

About a Monument of “Dayan Baatar”

D. Erdenebaatar

The monument known among the Mongols as “the hero Dayan” is near the lake Dayan in the territory of Sagsai Somon, in the Bayan-Ulgii province of West Mongolia. This monument belongs to the ancient history of the Turks. A Russian traveller, Potanin G. N, first noted this monument and recorded it in archaeological science under its current name.

Later on, during the studies of the enigma of the monument of “Dayan Baatar”, a wrong conclusion was formed about the talisman of this monument, on the basis of information about the mutual influence of the culture and religion of the west and east. And this wrong conclusion still continues today. Therefore, I would like to make a little correction. The Turks practised shamanism and at the same time they had intended to spread the Buddhist and Christian religions in ancient times. This is the reason why some researchers are mistaken, and considered their talisman as the Christian cross. In fact, it is not a Christian cross, nor is it evidence that there was an attempt to spread the Christian religion. This talisman is not a cross but a figure of a flying bird. Maybe this talisman was a shrine to Turkish ancestors or was the private shrine of that man.

It would be correct to mention that although the main shrine of Turks is the she-wolf, birds of prey such as eagles and falcons were also considered sacred amongst other Turkish tribes. For example, there was a figure of an eagle with wide-spread wings in the crown of a monument of Kul Tegin, excavated in Arkhangai province in 1958. (3. 3d side). Stone monuments of persons holding birds in their hands were found in the territory near the Seven River district of Middle Asia. (7. page 24)

Actually, birds like eagle and vultures are highly considered among Kasaku nationalities and they carry a vulture feather in the hat or the cradle of little child, as well as in the mane or tail of race horses because they believe that it protects them from danger. Potanin G. N was the scientist who first saw the monument of “Dayan Baata” and he had drawn general conclusions of the monument, but he didn’t determine that the talisman was the Christian cross. In the first volume of our country’s history “...beside the Buddhist religion, the Christian religion was also spreading among the Turks through Middle Asia. It was proved by the stone monument of a person with a Christian cross around its neck found in Bayan-Ulgii province...” (1. 122d side) and this conclusion was explained repeatedly in some books of ancient history.

Researchers have noted that among the Turkish stone man monuments, there have been occasional discoveries of monuments with a talisman. One monument of this kind was found near the lake Essick-ckul, (7. page 11-12) but its talisman is different from the talisman of the monument of “Dayan Baatar”. The talisman of the stone man monument found near the lake Essick-ckul has a figure similar to the Cyrillic letter Φ (7. page 89-90). Maybe it was a common custom between the Turkish tribes to regard the talisman as a religious shrine and there is no sufficient evidence that it was a cross because they believed in the Christian religion.

I consider it correct to provide this information to specialists of Turkish studies and those who are interested in the monument of “Dayan Baatar” on the basis of the materials collected in 1996 by the field research expedition in the Bayan-Ulgii province. Besides, we heard that there is another monument similar to the monument of Dayan Baatar near the mine of Hushot in the territory of Darvi in the Khovdo province, but no archaeologist has studied it yet.

Since 1877 when Potanin G. N first went to see the monument of “Dayan Baatar”, a succession of researchers have visited it, but none made a concrete report on this monument. Therefore the conclusion about the Christian cross has remained until now.

We describe the monument after our last visit: the height is 160 cm, the width 40 cm, while the thickness is 20 cm. It is of white-grey granite. The monument is peculiar, as it consists of a body and a head but has no hands or feet. The height of the head is 50 cm and its width is 38 cm. The hat, ears with earrings, eyes, nose, eyebrows, mouth, moustache and even the cheek bones were carved with precise details. On the body of monument there are relief lines of 2 cm wide and 1 cm high. They seem to be a belt, shoulder straps etc. The talisman carved in the neck of the monument first seems to be a cross, but when you observe it carefully, it can be a figure of a flying bird. (Picture No. 1). Behind the monument there are some stones put into the earth as a fence to protect it.

The side of the fence (or obstacle) is four by four meters and every stone is 1 metre long and 20 cm wide. This monument is situated in the direction of 72° . next to this monument is another monument with a height of 133 cm and a width of 20 cm. next to this monument is also a fence (obstacle) with a size of four by four. In front of this monument are some Tibetan letters, which were carved later.