

The Giant Audj Ibn Anak and the Prophet Nuh

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(Summary)

The study subject in the article is a plot which is not very popular in the oral tradition of the Bulgarian-speaking Muslims – the Pomaks. It is based on a text from “The Tales of the Prophets” of al-Kisa’i (c. 7/12 C.) and tells how the giant Audj Ibn Anak helped the prophet Nuh build the Ship of Salvation. The main motifs of the story are: Nuh needs the giant’s assistance to complete his works; the giant works hard and supplies the missing amount/kind of wood; the thankful prophet invites his helper to a dinner but provides insufficient amount of simple food; the giant doubts whether the food will be enough; the prophet urges the giant to pronounce the formula *basmala*; the giant refuses but while arguing with the prophet involuntarily tells the proper words; a miracle occurs and his hunger is satisfied.

The story is evidently Islamic in spirit and content but the clue to its understanding lies in the contradictory nature of Audj who like his Biblical prototype Og, the King of Basan, is emblematic of the sinful pre-diluvian generations (of giants – the Biblical *nephilim*) whose malignant deeds provoked the God’s wrath and whose destruction was the main cause for the Flood. The contradiction between the God’s decision to wipe out all evil from the face of the Earth and the “historical” survival of Audj/Og is solved in the post-Biblical exegesis mainly by the explanation that he was too enormous to be drowned by the waters of the Flood. The story of Al-Kisai provides another explanation – Audj was saved because he was from the helpers of the prophet; and yet the analysis of the story shows that his participation in the building of the ship secured only his physical survival, but not his spiritual salvation.

However, the Bulgarian Muslim narrators are not acquainted with this interpretation of the plot; they do not know neither the details of the giant’s Biblical genealogical ties or the problem of his survival. The story is told with the common believers mainly as an illustration of the efficiency of the formula *basmala*: a miracle occurs even when the God’s name is invoked by an unbeliever.