

Representations of the Turkic Peoples in the *Shahnameh* and the Greco-Roman Sources

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Turkic peoples of Central Asia interacted with most core civilizations of the Eurasian landscape, both bordering their homeland in Central Asia, and also through their migrations, which were truly continental in their scope. China and Iran were the two main political units and civilizations surrounding Central Asia prior to the arrival of the Arab-Muslims. Hence, China and Iran appear as the first major empires acquainted with the Turks. However, the migration patterns of the Turks brought them in contact with the Roman Empire and various European peoples on the West, and the Indian subcontinent and the various peoples of the South, as well. Arab Muslims, on the other hand, confronted the Turks through their own conquests, namely, through the expansion of the Islamic Empire into Central Asia. As part of their interaction, these sedentary peoples incorporated the image of the Turks into their own national myths, legends, literature, art and official documents. Turks were represented as the “other” in most cases, but there were radical variations in the degree to which the otherness of the Turkic peoples was portrayed in friendly or hostile ways. In this paper, I examine the representations of the Turks in Iranian and European sources prior to the arrival of Islam. In embarking on such a macro-level examination, I limit my scope to a comparison of the degree to which the Turks were incorporated as “friendly” peoples to the self-perception of Iranians, and to the Greco-Roman centered European identity. I focus on *Shahnameh*, the national legend of Iran, and the accounts of the Greco-Roman observers with regards to the Turkic peoples in the pre-Islamic period.

Shahnameh is a portrayal of the world from an Iran-centric point of view before the arrival of Islam. It is arguably the embodiment of Iranian sentiments and the Iranian cosmology at the time. Iranian identity, to the extent that it existed at that time, is best manifest in this myth. It begins by a quick summary of the genealogy of the Iranian royal family. Kaiumers is followed by his son Husheng, who in turn is followed by his son Tahumers. Once Tahumers passes away, Jemshid takes over the throne and rules for seven hundred years, contributing significantly to the Iranian nation, by building Perseopolis, parceling out the men into classes, instituting a feast called Neurouz, among other things.¹ However, uplifted in pride, Jemshid declares himself to be God, at which point Iranian nobles call upon Zohak, the serpent-king of Arabia, to take over the kingdom. However, Zohak’s wickedness induces Ormuzd, the foremost Iranian god, who considers Iranian people to be his people, much like

Jahve/Jehovah considers Israelites to be his people, causes a grandson to be born unto Jemshid, by the name of Feridun. With Feridun, the Iranian history 'really' begins. While he is already alive, Feridun puts his three sons into several tests, and then divides the Iranian world into three parts, and assigns each one of his sons to rule over one part. Rum (Anatolia) and Khaver are given to Silim. Irij, the brave and smart son of Feridun, receives the crown of Iran, the center of the world, whereas his other son, Tur, receives Turan.

"Then having read the secrets of Fate, Feridoun parted the world and gave the three parts unto his sons in suzerainty. Roum and Khaver, which are the lands of the setting sun, did he give unto Silim. Turan and Turkestan did he give unto Tur, and made him master of the Turks and of China, but unto Irij he gave Iran, with the throne of might and the crown of supremacy."²

Already in this initial partition and the portrayal of the Iranian world, we observe that the Turkic peoples and lands are included in the Iranian world. Turan, or the lands bestowed upon Tur and his descendants, are amply referred to as the "Turkish" lands, and the race of Tus is alternately called the "Turks" or the Turanians. Moreover, Tus, the ancestor of the Turks, is himself described in relatively positive terms, as being the brave son of Feridun, yet not as smart as Irij, whereas Silim, the eldest son, for example, is scorned for his cowardice and lack of intellectual capacity.

The world according to the *Shahnameh*, then, encompasses the lands of the Iranian and the Turkic peoples, whereas it excludes all the other peoples and lands, for example, Greco-Roman Europe, Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and the Far East. Turkic peoples are considered to be part of an Iranian-centric world-system, in a way that they are not considered in a Sino-centric (i.e. Chinese) or a Euro-centric portrayal of the "civilized" world. Nonetheless, *Shahname* as a whole is a description of the struggle between Iran and Turan, where Iran is favored over Turan as a general rule.

