

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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THE CUMANS – FOLKLORE

OVERVIEW

Folklore deals with the customs, beliefs, traditions, legends, riddles, folktales, myths, proverbs, music, dances and songs of a people.

Being one of the anonymous folk poetry genres, riddles have been around for thousands of years. Hence, studying riddles allows us to get information about the Cuman historical and cultural tradition. The Cuman riddles were the earliest sources of folklore that were found in the Codex Cumanicus.

FOLKLORE

Riddles

The Cuman riddles were included in the *Codex Cumanicus*, and are the oldest recorded documents which contain very important information about Cuman daily life, folklore and literature. The *Codex Cumanicus* contains 47 riddles. The riddles reflected the world of the Cumans, their thinking and their way of life.

In the Codex Cumanicus, there were riddles about phenomena of nature, heaven, earth, water, stars, riddles about dwellings, riddles about human labor activities, riddles about people, the family, their social life, riddles about the animal world etc.

The riddles were not only used to entertain people, but they require critical thinking and provide a mental challenge as in the following:

Beş başlı elçi keliyir. (Ol, etiktän beş barmaq bayar).

(A five-headed ambassador comes. These are five toes sticking out from under the hem).

aq kmening avzu yoq. Ol yumurtqa

(The white- vaulted structure has no mouth (opening). That is the egg).

The riddles in the Codex Cumanicus were also very important sources carrying information on the common heritage of all Turkic-speaking peoples.

Discussion/Questions

1- Why are riddles commonly found in the literatures of peoples around the world?

Reading

1- Dikhanbayeva, A.Ye, Shaimerdinova, N.G., "Kipchak Riddles of the Codex Cumanicus Monument As the Common Heritage of All Turkic-Speaking Peoples", in *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 2022, Vol. 6, No. 10, pp. 150-161.

2- Golden P. B., *Codex Cumanicus, Central Asian Monuments*, Edited by H. B. Paksoy, Gorgias Press, 2011.