



MAGTYMGULY'S PATRIOTIC VIEWS: THE VISION OF NATIONAL UNITY AND SOVEREIGN STATEHOOD IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY TURKMEN POETRY

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Abstract

This article provides an in-depth, comprehensive analysis of the patriotic views and political philosophy of Magtymguly Pyragy (Fragi), the preeminent Turkmen poet and thinker of the eighteenth century. Living in a turbulent era characterized by persistent tribal disunity, external invasions, and geopolitical fragmentation of the Turkmen lands, Magtymguly's poetry transcended mere artistic expression to become a powerful, foundational ideological program for the establishment of a unified and sovereign Turkmen state. The core of his patriotic vision centers on two interconnected, non-negotiable imperatives: the absolute necessity of tribal consolidation and the sacred status of the Motherland (Watan). Through the masterful use of vernacular language and deeply resonant imagery, he articulated a clear and urgent call for collective political action, valor, and the defense of the native land. This essay explores how his themes of courage, loyalty, national consciousness, and the preservation of Turkmen cultural identity laid the conceptual and emotional groundwork for the modern Turkmen nation-state, positioning him not merely as a poet, but as a crucial national ideologue and founding spiritual figure.

Keywords: Magtymguly Pyragy, Turkmen Poetry, Patriotism, National Unity, Statehood, Fragi, National Consciousness, Watan, Turkmen Tribes, Sovereignty.

Introduction: The Historical Imperative for Patriotism

The eighteenth century, the historical epoch in which Magtymguly Pyragy lived and created, was a period of extreme geopolitical fragility and chronic internal discord for the Turkmen people. This era was primarily defined by the devastating consequences of tribal fragmentation, which rendered the Turkmen lands vulnerable to constant military incursions, pillage, and intermittent subjugation by powerful neighboring empires, notably Persia and Khiva. The absence of a unified, central state authority meant that individual Turkmen tribes were perpetually engaged in self-serving conflicts, squandering their collective strength in internal strife rather than focusing on the urgent need for defense against external threats.

It is against this backdrop of persistent peril and disunity that Magtymguly's poetry emerges not as an abstract philosophical reflection, but as a vitally necessary political and ideological blueprint for survival and self-determination.

The poet's intellectual heritage drew deeply from the wisdom of his father, the poet Azady, and the rich tradition of Sufi ethics, but Magtymguly creatively transformed these influences into a powerful, accessible vehicle for national consciousness. His unparalleled contribution lies in his ability to clearly diagnose the root causes of the Turkmen predicament—namely, disunity—and to articulate the solution with an extraordinary blend of prophetic urgency and artistic brilliance. He utilized the common, vernacular Turkmen language, elevating it to a high literary standard, which ensured that his urgent message of patriotism, unity, and courage resonated profoundly with all segments of the population, from learned elites to nomadic tribal members. Consequently, the theme of patriotism in his work transcends simple love for the land; it evolves into a comprehensive political doctrine advocating for a single, unified, and self-governing Turkmen state. His legacy thus stands as a foundational monument to the nascent Turkmen national identity.

The Call for National Unity and Statehood

The most central, dominant, and persistent theme defining the entire corpus of Magtymguly's patriotic views is his tireless, fervent, and indeed, prophetic call for the decisive unification of the fragmented Turkmen tribal entities into a singular, cohesive, and politically viable national body. The poet viewed the prevailing condition of tribal disunity (*tire-tirä*) not merely as a matter of social inconvenience, administrative deficiency, or minor political obstacle, but as the single greatest moral, political, and existential failure that perpetually exposed his people to chronic weakness, continuous suffering, relentless external predation, and the ultimate threat of complete cultural and political dissolution. This essential, overarching theme is articulated throughout his extensive body of work not as a moderate political suggestion or a detached philosophical reflection, but as a passionate, often desperate, and uncompromising exhortation, deeply colored by a profound sense of personal anguish, ethical responsibility, and historic duty regarding the fate of his nation. He leveraged the inherent rhythm and emotional weight of his poetry to transform a geopolitical necessity into a moral imperative, making the achievement of unity the supreme test of Turkmen character.