It might be useful to compare *Shahname* as the founding myth of Iran with some of the other famous founding myths. *Genesis* as the founding myth of a Judeo-Christian world-system similarly begins with a detailed genealogical account of the Israelites.³ Again very similar to the *Shahnameh*, Abraham has two distinct lineages: First, his son with Sarah, Isaac, is the ancestor of the Israelites; whereas his son with Hagar, Ismael, is arguably the ancestor of the Arabs. The Old and the New Testament do not incorporate the line of Ismael as part of the Judeo-Christian world-system. The *Quran*, in contrast, builds on a similar genealogy as described in the *Genesis* and elaborates on Abraham's lineage, but portrays a world-system that is also inclusive of Ishmael's line. *Iliad*, another one of the most famous and fundamental legends, portrays a Greek-centric world-system, based on the struggle between the Trojans and the Achaeans.⁴ *Iliad*, in this view, is much closer to the *Shahnameh*, since the Trojans and the Achaeans, although rivals, partake in the same civilization,

defined by its quasi-Greek ingredients. Although Homer favors the Achaeans of the Greek mainland over the Trojans of Asia Minor, he nonetheless portrays them as part of the same cultural, political, and social space, as distinct from, for example, Iranians, Arabs, Africans, and the “Barbarians.” *Shahnameh* similarly favors Iranians over Turanians, while reinforcing the view that the Turanians also belong to the same social, political, and cultural space as the Iranians.

Iran and Turan also belong to the same religious sphere. For example, when Poshang, the father of Afrasiyab and the King of Turan, writes a letter to Kai Kobad, he salutes the Shah “in the name of Ormuzd, the ruler of the sun and moon...”⁵ Hence, shared belief in Ormuzd provides yet another common reference point for both the Iranians and the Turanians. In the same letter to the shah Kai Kobad, the Turanian king Poshang calls for the establishment of Jihun (Amu Derya) river as the boundary between Iran and Turan. “And Kai Kobad did according to his word. He drew up a fresh covenant between them...and proclaimed that there was peace throughout the land.”⁶ Mentioning of a covenant between Iran and Turan, and allusions to “the land” throughout which peace reigned after the covenant, also imply a mutually binding proto-contractual situation between Iran and Turan, whereby both Kingdoms feel an obligation to maintain peace and prosperity throughout “the land”, which encompasses both Iran and Turan, and which, after all, was really “one kingdom” before Feridun partitioned it among his sons.

Iran and Turan also belong to the same sphere of filial piety, bound by recurrent intermarriages and a shared genealogy. Apart from the ancient connection between the two lands, resulting from Feridun’s being the father of both Irij and Tur, there are many intermarriages between the most prominent Iranian and Turanian families. In Chapter 8, Rostam, the foremost Iranian hero of *Shahnameh*, wanders into Turan, and arrives at the Turkish city of Samengan. The King of Samengan receives him very well, and there Rostam has an affair with Tahmineh, daughter of the king, who bears a son named Sohrab. Sohrab is thus a product of Turkish-Iranian intermarriage. Throughout the *Shahnameh*, Sohrab is described in very favorable words, even more favorable, one might argue, than those attributed to Rostam. For example, in the ultimate fight between Rostam and Sohrab, Sohrab initially wins the battle and almost kills Rostam, but Rostam saves his life through a deceptive trick:

“And when the day was about to vanish, Sohrab seized upon Rostam by the girdle and threw him upon the ground...Then Rostam knew that only wile could save him. So he opened his mouth and said ‘O young man, thou knowest not the customs of the combat. It is written in the laws of honor that he who overthroweth a brave man for the first time should not destroy him, but preserve him for fight a second time, then only is it given unto him to kill his adversary.’”⁷

Similarly, Siawoosh, a son of Kai Kawoos, the Iranian king, runs away from Iran, and seeks refuge in Turan, because his life is threatened in Iran, due to his father's acquiescence to the lies that Sudaveh, a concubine of Kai Kawoos, forges against Siawoosh. Chapter 9 of *Shahnameh*, and especially part 4 of that chapter, is a vivid description of how warmly Siawoosh is welcomed in Turan, and how willingly Siawoosh himself bonds with Afrasiyab the Turanian king, and with the Turanian people in general:

