

THE INITIAL PHILOSOPHICAL WORLDVIEW OF TURKIC PEOPLES: BELIEF IN NATURE, MYTHOLOGICAL THINKING, AND PRE-ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT STAGES

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Abstract

This scientific article is devoted to a systematic investigation of the genesis and evolution of the early philosophical worldview of Turkic peoples before the Islamic period. The study encompasses an analysis of fundamental elements such as nature worship, the structures of mythological thinking, and the paradigm of Tangrism, delving into their ontological, epistemological, and ethical foundations. The article seeks to delineate the historical trajectory of the development of these perspectives while assessing their transformative role within the spiritual and intellectual heritage of Turkic peoples. Furthermore, it elucidates the dialectical interrelationship between ancient belief systems and their philosophical reflection, thereby facilitating the reconstruction of the initial metaphysical concepts of Turkic societies. By integrating perspectives from the history of philosophy and cultural studies, this work contributes to a broader contextual understanding of the intellectual traditions of Turkic peoples, shedding light on their pre-Islamic philosophical underpinnings.

Keywords: Turkic peoples, philosophical worldview, nature worship, mythological thinking, pre-Islamic period, Tangrism, shamanism, connection with nature, world perception, ancient beliefs, philosophical development, mythology, traditions, spiritual heritage, historical stages.

Introduction

The initial philosophical worldview of Turkic peoples was shaped by their unique historical, cultural, and social experiences. This worldview was distinguished by a profound belief in nature, mythological thinking, and stages of development before the advent of Islam. For Turkic peoples, nature was not merely a living environment but also a sacred source of spiritual connection. Their mythological narratives explained the origins of the universe, the meaning of life, and the relationship between humans and nature. Concurrently, during the pre-Islamic era, the philosophical perspectives of Turkic peoples were reflected in their daily lives, customs, and ways of perceiving the world. This study explores the historical worldview of Turkic peoples, analyzing the roots and developmental trajectories of their philosophical thought.

Materials and Research Methods

The research process involved the study and analysis of scholarly literature, memoirs, archival materials, advanced practical experiences, and the application of methods such as analysis and

synthesis, induction and deduction, systematic logical approaches, historical and statistical analysis.

Prominent scholars such as Sh.D. Burkitbaeva and A.E. Shargynova have researched shamanism, highlighting its significance in the ancient religious and cultural life of Turkic peoples. Their studies examined the traditions and social roles of shamanism among Turkic and Chinese peoples, analyzing its impact on religious beliefs and social structures. Renowned Turkish scholar Atagun Ilhan investigated the nomadic culture, shamanism, and lifestyle of Turkic civilizations during the pre-Islamic period, providing a foundational analysis of their religious and cultural dimensions. Additionally, Yusuf Muhammadoglu Mahmudov explored the relationship between nature and humans in ancient Turkic literature, offering historical and philosophical insights into early thought patterns. Aygerm Jumabayeva's research focused on archetypes in ancient Turkic pagan beliefs, such as Tengri, Umay, and ancestor worship, emphasizing the deification of nature and its cultural legacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For Turkic peoples, nature was considered sacred, with natural elements such as mountains, rivers, trees, and stars revered as divine forces. These beliefs fostered ecological consciousness - a responsible attitude toward the environment. In shamanic rituals, these elements played crucial roles, particularly water, fire, and wind, which were viewed as mediators for communicating with nature. Through nature cults, concepts of interdependence and balance between humans and the natural world were formed. In the Turkic worldview, nature was interpreted as a social object that served as the spiritual guardian of all societal existence. The development of social thought was grounded in the principle of cooperation between humans and the universe.

The Harmony of Mythological Thinking, Shamanism, and Tengrism

Mythological thinking served as the primary means for Turkic peoples to comprehend, understand, and explain reality, occupying a central position in their spiritual and intellectual life. Myths were not merely products of oral tradition but represented symbolic expressions of collective consciousness. Through these myths, ancient worldviews were philosophically interpreted, including the relationships between good and evil, life and death, heaven and earth, and humans and nature. Shamanism functioned as the practical manifestation of this mythological thinking. Shamans - religious and spiritual guides - acted as intermediaries between community members and the spirit world. Through various rituals, they communicated with spirits, healed illnesses, and predicted natural phenomena. In shamanism, animals - particularly birds and leopards - were regarded as divine symbols, appearing both in myths and in shamans' ritual attire.

The synthesis of mythological thinking and shamanism clearly expressed the interconnectedness between human life, nature, spirit, and the cosmos. This harmony strengthened the religious-philosophical views of Turkic peoples, becoming a fundamental paradigm in their thought system. Tengri (the sky god) represented the central divine concept,

envisioned as the supreme force determining human life and destiny. This idea was perceived by Turkic consciousness as the highest power and formed the philosophical basis of their worldview. In Tengrism, alongside celestial forces, the concept of Mother Earth (Yer-Suv spirit) also held significant importance [7.26].

