



AWERProcedia Advances in Applied Sciences



Vol 1 (2013) 358-363

1st Global Conference on Environmental Studies 2013

The nature and human being in the Turkic world-view

Talas Omarbekov *, Kazakh National University named after al-Faraby Faculty of History, Archaeology and Ethnology, av. al-Farabi, 71, Kazakhstan.

Gulnara Khabizhanova, Kazakh National University named after al-Faraby Faculty of History, Archaeology and Ethnology, av. al-Farabi, 71, Kazakhstan.

Galiya Iskakova, Kazakh National University named after al-Faraby Faculty of History, Archaeology and Ethnology, av. al-Farabi, 71, Kazakhstan.

Suggested Citation:

Omarbekov, T., Khabizhanova, G. & Iskakova, G. The nature and human being in the Turkic world-view. *AWERProcedia Advances in Applied Sciences*. [Online]. 2013, 1, pp 358-363. Available from: <http://www.world-education-center.org/index.php/paas>. *Proceedings of Global Conference on Environmental Studies (CENVISU-2013)*, 24-27 April 2013, Zeynep Sentito Hotel, Belek – Antalya, Turkey.

Received December 10, 2012; revised February 11, 2013; accepted March 22, 2013.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Dr. Nehir Varol.

©2013 Academic World Education & Research Center. All rights reserved.

Abstract

Increased air, water pollution and the deterioration of the environment in Kazakhstan requires reconsideration the issues of nature and human being connection. In this case, the paper uncovers a nature and human being image of Central Asian population on the sample of the Turkic people. The following questions are considered in the paper: "What does determine the Middle Age (VI-IX centuries) Turkic people's concept on nature and their attitude?" and "in what form is perception on nature and human being expressed by Turkic people? The study revealed that the geographical features of territories and nomadic life style of Turkic people in VI-X centuries effected their nature and human being conception. Turkic peoples' perception on nature and human being was reflected in folklore, ancient Turkic written sources, and symbols of Statehood.

Keywords: nature, history, Turks, Kazakhs, culture;

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Talas Omarbekov**, Kazakh National University named after al-Faraby Faculty of History, Archaeology and Ethnology, av. al-Farabi, 71, Kazakhstan, *E-mail address*: talas_1948@mail.ru

1. Introduction

Large industrial facilities in Kazakhstan lead to increased air and water pollution, the deterioration of the environment in general. After many years, more than twenty billion tons of waste were accumulated in Kazakhstan, third of which was toxic. Despite the fact that the big companies and the government are to develop a plan to combat pollution, the environment in Kazakhstan is still poor. Thus, to prevent environmental pollution there is a need to reconsider the issues of connection of nature and human being, world-view of nations in the middle ages and promote environmentally friendly attitude to nature among Kazakhstani people.

In this occasion the paper considers such questions as “What does determine the Middle Age (VI-IX centuries) Turkic people’s concept on nature and their attitude?” and “in what form is perception on nature and human being expressed by Turkic people?”

Purpose of study is to determine a nature and a human being image of Central Asian population on the sample of the Turkic people and their descendants – Kazakhs.

Sources for learning the basics of the ancient world of the Turks, which became the foundation of the spiritual culture of mature later Turkic peoples of Central Asia, including Kazakhs, are the monuments of written literature and particularly the oral folklore. It is no mere chance that there is a new upsurge of interest of researchers to rethinking the reality through the prism of the concept of sustainable development. The ancient nomadic Turkic civilization, founded and based on this idea, reflects the spiritual needs of current society. Such samples of epic genre as “Kitab-Dedem Korkut”, “Oguz-name”, “Manas” remain to be an important source for learning the basics of the formation of the Turkic world model. The next group of sources of medieval Turkic gravestone is the inscriptions found by archaeologists in the countries of Central Asia and Mongolia [1]. These sources were created by the Turks. Thus, they will contribute to the disclosure of the research theme.

The issues of the nomadic civilization of Turks and, in particular, mythology, due to their versatility, are the subjects of research interest of historians (of V.V. Bartold, S.G.Klyashtorny), writers (M.Maguain), philosophers (Z.Naurzbaeva) and ethnologists (N.Shahanova). For instance, T.Barfield [2], A.Tashagil [3], and A. Dosymbaeva [4] show the interplay between the Turks with the environment, their lifestyle and how they adapted to the natural environment.

