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## RESEARCH ON THE EPIC OF EDIGEY IN TÜRKIYE

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**Abstract.** Objective: The aim of the research is to reveal the history of studies in Turkey on the Edigey Epic, one of the most important epics in the Turkish world, to introduce the published copies of the Edigey Epic, and to determine from which perspectives the epic was researched and what kind of conclusions were reached. Research materials: The source of the study consists of copies of the epic published in Turkey, master's and doctoral theses on the epic, and articles published in various scientific journals in Turkey on the subject.

Results and novelty of the research: As a result of the research, it was determined that the Tatar, Bashkir, Nogay, and Kazakh versions of the epic were published in Turkey, two master's and two doctoral theses were written on the Edigey Epic, and dozens of articles were written. Although the different versions of the Edigey Epic published in Turkey are attributed to different nations, in fact the subjects and heroes of all these publications are the same, and we see the differences only in the motives and cultural characteristics specific to these respective nations. As in many other fields, Tatar intellectuals were the first to research the epic in Turkey. On the other hand, articles written about the epic examine it in terms of history, literature, and language. These studies mostly attempt to reveal how the epic deals with the image of Edigey and Timur, the theme of homeland, weapons, steppe and steppe culture, birth-wedding-death, etc. In addition, some articles examine topics such as supernatural powers, mythological motives, and the functions of animals in the epic.

**Keywords:** Türkiye, epics, Epic of Edigey, Golden Horde, Tatars

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Historically, Turks have migrated from their homeland (today's Mongolia) to different geographies, made new homelands for themselves, and established new states there. As a result, different Turkish peoples continue to exist in Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Anatolia, Volga-Ural, Siberia, and the Balkans. Epics about their ancestors' glorious victories and difficult times play an essential role in the history and culture of all these peoples. It is possible to read the political history, migrations, and socio-cultural structures of different Turkish tribes in epics. While *the Epic of Oghuz Kagan* deals with the life of Oghuz Kagan, the legendary

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ancestor of the Turks, *the Epics of Ergenekon and Türeyiş (Turkic Creation Myth)* describe the re-establishment of the Turkish states. *The Migration Epic* talks about the dispersion of the Uyghurs after the collapse of the Uyghur State, and *the Epic of Manas* talks about the struggle for the existence of the Kyrgyz. The exciting thing is that, in addition to their epics, Turks have also been the subject of the epics of foreign peoples. For example, while *the Epic of Igor Company*, one of the first epics of the Russians, is about the struggle of the Russian princes (knezs) with the Kipchaks, one of the main characters of the German Nibelungen Epic is the European Hun ruler Attila. One of the most famous epics of the Turks is *the Epic of Edigey*. The reason for Edigey's fame is that first, the state to which the protagonist belongs, the Golden Horde, was one of the largest Turkish states of the Middle Ages and united many of today's Turkish peoples under one roof. The ancestors of the Volga-Ural Turks, Siberian Turks, Central Asian Turks, and even some Balkan Turks, especially the Tatars, were in the Golden Horde. Especially after the collapse of the USSR, when all these peoples were rewriting their history, more space began to be devoted to the legacy of the Golden Horde. Another reason why *the Epic of Edigey* is famous is that it was banned for a period. In the last years of the Second World War, the history of the Golden Horde was forbidden by the Soviet Union administration as it was considered objectionable. *The Edigey Epic* also became a symbol of this ban. It is understood that *the Edigey Epic* was one of the rare epics banned in history.

