



THE COMMONALITY OF CULTURAL VALUES AMONG TURKIC PEOPLES IN CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

The rich cultural heritage of the Turkic world is not only the greatest value of the Turkic-speaking countries, but also an integral part of the entire world culture. All Turkic peoples, including the Turkic peoples living in Central Asia – Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Turkmen – have, to one degree or another, a common culture and traditions. The reason is that they lived side by side in a particular region of the country during ancient and medieval times. In the article, the cultural values common to these peoples are analyzed using the example of folk views associated with traditional economy, customs, rituals, national folk games included in ethnosport, and examples of folk oral creativity. Central Asia has long been a single cultural and historical region, and a single political space has existed here for many centuries.

Keywords: Turkic peoples, cultural heritage, commonality, traditional economy, folk beliefs, traditions, folk games, oral folk art.

Introduction

The Turkic world has long been a unique place for the emergence and development of powerful cultures and civilizations that have had a huge impact on the direction and development of world history. Its influence lies in the fact that the Turkic world is geographically located in the central part of the Eurasian continent and has always been a bridge connecting the two great cultures of the East and the West. The world community recognizes that Central Asia, the birthplace of the Turkic ancestors, played an important role in the spread of Turkic tribes and peoples throughout the world. These states, created by the great Turkic dynasties of the Ghaznavids, Karakhanids, Anushteginids, Timurids, Shaybanids and Osmanids, with enormous scale and scope, can become a model of unity of the entire Turkic world based on the policy of justice, piety and wisdom.

There has been much in common over the centuries in the historical destinies of the Kazakhs, Azerbaijanis, Turks, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Turkmens and other Turkic peoples.





Even in the most difficult conditions, fraternal peoples have long gravitated towards rapprochement with each other. In history, the Turkic peoples have much in common: they belong to the same ethnogenetic and ethnolinguistic family, to the same Islamic confessional community, and have common spiritual values. For many centuries, they lived in direct contact with each other. This confirms that their language, religion and culture had many common features. Let's start by examining these common features using the example of folk beliefs, customs and rituals associated with traditional economic activities.

The Turkic world is known for the diversity of Turkic languages. However, they have a property of similarity, and linguists admit that in the past there was a single common source language, from which all modern languages separated in complex and diverse ways. The history of the Turkic peoples has a lot in common: they belong to the same ethnogenetic and ethnolinguistic family, profess the same currents of Islam, and share common spiritual values. For many centuries they were in direct contact with each other and led a common life.

It is believed that now in the world 16 peoples have Turkic roots and speak Turkic languages. Modern Turkic culture is rather mosaic. It is influenced by global processes and the emerging global culture. Consideration of the foundations of Turkic culture, its system of values, driving forces, and developmental features is of interest not only for historians and Turkic scholars, but also for specialists in the field of cultural theory. The unity of the cultures of the Turkic peoples is preserved thanks to the deep foundations of this culture, its archetypal core, common language base, similarity of myths, folk epics, preserved rituals and traditions.

The peoples of Central Asia have been engaged in animal husbandry since ancient times, which is considered one of the main types of traditional economy. This, in addition to the great knowledge and experience associated with this area, created the basis for the emergence of a unique economic culture among these peoples, including different religious views. The Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Tajiks living in the region have various legends about saints, in particular about the patrons of livestock breeding. In the ethnographic literature published in different periods, there are many comments and assumptions on these legends. From this it is easy to understand that in the traditional animal husbandry of the peoples of Central Asia there were religious views, customs and rites associated with the "cult of saints" [11, p. 189].

All types of domestic animals had their patrons, who were the first to tame them by the "order of the Creator". Legends about the existence of individual patrons (pir) were associated with the names of Muslim saints. For example, the Uzbeks consider the





patron of sheep breeding to be “Chaban-ata”, cattle breeding to be “Zengi-ata”, camel breeding to be Vais-ata [14, p. 32], horse breeding to be Kambar-ata (among the Turkmen Dul-dul-baba) [3, p. 7], goat breeding to Chechan-ata (among the Kazakhs Seksek-ata) [1, p. 194]. Every year, before going out and returning to the pasture, the shepherds made sacrifices to the patrons of livestock. They asked their patrons to protect the livestock from all sorts of harm, increase the number of hooves, get good meat and fatten them [8, p. 32].