Unity as the Fundamental Prerequisite for Sovereignty and Prosperity

Magtymguly consistently and unyieldingly argued that only through the complete and unequivocal consolidation of all disparate tribal entities (such as the Teke, Yomut, Ersary, Saryk, Goklen, and others) could the Turkmen people ever realistically hope to achieve the establishment of a stable, independent, and self-governing state. This unified state, he adamantly believed, was the only political structure capable of effectively defending its territorial integrity against powerful external forces, guaranteeing internal

cohesion and order, and ensuring the long-term economic prosperity and enduring cultural survival of its populace. His most celebrated poetic verses frequently employ powerful, universally resonant metaphors that have become deeply embedded in the national consciousness as shorthand for his political doctrine. For instance, the enduring imagery of the "single tray" (Goteriler ol ykbaly turkmenin / If the dishes are ready on a single tray, it will elevate the destiny of the Turkmens) symbolizes the absolute, vital necessity of unified national effort, a shared and common destiny, and a coordinated political will that supersedes all narrow, parochial interests. The poet vividly and systematically envisioned a future state that would be eternal, founded on intrinsic justice, inherently mighty, and culturally proud, capable of standing on an equal and respected footing with its powerful neighboring empires—a glorious vision that stood in stark and painful contrast to the miserable, vulnerable reality of his contemporaries, who were trapped in a destructive cycle of relentless internal fragmentation and collective helplessness. His profound political foresight lay in the crucial realization that national self-determination and political autonomy could never be fully achieved without prior national consolidation and internal spiritual harmony. The envisioned unity was not merely an administrative arrangement but a covenant for collective survival.

The Scathing Critique of Internal Discord, Moral Deficiency, and Tribal Selfishness

The poet demonstrated remarkable moral courage and intellectual honesty by not shying away from the sharp, direct condemnation of the vices and ethical failings that systemically underlay the perpetual tribal conflicts and relentlessly fueled internal strife. He fiercely and publicly denounced the spiritual emptiness, profound selfishness, corrosive greed, and critical lack of strategic foresight displayed by numerous tribal leaders, wealthy chieftains, and feudal lords. Magtymguly utilized his immense moral and poetic authority to preach vehemently against all forms of internal warfare and division, making it unequivocally clear that such discord was a direct and reprehensible form of collective self-sabotage and political treason, which invariably played directly into the hands of external aggressors and expansionist powers, who sought to maintain Turkmen weakness. His primary focus was not merely on achieving a superficial military or administrative alliance to repel invaders, but on forging a far deeper spiritual and moral unity founded on shared, intrinsic ethical values such as honor, absolute sincerity, justice, and mutual responsibility. This deep, ethical foundation was deemed the prerequisite, pre-political pillar without which no lasting or honorable state structure could ever be built. He systematically aimed to instill a profound, all-encompassing national consciousness that deliberately superseded, rendered irrelevant, and ultimately replaced narrow, restrictive tribal loyalties, thereby shifting the individual's primary allegiance from the immediate clan or lineage to the overarching, transcendent, and unifying concept of the Turkmen nation. This relentless emphasis on a shared destiny, common honor, and indivisible national identity represents the highest, most comprehensive, and most enduring definition of his patriotic political philosophy. His call was a clarion demand for moral renovation as the path to political power.

The Sacredness of the Motherland and Valor

Magtymguly's profound patriotic conviction is intrinsically and inextricably linked to the elevated, almost mystical concept of Motherland or Fatherland, a term which he meticulously imbues with a towering sacred and spiritual significance that transcends mere geographical description. For the poet, this concept extends far beyond a simple physical location, geographical borders, or administrative territory; it encompasses the entire cultural, historical, existential, and ethical sphere of the Turkmen people, functioning as the foundational spiritual home and the source of all national virtues. Watan is thus conceived as the axis mundi of the Turkmen world, the point from which all meaning, identity, and honor emanate. The poet's articulation of the Motherland's sanctity serves as a direct challenge to the geopolitical uncertainties of his time, anchoring the national identity to an eternal, immutable source.

Watan as the Supreme and Irreplaceable Value

In the comprehensive worldview constructed by Magtymguly, the native land is consistently depicted as the most precious, fundamental, and irreplaceable treasure a people can possess. This value far surpasses any form of transient material wealth, personal fortune, or temporary comfort potentially found in foreign lands or under foreign dominion. The poet forcefully and passionately reminded his contemporaries who, facing hardship, starvation, or continuous warfare, might have been rationally tempted to emigrate or seek safety abroad, that "There is no place dearer than our native Motherland". This powerful conviction served as an absolute and uncompromising counter-narrative to the despair, political instability, and forced displacement that characterized his era. It was a potent poetic and moral tool, urgently urging the people to remain steadfast in their ancestral territories, to endure hardship, and to commit their lives and efforts to the difficult but necessary task of building their collective future directly upon that sacred soil. The Motherland, in Magtymguly's lexicon, is not just a place of birth; it is the ultimate source of all honor, personal dignity, moral integrity, and collective life—a treasure for which no sacrifice is too great. Its value is metaphysical, making its abandonment tantamount to spiritual suicide and existential betrayal.