"..Siawoosh was come into Turan...Afrasiyab yearned to look upon his face, and [Piran] said [to Siawoosh] 'Turn thee in amity unto the King, and let not thy mind be troubled concerning that which thou hast heard about him. For Afrasiyab hath an ill fame, but he deserveth it not, for he is good.'...And the sight of Siawoosh became a light to the eyes of the King of Turan and a joy unto his heart, and he loved him like to a father."⁸

After embracing Siawoosh, Afrasiyab says that "The evil that hath disturbed the world is quieted, and the lamb and the leopard can feed together, for now is there friendship between our lands." In these words, we see again that the "world" is conceived of Iran and Turan. What is meant by this conceptualization is of course, not that there are no lands beyond Iran and Turan (China, Europe, Africa, etc.), but that the worldview of *Shahnameh* only encompasses these lands, much like the "civilized world" denotes only the Greco-Roman world for Europeans, and the Middle Kingdom for the Chinese.

Furthermore, Siawoosh marries with a Turkish girl, the daughter of Afrasiyab, mostly because Piran mentions him that

"Thy home is now in Turan...and if Afrasiyab be thy father indeed, there can no hurt come near to thee. And peradventure, if a son be born unto thee of the daughter of Afrasiyab, he will bind up for ever the enmity of the lands."⁹

Then Siawoosh marries with the daughter of Afrasiyab and he is given a province within the Turanian kingdom. The son of Siawoosh and the daughter of Afrasiyab is Kai Khosrow, who becomes the shah of Iran in the later chapters of *Shahnameh*. Kai Khosrow, although a grandson of Afrasiyab, is arguably the most praised of all shahs in the *Shahnameh*,¹⁰ and this fact also testifies to the claim that the fate of Iranian and Turanian races are inextricably linked. Indeed, when Kai Khosrow comes back to Iran, with the purpose of assuming the Iranian throne, he is favored over Friburz, another son of the shah Kai Kawoos. Friburz is 'purely' Iranian, unlike the 'Turkish' Kai Khosrow:

"...all men regarded Kai Khosrow as the heir, and only Tus was sorrowful at that which was come to pass. But Tus was angered, and said that he would pay homage only unto Friburz, and to none other. And he came before Kai Kawoos and said 'Friburz is thy son also, why therefore wilt thou give the crown unto one who is sprung from the race of Afrasiyab?'"¹¹

Kai Khosrow nonetheless becomes the shah, despite being from the race of Afrasiyab, and hence a Turk, demonstrating that being an Iranian or a Turanian is irrelevant insofar as both races share the same genealogy from Feridoun and even indicating that there may be many good qualities to be acquired from a union of Iranian and Turanian lineages.

Finally, the contrast between the descriptions of Kai Kawoos and Afrasiyab, who remain the kings of Iran and Turan throughout most of the *Shahnameh*, respectively, also shows that Ferdowsi does not necessarily favor the Iranian side over the Turanians. Throughout the epic, Kai Kawoos is depicted as an incompetent and imprudent shah who caves in the face of threat, and displays a very negative portrait as a ruler, only to be saved with the help of Rostam, whose courage and prudence is manifest. Kai Kawoos almost always falls into the tricks prepared by Ahriman, the evil god, and he follows the path of those who are led astray... First, he marches into Mazandaran, the land of the Deevs, despite the advice of all the nobles that he should not. His campaign to Mazandaran fails, and along with his army, he is blinded and held captive in Mazandaran for many years, till Rostam saves him and his army. Second, he is fooled by the King of Hamaveran, who invites him to a feast designed as a trap, and Kai Kawoos is saved but only with the help of Sudaveh, the daughter of the King of Hamaveran, who falls in love with Kai Kawoos and becomes his concubine later on. Third, similar to the story of Icarus, Kai Kawoos falls victim to his own hubris, when, being fooled by the Deevs again, he aspires to fly and reach the stars. The eagles which carry his flying chariot, once they cannot continue anymore, drop him to earth, and he desperately wanders as far as to the "desert of Cathay," only to be rescued by an army led by Rostam. The chapter narrating Kai Kawoos's foolish endeavors is appropriately titled "Kai Kawoos Committeth More Follies." Despite being his shah, Rostam severely scorns Kai Kawoos:

