

KAZAKH CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAMIC AND TURKIC CIVILIZATIONS

T.H. Gabitov

Faculty of Philosophy and Political Sciences Al-Farabi Kazakh
National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
tursungabitov@mail.ru

Abstract. The Kazakhs are one of the largest nations in Central Asia. Prior to the 1917 October Revolution, the Kazakhs led a nomadic mode of life. This did not prevent up to 25% of literates in the society from knowing the Arabic script. After the October 1917 Revolution, Kazakhstan, being the Russia's colonial outskirt, entered the structure of the Soviet Union and thus became the object of Soviet cultural policy. Despite a rather unfavorable sociopolitical situation for folk culture in the 20th century, nevertheless it has managed to preserve its main properties by the beginning of the third millennium. Various regional traditions of folklore and folk-professional creativity – epics, instrumental music and songs- are peculiar to Kazakh folk culture. Each of these genres – epics, instrumental music (kyui) and folk professional songs – possesses its own phenomenological specificity and accordingly, its own destiny in the 20th century.

Unlike Christianity and Buddhism, Islam, being one of the three universal world religions, actively penetrates into people's everyday life. The main reason for this is that in Islam the religion and ideology, philosophy, religious organizations and state bodies are closely interrelated. In order to analyze the state of being of interrelations of religion and civil society in Kazakhstan, it is necessary to study Islam and its relations with spiritual culture of the society. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan the religion is separated from the state, i.e. each performs its own function without interfering into each other's affairs. The right of the citizens of our republic to freedom of thinking and faith is based on the Constitution of the RK, Civil Code, Law "On freedom of faith and religious unions in the Republic of Kazakhstan".

I n t r o d u c t i o n. The claims for cultural sovereignty put forward by the post-Soviet states are drawing different responses; many find them unsubstantiated. This assessment is usually based on the modest resources at the disposal of the new "contenders" for sovereignty. Upon closer investigation, however, cultural heritage and the symbols that the elites of the post-Soviet states would like to use as national proved to be part of a broader civilizational area. Nevertheless, despite all the apparent irrationality of such efforts, they are entirely substantiated.

First, the contemporary world political system is the sum-total of all the states. The states are regarded as sovereign units that are seats of power or so-called receptacles of power. Let us clarify that we are talking not only about military-political and economic power, but also about cultural power. So the attempts by states to position themselves as homogeneous nations are fully justified; this strategy makes it possible for them to improve their position in the global rivalry. In this way, the state will have to make a choice between two possible alternatives: either force other

nations to treat it as an autonomous cultural and political whole, or present itself as “not entirely” a state.

Second, these efforts are seen as a striving toward self-assertion and, if you like, revenge; to this we can add the extraordinary popularity that the discourse on so-called post-colonialism gained at the beginning of the 1970s. In other words, by claiming to restore their supposedly desecrated authenticity, the post-Soviet states are only playing according to the rules posed by the global community, and their nationalism is nothing other than subordination to transnational political imperatives.

In the era of the triumph of nationalism, the standoff between the local and the national looks like opposition between the particular and the universal. In so doing, the local (regional) was opposed to the national as part of the whole. In the globalization era, the national finds itself in the position of the local (particular) [1].

Complaints that some transnational powers are threatening the cultural uniqueness of a particular nation have already become par for the course. Globalization, which gives a boost to unification and diversification, is also capable of standardizing (McDonaldization) and augmenting cultural diversity. The world cultural market is in dire need of “nonidentity,” which has always been a headache for nation-states; the transnational companies functioning in this sphere are true so-called authenticity hunters. While striving to meet the existing demand for exoticism, they are looking for, finding, and promoting “cultural products” that could be offered to buyers as non-commercial, alternative, non-conformist, and so on. [2]

In the context of the aforesaid, we will examine the correlation between the indigenous and the superimposed in the Kazakh culture. Islam is the nucleus of the unified identification field of the Kazakhs and Turkic peoples on the whole. If we abstract ourselves from Soviet Marxism’s thesis that this religion was imposed on the Turkic peoples by the Arabs, the following aspects of this problem can be identified:

- (a) Islam has had a civilizational influence on the culture of the Turkic peoples;
- (b) Islam promoted an upswing in the culture of the Turkic peoples in the 9th-12th centuries (the Turkic philosophy of this period occupied one of the leading positions in the world philosophical process);
- (c) in terms of Russia and China’s colonization of the Turkic peoples, Islam contested the assimilation policy of these empires and performed an ethnic-preserving function;
- (d) the Turkic peoples took advantage of the Arab-speaking philosophy to become acquainted with the cultural heritage of antiquity.