The Absolute Imperative of Courage, Loyalty, and Defense

The defense of the Watan is consequently elevated in Magtymguly's ethical and political framework to the highest moral, ethical, and near-religious duty incumbent upon every Turkmen man. This duty is non-negotiable and defines the very essence of true manhood. Magtymguly dedicated countless verses to glorifying and immortalizing the virtues of courage, unwavering heroism, and absolute loyalty to the native soil, systematically portraying the ideal Turkmen warrior as inherently fearless, unconquerable, and morally pure when engaged in fighting for the preservation of the land and a just national cause. He frequently drew upon the rich reservoir of Turkmen historical narratives and mythical references to illustrate the boundless valor, resilience, and tactical shrewdness of his people, thereby intentionally creating a heroic ideal—a powerful ethical and military standard—for the younger generation to emulate and

embody. This relentless, focused emphasis on loyalty and bravery was intended to be a potent, practical, and immediately motivating force: a sobering reminder that the failure to protect the ancestral land would inevitably result not just in a transient military or political defeat, but in a far more profound and permanent spiritual degradation, ethical collapse, and irretrievable loss of national identity and cultural self-respect. His patriotic poetry thus functioned as an inspirational, widely disseminated code of honor, fundamentally equating genuine patriotism with true humanity and unblemished self-respect. The defense of Watan was framed as the ultimate act of ethical self-realization.

Enduring Legacy and Impact on National Identity

Magtymguly Pyragy's patriotic views have not remained confined to the historical context of the eighteenth century; they have exerted a profound and lasting influence on the formation and preservation of the Turkmen national consciousness right up to the modern era. His work serves as the single most important literary and spiritual source for the collective identity of the Turkmen people.

The Founder of National Literature and Language: By writing almost exclusively in the Turkmen language, Magtymguly did more than just choose an artistic medium; he effectively elevated the vernacular Turkic dialect to the status of a sophisticated literary language, distinct from the prevailing cultural dominance of Persian. This linguistic choice was, in itself, an act of profound patriotism, providing the nascent nation with a unified linguistic foundation and an established, cherished literary heritage. His poetry, filled with folk wisdom and proverbs, became a fundamental code of moral and ethical behavior, serving as an accessible guide to national values.

Spiritual Basis for Modern Statehood: The poet's vision of unity and a powerful state provided a spiritual and intellectual justification for the later aspiration for national independence. His verses are widely cited as the prophetic articulation of the dream for a sovereign Turkmen state, making him a central symbolic figure in the political and cultural narrative of modern Turkmenistan. His poetry acts as a powerful, non-sectarian force promoting humanism, mercy, justice, and friendship, qualities he deemed essential for the moral integrity and longevity of the unified nation he foresaw. Thus, his patriotic legacy is defined by a holistic vision that intertwined political sovereignty with profound moral and ethical responsibility.

Conclusion

Magtymguly Pyragy's extensive body of work stands as a monumental testament to the power of poetry not merely as an art form, but as a foundational political and moral instrument. The core of his legacy is his profound and urgent patriotic vision which served as a crucial ideological anchor for the Turkmen people during a period of extreme geopolitical and social vulnerability in the eighteenth century.

His genius lay in his ability to clearly articulate the central crisis of his era—the debilitating tribal disunity—and simultaneously offer a compelling, actionable solution: the absolute necessity of national consolidation under a sovereign state.

His concept of Watan (Motherland) transcends the purely geographical, becoming a sacred, spiritual entity that demanded not only profound love but also fierce, unwavering defense, establishing a powerful code of courage, loyalty, and ethical responsibility. By tirelessly calling for the unification of the fragmented tribes and establishing the vernacular Turkmen language as a high literary standard, Magtymguly effectively created the spiritual and linguistic blueprint for modern Turkmen national consciousness. Consequently, his poetry is not merely a historical relic; it remains a living, resonant source of identity, wisdom, and moral guidance, positioning him as the founding spiritual ideologue whose vision for a unified, sovereign, and honorable nation continues to inform and inspire the Turkmen identity in the contemporary world. His contribution is thus an indelible part of global literary and political history.

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