

THE GENDER PROBLEM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EPIC “KOROGLU”

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A woman is the most beautiful work created by God. The Creator estimated her with the honor of being the highest title – mother. The word “woman” means motherland, land, peace, freedom, tranquility, love. Many glorious and bright pages of our history and culture have been connected with the name of a woman.

Studying the history of any nation, along with history books, historical monuments, historical sources one should refer to folklore – folk literature. Because an epic is a history created by the people themselves. It is an Ergenekon memory, it is an exit from darkness to light, from narrow to wide, it is salvation. The epic “Koroglu” is a living past of the people on the scale of idealization of heroism and it is a monument of immortal art.





According to the opinion of the majority of scientists the development of the ancient Koroglu myth towards the epic was associated with the Oghuz-Turkman hegemony in the Middle East (during the 14th – 15th centuries). At a later stage, due to the different political-historical processes taking place in Anatolia, Azerbaijan, Central Asia, where Oghuz people settled, this epic gained different dimensions and thus a series of epics “Goroglu” – “Koroglu” was formed. All “Koroglu” texts in Azerbaijani Koroglu studies are classified into two groups in terms of image, structure, plot and motives: 1) Azerbaijani or Western version 2) Central Asian or Eastern version.

The epic “Koroglu”, being a link in the process of continuous continuation of the Turk-Oghuz epic, directly or indirectly repeats the old models. In the Azerbaijani version of the epic Koroglu is a more central figure. Coming out of the common people, the hero protects more of his revenge character. He is a kind avenger, a brave man among his people. Like Robin Hood from English folk ballads

At the same time, he is the master *ashiq* who is able to improvise. In both versions the origin of the image of Koroglu is connected to the archetype of the son of God in Turkic mythology. According to its function Koroglu is the savior of the ethnos. Koroglu's fame in Asia is as high as Homer's fame in Greece. Koroglu is the "knight of great roads", the patron of the Silk Road, Chanlibel [Ibrahimova: 2014-113].

No doubt, the epic "Koroglu" is a heroic epos. The origin of this monumental word monument was formed with the bravery and heroism of Koroglu and his fighters. In 1959 year all the heroic deeds shown in eight of the 17 chapters included in the edition by M.H.Tahmasib are about love and affection. It should not be forgotten that love scenes in the Azerbaijani version of the epic are no less than heroic scenes. The ladies such as Nigar, Telli, Huru, Ruyiya, Shirin, Mahbub, Dunya, Merjan were brought to Chanlibel because of their love and immortal love for Koroglu and fighters [Islam Sadig – 1998:5].

In the epic "Koroglu" there are no sharp contradictions and conflicts in intersex relations. In this society the moral values are able to maintain their own health, a woman with her own struggle allows to follow the rise. In the epic the people describe their desires and wishes, create the highest form of attitude to the women.

In the epic “Koroglu” the place and position of the heroic female characters along with the heroic Oghuz fighters are very interesting. The women are connected with the events and stories in the different chapters.

The woman characters such as Nigar, Telli, Mehbub, Rugiyya, Dunya, Dona, Huru, Zernishan are the daughters of the noble families, they differ from the fighters due to the social origin. In fact, the women described in the epic have come from the different countries and are symbols of that native lands, bearers of peace, symbolizing peace.

In the epic “Koroglu” a woman is actually a goddess of love, self-sacrifice, mercy and a source of love. In the epic the female characters are active and their numbers are numerous. In the epic the old Turkic warrior women’s lines are clearly visible in female characters. Girls are brave, heroic, able to show bravery, riding horses, playing swords, shooting arrows and wrestling. But all these heroic lines do not interfere with their femininity, feminism is not observed. They are very beautiful and pretty.

Among the more archaic and especially widespread plots we can note the heroic races that take place between a boy and a girl. The last type of marriage competitions is about the image of a warrior girl. In its more archaic forms this image belongs to the matriarchal family relationships. The warlike girl, defeated by the hero, becomes his betrothed or mistress.

