

*Emine Erdoğan Özünlü\**

**SOME OPINIONS CONCERNING ARMOUR CONCEPT**

*Эмине Ердоган Озунлу*

**НЕКОТОРЫЕ МНЕНИЯ ПО ПОВОДУ КОНЦЕПЦИИ БРОНЯ**

УДК:327.5

*It is a self-evident truth that traces of historical, military and cultural heritage of Central Asia subsist in Ottoman Empire. One of these traces is "armour", a dress made up of iron and wire plates which is worn to protect from weapons like arrow, sword, bolt etc. In this study, by taking into consideration Kyrgyz and Ottoman armies, armour and terms explaining armour will be emphasised.*

**Key words:** *Turks, Central Asia, Ottoman, Armour.*

**Introduction**

As a well known fact, Turks used to utilize light weapons like arrow, bow and sword widely and efficiently since the ancient times. Interaction with various cultures in throughout history enlarged the range of weapons used. It is possible to observe this fact in Ottoman army. While using weapons such as rifle, kargı (bolt), cıda gönder, spear, staff (mace, war clup), merlin, catapult, hatchet, knife and dagger in order to combat, need for defence is taken into consideration and in this respect shield, tolga<sup>1</sup> (war helmet) and armour are used<sup>2</sup>.

As a Persian term, armour<sup>3</sup> has become a general name for protection suit used by a number of race and states in the east and west especially Turks in order to protect from drilling war equipments like sword, arrow and bolt. On the other hand, although raw materials of armours differ in types (metal, leather, cloth), a number of different names were used to represent this defence garment. Yarık, soot (sovut), olupok, kübö, çarayna, şarpıldak, cebe and bürüme are some of these examples.

**About armour**

It is possible to insert that two kinds of armour were used widely in ancient Turks. One of them was called "kübö yarık" and the other one was called "say yarık". "Kübö yarık" referred to the armour type which covered whole body, whereas "say yarık" was a term used to imply only iron breastplate<sup>4</sup>.

In related literature, kübö is defined as "arrow-proof ton", namely outfit<sup>5</sup>. Besides, this term was used to indicate precious and expensive outfits. The reason for such identification is the fact that kübö was made up of cotton and sewed with thick silk cloth. In middle age, only those with financial power were able to wear a dress as such. Thus, kübö was classified in itself according to its quality as Ak Kübö, Kök Kübö, Kıl Kübö and Kübö Ton<sup>6</sup>.

In Epic of Manas, belonging to Kyrgyz Turks, term "kübö" was mentioned. Despite not being defined precisely and clearly in the epic, there were considerable information about war garments and equipments. Accordingly, "kübö" which was sewed with thick silk cloth using cotton and "olpök"<sup>7</sup> which was made up of thick silk and used as an armour, were among soldier harness. Also in the epic, a garment called "çalbar" which was made from leather of wild goat as another soldier harness<sup>8</sup>. Apart from these, according to the epic, Kyrgyz people used to use "çarana"<sup>9</sup> which was a breastplate made up of metal plates and also another armour "şarpılдаğı"<sup>10</sup> which was made up of leather. They used shields to get protected from arrows and swords and in order to protect their heads they utilize a helmet called "tuulga". In the Epic of Manas, it is seen that women had a profound role in production of soldier harnesses and equipments. According to the epic, Kanıkey –wife of Manas- provided soldier harnesses for forty çoro of Manas<sup>11</sup>.

\* Assist. Prof. Dr., Kyrgyzstan-Turkey "Manas" University, Faculty of Literature, Department of History, Academic Member.

<sup>1</sup> Şemseddin Sâmî, *Kâmûs-i Türkî*, İstanbul 1317, s.685.

<sup>2</sup> Aydın Taneri, *Osmanlı Kara ve Deniz Kuvvetleri (Kuruluş Devri)*, Ankara 1982, p.176.; Salim Koca, "Eski Türklerde Devlet Geleneği ve Teşkilât", *Türkler*, Vol 2, Yeni Türkiye yay., Ankara 2002, p.838.

<sup>3</sup> A.Taneri, *Osmanlı Kara ve Deniz Kuvvetleri*, p.176.

<sup>4</sup> S.Koca, "Eski Türklerde Devlet Geleneği ve Teşkilât", p.838.

<sup>5</sup> B.M. Yunusaliev, *Manas*, 2.Kitep, Frunze 1959, p.314.