"Hath the world seen the like of this man? Hath a more foolish head sat upon the throne of Iran? Ye would say there were no brains within this skull, or that not one of its thoughts was good. Kai Kawoos is like a thing that is possessed, and every wind beareth him away. Thrice hast thou now fallen into mishap, and who can tell whether thy spirit hath yet learned wisdom?"¹²

Contrasted with the depiction of Kai Kawoos, Afrasiyab is described in relatively positive terms in *Shahnameh*. Although he is described as an aggressive character with war-like attributes, Afrasiyab still appears to be a better king who is more courageous and prudent than Kai Kawoos. Of course, Rostam, Sohrab, and Siawoosh, the last two of which are half-Turkish, are more prudent, courageous and better qualified in general than Afrasiyab, but the comparison between the Iranian king Kai Kawoos and the Turanian king Afrasiyab highlights the strengths of the latter and the weaknesses of the former.

As a partial conclusion, *Shahnameh* clearly portrays a world where Iran and the Turkic peoples of Central Asia (Turan) are bound together by a set of

shared ancestors, traditions, religious beliefs, filial piety, and other cultural, social, and political attributes. Therefore, both Iran and Turan are encompassed in a one world-system, similar to the way in which, later on, "Dar-ul-Islam" encompassed all the Muslim peoples of the world.

The relatively friendly accommodation of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia into the Iranian identity in *Shahnameh* is not surprising, since the Turkic and Iranian peoples were mutually interdependent even in the pre-Islamic period. As both Soucek¹³ and Golden¹⁴ maintain, Iranian groups were very prominent in Central Asia, especially in Transoxania (i.e., Maveranunehir) during the pre-Islamic times. However, these Iranian groups were very much intermingled with the Turkic groups, which mostly dominated Central Asia. Among the Iranian groups under consideration, Sogdians appear to be the key Iranian group with whom the Turkic peoples of Central Asia established a framework of interdependence. In this framework, Turkic groups would constitute the military-political elite, and the bulk of the population, mostly engaged in nomadic economic activities, whereas the Sogdians provided the crucial link between the nomadic Turkic peoples and the sedentary societies. Sogdian merchants dominated the Silk Road, and Sogdian people in general were engaged in economic and cultural activities associated with a sedentary life-style. Hence, Turkic and Iranian peoples together constituted a socio-economic system, a civilization, which sometimes coincided with the same political entity, whereby they performed quasi-specialized functions in a complex establishment. Hence, their participation in the same organizational whole might explain the inclusion of Iran and Turan in the same socio-cultural framework in the *Shahnameh*.

Representation of the Turkic peoples in Greco-Roman (European) sources, on the other hand, is mostly negative and exclusionary. *Chronicles of the Barbarians* provides us with a compilation of the Greco-Roman accounts of peoples attacking the "civilized" world. Many Turkic peoples are covered in its pages, both before and after the arrival of Islam. Concentrating on the pre-Islamic period, one finds Herodotus' account of the Scythians, and the accounts of Claudian, Priscus, and Jordanes, pertaining to the Huns, and Attila the Hun in particular. Herodotus, writing in the 424 B.C., describes Scythians in such a manner as to present them as absolute barbarians.

"When a Scythian overthrows his first enemy, he drinks his blood; and presents the king with the heads of the enemies he has killed in battle; for if he brings a head, he shares the booty that they take, but not if he does not bring one... Once every year, the governor of a district...mingles a bowl of wine, from which those Scythians drink who have captured enemies; but they who have not achieved this...sit at a distance in dishonor; this is accounted the greatest disgrace, such of them as have killed very many men, having two cups at once, drink them together."¹⁵

His account of the Scythians has almost nothing to do with Scythians as intelligible, communicable human beings, but rather obsessed with a list of their cruel customs, all of which invariably consist of killing, amputating, and skinning of their enemies. Supposedly an objective description of the Scythian society, his account now seems as an apparent attempt at scaring his own Greek audience from the Scythians by portraying "them" as absolute barbarians in opposition to a civilized "us." When Herodotus discusses the punishment of a soothsayer, who provides a false prophesy, he does not hesitate to describe meticulously the manner in which the soothsayer is killed.