Ancestor worship developed as a socio-philosophical institution that reinforced historical memory within family and clan structures. The names of ancestors were remembered, prayers were offered to their spirits, and through these practices, spiritual bonds between generations were strengthened. In Tengrism, Tengri was the supreme god whose influence permeated all aspects of the cosmos. According to their belief, Tengri created the heavens, earth, and humans, governing their lives. This philosophical perspective reflected the establishment of balance between earth and sky, care for nature, and a sense of responsibility toward the environment. Tengri was viewed not only as a creator but also as a force influencing life and death. The spirits of ancestors served to reinforce this concept, becoming an inseparable part of the culture of seeking spiritual guidance from ancestors, honoring their memory, and commemorating them. The fundamental tenets of Tengrism include the following:

1. **Tengri** — Tengri is the supreme deity who determines the course of human life and guides them.
2. **Creation and Dualism** — A constant struggle exists between heaven and earth, good and evil, life and death.
3. **Respect for Nature** — Maintaining a balance between the earth and the sky is of paramount importance [2.86].

The cult of ancestral spirits played a significant role in the cultural life and social structure of Turkic peoples. These spirits served to reinforce the historical and spiritual connections among generations within families and clans. Ancestral spirits were revered, prayers were recited in their memory, and they were commemorated. Through such practices, ancestors were perceived as an integral part of life, and their spiritual presence contributed to shaping the moral and ethical values of society. Belief in ancestral spirits is characterized by the following aspects:

1. **Memory within Family and Clan** — Ancestral spirits are vital for preserving memory and maintaining spiritual continuity among generations.
2. **Spiritual and Religious Rituals** — Various ceremonies, prayers, and events were held to commemorate the spirits of ancestors. These rituals served as a means of honoring the community's historical heritage.
3. **Social Solidarity** — Belief in ancestors reinforced communal unity and spiritual cohesion within society [7.41].

Tengrism and the cult of ancestral spirits held a central position in the social and cultural structures of Turkic peoples. Belief in Tengri shaped the relationship between humanity and the cosmos, linking every human action with the heavens. Reverence for ancestors and faith in their spirits served to preserve historical memory within families and clans. These beliefs not only established religious unity but also ensured social order. Tengrism and the cult of ancestral spirits were also instrumental in reinforcing the ecological, ethical, and spiritual values of

Turkic peoples. They promoted a sense of responsibility toward nature, cautious engagement with the environment, and social unity within communities.

Pre-Islamic Developmental Stages and Their Characteristics

The religious, social, and philosophical developmental stages of the Turkic peoples before the advent of Islam played a vital role in shaping their society, religious beliefs, philosophical worldview, and social systems. This developmental process unfolded over multiple stages, during which unique spiritual beliefs and social structures emerged through interactions with the natural environment.

In this period, nature was regarded as sacred and divine. Natural elements such as mountains, rivers, trees, and stars were perceived as embodiments of divine forces. Belief in these elements fostered an ecological consciousness. Nature cults and veneration of natural forces revealed a deep spiritual connection between humans and nature. In shamanism, natural elements such as water, fire, and wind played a central role in facilitating communication with spirits. Through such beliefs, notions of harmony with the environment and spiritual unity with nature were formed.

The belief in Tengri occupied a central place in the religious system of Turkic peoples. Tengri, as the god of the sky, was perceived as the creator of the world and the force determining the fate and life of human beings. This belief significantly shaped the worldview and philosophical understanding of the Turkic peoples [3.27]. Tengri, associated with celestial powers, was deeply interwoven with social systems and moral values. His existence was perceived as essential in maintaining the balance between humans and the universe.

Belief in ancestral spirits also held an essential place in the religious and social development of the Turkic peoples. Rituals performed in honor of ancestral spirits served to preserve historical memory and strengthen spiritual ties. This belief also contributed to enhancing social unity. Respect for ancestors helped establish enduring spiritual connections between generations and played an invaluable role in the social order. Rituals that maintained contact with ancestral spirits served as vital tools for reinforcing the people's historical consciousness and spiritual identity.

The nomadic lifestyle significantly influenced the religious and philosophical development of the Turkic peoples. Nomads lived in direct contact with nature, which deepened their reverence for it. Natural phenomena such as rain, wind, and sunset held significant philosophical meaning. Through these experiences, ecological responsibility was cultivated among the Turkic peoples. Furthermore, their religious beliefs were oriented toward maintaining harmony with nature.

The pre-Islamic developmental stages of the Turkic peoples were crucial in forming their religious, social, and philosophical worldviews. Belief in nature, Tengri, reverence for ancestral spirits, and the nomadic way of life formed the foundation of their cultural, religious, and philosophical systems. These beliefs and values reinforced spiritual cohesion and developed ecological awareness. Even after the adoption of Islam, these values persisted in various forms and continue to manifest in the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples today.

Conclusion

The initial philosophical worldview of Turkic peoples was a product of their historical, religious, and cultural evolution. Rooted in nature worship, mythological thinking, and pre-Islamic developmental stages, this worldview shaped their social systems, ethical values, and ecological consciousness. Nature was revered as sacred, mythological narratives provided explanations for existence, and Tengrism offered a framework for understanding the divine and human destiny. Ancestor cults reinforced social unity and historical continuity. These elements collectively formed the intellectual and spiritual foundation of Turkic societies, leaving a lasting legacy that continues to influence contemporary cultural practices and philosophical reflections. Today, these ancient beliefs and thought systems endure in Turkic customs, rituals, and folklore, serving as a testament to their rich intellectual heritage.

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