<sup>6</sup> *Manas Entsiklopediya*, I, Bişkek 1995, p.359.

<sup>7</sup> K.K.Yudahin, *Kırgız Sözlüğü*, (Türkçeye çev. Abdullah Taymas), Vol II, Ankara 1998, p.590.

<sup>8</sup> Saul Matveyeviç Abramzon, *Kırgız cana Kırgızstan Tarihi Boyunca Tandalma Emgekter*, Bişkek 1999, p.553

<sup>9</sup> Ayrıca bkz. K.K.Yudahin, *Kırgız Sözlüğü*, (Türk-çeye çev. Abdullah Taymas), Vol I, Ankara 1998, p.253.

<sup>10</sup> K.K.Yudahin, *Kırgız Sözlüğü*, Vol II, p.681.

<sup>11</sup> S. M. Abramzon, *Kırgız cana Kırgızstan Tarihi...*, p.557-558.

In the epic, while there was some information about physical powers of Manas who was described as a baatur (hero), there was also information about his garments, weapons and his horse<sup>12</sup>. The armour of Manas, “Ak kübö”, was obviously a symbol for his bravery, his power, his reign and his prosperity. This fact was articulated in the epic as such:

“The horse he’s riding, Ak Kula  
The garment he’s wearing, Ak Kübö  
Ak kula, not equal to any horses  
Ak Kübö, not vulnerable to any arrows”<sup>13</sup>

Among Kyrgyz, along with the term “kübö”, also the term “soot”<sup>14</sup> was used to indicate armour. In dictionaries, meaning of soot is “chain armour”. Here what is meant to indicate is obviously the armour produced via combining chain rings. However, we can understand from a saying in Kyrgyz public folklore; “Ak soot has collar with no sleeves, true words have pain with no hostility” that this garment has a collar with no collars<sup>15</sup>.

In Ottoman military organization and culture, armour presents a more complex structure. In Ottoman Empire, armour used to consist of a combination of such parts as helmet (tulga) to protect head, armoured breastplate to put on, brassard, gloves and knee pad, and this combination was called “armour suit”<sup>16</sup>.

One of the most common terms used to indicate armour was “cebe”. This term is defined as “*armour worn at war*”<sup>17</sup> and it is possible to come across with various implications in related literature about this Mongolian term. There have been various expressions in the work, *Secret History of Mongols*, firstly defined as “*war equipment, weapon*”<sup>18</sup>, also defined as such “*armour made in round shape*” or “*cevşen (armour), not in a single piece, sometimes leather sweater*”<sup>19</sup>, and “*armour of a single piece and worn for protecting against enemy attacks in battle, thick leather cloth*”<sup>20</sup>. The word cebe was generally used as cevşen along with “cebe vü cevşen”<sup>21</sup>. However, there is no trace of such expression<sup>22</sup>.

Cebeci was called as “zeredkaş” among Mamelukes and as “bektar” by Ottomans at the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of 16<sup>th</sup> century. Referring the name cebe, the organisation for producing weapons and other war equipments for janissaries was called as “Cebeci organisation”. Today the word cephan (cebehane or ammunition) comes from this relation<sup>23</sup>.

One of various armour types used by Ottomans is “bürüme”. It is highly possible that bürüme originated from Turkish verb “bürüme, sarmak” (to cover up, wrap)<sup>24</sup>. According to Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, bürüme is one of the wraps covering helmet and it took this name because it was wrapped over the head and later on called as “wrapping turban”, also people having feudal more than 3 thousand lucre wrapped these turbans<sup>25</sup>. However, concerning the fact that armour covers up the body of a soldier against enemy attacks, the word bürüme (wrap) seems to identify armour clearly. On the other hand, according to Nicoara Beldiceanu bürüme was a type of armour<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> V. M. Jirmunskiy, *Türkşkiy Geroişeskiy Epos*, Leningrad 1974, p.56-57.

<sup>13</sup> Naciye Yıldız, *Manas Destanı (W.Radloff) ve Kırgız Kültürü ile İlgili Tespit ve Tahliller*, Ankara 1995, p.141-142, 598-599.

<sup>14</sup> Gülzura Cumakunova, *Türkçe-Kırgızca Sözlük*, Bişkek 2005, p.993.

<sup>15</sup> K.K.Yudahin, *Kırgızsko-Rusşkiy Slovar*, Vol I, Moskva 1956, p.655.

