ISSN: 3093-9305 VOLUME - 5

JOURNAL OF GLOBAL SCIENTIFIC INNOVATIONS



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JGSI
Journal of Global Scientific Innovations
International scientific practical journal

UDK: 398.22:1(575.1)

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Science ID: MFR-0726-0170

JUSTICE FREEDOM AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE UZBEK GOROGLY CYCLE A SOCIAL PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

Abstract: This article reads the Uzbek Gorogly cycle – twenty-seven epics recorded from the bakhshi Rahmatulla shoir Yusuf o‘g‘li (Tashkent, 2006) – as an axiological system organised around justice, freedom and collective responsibility. Eight passages, located by a lexical concordance of normative markers across all 448 pages and verified against page images, are analysed in the original with translation. Freedom appears as autonomy that cannot be received from an oppressor; justice operates first as a constraint on the hero’s own army; and Chambil is not an achieved utopia but a conditional order which the epic itself describes as having filled with oppression.

Keywords: Gorogly epic, Central Asia, social justice, freedom, collective responsibility, oral heritage, axiology.

СОЦИАЛЬНО ФИЛОСОФСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ СПРАВЕДЛИВОСТИ СВОБОДЫ И КОЛЛЕКТИВНОЙ ОТВЕТСТВЕННОСТИ В УЗБЕКСКОМ ЭПИЧЕСКОМ ЦИКЛЕ ГЁРОГЛЫ

Аннотация: В статье узбекский эпический цикл «Гёроглы» рассматривается как аксиологическая система, основанная на справедливости, свободе и коллективной ответственности. Материал – двадцать семь дастанов, записанных от Рахматуллы шаира Юсуф угли (2006, 448 с.). Восемь фрагментов, отобранных путём лексического поиска и фильтрации, проанализированы в оригинале и переводе. Свобода предстаёт как автономия, которую нельзя получить из рук угнетателя, справедливость – как ограничение действий войска самого героя. Чамбиль изображён не как осуществлённая утопия, а как условный порядок, в котором, по словам самого эпоса, усилилось угнетение.

Ключевые слова: эпос «Гёроглы», Центральная Азия, социальная справедливость, свобода, коллективная ответственность, устное наследие, аксиология.

GO‘RO‘G‘LI O‘ZBEK DOSTONLAR TURKUMIDA ADOLAT ERKINLIK VA JAMOAVIY MAS’ULIYATNING IJTIMOIY FALSAFIY TAHLILI

Annotatsiya: Maqolada «Go‘ro‘g‘li» dostonlar turkumi adolat, erkinlik va jamoaviy mas’uliyatga asoslangan aksiologik tizim sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Manba –

Rahmatulla shoir Yusuf o‘g‘lidan yozib olingan yigirma yetti doston (2006, 448 sahifa). Leksik qidiruv va saralash orqali tanlangan sakkiz parcha asl matn va tarjima bilan o‘rganilgan. Erkinlik zolimdan in’om sifatida olinmaydigan muxtoriyat, adolat esa avvalo qahramonning o‘z qo‘shinini cheklovchi me’yor sifatida namoyon bo‘ladi. Chambil ro‘yobga chiqqan utopiya emas, balki dostonning o‘zida zulm kuchaygani qayd etilgan shartli tartibdir.

Kalit so‘zlar: Go‘ro‘g‘li dostoni, Markaziy Osiyo, ijtimoiy adolat, erkinlik, jamoaviy mas’uliyat, og‘zaki meros, aksiologiya.

Introduction

Gorogly is sung in Uzbek, Turkmen, Karakalpak, Kazakh and Tajik, and as Köroğlu in Turkish and Azerbaijani; Chodźko first brought it to a European readership in 1842 [5]. Yet UNESCO inscribed it in 2015 on a nomination from Turkmenistan alone [14], and the Manas case shows how quickly a shared inheritance becomes a contested national asset [8]. Heritage framing favours a celebratory register, and the normative content of the epic is usually summarised – it celebrates justice and freedom. Two things go missing: the relation among the values, and the epic’s criticism of itself. This article analyses the Uzbek cycle as a source in social philosophy and proposes a replicable procedure for doing so.

The article makes three contributions. Substantively, it treats the Uzbek Gorogly cycle as an argument about how people should live together rather than as a national credential. Methodologically, it sets out a procedure – lexical concordance, filtered selection, verification against page images – that another scholar can repeat. Comparatively, it identifies in one eastern variant a set of accountability devices whose distribution across the branches of the tradition becomes an empirical question.

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Literature Review

Zhirmunsky and Zarifov read Uzbek heroic epic against the social history of its performers [16]; Reichl’s edition of Rawshan remains the fullest Western-language treatment of an Uzbek variant [11]; Turdimov traced the genesis and evolutionary stages of the cycle [12, 13], and recent work addresses its stylistic texture [10]. Wilks shows the hero shifting between bandit and sovereign as the tradition moves west [15], and Borjian how the Tajik Gurughli reshapes a shared plot [4]. None of these studies asks how the cycle’s statements about oppression, freedom, tribute and petition relate to one another, or takes seriously the passages in which the epic turns its standards against Chambil.