The Turkic peoples had peculiar religious beliefs associated with the “cult of animals”. In ancient times, the Turkic peoples could not imagine two worlds without a horse. The image of a horse occupied a special place in the religious and mythological views of the nomadic and semi-sedentary Turkic peoples who lived in Central Asia. The horse, which occupied an important place in their way of life, was sanctified and raised to the level of a cult. It can be noted that in the past these peoples had different views and customs associated with the cult of the horse [9, p. 134]. Religious views, customs and rituals associated with the cult of the horse are clearly visible in the funeral rites of the Turkic peoples [2, p. 22; 5, p. 103-104].

The peoples of Central Asia held unique funeral rites associated with the cult of the horse. For example, after the burial of the deceased, the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz held horse races in his memory several times. The funeral procession was held as close as possible to the cemetery so that the deceased could hear the clatter of horses' hooves [7, p. 59]. The idea of horses in funeral ceremonies represents a transformed form of the ancient custom of burying the deceased along with their horses and belongings.

In the ancient beliefs of the Uzbeks and Kazakhs, rams and camels were endowed with the properties of a talisman and their veneration was combined with various ancient cults. The animals themselves primarily acted as a talisman. Secondly, certain body parts of these animals (horns, hooves, skull, etc.) performed a protective function. Among the Central Asian peoples, ornaments in the form of ram horns, camel feet and eyes on carpets, felts and embroideries, or the custom of sewing camel hair onto children's clothing as an amulet, certainly once had the meaning of a talisman against the evil eye [1, p. 195-196].

A necklace in the shape of a ram was found on the neck of a human figurine found near the Koy-Krylgan-Kala fortress in the Ellikkala region of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The presence of sheep bones and ram-shaped decorations in graves and tombs also indicates that the local peoples worshiped the cult of sheep. Among the ancient Kazakh gravestones one can often find the so-called “koitas” – stylized sculptural images of stone rams [1, p. 195].





Some tools of traditional livestock farming were also endowed with a certain sacred meaning. Such tools include a shepherd's crook, a bridle, a halter, a rein for camels, a hook for catching horses, etc. The owner did not give these tools to anyone of his own free will under any circumstances. Uzbeks and Kazakhs, in cases of misunderstanding on certain issues, had a custom of swearing on a shepherd's crook or horse whip to prove the truthfulness of their words [5, p. 114].

Among the peoples of Central Asia, much more common features can be observed in beliefs related to the animal husbandry calendar, livestock breeding and reproduction, livestock treatment, sacrifices, as well as some prohibitions on milk and dairy products. Next, let's talk about the general aspects associated with the national games of these peoples.

Folk games, originating from the distant past, are an integral part of the national cultural heritage and have their own history. Therefore, analysis and research of the role and significance of folk games in the process of historical development of society, their use in the education of modern youth are considered as pressing problems of pedagogy. Folk games in a figurative form, often expressed in the form of music or dance, reflect the events of everyday life of the people, the observations and impressions of ordinary people, their life experience. Folk games are passed down from generation to generation as a cultural heritage. In them people realized their dreams, hopes and desires. We can say that folk games are a product of the centuries-old historical development of the people, who have absorbed folk traditions, customs and lifestyles [10, p. 547].

Ethnosport and national games are an integral part of the material and spiritual culture of any people. There are many examples in history where strong and long-lasting alliances were achieved through sports competitions. Bloody and painful wars have become a thing of the past, and in their place strong trade, economic, cultural and political ties have been established between clans, peoples and states. Traditional sports competitions also serve to preserve historical heritage and national memory, foster love for the Motherland and patriotism in the hearts of young people. In our opinion, an important task of holding national games is also to form a respectful attitude towards the moral values of other people [12, p.133].

In this sense, the project of the Kyrgyz Republic – the World Nomad Games (WNG) is distinguished by its uniqueness. It is aimed at preserving national traditions, educating the young generation, popularizing the culture of the Kyrgyz and other peoples of Central Asia. The World Nomad Games are of great importance in strengthening interstate and diplomatic connections. They set a positive example of intercultural creative communication [9].





It is worth noting that an important component of the World Nomad Games is a program of scientific events, which allows not only to plunge into the world of culture of nomadic civilization, but also to penetrate deeper into the content of the national games and types of ethnosports of the peoples of Central Asia based on historical and cultural knowledge. Thus, common features are also reflected in folk games, which are a symbol of cultural values. Let's share some interesting information about some national games included in the types of ethnosports that combine common features. Belt wrestling (kuresh) is a fight between two opponents on belts; the winner is the wrestler who puts the opponent on both shoulder blades, lifts him from the ground above the waist, or forces him to touch the ground with any part of the body [13, p. 10]. This martial art is very reminiscent of the national belt wrestling of the Kyrgyz people - olish, as well as Kyrgyz wrestling. The Turkmens have goresh, the Tajiks have gushtini milli kamarbandi, the Koreans have sirim, as well as the wrestling of the great nomads (free-united belt wrestling of nomads). In the legendary poem "Manas" the Kyrgyz struggle is described in detail using the example of the struggle between the sage Kusha the hero and the Kalmyk hero Zholoy [4]. In Uzbekistan, the Fergana and Bukhara styles of belt wrestling are widespread.