Not only did Islam have a portentous influence on the spiritual culture of the Turkic peoples, the Turkic neophytes helped to spread and reinforce it. It is enough to recall the Kara-Khanid Khanate, the Great Mughal Empire, Iran, the Ottoman state, and so on.

The Turkic culture as a whole and the Kazakh in particular are distinguished by internal unity that is not based either on racial characteristics (the Turkic peoples are mainly transitional forms between the Indo-European and Mongoloid races), or on cultural-economic types (nomads, oasis and river valley farmers, city-dwellers), or on

religious confessions (different trends of Islam, Orthodox believers, Shamanists, Buddhists, and so on), or on political systems (democratic and totalitarian regimes, autonomies, independent peoples, and so on).

So what unites the views of the different Turkic ethnicities into a single world outlook system? We believe the main elements to be a common language, historical memory about the heroic past, and ethnically oriented mythology and folklore, in other words, archetypes of spiritual experience.

The marginalized mind of the contemporary Turk has an irrepressible striving for self-realization, but much remains unsaid and undone. The uniqueness of the Turkic culture lies in its intrinsic combination of traditions and openness toward innovations and the nomadic and settled understanding of the world (sacral, profane, and chthonian); it is characterized by tolerance, love of freedom, originality of word, and optimism.

The main world outlook universals of the Kazakhs are determined by both the immanent spiritual experience of the people and a realm of its cultural dialogs (Turkic-Chinese, Turkic-Soghdian, Turkic-Arabic, and Turkic-Slavic syntheses). In addition to such categories as “existence,” “man,” “world,” “space,” “time,” etc., there are unique world outlook and philosophical universals in Turkic philosophy: “*kut*,” “*kanagat*,” “*nesibe*,” “*nysap*,” “*obal*” and “*sauap*,” “*kie*,” “*kesir*,” “*el*,” “*aleumet*,” “*kisi*,” etc. These concepts can only be translated into different languages when preserving the context in which they are used.

Even in its most Islamized forms, Turkic philosophy has never fully departed from its ancient roots. For example, it is no accident that Hoja Ahmet Yassau is still considered a Sufi preacher who is mentally close to the nomadic world outlook; in his manuscript *Diواني Khikmet*, pre-Islamic personalities are often found—“*erens*,” “*chiltens*,” “*mugans*,” “*aruakhs*,” “*ancestors*,” and so on [3].

A topic running throughout Yusuf Balasaguni’s poem *Blessed Knowledge* is the harmony between nature and man; in it he also mentions the universal Turkic cultural hero Alp Er Tunga [4].

Nomadic gnosis, which is based on the tradition of passing on sacral knowledge orally and not recognizing a fixated, final, and frozen state, is characterized by a search for particular harmony between man and the world; from this it follows that Turkic philosophy is essentially dialogical and discursive.

In the ternary Turkic model of the world, man acts as its axis. The world is not isolated from him; it is humanized and endowed with every human quality. It is not borrowed terms such as “*adam*” or “*pende*” that represent the central concept of Turkic philosophical anthropology, but “*kisi*” (the human dimension in man). In contrast to the “man-deer” (Yusuf Balasaguni), present-day man is the bearer of genuine moral and sociocultural qualities and always strives to remain so.

The image of “kinsman” characterizing the nomadic lifestyle that became established in the literature is rejected by a sociocultural analysis of the nomadic community of the Turkic peoples. Such features inherent in the nomadic society as love of freedom, openness, and mobility caused the following individualized types to be singled out from the community: *batyr*, *akyn*, *zhyrau*, *sal*, *seri*, *baksy*, *bi*, and so on.