Methodology

The corpus is the 2006 Sharq edition: twenty-seven epics, 448 pages, recorded from Rahmatulla shoir Yusuf o‘g‘li [7]. A lexical concordance of seven marker sets – zulm, sitam (oppression); adolat, insof (justice); ozod, erkin, qul (freedom, slavery); nasihat (admonition); maslahat (counsel); arz, shikoyat (petition); boj, xiroj

(tribute) – flagged 188 pages. Close reading reduced these to 41 loci where a norm is explicitly asserted, and three filters (explicit statement, at most two loci per epic, coverage of each category) left eight, each checked against a page image. Aristotle [2], Berlin [3], Kant [9], Durkheim [6] and al-Farabi [1] serve as heuristics – questions put to the text, not doctrines read into it. Translations are mine.

Analysis and results

Freedom that cannot be given

Ravshanbek, the hero's father, captive of the Qizilbash, is offered a letter of manumission on condition of repentance. He answers: "men o'lsam ham dushmanga tovba qilib, yalinmayman" – "even if I die, I will not repent before an enemy and beg" [7, p. 19] – and is sold at the slave market on the spot. Freedom here is not the absence of constraint, since accepting would have removed it, but autonomy that cannot be received from the oppressor's hand; Berlin's positive liberty and Kant's autonomy are the closer fit [3, 9]. His buyer Gajdumbek then tells him: "Rasmi qulsan, haqiqatda ozodsan" – "in form you are a slave; in truth you are free" – since keeping a fellow Turkmen enslaved would defile the Turkmen name [7, p. 22]. Dignity is grounded not in the person, as for Kant, but in communal honour, closer to Durkheim's collective conscience [6].

The Forty as a political association

The Forty exist before Gorogly meets them: "qirq yigit to'planib, Xunxorga qaram bo'lishni xohlamay, tog'larda qochib yurar edi" – forty young men, unwilling to be subject to Khunkhor, lived as fugitives in the mountains [7, p. 55]. The band is constituted by a collective refusal of tribute, not by attachment to the hero. Gorogly offers union on horizontal terms – "Agar do'st bo'p ergashsanglar" ("if you follow me as friends") – and enacts sovereignty by rerouting the levy: "Endi bojini Xunxorga to'lamasin. Menga to'lasin" ("let him pay the tribute no longer to Khunkhor; let him pay it to me") [7, p. 58]. The new order is measured by whom it attracts: the poor and ragged migrate to Chambil.

Justice as a constraint on one's own side

Refusing to make war on a fellow believer over a private wrong, Gorogly rides out alone and leaves one instruction: "Hech kimsaga zulm-u sitam qilmanglar" – "oppress and wrong no one" – and seize no property beyond the assessed levy [7, pp. 61–62]. The prohibition targets his own people at the moment he can no longer enforce it. Before a later battle he forbids his army arrogance, plunder and the pursuit of the fleeing: "Qochganni quvguvchi bo'lmang" [7, p. 176]. Pursuit is militarily advantageous; forbidding it at a cost marks a norm rather than a prudential maxim. Justice, in Aristotle's sense, appears only in relation to others [2].

Chambil as a conditional order

The most consequential sentence in the volume is given to Balo, a spirit with no motive to flatter: “Chambilda zulm va vo‘shak ko‘p bo‘lib, podshosi Go‘ro‘g‘li yo‘ldan chiqayozgan” – “in Chambil oppression and slander had grown numerous, and its ruler Gorogly had all but strayed from the path” [7, p. 274]. Chambil is not a place but a condition a community can fall below. The community keeps a procedure against its ruler – the biys arrive saying “El tilidan arzga keldik” (“we have come with a petition in the name of the people”) [7, p. 437] – and the aged Gorogly sings that Chambil was built “Adolat, totuvlik izidan” – “in the wake of justice and concord” [7, p. 352]: prosperity follows justice, not the reverse.

Discussion

Two revisions to the standard reading follow. First, the Forty are not an expression of the hero’s stature: the association precedes him, and his contribution is normative – a code that turns a band living by seizure into a community with a rule about seizure. Second, the comparison with al-Farabi is a contrast as much as a parallel [1]: al-Farabi’s virtuous city is constitutional, whereas the epic’s is diagnostic. Only a city that can fail shows the standard at work, so the passage at page 274 is the thesis’s best evidence. The cycle sits at neither of Wilks’s poles [15]: Gorogly gains a throne and a levy, yet the epic retains instruments to judge him. The corpus, however, is one performer’s repertoire, and comparison with other Uzbek recordings and with the Tajik Gurughli [4] is still needed.

The method matters as much as the result. Comparison of the normative content of Central Asian epic variants has remained largely impressionistic – a matter of characterising what an epic “values” rather than locating what it asserts. The procedure used here requires only a searchable text and a printed edition, makes the evidential base explicit at each stage, and produces page-specific citations a disagreeing reader can check. Applied to Manas, Alpomish, Edige or the Tajik Gurughli, it would allow the question of whether an accountability device – a petition procedure, a code binding on the hero’s own army, a verdict on the ruler’s failure – is branch-specific or tradition-wide to be answered rather than asserted. It also bears on heritage practice: national framing selects for the celebratory register in which a sentence like the one at page 274 disappears [8, 14], whereas a cycle that criticises its own ideal city is the more usable inheritance, because a standard that can be failed remains available for reapplication.

Conclusion

Justice, freedom and collective responsibility form a connected structure in the Uzbek Gorogly cycle. Justice limits one’s own side; freedom is autonomy no oppressor can confer; the collective precedes the hero. Chambil is an order the epic itself shows falling short: legitimacy is earned through service to the common good and is never held outright. The procedure used here is repeatable and can make comparison across the region’s epic traditions less impressionistic.

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