With the onset of autumn, equestrian games begin in Uzbekistan and other countries of Central Asia, dating back to distant nomadic ancient times. This game is known in Uzbekistan under the name ulak-kupkari, in Russia under the name goat-drawing, in Kyrgyzstan under the name kok-boru ("blue wolf"), in Kazakhstan under the name kokpar, in Persian-speaking Afghanistan and Tajikistan under the name buzkashi, and in the village of Kurama, which is considered a mixture of Uzbek and Kazakh tribes living in the mountains near Tashkent and Khojand, called kukmar [15].

Ulak-kupkari (translated from the Turkic "kup" means "many" and the Persian "kari" - "business, work", i.e. "the work of many") is one of the oldest equestrian games of the peoples of Central Asia. This incredibly exciting spectacle can only be compared in terms of the intensity of passions with the Spanish bullfight. Traditionally, ulak-kupkari are held at folk festivals, weddings, in the spring before the start of agricultural work and in the fall after harvesting. This game is so popular that it has turned into a separate sport with its own rules, clubs, and federations. There are even international competitions held. In this game, brave riders compete for the carcass of a goat or a young ram: the winner must reach the finish line without allowing other riders to recapture the prey [11].

Olomon poiga (mass horse racing) – designed to test the horse's endurance and, as a rule, was organized mainly during holidays. It should be noted that relatives could help the participant in the race. Most often, the riders who participated in the duels





were teenagers. The participants, tucking their horses, lined up in one line and headed in the direction indicated by the sign. The winner was the participant who reached the indicated place and returned back first. Special judges, "doyachi", also participated in this competition. They monitored compliance with the rules of the race and determined the winner. In the Fergana Valley, teenage girls also participated in such races along with young men [14, p. 423]. The Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, in contrast to the crowd, had horse racing competitions, intended for a longer distance and with a prize for the winner.

The tales of the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Karakalpaks are diverse in genre and have common plots and themes. The characteristics of the main characters are similar in them: enemies are dragons and other evil forces, friends are a good horse, good friends, all this gives rise to the assertion that the folklore of not only the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, but also other Turkic peoples has an internal relationship, which is clearly expressed especially in the plot, landscape sketches, character behavior, in the struggle between good and evil.

The mutual influence of the Turkic peoples is clearly manifested in folk epics. It is especially worth noting the similarity of the versions of the epic "Alpamys" among different peoples. The Kazakhs, Uzbeks and Karakalpaks associate the events described with the Kongrat tribe. These versions are based on the Kongrat edition of "Alpamys". Each of the peoples preserved the ancient plot in their full versions, but supplemented it in accordance with their oral poetic tradition. It is no coincidence that in the epic "Alpamys" the raid on the Kongrats is led by Taisha, or Taishik Khan. This name (taizhi) itself is a memory of the Khuntaishi, who captured the south of Kazakhstan and the Tashkent oasis, as a memory of the victorious and heroic struggle with the Dzungar conquerors. "Alpamys" lives in the Kazakh and Uzbek peoples. Alpamys entered equally into the consciousness of the Kazakh, Karakalpak and Uzbek peoples as an ideal image of a defender of the native land and a noble hero. Through oral traditions, the people have preserved information about their life, history, religious beliefs, culture, etc [16].

Thus, in folklore works one can observe many thematic similarities, figurative analogies, and unity of artistic means in depicting the life of the Turkic peoples. In the oral poetic creativity of the peoples, the unity of event motifs can be traced, the common aspirations, hopes and thoughts of the peoples are reflected. Historical pictures of life, social issues, and heroic characters were revealed in close connection with national poetic traditions.