When drawing a historical parallel, it can be recalled that Anacharsis, a Scythian thinker of antiquity and one of the “seven sages of the world,” doubted the ancient ideas about morality and contrasted the high spirituality of the nomads to them [5].

The Orkhon-Yenise (Old Turkic) written records are full of warnings about the danger of borrowing the morals and behavioral stereotypes of the Tabgashs (Chinese). The legendary Korkyt Ata is looking for the meaning of life and wants to find the way to eternal life; Abai calls on him to be a man. The ethic inclination of Turkic spirituality can clearly be seen even in these brief sentiments.

The following can be described as special features of the traditional ethics of the Turkic:

- syncretism of reason (truth), aesthetics (beauty), and ethics (good);
- widespread binary oppositions: life and death, good and evil, joy and sorrow, body and soul, sacral and profane, satisfaction and self-restriction, and so on;
- philosophemes are presented in an ethic framework (for example, the four origins of the world and man mentioned by Yusuf Balasaguni);
- rootedness in the environment and harmony with it;
- understanding honor and conscience as the foundations of the teaching on morals (for example, in Shakarim);
- significance of the eminence of origin;
- coincidence of moral and human qualities;
- gerontarchical priorities of morality;
- honoring women and respect for children;
- identification of nomadic and kinship forms of human solidarity and consent;
- developed institution of hospitality, and so on.

The oral-poetic discourse of the bearers of Kazakh philosophy and the individualized forms of folk wisdom are essentially dialogical. For instance, in addition to expressing the existentialist state of the thinker, *tolgau* and the popular aphorisms of *beis* are always addressed to the listeners and oriented toward mutual understanding, which is achieved by sacralization and enhancement of the art of the word (you can kill a person, but you cannot stop words from freely flowing).

According to many philosophers and culturologists, the 21st century could well become the century of the Turkic culture and civilization, for which there are many reasons.

First, in globalization conditions, the areas of contact of the contemporary world super civilizations acquire special significance. The Turkic world is located at the crossroads of the Islamic, Orthodox, Chinese, and Western civilizations; one way or another, it is under the influence of their cultures, on which it, in turn, has a significant influence.

Second, a powerful charge of passionarity is arising in the new independent Turkic states due to the need to revive cultural roots and enter into the world civilizational community. This charge is also potent in Turkey.

Third, the traditional values and ideas of Turkic philosophy (tolerance, the sacral word, openness, respect for traditions, receptiveness to innovations, ethnic orientation, closeness to nature, environmental consciousness, and so on) are in great demand by the contemporary world civilization [6, p. 75].

As directly related cultures which had impact on Kazakh culture can be mentioned Shamanism and Sufism. Let us make some examples proving that shamanism had absorbed all features typical to the Eastern countries. According to S. Rerick all spiritual doctrine takes their roots from Asia, because Western person values technology higher than spiritual values. Oriental person all his life spends on searching and development of his inner world, on revelation of hidden and vivid parts of his spiritual essence and on actualization and perfection of levels of humanity. In next parts of the article are given semiotic analysis of Kazakhstan' Islam in the context of shamanism and Suffism.

Shaman aims to evoke human's unconscious world. This is the method of search spiritual unity with unlimited inner essence. This method can be considered as a game of shaman. This game semantically may be interpreted in the following way. During his game shaman imitates the role of the creature of the world (imitation of cosmos in individual level), by mystical unity divides good and evil, he transfers harmful qualities, and removes evil. During the game physical body turns into peculiar condition. Many evidences show that shamans have parapsychological abilities. For instance, some shamans could bring out from body harmful bile. They were perfect masters of methods of surgery and hypnotic cure methods. In the condition of ecstasy they could walk barefoot on scorching coal. Similar phenomena can be noticed in the system of yogis and Philippians physicians. One peculiarity part of shamanic game is in usage of music during meditation. Semantic meaning of the kui is based on the principle to restrain death.