Each of the women in Chanlibel comes to the mentioned place with their own wishes and dreams, they send a message saying “*dear Koroglu, if you are brave, come and take me and they reached joining*”. Each of them has own epos. Sometimes in order to bring them, the heroes go to a hostile land, where, after a lot of adventures and bravery, they manage to get the girl they want.

In the Azerbaijani version Nigar, who is Koroglu’s lover, is at the center of the female characters. Nigar is a lifelong friend of the legendary Koroglu, who is known from the East to West. One can observe that Nigar has an equal status as Koroglu in Chanlibel. As Koroglu is the head of the fighters, Nigar is also the head of the women. He is in a conciliatory position when there are certain misunderstandings in Chanlibel. Nigar had so much respect among the fighters that they would not have changed her words.

Nigar is the mother of the nation, born from the spirit – desire, inner energy of folk, who passed through the fate of all fighters and women in Chanlibel. Nigar, who has no reproductive function, is presented in the epos as a perfect mother.

In the relations of Nigar and Eyvaz, one can see the highest level of Mother –Son relations. The poetic description of Nigar’s longing for children, her desire to become a mother, is extremely melancholy.

Neje bakhim ev-eshiye,

Yarali konlum ushuye,

Toz burumush bosh beshiye

Shirin Layla chalan yokhdur. [Koroglu 2005: 330].

(Translation: *It is difficult to look at the house, My wounded soul is cold. The empty cradle covered in dust, No one plays sweet lullaby*)

Here the unique fragile love poems are the poetic expression of Koroglu - Nigar love. In general, Koroglu and Nigar’s love is observed in all chapters of the epic. Nigar is the mother of the nation, born from the spirit – desire, inner energy of folk, who passed through the fate of all fighters and women in Chanlibel. She is a symbol of the Ottoman Turkish Empire.

In the Uzbek version of the epic Yunus Peri is associated with extraterrestrial beings, but she is an image with the same character and function as Nigar in the Azerbaijani “Koroglu”. Along with them, in the versions of the epos there are other female characters who are wise, show the way to the heroes and become as a spiritual mother to the fighters. It is interesting that if in the Azerbaijani version the father Ali is a man who admonishes and guides the teenager Koroglu, then in the Turkmen-Uzbek versions this function is performed by his grandfather Jigali bey and stepmother Gulennam, who looked after him for many years. In accordance with the character of the heroic epic, in all versions and variants of the epos Koroglu, including the Azerbaijani and Uzbek versions, the first sign that women value when choosing their spouses is courage, heroism. Their proposal to marry Koroglu or his fighters (“if you are brave, come and take me!”) forms a heroic test. The hero must come to the enemy city and meet him, show heroism, fight with opponents and win.

One of the heroic women in the epic “Koroglu” in Azerbaijan is the image Telli, who wears the clothes of a wrestler in order to rescue Ashiq Jun from the dungeon, “dressed from the top and locked from the bottom, girds a sword, hangs a spear, takes a shield” [Koroglu 1965: 63]. She kills the dungeon guards alone and frees Koroglu’s ashig. Even at that time, she introduces herself as Koroglu and panics the city. “After that, when he tells about himself once, let him speak about us five times!” – telling it she sends regards to Koroglu. In many versions of the Azerbaijani epic there are even images of women fighting against Koroglu. One of them is observed in the epic “Koroglu and Aypara”, rejecting her love, she fights against Koroglu as an army warlord [Koroglu 2021:239].

Chanlibel is a society and a very just society, in which gender relations are maintained, which are a priority in our world. In the epic “Koroglu” a woman is a faithful friend, support, lover and the basis of a joint life of a man. The images “Nigar” in the epos get rid of the hometowns they represent, their ancestral native lands and enter Chanlibel with great pleasure and love. At the same time, the arrival of Nigar in Chanlibel is an expression in the epic language of the idea of the unification of Turkish hometowns under one flag.



Thanks for your attention!