"They accordingly put them to death in the following manner: when they have filled a wagon with fagots, and have yoked oxen to it, having tied the feet of the prophets and bound their hands behind them, and having gagged them, they enclose them in the midst of fagots; then having set fire to them, they terrify the oxen and let them go. Many oxen, therefore, are burned with the prophets, and many escape very much scorched... In this manner...they burn the prophets."¹⁶

The problem with Herodotus' account is not only the multitude of such descriptions, but rather, that his account solely consists of such descriptions. He does not talk about the arts, culture, social life, political and military organization, economic activities and the other "human attributes" of the Scythians but describes only these repulsive, horrendous and inhumane 'customs,' which may just as well be a product of his own imagination.

Similarly, the Roman observer Ammianus Marcellinus' account of the Huns is a compilation of derogatory terms geared towards these Turkic people. Relying on his description of the Huns, one cannot see any semblance of "humanity" or "civilization" in the attributes of the Huns. Huns, it seems, constitute the polar opposite humanity:

"The people called Huns...are a race savage beyond all parallel...they grow up without beards, and consequently without any beauty, like eunuchs...you might fancy them two-legged beasts...They cover...their shaggy legs with the skins of kids...None of them plough or even touch a plough handle: for they have no settled abode, but are homeless and lawless...In truces they are treacherous and inconstant...like brute beasts, they are utterly ignorant of the distinction between right and wrong...They...have no respect for any religion or superstition whatever; are immoderately covetous of gold...This active and indomitable race, being excited by an unrestrainable desire of plundering the possessions of others, went on ravaging and slaughtering all the nations in their neighborhood..."¹⁷

Ammianus Marcellinus, later on describes the Huns as the scourge from the east "in the shape of men,"¹⁸ implying that they actually are not "men" (i.e. human); consistent with his account of the Huns as a whole. The Greco-Roman attitude towards the Huns is monolithic; they describe the Huns as a semi-human race with only negative attributes.

The Egyptian-born poet Claudian, who served in the court of the Emperor Honorius, wrote a poem titled "The Huns," wherein he brings together the Greco-Roman views on the Huns into an artistic work. According to Claudian, the sustenance of the Huns is spoil, and their souls are never subdued to sturdy toil. "Their bodies foul to view" and "the Northern Bear looks on no uglier crew." They are a savage crowd, who kill the very people to whom they vowed not to attack.¹⁹ Priscus, an eastern Roman politician and historian who was sent on a diplomatic mission to the king of the Huns by Emperor Theodosius II in the summer of 449, provides similar, albeit more moderate, views on the Huns, in his "Negotiating and Dining with Attila."²⁰ He consistently refers to the Huns as the Barbarians, and reveals similar views with the aura of a factual observation.

Since the Greco-Roman accounts of the Turkic peoples, be it the Scythians or the Huns, are one-dimensional and negative, it seems a futile effort to go through all of these accounts in order to find signs of a Greco-Roman—Turkic accommodation, and the description of the civilized world in such a manner as to encompass the Turkic peoples. In sharp contrast with the Iranian views of the Turkic peoples in *Shahnameh*, one cannot detect in the Greco-Roman accounts any description of the Turkic peoples that implies a common genealogy, religion, or social and cultural patterns between the Turkic peoples and the Greco-Roman Europeans. Indeed, Turkic people not only "do not respect any religion," but some of them may even be confused with two-legged beasts, and may actually *be* beasts in the shape of men, hence making it impossible to construct a common identity between the 'civilized' Greco-Roman Europeans and the 'barbaric' Turks. Not only that the Turkic peoples are not included in the Greco-Roman civilization, but they serve as the "other" people against which the Greco-Roman civilization is defined. In the last sentence of his account of the Scythians, Herodotus maintains that "they studiously avoid the use of foreign customs,"²¹ implying that the incorporation or even assimilation of the Turkic peoples into the Greco-Roman civilization may be impossible, hence presenting a dim prospect for the future coexistence of the Turkic and European peoples.