F. Ratzel states that a human being is a child of the earth not because the earth was of a human being with the appearance of the first germs of organic life, but since all created earlier things predicted a human being. The human being came to earth with the need for education and capable of education. The Earth brought him to fight with all its forces and creatures, and his private history is closely intertwined with the history of the earth in general. Thus, there is a need of an external study of a human being’s place in nature [5].

Then what is nature? Nature in the broadest sense is all things, the world and the diversity of its forms. In a narrow sense it is the object of natural sciences and a combination of the natural environment of human society [6].

World-view is a system of generalized vision on the objective world, the place of human being in it, the attitude of people to surrounding reality and to themselves. It is beliefs, ideals, principles of knowledge and action of people, determined by before stated views. Overall world outlook plays a major role in the survival of the people. First of all, it is reflected in religion, art, in the field of group communication, entertainment and, etc. Therefore, these areas were taken into account during the study.

2. Methodology

The methodology of research is based on comprehensive, synergetic, integrated approaches, historical-genetic, historical and comparative methods. Knowledge of geographic, economic, and related scientific fields - Turkic philology, archeology and ethnography were applied in the research in line with the integrated approach. Moreover, sources of Turkic written monuments and archaeological expeditions were employed in the study.

3. Findings and Results

First, one of the factors, defining the notion of the environment and Turks` attitude is close connection and dependent on nature. In the Middle Ages the ecological world of Turkic tribes, living in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, was very fragile. Therefore, they tried to adapt to the environment and the weather changes, specifically, that took place on the eve of the Middle Ages. For periodization and making the chronology of Holocene, Kazakhstani scientists used the scheme of Blytt–Sernander, upgraded by N.A Khotynsky. According to this scheme, in VI-VIII centuries, there was a high humidity and low temperature on the most part of Kazakhstan territory [7]. In IX-XII centuries, on the contrary, the climate changed, the temperature rose and the supply of moisture decreased. Recent research findings reveal that geological environment in this period was similar to the present one. As the result, all these, before stated changes, pushed the Turkic tribes to look for new areas of expansion [8]. This led to seasonal use of land and the formation of the nomadic economy [9].

Moreover, the Turks worshipping nature made it an integral part of their lives [10]. The prairie landscape in the world outlook of nomads is a model of an ideal space, with which the initial act of creation was connected. The ritual of visiting the holy places to heal from disease and have offspring, by touching the sacred land, the water source, still exists. Turks world-view is imbued with the idea of environment majesty [11]. Developed space, perceived as a central part of the generic land, was labeled by comprehensible symbols. Space, marked by mountains, trees, stone sculptures, in the course of the cycle of ceremonies, sacrificial rites, is "illuminated by oath" and this center become highly sacred [12]. For example, in 2001, A.M. Dosymbaeva during archeological research revealed runic inscription on the rock stone on the right bank of Merke in Merke area in Zhambyl region. Turcologist A.S Amanzholov translated this text as follows: "My sorrow is the death" and "disperse my sorrow". The text also was translated by Japanese Turcologist O. Takashi as "Eternal sacred land", which means Merke is everlasting blessed land [13].

The system of conception about the reality led the ancient nomads to the idea of interrelation between crisis in the society and the shock in the nature. "Any violation of the world order entails upheavals in the state ... When the sky presses and the earth opens up" [14]. Thereby, turmoil in the state was associated with natural disasters, which in turn were perceived as the punishment of heaven for people, who violate the balance of world order. Epic context of this idea is expressed in the joy of rebirth of seemingly lost world in the plot of a BAMS-Beyrek`s, son Salorio, revival: "Your Black Mountain tottered, staggered and collapsed, (again) it finally got up! Your blood-spattered water dried up; (again) it purred at last! Your strong tree withered away; (again) it finally became green! " [15].

The instances of negative consequences of irrational behavior of people in relation to nature are reflected in ancient legends of Central Asian Turks. There were series of sacred animals, murder of which was punishable by nature. The Kyrgyz people have legends about the hunter Kozhozhas, who mistakenly shot his son, taking him for a deer. It was a punishment for the reckless and greedy attitude to nature. Hence there was a belief of thousands animals, the number of which can be killed by hunters [16].

Therefore, the Turks found it necessary to protect the environment. For example, the story of Er-Tostik traced the idea of care for nature. Er-Tostik saved the chicks of Samruk from great snake, crawling on a tall tree. This tale expresses the idea of the existence of the interdependence of the natural world and human being ("Er-Tostik", a number of other stories, such as "Just punishment", "Kyuyum batyr" legend, the legend of kyu "Shynyrau"). Mighty Samruk knows that her chicks die in the jaws of the snake, but she cannot change the predestined. She only laments fate of her chicks. The human being should save them and this is his mission, this is the meaning of his existence [17].