With the collapse of the USSR, this ban was lifted, and Golden Horde research accelerated worldwide, especially in Tatarstan. *The Edigey Epic* became popular again among the Turkish people. Türkiye is no exception in this context. The fact that the epic has been published many times in Türkiye and has been the subject of many articles can be explained by a few issues. Especially after the collapse of the USSR and until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, interest in Turkish history other than Seljuk and Ottoman history began to increase in Türkiye. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the contributions of many Tatar scientists (Yusuf Akçura, Sadri Maksudi Arsal, Ahmet Temir, Ayaz İshakî, Zübeyir Koşay, Akdes Nimet Kurat, etc.), research on Turkish history outside Anatolia, especially the history of Volga-Ural, gained momentum in Türkiye, while at the start of the Cold War, research in this field was interrupted. After 1991, it started to attract attention again. The second reason is that Türkiye has made significant progress in publishing and researching epics in recent years. While all the epics were published separately, the Turkish Language Society published the Tatar, Bashkir, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Khakas, etc. epics as a corpus. Within the framework of this research, a separate place was allocated to *the Epic of Edigey*. The third reason is the content of the Edigey Epic. Tokhtamysh Khan, one of the protagonists of the epic -although this subject is not discussed in the epic- was also one of the allies of the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid during his fight against Temur. Therefore, the Temur-Tokhtamysh struggle and all sources related to the subject are closely followed in Türkiye.

What distinguishes the Edigey Epic from other epics in epic publications and research in Türkiye is that it is attributed to different peoples. For example, while the Migration Epic is accepted as the epic of the Uyghurs and the Manas Epic is the epic of the Kyrgyz, the Edigey Epic has variants of Tatar, Bashkir, Nogay, etc. This is because, as mentioned above, all these people are within the Golden Horde.

The first publication of the Edigey Epic in Türkiye is the Tatar variant of the epic written by Dr. Rüstem Sulti [8]. The text published by Rüstem Sulti is based on the copy prepared in Tatar Turkish by Tatar scholar Naki İsenbet. This work by Sulti is his doctoral thesis, which he defended at Ege University in 1998 [17].

In the introduction of this study, Sulti discusses topics such as epic types, Tatar narrative tradition, the place of the Edigey epic in this tradition, and studies on the Edigey epic. [8, p. 11–34]. The text consists of a Tatar part with Cyrillic letters, a Turkish transcription, and a Turkish translation. While explaining the studies on *the Epic of Edigey*, Sulti states that the Crimean Tatar Hacı Osman Ataoğlu, who lived in the Harmana village near Ankara in Türkiye in the 1950s, found a written variant and that it was later published in German [5] by Saadet Çağatay [8, p. 31].

Bashkir variants of the epic were published several times in Türkiye. In 2017, Mustafa Arslan published the Bashkir variant under the name *Historical Epic of Bashkir Turks, İdigey and Moradım (İzeükey Minen Moradım)* [4]. This publication is based on Burangulov's publication. It would have been more accurate for Mustafa Arslan to have said "Bashkir variant of the epic" instead of "The epic of the Bashkirs" in the title.

Like Rüstem Sulti, Mustafa Arslan deals with topics such as Bashkir Turks and the epic tradition, studies on the epic, content features of the epic, and types in the epic in the introduction before giving the text of the epic. The book's epic text is given in Latin letters, in Bashkir, and Turkish.

Göksel Öztürk also published this copy of Burangulov in 2023 [14]. This study is Göksel Öztürk's doctoral thesis, published as a book (2001) [15]. In his thesis study, Öztürk, in addition to the publication of the text, also discussed the development of Bashkir Turkish as a written language, sound, and sound events through the epic text. In his book study, he deals with the Bashkir copies of the epic and the studies on the epic in Bashkortostan. Öztürk also gives the text of the epic in Bashkir and Turkish in Latin letters.

A few variants of *the Epic of Edigey* were published in the third volume of the 4-volume work titled *Bashkir Epics*, also published by the Turkish Language Association: *İdige and Muradım* [9]; *İdege (The Fairy Tale Version)* [10].

The Nogay Turks variant of *the Epic of Edigey* has also been published. The variant that is the subject of the study titled *Edige, the Heroic Epic of the Nogay Turks (Introduction-Text-Quotation-Grammatical Index)*, published by Mustafa Yıldız in 2016, is the text included in Haşim Sikaliev's book titled *Nogay's Forty Batyrs*, published in 1991 [22]. In the introduction part of his work, Mustafa Yıldız gives information about Nogay folklore and epics, Tokhtamysh Khan-Edigey relations, and the variants of the Epic of Edigey. Then, he provides the epic text in Nogay and Turkish in Latin letters. In 2020, the Kazakh (Cokan Velihanov) copy of the epic was published [7]. Kazakh and Turkish texts are given together in this publication.