<sup>16</sup> Hilmi Aydın, *Sultanların Silahları*, Topkapı Sarayı Silah Koleksiyonu, Ankara 2007, p.113.

<sup>17</sup> Tuncer Gülensoy, “Moğolların Gizli Tarihi’ndeki Türkçe Kelimeler Üzerine Bir Deneme”, *Türkoloji Dergisi*, V/1 (1973), p.101.

<sup>18</sup> *Moğolların Gizli Tarihi*, Mangol-un Niuça Tobça’an (Yüan-Ch’ao Pi-shi), (Yazılışı:1240) (Çev. Ahmet Temir), Ankara 1995, p.75, 236.; Ahmet Temir, “Türkçe ile Moğolca Arasındaki İlgiler”, *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol XIII, No 1-2 (Mart-Haziran 1955), p.2-25.

<sup>19</sup> Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Vol I, İstanbul 1993, p.261-262.

<sup>20</sup> Midhat Sertoğlu, *Osmanlı Tarih Lügâtı*, İstanbul 1986, p.61.

<sup>21</sup> M.Z.Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri...*, Vol I, p.261-262.; Bu hususta ayrıca bkz.İ.Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, “Cebeci”, *İA*, Vol 3, p.35-36.

<sup>22</sup> “*zu’âmâ ve erbâb-ı timârı dahi kanûn üzere cebe vü cevşen ve cebelüleriyle müretteb ü mükemmel düşman yarağıyle maal alup gidüp müşarünileyh serdara teslim eylesin*” bkz. Mehmet Ali Ünal, *Mühimme Defteri 44*, Akademi Kitabevi, İzmir 1995, p.16. Benzer örnekler için aynı eser, p. 20, 28, 36, 116, 117, 118, 163.

<sup>23</sup> Bu hususta detaylı bilgi için bkz. M. Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri...*, Vol I, p.261-262.; Ayrıca bkz.İ.Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, “Cebeci”, p.35-36.; Yasemin Kılıçaslan, “Cebeci”, *DİA*, Vol 7, p.182.

<sup>24</sup> *XIII.Asırdan Günümüze Kadar Kitaplardan Taranmış Tanıklarıyla Tarama Sözlüğü*, II, İstanbul 1945, p.187.

<sup>25</sup> Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Vol I, İstanbul 1993, p.250.

<sup>26</sup> Nicoara Beldiceanu, *XIV. Yüzyıldan XVI. Yüzyıla Osmanlı Devleti’nde Tımar*, (Terc. M.Ali Kılıçbay), Ankara 1985, p.88.

In certain Turkish dialects, also, *bürüme* bears the same meaning. The fact that there is *bürüme*, cover up<sup>27</sup> word in Turkish dialects and in Kyrgyz language there is “*katlamak*”<sup>28</sup> (fold up) verb, namely there is “*bürmölö*” word which means “covering by wrapping” prefigures that this word has central Asian roots. Also another fact strengthens this possibility; that there is a collar type chosen by elder women in Kyrgyz people which is called “*bürmö caka*” namely “*a dress type sewed by swapping its collar*”<sup>29</sup>.

There has not been enough information concerning quality and characteristics of armour called *bürüme* in literature. However especially in compositions books about 15<sup>th</sup> century, it is possible to come across with record related to this term<sup>30</sup>. As a known fact, feudal people were obliged to supply *cebelü* for the state. *Cebelü*, a word related to *cebe*, was used as “*armoured soldier*”<sup>31</sup>. Those *Cebelü* group were slaved bought by cavalryman in cash or those captured during war. Annual income of cavalryman used to be about 1.000-19.999 lucre according to his service degree. And cavalryman had to grow a *cebelü* for each 3.000 of that amount<sup>32</sup>. In this sense, *bürüme* is term referring to own armours of huge feudal owners<sup>33</sup>. According to some record confirmed, cavalryman with annual income of 3,000 lucre would come to campaign armoured and having bring armoured soldiers, as written as “*their bürüme and one cebelü*”<sup>34</sup>.

#### Features of Armours and Their Usage

Discoveries of Y. S. Hudyakov who has been carrying out research on ancient Turks’ war equipment showed us that there were arrows, bows, iron arrowheads used for long distances, sharp cavalry swords and armours used for protections in battles, and these were inherited from Avars and Aşina family reign period located in Mountainous Altay area. According to information given by him, armour found in Berel area of Mountainous Altay was arranged by wrapping iron plates with a leather belt; moreover between 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries spangled armoured shirts used for defence at wars were covered on the body with leather belts<sup>35</sup>.