Second, religion was one of the factors, defining the attitude of Turks to nature, since there was a concept of the duality of creation of all things. According to this notion, Tengri and Earth-Water (Zher-Su) make a unified whole [18]. The Turks religious beliefs are connected with Tengrianism, according to which Tengri is a "lord" and "sanctuary" of all things. Therefore, sky, Earth-Water (Zher-Su) and Hagan Khatun are perceived to be sacred. Sky is considered as the embodiment of Tengri, Earth-Water (Zher-Su) is happiness of Tengri and Hagan Khatun represents the will of Tengri, the guardians of people, etc. [19].

Creation of the world was directly related to Tengri: the blue dome of sky covers habitable, "brown earth" as the "roof". This comparison is used by the authors of two rock paintings on the coastal cliffs along the river Tuba (a tributary of the Yenisei). One of these so-called "second monument of river Tuba", can be read with some refinements in the last two lines:

(2) Tenrim öçük bizke [bol]

(3) Idil jerim a bengü bol

(2) Oh my heaven, be a roof over our heads

(3) Oh my country Idil, long life to you [20]!

The next issue that will be considered further is “in what form is perception on nature and human being expressed by Turkic people?” There is a common view among historians that Turkic peoples’ perception on nature and human being was reflected in folklore, ancient Turkic written sources, uncovered from Central Asia, symbols of Statehood such as flag, “tamga” (family symbol). Thus, this will be considered further during the discussion of Turkic world-view models. The scholars claim that Turks had 3 models of world’s picture: 2 horizontal and 1 vertical.

The first horizontal model is cosmological model of the world, which is based on a global view of space. It includes space, the celestial bodies, the planets, the earth, the sky. Space and nature, surrounding human being, were one piece. According to the genealogical legends, Oghuz tribes, by whose language was written the above stated source, were descended from progenitor Oguz Khan, who had 6 sons with the names of the Sun (Kun), Moon (Ai), Star (Zhulduz), Mountain (Tau), Sea (Teniz), Heaven (Kok). Oguz Khan had 24 grandchildren, the names of which were given to Oguz tribes. Each tribe had a totem animal, respectively, its totem [21].

The attributes of the sky were the sun and the moon, associated with the earthly life. The cult of “born of the sun” is reflected in the Orkhon inscriptions. “The side, where the sun was born” (kun toýusıqarǵa) was considered to be one of the main directions. Thus, the doors of Kagan were opened to the east “of reverence for the ascent of the sun» (kun batsıqıǵa) [22].

The second horizontal model of the world is represented as a square or flat space. The earth was imagined as a quadrangular (square) space, inhabited by the people and hostile Turks on the edges. To indicate the boundaries of the world consistently, the term buluǵol: tort buluǵ (four corners) is applied in runic writing. For instance, there is a clear confirmation of this in the text, devoted to Kultegin: “When the blue sky was made in the overhead (and) the dark (brown) land in the bottom, sons of human being (people) were created between them. My ancestors Bumin Kagan Istemi-Kagan had power over the sons of human being. Reigning (the kingdom), they supported, arranged a tribal alliance and founded the Turkish nation. Four corners (mean people who lived around of all four corners of the earth) were all (their) enemies, speaking with the army, they conquered all the people living in four corners, and brought them all to the world. They made to bow (heads of) those, who had heads and forced to bend the knees those, who had knees. Turks (people) settled forward (to the east) till the lands of Kadyrkhan common people, back (to the west) till the land of Temir kapyg (“Iron Gate”) [23]. Center of the world was a “sacred Otyuken land”, inhabited by Turks, the residence of Turkic Hagens, from where they went hiking forward, backward, right, left for the conquest of “four corners of the world”. For example, in the complex of monuments, dedicated to El Etmish Yabgu (chronology is approximately 716 and 728), who was Shad by Elteris, Kapagan and Bilge Kagans: “Our ancestor Jami Hagan conquered four corners (törüt boluǵuy) of the World, including the whole Turkic people; Turks in the east (kun toýusıqarǵa), in the west (kun batsıqıǵa), those, settled from the neighborhood (beriye) to China and further... set balbals (stone statues) [24]. In this case the application such words, determining the direction, as “kun toýusıqarǵa” (east), “kun batsıqıǵa” (west), “beriye” (south) and “yariya” is demonstrated.