In addition to the text publication, another study that deals with the variants and content of the Edigey epic is the book titled *The Epic of Edige: Effects of a Heroic Tradition, Content, and Formation*, written by Andrea Scmitz and translated into Turkish by Can Bulut [16]. By comparing five Nogay, three West Siberian, seven Kazakh, one Karakalpak, and one Crimean Tatar variant of the epic, the author tries

to reveal the structure and content of the Edigey Epic and to identify the image of Edigey among the Turkish people.

As Andrea Scmitz puts it, although there are different variants of *the Epic of Edigey* and this epic is attributed to different nations, the subject and heroes of all these publications are the same. On the other hand, we find the differences in the epic only in the motives and cultural characteristics specific to all these peoples.

In addition to book studies, the Edigey Epic has also been the subject of master's and doctoral theses. Moreover, in the doctoral theses of Rüstem Sulti and Göksel Öztürk mentioned above, Nezih Tatlıcan wrote *Mythology and Historicity in Edigey-Centered Epic Narratives (Bashkir-Kazakh-Tatar)* [19] focusing on the Edigey Epic and Shyryn Kozhabekova *Edige Epics Edition Critique (Integrated New Text)* [12] that they wrote master's theses titled "detection". In addition to book studies, *the Edigey Epic* has also been the subject of master's and doctoral theses. In his thesis, Tatlıcan focuses on *the Edigey Epic* and examines the elements of mythology and historicity in the Tatar, Bashkir, and Kazakh epics. In his thesis, Kozhabekova introduces 61 variants of the epic belonging to the Tatars, Bashkirs, Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, Nogays, Uzbeks, and Turkmens, and then includes the Turkish translation of the Erpolat Rayymberdioglu variant of the Karakalpak Turks.

The Epic of Edigey has been the subject of many studies. In our research on the subject, it was determined that 11 articles were published in Türkiye. Alper Alp focuses on the image of Temur in the epic in his article titled "The Image of Temur in the İdegey Epic" [1]. The author, who discusses it more according to Sulti's publication, states that Temur is generally portrayed negatively in the epic. According to Alper Alp, in the epic, it is emphasized that Tokhtamysh looks down on Temur and that he is superior in terms of status, and it is stated in the epic that although Temur is a powerful ruler, his rule is not legitimate. Although it is written that Tokhtamysh and Edigey were also wrong, the most important reason for the collapse of the Golden Horde is Temur, according to Epic [1, p. 80–81].

Zekiye Tunç, in her article titled "Homeland Theme in the Edigey Epic (According to Tatar and Bashkir Variants)" discussed the theme of homeland in the epic. After summarizing the epic in her article, Tunç compares the Tatar and Bashkir variants, gives information about Edigey Mirza, and finally deals with the subject of love and longing for the homeland in the epic and gives examples on the subject [20]. For example, when Edigey took shelter with Temur, Edigey explained to him that he had left his homeland as follows:

*I left my own father. From the safe homeland within the Volga  
I left my Volga,  
I left my own state.  
From my son, Norad,  
I left the light in my eyes* [20, p. 700].

There are many examples of longing for the homeland in the epic. In general, Edigey fought a great struggle to protect his native lands, Volga and Ural, from enemies. Edigey described his homeland as a "luminous homeland" and a "holy homeland" It is understood from this that Edigey placed his homeland at sacred level [20, p. 713]. İklil Kurban in his article titled "The Epic of İdegey and the Identity of the Epic Hero İdegey", provides general information about both the epic and its hero Edigey [13].

The weapons used to defend the homeland are as important as the theme of the homeland. In her article titled “Weapons in the Epic of Edigeý” Gülhan Atnur discusses the weapons mentioned in the epic, based on the Tatar version of the epic. However, the rule in epics is clear, and Edigeý mentions this rule twice:

*“To beat the unarmed, to kill the sleeping ones*

*It is the work of the weak person, it is the work of the vile person.”* [3, p. 219–220].

