mitolojisinin temel kaynaklarından araştırılmıştır. Bu araştırmanın sebebi diğer dinlerden ve inanışlardan birçok unsurun Japon mitolojisini ve diğer Asya mitolojilerini etkilemiş olduğunun düşünülmesidir. Değişik kaynaklar yardımı ile ortak mitolojik özellikler tespit edildikten sonra Türk ve Japon mitolojileri arasındaki bağlantılar tespit edilip yorumlanmıştır. Türk ve Japon mitolojileri mitolojileri ile ilgili karşılaştırılan konular arasında yaratılış, yaratılışın başlangıcı, yaratılış süreci, cennet ve cehennemin işlenişi, kutsal mekânlar, kutsal nesnelere, tabiata bakış, mitolojilerde geçen özel isimler, olağanüstü olay, durum ve nesnelere, Tanrıların insana bakışı, insanın Tanrılara bakışı vb. konular sayılabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Japon mitolojisi, karşılaştırma, mitoloji, Türk mitolojisi, yaratılış.