This model of the picture of the world is a different horizontal image, stating situational (route) a description of the landscape with its orohydrography. First, land-water (jer-sub, jer-su), acting as a general opposition to “blue sky”, is considered as a sacral and terminological concept. Turks by the word land-water (“jer-su”) referred to territory and space in general. The example of application of “jer-su” could be found in the Turkic literary monuments: “may land-water not be without a master” («Jer-su bidsiz bolmazun»). There is the following text on the stone stele, dedicated to Bilge Kagan: “the people of “ten arrows” was harassed. Saying, let it not be without a master land and water owned by our ancestors ... a leopard-bag, at that time we gave (him) and gave the title of Kagan (his marriage) my little sister - the princess [25]. This space is endowed with emotionally active characteristic: it may be hostile or alive. This implies to the concepts such as native land, homeland, Zheruik. Zheruik and home were synonymous. Clear examples of this could be found in the legends and kys of Korkyt. They are «Korkut», «My People» («Elim-ai, halkim-ai») «Camel Targil» («Targil tana»). For Turks and most revered native land was “the land, where dripped the blood from the umbilical cord”. This phrase refers to a Motherland and home. As a comparison to previous case, the

example of the role of native land for the Kazakhs, the descendants of the Turks, will be considered further.

The famous Russian scholar A.I. Levshin wrote the following about the Kazakhs: "the Kazakhs are tied to their own land. They are ready to stand all challenges and suffer but not leave their Motherlands"[26]. Due to representation of Turks, a land is the place, where all things were created. It is the center of the world; it is Zheruik (promised land). In the above mentioned legends and kys of Korkyt, the search of Zheruik by Korkyt is told.

Furthermore, a vertical model of world image could be identified. It is often referred by many authors [27]. In this model, the world consists of top and bottom world: human world and the underworld. "World Mountain" and "The World Tree" are connected to the world beyond the grave and the earthly life. To dream of a falling tree was an evil omen, it meant death of a loved ones. In addition, it was forbidden to cut down the forest saplings, as this could result in the death of children [28].

Taking in account above stated issues it could be concluded that the environmental world of population of the Great Steppe from the middle part of Eurasia was already fragile in its nature. Therefore, it is true that from all of the world's ecological systems the destiny of steppes is the most dramatic, despite the fact that the heirs of the steppes - nomads - are well-adjusted and finely balanced with the steppe environment peculiar and distinctive culture.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Relatively few studies and interdisciplinary links made the issues of world-view of Turkic people the subject of interest. Today, there is a need to create: traditions of respect for nature and its laws.

The questions of preserving the harmony of human being, society and nature are still actual. Therefore, to prevent environmental disasters it is necessary to assess damage caused to nature by mankind s for the next 50-100 years in Kazakhstan. This requires a deeper investigation of the issues of this paper on the example of the tribes and peoples of other continents, different chronological periods of human development.

References

- Turkish sources of the history of Kazakhstan*, 2 volume. *Ancient Turkic gravestones stones and written records (Orhon, Yenisey, Talas) [Kazakhstan tarihi turali turki derektemeleri. Kone turik bitik tastari men eskertkisherleri (Orhon, Enisey, Talas)]*. Dyke Press, Almaty, 2005, pp 5-252.
- Barfield, T.J. *The Perilous Frontier. Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd Cambridge, MA & Oxford, UK, 1996, p 21.
- Taşğıl, A. *Blue turks [Gök-Türkler]*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 2011, p 9.
- Dosimbaeva, A. *The Western Turk Empire. The cultural heritage of the Kazakh steppe [Zapadnyy Turkskiy kaganat. Kulturnoe nasledie kazakhskoi stepi]*, Complex, Almaty, 2006, pp 4-168.
- Ratzel, F. *Humanity as a phenomenon of land life [Chelovechestvo kak yavlenie zhizni zemli]*, In: Kohler, J., Ranke, I. and Ratzel, F. *Human history: Prehistory [Istoriya chelovechestva: Doistoricheskiy period]*. Polygon, St-Petersburg, 2003, p 107.
- Kazakhstan National Encyclopedia [Kazakhstan Nacionalnaya Enciklopediya]*, 4 Volume. Kazakh Encyclopedia, Almaty, 2006, p 9.
- Aubekerov, B.Zh. and Nygmatova, S.A. *Climate and landscape changes, the history and evolution of human society from the earliest hominids to nomads in Kazakhstan [Izmineniya klimata i landshavta, osnovnie etapi evoluciyi chelovechestva obshestva ot drevneishih gominid do kochevnikov na territoriyi Kazakhstana]*, In: *Materials of International Research Conference "Contribution of the nomads in development of world civilization"*. Dyke-Press, Almaty, 2007, p 145.
- Ibid. p 142.
- Barfield, Op. Cit. p 21.
- Gabitov T., Alimzhanov A. *The mythology and religion of the Turkic people before Islam [Islamga deingi turki haliktarinin mifologiyasi men dini senim-nanimdari]*. In: *Philosophical heritage of the Kazakh people*, 1 volume *Worldview of the ancient nomads*. Almaty, 2005. p 442.