The epic describes battle scenes in detail: war flags are raised (Turkish-tug-), horsemen or foot soldiers are prepared, cannons are fired, and Temur’s elephants are lined up [3, p. 220]. The author states that mace, whip, lasso, spear, axe, knife, arrow, armor, and, of course, the sword is frequently mentioned in the epic during the Civil War and the fight against Temur. It is written that Edigeý, like many other heroes, used a Damascus sword [3, p. 220–225]. It is emphasized in the epic that the weapons were made of real steel. This once again points to the sanctity of blacksmithing among the Turks. Some weapons are decorated with gold, indicating the nobility of the owner [3, p. 229].

Gülhan Atnur, in another article about the Edigeý Epic “The Book of Dede Korkut and the First Representatives of the Tradition of Bard and Yıravlık in the Edigeý Epic” [2], compares *the Epic of Edigeý* with *the Book of Dede Korkut*, another famous work of the Turks, and explains the poetic and yırav characteristics in these two works. Examines the traditions.

One of the topics discussed within the framework of the Edigeý Epic studies in Türkiye is steppe and nomadic life. Çolpan Zaripova Çetin examines steppe life and traditions in her article “Steppe and Nomadic Life in the Tatar Epic İdegeý” [23]. According to the author, the steppe they call *Dala* is, on the one hand, a vast place where Khans and people live, where many Turkish tribes migrate from one end to the other, and where commercial caravans pass, and on the other hand, it is a frightening and brutal battlefield [23, p. 320–321]. The horse and the hunting bird, which are indispensable parts of the steppe, also constitute important elements of *the Edigeý Epic*. While the events in the epic revolve around a bird of prey, depictions of horses also give important clues about their owners [23, p. 321–322]. All areas of steppe life are discussed in the epic: tents, food culture, horses, steppe animals, clothing, musical instruments (Turkish music instruments: kopuz, saz, zurna, drum, dombra), traditions regarding birth and death [23, p. 322–328].

Çolpan Zaripova Çetin has another article about the Edigeý Epic: “Transitional Periods in the Tatar Folk Epic İdegeý” [24]. In this article, the author discusses the customs and traditions related to birth, wedding, and death in the epic. Birth-related customs include having the child’s shoulder blade examined; scattering gold coins; making mares mature by slaughtering mares that have not given birth; giving a name; and expelling the fleeing enemy; It includes preparing a crib. [24, p. 129–138]. Wedding customs are described as follows: the bride coming to the groom’s house and bowing to her father-in-law and mother-in-law to show her respect; the bride taking the bowl full of honey and drinking it; Veil knitting and draping [24, p. 138–142]. Funeral traditions include practices such as washing the dead and making kurgans (building graves). [24, p. 142–144].

Epics, in addition to covering the main events in the political history of states and providing important information on socio-cultural issues, also have mythologi-

cal elements. Some of the studies on *the Edigey Epic* in Türkiye examine the epic from this perspective. In this context, mentioning Gumru Shahriar's article [18] is necessary. In her article titled "Religious-Mythological Motifs in the Edigey Epic" Shahriar, on the one hand, gives examples of mythological motifs in the epic (for example, the event of being born from a fairy girl or the Kara Tiyin Alp (symbol), on the other hand, she emphasizes that Edigey is a Muslim, and in this context, he emphasizes Beytullah, the Hereafter, it examines religious elements such as Heaven, Hell, and Azrael.

In his article, Yaşar Kalafat examines the extraordinary characters based on Rustem Sulti's publication of the epic. Chief among these are the fairy girl, Edigey's mother, and Kara Tiyin Alp, from whom Edigey saved Temur's daughter. [11]. Ramilya Yarullina Yıldırım and Çetin Yıldız, in their article titled "Functions of Animals in the Edigey Epic" [21], write that animals are used as elements of simile and allusion in the epic. They state that animals represent strength and bravery, beauty and grace, cowardice and helplessness, experience, and old age in the epic.

Like other epics, the Edigey Epic also contains proverbs. Fahri Dağı mentions 48 proverbs in his article titled "Some Proverbs Identified in the Edigey Epic" [6]. The author examined the proverbs he identified in the epic within the framework of the headings: forgiveness, the mortality of the world, life experience, bravery, unity and solidarity, cowardice and evil, wisdom and virtue, raising children, love of the country, time and the importance of time, state administration, bad words and gossip, and proverbs about lineage and social status. According to the author, the proverbs in the epic contain ethical values that statesmen should have, such as forgiving, not inclining towards worldly possessions, bravery, wisdom, love of nation and homeland, making good use of time, and raising children, which suit the Alpine type [6, p. 318].