The reason for the Greco-Roman disdain for the Turkic peoples must undoubtedly have multiple reasons. One may attribute the Greco-Roman attitude, contrasted with the relatively friendly reception of the Turks in *Shahnameh*, to the distance between the Turkic and the Roman homelands, and the particular form of their interaction, whereby the Turkic peoples literally invaded territories that were previously held by the Greeks, Romans, and other peoples of Europe. However, this argument hardly explains the sharp contrast between the Iranian and Greco-Roman attitudes, not the least because the initial Turkic homeland is situated by the Altai mountains, and even north thereof, and hence the Turkic peoples must have been perceived as the invaders even in

Transoxania, Khorasan, and other regions adjacent to, or within, what is historically known as Iran. However, the deeper reasons for the negative Greco-Roman attitudes towards the Turkic peoples cannot be fully explored within the constraints of this paper.

In conclusion, we observe a radical difference between the representations of the Turkic peoples in the Iranian *Shahnameh*, and the representations of the Turkic peoples in various Greco-Roman sources, including the accounts of Herodotus, Marcellinus, Claudian, and Priscus. In the *Shahnameh*, the coexistence and the interdependence of the Turks and the Iranians is manifest in the mutual accommodation of these peoples against each other, and in their sharing a similar religious, cultural, socio-economic, and filial sphere of interaction, while conceptualizing a common land consisting of both Iran and Turan, hence implying a civilization that encompasses both of these peoples. On the contrary, Greco-Roman civilization is certainly exclusive and discriminatory against the Turkic peoples, even to the extent of defining civilization against the "otherness" of the Turkic peoples. As this inquiry to the representations of pre-Islamic peoples in Iranian and Greco-Roman sources demonstrated, attributing the negative Turkish images prevalent in some parts of the world to Islam alone would be wrong, and that research focused on the positive and negative representations of pre-Islamic Turkic peoples in the civilizations that they confronted (Chinese, Iranian, Indian, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, respectively) may be more fruitful.

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¹ Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, translated by Hellen Zimmern, chapter 1: The Shahs of Old, <http://classics.mit.edu/Ferdowsi/kings.html>

² Ibid, chapter 2: Feridoun. Hellen Zimmern uses "Feridoun" to refer to this particular character in *Shahnameh*; instead I chose to use "Feridun" in this paper.

³ "Genesis," in the *Holy Bible*, (King James Version), World Bible Publishers.

⁴ Homer, *Illiad*, translated by Richard Lattimore, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1961.

⁵ *Shahnameh*, chapter 5: Rustem.

⁶ Ibid, chapter 5: Rustem.

⁷ Ibid, Chapter 8: Rustem and Sohrab.

⁸ Ibid, Chapter 9: Siawoush.

⁹ Ibid, Chapter 9: Siawoush.

¹⁰ Except maybe Feridun, who is the ancestor of both Iranian and Turanian kings.

¹¹ Ibid, Chapter 9: Siawoush.

¹² Ibid, Chapter 7: Kai Kaous Committeth More Follies.

¹³ Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, Cambridge University Press, 2000. Chapter One: The Beginnings.

¹⁴ Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden: 1992. For example, on p.150, Golden maintains that "the Sogdians appear to have played an important role as intermediaries... Later missionaries were of Toxarian origin." Both Sogdians and Toxarians are Iranian.

¹⁵ Herodotus, "Scythians and the Thracians," in David Willis McCullough, *Chronicles of the Barbarians*, Random House, New York: 1998. p.18-19.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.20.

¹⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, "The Gothic Invasion and the Battle of Hadrianopole," in David Willis McCullough, *Chronicles of the Barbarians*, Random House, New York: 1998. p.121-123.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.149.

¹⁹ Claudian, "The Huns," in David Willis McCullough, *Chronicles of the Barbarians*, Random House, New York: 1998. p.151.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.152-164. The account of Priscus is much less derogatory towards the Huns, probably because he actually met and negotiated with them, and hence had a much better sense of their actual character.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.22.