Dosimbaeva, A. The concept of the steppe world: issues of development of the countries of origin of nomads [Konsepsiya stepnogo mirovozzreniya: voprosi proishozhdeniya razvitiya gosudarstv nomadov], In: Historical heritage and modern culture. *Materials of the international scientific-practical seminar (30 November 2012)*. Service Press, Almaty, 2012, pp 131-135.

Ibid. p 134.

Kadrimbetova, N.N. Some aspects of the ideological concepts in the ancient Turkic literary monuments [Bairgi turk zhazba eskertkishterindegi ideologiyalik tusinikterdin keibir aspektileri], In: *The Kazakhstan archaeology in the era of independence: results and prospects. Proceedings of the International Conference dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the 20th anniversary of the Institute of Archaeology named after A.H. Margulan (12th-15th of december 2011)*. 2 volume, Hikari, Almaty, 2011. p 333.

Klyashtorny, S.G. Mythological subjects in the Ancient Monuments [Mifologicheskie suzheti v drevneturkskih pamyatnikah], In: *Turkological Collection*. Moscow, 1977, p 123.

The book of my grandfather Korkut. Oguz heroic epic [Kniga moego deda Korkuta. Oguzskiy geroicheskiy epos], Trans. Bartold, V.V. Moscow-Leningrad, 1962, p 47.

Discover this wonderful world of legends [Otkroi dlya sebya etot divniy mir legend], Bishkek, 2009, pp 103-104.

Naurzbaeva, Z. Samruk rescue chicks and lost initiatory ritual nomads [Spasenie ptenzov samruk i utrachenniy iniciacionniy ritual kochevnikov] [Online]. Available from: <http://otuken.kz/index.php/mythzira/40--v> [Accessed 5th November, 2012].

Dosimbaeva, Op. Cit. p 131.

Kenzhetai, D. Traditional Turkic worldview and its role [Dasturli turkilik dunietanim zhane onin mani], In: *Worldview of the ancient nomads [Ezhelgi koshpeliler dunietanima]*. 1 volume. Astana, 2005, pp 71-96.

Klyashtorny, S.G. Notion of time and space in the Ancient Monuments In: *Ancient Turkic civilization: written records (Proceedings of the International Conference dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan)*, Astana, 2001, pp 28-34.

Bartold, Op. Cit. p 138.

Klyashtorny, Op. Cit. p 32.

Malov, S.E. *Monuments of Ancient Literature. Texts and Studies [Pamyatniki drevneturkskoi pismennosti. Teksti i isledovaniya]*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1951, [Online]. Available from: <http://kronk.narod.ru/library/malov-se-1951-1-2.htm> [Accessed 6th December, 2012].

Turkish sources of the history of Kazakhstan, Op. Cit. p 55.

Ibid. p 55.

Levshin, A.I *Description of Kirghiz-Cossacks, or Kirghiz-Kaisak, hordes and steppes [Opisanie kirgiz-kazachiyh, ili kirgiz-kaisazkih, ord i Stepei]*, Sanat, Almaty, 2009, p 330.

Suleimenova, ZH. D., Tashagil, A. and Amankulov, B. The Role of Person and his Psychological Portrait in Turkic Philosophy of Culture [Online]. Available from: <http://www.waset.org/journals/waset/v62/v62-101.pdf> [Accessed 10th January, 2013].

Traditional world of Turks of southern Siberia. Sign and ritual [Tradicionnoe mirovozzrenie turkov Uzhnoi Sibiri. Znak i ritual], Novosibirsk, 1990, p 47.