Along with Y. S. Hudyakov, M. B. Gorelik also provides interesting information concerning armours. According to his findings, iron and thick leathers were used for armour production among Central Asian nomadic tribes. Yet, animal skin gained a wooden solidity after it dried. In armour made from leather, plates of a hand size were prepared and by boring 8 holes around very strong belts were prepared. Putting belts in a ladder structure, thinner girders were connected with other plates. When plated got cleaned, even people could see their reflections<sup>36</sup>. There were two types of armour: Lameryar (metal, leather) and laminar (metal)<sup>37</sup>. Such garments had been used till the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century in Central and Eastern Asia especially in Mongolia, Tibet, China and Japan<sup>38</sup>.

When it comes to armours used in Ottoman Empire, Ottoman armours bear a great deal of resemblance to Mameluke armours in form and material in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Generally chain sewing style was used in Ottoman armours. Front, under-arm and back sides of the armour were strengthen with long rectangular steel plates. Moreover, for protection of arms they inserted “*kolçak*” (brassard) between elbow and wrist. These kinds of chain sewed armours were more useful when compared with European armours. These armours provided more mobility and got less heated and allow body to take air through holes. Also one could wear other clothes in order to get protected from cold weather. After 17<sup>th</sup> century, completely chain-sewed armours were in demand<sup>39</sup>.

#### General Evaluation

As indicated above, Central Asian nomadic tribes especially Turks used to utilize various protective garments as a means of protection from weapons at battles throughout related historical period. While some of those garments were produced from animal skins, according to financial power status they consist of chain rings or iron plates. However, it is good to mention that both as a sign of cultural durability and as a result of its ease of use and lightness, in Ottomans armours, called knitted armours and made through chain rings, were more

<sup>27</sup> H.A.Baskakova-B.A.Karrieva vd, *Turkmencko-Rucckiy Slovar*, Moskva 1968, p.123.

<sup>28</sup> *Kırgız Tilinin Sözdüğü*, Bişkek 2010, p.287.

<sup>29</sup> I am thankful to my dearest colleague, Dr. Roza Abdikulova for supplying this information and translating Russian and Kyrgyz text.

<sup>30</sup> *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Maliyeden Müdevver Defter*, No.9, v.27 a. (It will be abbreviated as BOA).

<sup>31</sup> N. Beldiceanu, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Tımar*, p.88.

<sup>32</sup> N. Beldiceanu, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Tımar*, p.88.

<sup>33</sup> Halil İnalçık, *Devlet-i 'Alıyye, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Üzerine Araştırmalar-I*, İstanbul 2009, p.30.

<sup>34</sup> BOA-MAD-9, v.16 a, 24b.

<sup>35</sup> For further info concerning armours: Yuliy S.Hudyakov, “Eski Türklerde Silah”, (Çev.Dildar Atmaca), *Türkler*, Vol 3, Ankara 2002, p.470-475.

<sup>36</sup> M.B. Gorelik, *Ranniy Mongolskiy Docpeh*, Novosibirsk, 1987, p.172-173.

<sup>37</sup> M.B. Gorelik, *Ranniy Mongolskiy Docpeh*, s.178.; V. Butanayev- Y. Hudyakov, *İstoriya Yeniseyskiy Kırgızov*, Abakan 2000, p.134-135.

<sup>38</sup> M.B. Gorelik, *Ranniy Mongolskiy Docpeh*, p.165.

<sup>39</sup> H. Aydın, “Sultanların Silahları”, p. 34.

widely used. Moreover, in time these knitted armours gained a more complex structure and armours, helmets reached their artisanal peaks with little ornament implemented in them.

Armours were also used to refer a symbol for domination and power. Especially nations using armours made up of metal gained more success in dominating rivals in battlefields comparing other nations. However throughout Eurasian History, the power, which had established empires in the middle of nomadic tribes and which dominated other settled nations, is the armoured cavalry army<sup>40</sup>. Owning a real military unit, namely armoured cavalry army, was equal to dominate various tribes and domineer them. In this respect, Turks who were dominators of Eurasia managed to carry out this success to the farthest points of Asia and even to lands of Balkans and Europe.