Abstract

Representations of the Turkic Peoples in Shahnameh and the Greco-Roman Sources

The author examines the representations of pre-Islamic Turkic peoples in Iranian and Greco-Roman sources. The way in which Turks were dealt with in the Shahnameh, the national legend of Iran, is examined in detail. In the Shahnameh Turkic and Iranian peoples are perceived to be part of the same civilization, and even though Ferdowsi's description is an Iran-centric one, he nonetheless describes Turks and Iranians as part of the same family, and depicts their struggle as a "rivalry of brothers", both literally and metaphorically. By emphasizing that Turkic and Iranian people in pre-Islamic Central Asia lived in a framework of political economic interdependence, the

author notes that their depiction as part of the same civilization in Shahnameh may be due to such interdependence. In offering a national genealogy, Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is presented as being similar to the Bible and the Iliad. In the second half of the article, representations of Turkic people in Greco-Roman sources are examined. Examined are the descriptions of Scythians by Herodotus, and the descriptions of the Huns in different periods by Marcellinus, Claudian, and Priscus. In glaring contrast to Shahnameh, the Greco-Roman authors examined here depict Scythians and the Huns as the antithesis of civilization, half-human, half-animal, barbarians par excellence. The author claims that understanding the negative Turkish images prevalent in some parts of the world as only resulting from Islam would be wrong, and that research focused on the positive and negative representations of pre-Islamic Turkic peoples in the civilizations that they confronted (Chinese, Iranian, Indian, Roman, Byzantine, Arab) may be more fruitful.

Key Words: *Shahnameh, Ferdowsi, Iran, Turan, Huns, Scythians, Herodotus, Marcellinus, Claudian, Priscus, Pre-Islamic Central Asian Culture and Civilization.*

Özet

Şehname'de ve Yunan-Roma Kaynaklarında Türk Topluluklarının Temsili

Yazar bu makalede İslamiyet öncesi Türklerin eski İran ve eski Yunan-Roma kaynaklarındaki tasvirlerini inceliyor. Özellikle, İslamiyet öncesi Türklerin İran'ın ulusal destanı Şehname'de nasıl ele alındığı detaylı bir şekilde anlatılıyor. Yazar, Şehname'de Türk ve İran halklarının aynı medeniyet ve dünya görüşü içinde telakki edildiğini, doğası gereği İran-merkezli bir tasvir ediyor olsa bile Şehname yazarı Firdevsi'nin Türkleri İranlılarla aynı aile içinde betimleyerek, İran-Turan mücadelesini de 'kardeşlerin rekabeti' olarak tasvir ettiğini belirtiyor. İslamiyet öncesi Orta Asya'da Türk ve İran kavimlerinin iç içe, bir siyasal ekonomik karşılıklı bağımlılık dahilinde yaşadıklarına vurgu yapılarak, Şehname'de Türk ve İran halklarının aynı medeniyetin birer parçası olarak tasvir edilmelerinin bu durumdan kaynaklanmış olabileceği belirtiliyor. Şehname'nin, ulusal bir şecere (genealogy) ortaya koyması açısından İncil ve İlyada gibi eserlerle benzerlik arzettiği vurgulanıyor. Makalenin ikinci yarısı

sında, yine İslamiyet öncesi Türklerin bu defa Yunan-Roma kaynaklarındaki tasvirleri inceleniyor. Herodot'un İskitler, Marcellinus, Claudian, ve Priscus'un da değişik dönemlerde Hunlar hakkında yazdıkları tasvirler inceleniyor. Şehname'nin tam aksine, incelemeye konu olan Yunan-Latin yazarlarında İskitler ve Hunlar tam anlamıyla medeniyetin zıddı, yarı-insan, yarı-hayvan, barbarlar olarak tanımlanıyorlar. Yazar, bazı medeniyetlerde hakim olan olumsuz Türk imgelerinin yalnızca İslamiyetten kaynaklanıyor olarak görülmesinin yanlış olacağını, İslamiyet öncesi Türklerin karşılaştıkları medeniyetlerden (sırasıyla Çin, İran, Hint, Roma, Bizans, Arap) başlayarak olumlu ve olumsuz Türk betimlemelerinin yabancı kaynaklardaki kökeni ve evrimine yoğunlaşan araştırmaların daha verimli sonuçlar verebileceğini iddia ediyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şehname, Firdevsi, İran, Turan, Hunlar, İskitler, Herodotus, Marcellinus, Claudian, Priscus, İslam-öncesi Orta Asya kültür ve medeniyeti.

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