In the works of oral folk art, in particular, in the epic poems of the Turkic-speaking peoples, one can observe many similar themes, figurative analogies, artistic means in





depictions of folk life, etc. The epic community in folk epics was supported by the community of genres – fairy tales, legends, riddles, proverbs and sayings. Moreover, in some genres of oral folklore of the Kazakhs and Uzbeks (for example, proverbs and sayings), one can find closeness not only of content and ideas, but also the adequacy of verbal components. For example, the Kazakh proverb "Dushpan kuldirip aytady, dos zhylatyp aytady" (An enemy speaks insincerely, a friend speaks impartially) among the Uzbeks has the form "Dushman kuldirib aytadi, dost achitib aytadi". Many similar examples can be given. Therefore, it is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to find out who originated these proverbs and sayings - the Kazakhs or the Uzbeks. Among the Kazakhs and Uzbeks of the south of Kazakhstan, the Tashkent and Khorezm oases, such a commonality of riddles, proverbs and sayings is due to the commonality of their way of life and socio-economic life. For example, with the transition to agriculture, the Kazakhs, like the Uzbeks, began to grow various agricultural crops. This process is reflected in their folklore [16].

The commonality of culture, way of life, and life of the Kazakh and Uzbek peoples is reflected in folk tales: magical and fantastic, everyday, about animals, etc. Fairy tales have similar themes and plots. Evil in both Kazakh and Uzbek tales is personified by dragons, mystan-kempir, devas, and other evil forces, good is personified by a strong horse, white-bearded elders (aksakals), and loyal friends [9].

Magical and fantastic tales are especially popular among the people, which include more or less accurate oral retellings of the works of the ancient classics of the East, including the Uzbek classics. For example, many excerpts from the classical poems of the ancient East "Yusuf and Zuleikha", "Leila and Majnun", "Farhad and Shirin", "Iskander", "Ker-ogly" and others became fairy tales, which found their own national expression among each people. The content and plot outline of such stories often served as biographies of the poets who created these great creations, conveyed in the form of legends. The legend "Sultan Hussein and his vizier Mir-Ali Sher", widespread among the Uzbeks and other peoples of the East, is known to the Kazakhs in the form of the fairy tale "The Virgin Ruler and the Black Slave". On the other hand, this tale surprisingly has something in common with the ancient Kazakh "Ayaz-bi". In both fairy tales, the questions: "Which grass is the worst? Who is the worst among birds and people? – the black slave gives an exhaustive answer.

The cultural ties between Kazakhs and Uzbeks left an imprint on their songwriting. In particular, Kazakh and Uzbek ritual songs are not much different from each other. The wedding songs "Zhar-Zhar" among the Kazakhs and "Yar-Yar" among the Uzbeks, "Betashar" and others clearly testify to the spiritual kinship of the Kazakhs and Uzbeks. In the endless expanses of the Kazakh steppe, Uzbek lyrical poems about





“Leila and Majnun”, “Farhad and Shirin”, “Tahir and Zukhra”, full of aspirations for freedom, have long been sung. Many Uzbek legends existed in the Kazakh environment in the form of songs. The songs to the accompaniment of the dombra were more intelligible than the oral retelling. This has firmly become a tradition [16]. One of the most common images in the oral literature of the Turkic peoples is Nasriddin Afandi. The Uzbeks know him under the names of Khoja Nasriddin, Nasriddin Afandi, Mullah Nasriddin, the Indians – Birbol, the Arabs – Joha, the Kazakhs – Aldar Kosa, the Tajiks – Mushfiki, the Turkmens – Mirali, the Karakalpaks – Umrbek, the Tatars – Akhmadakai [17, p. 20]. In all the jokes, Afandi appears as a brave, truthful, honest man glorifying justice, a defender of the poor, widows and the disadvantaged, as well as a folk hero ridiculing the shortcomings of the individual and society. He exposed the tricks of some unjust officials, qadis, people whose deeds diverged from their words, laconically and figuratively expressing his attitude towards them through a light joke or sharp satire.

The roots of Turkic culture go back to ancient times, and thanks to the unprecedented expansion of the area of residence and active activity of the Turkic peoples, they had a multifaceted influence on the culture of the peoples of Eurasia and on the entire world culture. However, the Turkic factor in the development of world culture still remains little known and in many respects insufficiently appreciated. World history provides modern scientists with enormous material for research and evidence of the significant influence of the culture of Turkic-speaking countries on the development of societies and peoples living in Asia and further in the west, from east to north, including in the vast territory now called Europe. Today, in the global community of Turkic-speaking countries, there are rich cultural sources that are reflected in oral folk art, legends, national holidays and games, fairy tales, norms and rules of behavior in society, music, songs and dances, national traditions, clothing, folk arts and crafts and handicrafts, as well as in many other aspects.

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