**Conclusion.** The process of publishing and researching the epics of the Turkish world has accelerated in Türkiye in recent years. In Türkiye, all the epics of the Turkish world have been published many times separately, and the epics have been the subject of different studies. Unlike in the past, it is seen that historians are increasingly referring to epics and using epics as sources. In recent years, one of the most researched epics in Türkiye is *the Epic of Edigey*. The Edigey Epic has attracted the attention of Turkish researchers in many aspects. The Edigey Epic, which has been a symbol of prohibition for many years, is also the common historical and literary heritage of many Turkish people. The epic has variants of Tatar, Bashkir, Kazakh, Karakalpak, Nogay.

Tatar researcher Rustem Sulti started *the Edigey Epic* research in Türkiye. The Naki İsenbet variant of the epic, which he published in Tatar and Turkish in Türkiye in 1998, initiated interest in *the Edigey Epic*, and its publication became the subject of many researchers. In general, it should be said that scholars of Tatar origin in Türkiye played an essential role in the research of the Golden Horde, Tatar history, and the Turkish states and tribes in the north of the Black Sea and brought many primary sources into Turkish.

After the Tatar variant of the epic was published in Türkiye, Bashkir, Nogay, and Kazakh variants were also published. Also, two master's and two doctoral theses were written about *the Edigey Epic*. Although there are different variants of *the Edigey Epic*, and this epic is attributed to various nations, the subject and he-

roles of all of these publications are the same, and we see the differences only in the motifs and cultural characteristics specific to all these people.

Although it seems that the *Epic of Edigey* attracts the attention of linguists mostly when looking at master's and doctoral theses, historians, art historians, and cultural history researchers have also started to conduct studies on the epic in recent years. As a matter of fact, according to our research, 10 articles about *the Epic of Edigey* were written in Türkiye. These studies have mostly tried to reveal how subjects such as the image of Temur, the theme of homeland, weapons, steppe, steppe culture, birth, wedding, and death are handled in the epic. In addition, subjects such as extraordinary powers, mythological motifs, and the functions of animals in the epic were also examined in the articles. It is understood that interest in the Edigey Epic will gradually increase in Türkiye. In this context, publishing all variants as a corpus and writing a monograph covering all epic aspects is essential.

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## ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ЭПОСА «ИДЕГЕЙ» В ТУРЦИИ

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**Резюме.** Цель исследования – раскрыть историю исследования эпоса «Идегей», одного из важнейших эпосов тюркского мира, в Турции, познакомить читателя с опубликованными рукописями эпоса, а также выявить какие темы в эпосе больше всего привлекает внимание турецких исследователей.

Материалы исследования: экземпляры эпоса, изданные в Турции, магистерские и докторские диссертации, связанные с эпосом, а также статьи, опубликованные по данной теме в различных научных журналах Турции.

Результаты и научная новизна: В результате исследования установлено, что в Турции изданы татарский, башкирский, ногайский и казахский варианты эпоса, написаны две кандидатские и две докторские диссертации, а также десятки статей. Хотя разные варианты эпоса, изданных в Турции, приписываются разным народам, сюжет и герои всех этих изданий одни и те же, а различия мы видим лишь в мотивах и культурных особенностях, свойственных всем этим народам. Как и во многих других областях, первыми, кто исследовал эпос в Турции, были татарские интеллектуалы. С другой стороны, статьи, написанные об эпосе, рассматривают эпос с исторической, литературной и лингвистической точки зрения. В этих исследованиях в основном пытались выявить, как раскрываются в эпосе такие сюжеты, как образ Идегея и Тимура, тема родины, оружия, степи и степной культуры, рождения-свадьбы-смерти. Кроме того, в написанных статьях также рассматривались такие темы, как чрезвычайные силы, мифологические мотивы и функции животных в эпосе.

**Ключевые слова:** Турция, эпос, эпос «Идегей», Золотая Орда, татары

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