We cannot consider Kazakh religious systems as types replacing each other. As usual, in concrete historical periods religious systems occur simultaneously in syncretism. According to forms of spiritual culture one of them becomes dominant. For example semantic analysis of mythical characters can be interpreted as syncretism of two religions. Variety of subconscious mystical figures are supplemented with different images of daemons in Kazakh philosophy. Researches of history and monuments of Kazakh culture mention amongst them the following characters: 1) saitan, 2) peri, 3) gin, 4) zheztirnak (a woman with copper nails), 5) sorel (her husband), 6) zhalmauiz (witch), 7) albasti (troglodyte), 8) obyr (necrophilia), 9) Montana (changeable jin), 10) shimurin, 11) martu (dangerous for women during childbirth), 12) kirsik, 13) iblis (from Islamic daemons) etc.

From above mentioned list of daemons can be noticed vivid religious syncretism. One of them is the way of sacrifice (tasattik). Words 'kurban' and 'tasattik' derived from Arabic language. However in their realization were implanted initial believe rituals. According to Quran prophet Ibrahim sacrificed a sheep. Ritual 'tasattik' initially aimed to soften destroying impact of social revenge (talion), because principle 'a life for a life' weakens its communicative opportunities. Blood feud by being transferred into cultural exchange becomes a ritual custom. The ritual aimed to unite participants of a definite symbol. It had symbolic character. Shaman

was wise man who knew the meaning of this symbol. Interrelation of shaman system with Islam was indifferent. Based on the struggle with idolatry Islam sussed and blamed genetheoistic believes [7, p. 130-134].

However in order to be accepted by people, Islam had to accept their initial world outlook and spiritual core. This process was two-sided. Following semantic analysis of religious images also proves our statements. Tengri and holy aruakhs had gained Muslim content. Sky Tengri became Allah, aruaki turned to pirs, mashaikhes, assistants of the God, ancient daemons transferred into jinns and satans from Islamic daemons). This was really complicated and different sided phenomena. As mixture of two believes can be given many examples from folklore and religious texts. Even shamanism in the extent of Kazakh culture became an element of Islam. Dance of shaman adopted elements from suffian actions; before his rituals shamans made ablution in Islamic way; shaman began his words with prayer to Allah and to prophet Muhammad and His halifs. Diuana with rod in his hand, in a pointed hat, decorated with swan firs was associated in people's consciousness with baksi (shaman). Transfer from native religions to Muslim type in Kazakh culture covers many centuries and it took place in unity and inter supplement.

There were written many works considered about Islam and its formation in the territory of Kazakhstan, about 1.5 billiards. But let us consider some issues connected with features of Islamic civilization. There are numerous of different myths and perverted comprehensions about Islamic civilization. The west which used technological changes in the beginning of the new epoch (industrial society, market, industrial revolution) beneficially turned into key world power and aspired to supremacy all over the world. Efficient repulse westernization met only from Oriental religions. Particularly Islamic religion suffered more than Chinese and Japanese religions from Christian expansion. In the end of the XIXth century after crusade there were no independent Muslim countries, except Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. But it is worth to mention that any of those colonized countries rejected Islamic belief. Even Russia which conducted very powerful cultural expansion could not destroy even one of the formed Islamic ethno cultural system. Acceptance of the Christianity by native ethnos of Siberia was connected with the change of the ancient traditional religion.

In the middle-aged Muslim empires policy of forced conversion to Muslim from Christianity was not conducted on purpose, because according to the basic rules of Islam a man must convert to Islam on his own will [8, p. 165].

To this point can be raised question: Does it exist fundamentalism and particularity? Of course, it wouldn't be right to say that it doesn't exist. Fundamentalism is a product of a marginal society where traditional culture got into crisis and which couldn't adjust to new historical conditions. this manifestation can be noticed in Iran, Afghanistan, and Egypt. In these countries phenomena of fundamentalism emerges in the result of struggle to the Western expansion. Fundamentalism is an aspire to preserve cultural features in the framework of the ancient forms. Islamic particularity is also related with exaggerated images of the Western myths. By Islamic religion all people are regardless of origin, nationality, belief are creatures created by mercy of the God. Even followers if Abraham

religions are not enemies for Muslims. As al-Farabi said ‘they are citizens of the city of the lost’.

Other world and national religions are titled with the names of their founders or by the names of the society (Christianity – Jesus Christ, Buddhism – Gautama Shakhia-Muni Buddha, Zorastrism – Zaratushtra, Confucianism – Confucius). But Islam is different. It is destined for all people.

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