#### Bibliography:

1. Abramzon, Saul Matveyeviç (1999), *Kırgız cana Kırgızstan Tarihi Boyunca Tandalma Emgekter*, Bişkek.
2. Aydın, Hilmi (2007), *Sultanların Silahları*, Topkapı Sarayı Silah Koleksiyonu, Ankara.
3. Baskakova, H.A. -B.A.Karrieva vd. (1968), *Turkmencko-Rucckiy Slovar*, Moskva.
4. *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Maliyeden Müdevver Defter*, No.9.
5. Beldiceanu, Nicoara (1985), *XIV. Yüzyıldan XVI. Yüzyıla Osmanlı Devleti'nde Timar*, (Terc. M.Ali Kılıçbay), Ankara.
6. Butanayev, V. - Y. Hudyakov (2000), *Istoriya Yeniseyskih Kırgızov*, Abakan.
7. Cumakunova, Güلزura (2005), *Türkçe-Kırgızca Sözlük*, Bişkek.
8. Gorelik, M.B. (1987), *Ranniy Mongolskiy Docpeh*, Novosibirsk.
9. Gülensoy, Tuncer (1973), "Moğolların Gizli Tarihi'ndeki Türkçe Kelimeler Üzerine Bir Deneme", *Türkoloji Dergisi*, V/1, p.93-105.
10. Hudyakov, Y. S. (1997), *Voorujeniye Koçevnikov Yujnoy Sibiri i Zentralnoy Azii v Epohu Srednevekovyya*, Novosibirsk.
11. Hudyakov, Y. S. (2002), "Eski Türklerde Silah", (Çev.Dildar Atmaca), *Türkler*, Vol 3, Ankara, p.468-477.
12. Jirmunskiy, V. M. (1974), *Turkskiy Geroičeskiy Epos*, Leningrad.
13. Kılıçaslan, Yasemin, "Cebeci", *DİA*, Vol 7, p.182-183.
14. İnalçık, Halil (2009), *Devlet-i 'Aliyye, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Üzerine Araştırmalar-I*, İstanbul.
15. *Kırgız Tilinin Sözdüğü*, Bişkek 2010.
16. Koca, Salim (2002), "Eski Türklerde Devlet Geleneği ve Teşkilât", *Türkler*, Vol 2, Yeni Türkiye yay., Ankara, p.823-844.
17. *Manas Ensiklopediya*, I, Bişkek 1995.
18. *Moğolların Gizli Tarihi: Mangol-un Niuça Tobça'an (Yüan-Ch'ao Pi-shi)* (1240), (1995), (Çev. Ahmet Temir), Ankara.
19. Pakalın, Mehmet Zeki (1993), *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Vol I, İstanbul.
20. Sertoğlu, Midhat (1986), *Osmanlı Tarih Lügâtı*, İstanbul.
21. Şemseddin Sâmî (1317), *Kâmûs-i Türkî*, İkdâm Matbaası, İstanbul.
22. Taneri, Aydın (1982), *Osmanlı Kara ve Deniz Kuvvetleri (Kuruluş Devri)*, Ankara.
23. Temir, Ahmet (1955), "Türkçe ile Moğolca Arasındaki İlgiler", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol XIII, No 1-2 (Mart-Haziran), p.2-25.
24. Uzunçarşılı, İ.Hakkı, "Cebeci", *İA*, Vol 3, p.35-36.
25. Ünal, Mehmet Ali (1995), *Mühimme Defteri 44*, İzmir.
26. *XIII.Asırdan Günümüze Kadar Kitaplardan Taranmış Tanıklarıyla Tarama Sözlüğü*, II, İstanbul 1945.
27. Yıldız, Naciye (1995), *Manas Destanı (W.Radloff) ve Kırgız Kültürü ile İlgili Tespit ve Tahliller*, Ankara.
28. Yudahin, K.K. (1956), *Kırgızsko-Russkiy Slovar*, Vol I, Moskva.
29. Yudahin, K.K., *Kırgız Sözlüğü*, (Çev.Abdullah Taymas), Vol I-II, Ankara 1998.
30. Yunusaliev, B.M. (1959), *Manas*, 2.Kitep, Frunze.

Рецензент: д.и.н. Чотаева Ч.К.

<sup>40</sup> H. İnalçık, *Devlet-i 'Aliyye*, p.29-30.