



The Origin of the Turks in Various Historical Versions

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Abstract

Turkic-speaking peoples are among the most numerous peoples of the globe. A significant part of them have lived in Asia and Europe since ancient times. The Turks make up 90% of the inhabitants of modern Turkey, and in the territory of the former USSR there are about 50 million of them, which is the second largest group of the population after the Slavic peoples. The Turkic world is the birthplace of the very first and powerful cultures and civilizations, which subsequently had a significant impact on the entire course of world history, since throughout their history the Turks have been a connecting bridge between East and West. Many modern historians objectively note the role of the Turkic world in the history of human civilization as an important and positive factor in the development of progress and the preservation of peace.

Keywords: *Turkic Peoples; Turks; Ethnos; South Caucasus; Central Asia; The Great Silk Road; Azerbaijanis; Kazakhs; Kyrgyz; Turkmens; Uzbeks*

Introduction

For most people, the term “Turk” simply means a resident of Turkey. Few people realize that as many as 60% of the world’s 90 million Turks, defined as anyone who speaks Turkic as their mother tongue, live outside the Republic of Turkey.

For example, in Central Asia and the Caucasus, where they have recently reemerged as independent peoples, Turkic-speaking Azeris, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmens, and Uzbeks are roughly equal in number to Turks in Turkey itself. Significant Turkic minorities also live in Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Mongolia, Russia and Ukraine. In northwestern China, the Uyghur Turks outnumber the Han, giving the name to the country’s largest administrative unit.

The Turkic peoples, in fact, are one of the most widespread ethnic groups in the world, inhabiting a vast region from the Great Wall of China in the east to the Balkans in the west and from Siberia in the

north to Afghanistan in the south. The Turks have been justifying their name for 1500 years, which in translation from Turkic means “strong” or “strong” [1].

Describing the occupations of the ancient Turks, the scientist writes: “the inscriptions on the stones testify that the ancient Turks had a deep enough understanding of the strategy of attack and defense, the logistics and food supply of the army, the sudden capture of the enemy, bypassing, pursuing the retreating forces, organizing military intelligence, providing unity of the front and rear, the training and use of military specialists [1].

According to A.K. Narymbaeva, in Soviet times, the role of the Turkic peoples in the development of civilization was deliberately belittled and distorted. So, “some scientists considered Mongoloids to be the ancestors of the modern Turks, others argue that the ancient Türks were Caucasoids. Some believe that for the first time Turkic tribes appeared in Eastern Europe only in the middle of the first millennium AD, others write about the distant relationship of the ancient Turks with the Sumerians, Etruscans and American Indians [2, p. 202].

According to G. Gumbatov, “the birth of the Turkic ethnos took place in the South Caucasus. Archaeologists have found that starting from the 7th millennium BC. The South Caucasus and adjacent territories of Western Asia were inhabited by hunters of mouflons, mountain tours and goats” [3, p. 124]. Later, the ancient Turks domesticated these animals, began to grow and cultivate wild plants growing here (wheat, barley, grapes and other agricultural crops). So the local population became sedentary, turning from hunters into cattle breeders and farmers.

The opinion of historians is confirmed by linguists and archaeologists. According to many linguists, the ancient Turks were previously part of the Nostratic linguistic community, which soon split into western and eastern branches, which is associated with the cessation of communication between representatives of different dialects belonging to these branches.

Results and Discussion

Archaeologists have revealed that the ancient Turks created a unique burial mound culture, which includes rock paintings, royal burial mounds, deer stones, and stone sculptures. Kurgan culture subsequently spread throughout Eurasia, as the ancient Turks explored new lands.

The famous Italian scientist M. Alinei wrote: “Turkic peoples were the first to successfully tame horses and passed this innovation on to neighboring peoples. This is confirmed by the presence of Turkic borrowings in the terminology of the horse in the Finno–Ugric languages, the antiquity of which has been proven by experts, and this implies the antiquity of the Turkic presence in Eastern Europe” [4, p. 13].

The German scholar Peter Golden has written that groups of Turkic tribes have been in contact with the Iranian cities and oasis states of Central Asia since the migrations caused by the Xiongnu movements, if not earlier. Upon entering Western Turkestan, they continued the pattern of relations they had become familiar with through their contacts with the Eastern Ukrainian and Toksar city–states [5, p. 133].

According to the American scientist A. Pillamarri, Asia Minor, or modern Turkey, was once inhabited by a variety of non–Turkic peoples. Most of these people spoke Indo–European languages and included the Hittites, Phrygians, and Luvians.

The scientist notes that after the conquests of Alexander the Great, Asia Minor was basically Hellenized and remained completely Greek until the 11th century. In the XI century, the Turks began to

appear on the outskirts of Asia Minor (Anatolia), which was then under the control of the Greeks. Many Turks were mercenaries in the service of local Arab and Persian rulers east of the Byzantine Empire and Armenia, the dominant states of Asia Minor. In 1037, the Seljuk Empire, a Turkic state, was founded northeast of Iran in Central Asia and quickly overran much of Persia, Iraq, and the Levant. By the 1060s, the Seljuk Empire bordered Byzantium and Asia Minor [5, p. 130]. It should be noted that the Turks were a minority, ruling over the Persian, Arab and Kurdish majority.

The Turkic tribes to the east of the Khazars, settled around the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, are subject to powerful religious influence. Initially, their religion was shamanism, but later they converted to Islam. This brings them into the Muslim caliphate, which since 762 has been based in Baghdad.

Displaced by the Mongols from their homes in the Asian steppes, the nomadic Turkic tribes converted to Islam in the eighth and ninth centuries. By the tenth century, one of the Turkic tribes, the Seljuks, had become a significant force in the Islamic world and adopted a sedentary lifestyle that included Islamic orthodoxy, central administration, and taxation.

However, many other Turkic groups remained nomads and, following the traditions of the Ghazi, sought to conquer lands for Islam and get their own spoils of war. This brought them into conflict with the Seljuk Turks, and in order to pacify the nomadic tribes, the Seljuks sent them to the eastern possessions of the Byzantine Empire, to Anatolia. The tribe known as the Ottomans arose from one of the small emirates that settled in northwestern Anatolia after 1071. The dynasty was named after Osman Ghazi (1259–1326), who began to expand his kingdom into the Byzantine Empire in Asia Minor, moving his capital to Bursa in 1326.

G. Leiser, a scholar from the University of Cambridge, noted that Byzantium established diplomatic contacts with the Turks of Central Asia as early as the sixth century AD, and later the movement of the Turkic peoples across the steppes north of the Black Sea brought them to the borders of the empire in Eastern Europe [6].

According to the scientist, the first state ruled by a central authority was founded in Anatolia, on the Asian peninsula of Turkey, in 1750 BC. the Hittites. Of Indo-European origin, they entered Anatolia through the Caucasus during the great migrations that began around 3000 BC and probably continued for the next thousand years over a vast area stretching from Western Europe to India.

They established a feudal state, the only one capable of challenging the hegemony of Egypt. Excavations have unearthed many impressive ruins of Hittite settlements in Anatolia; fascinating artefacts from this period are exhibited at the Ankara Archaeological Museum. The empire was contemporary with Troy on the west coast of Anatolia [7, p. 67].

The Turkish scientist M. Keymen notes the existence of a common language of the Turkic peoples [7, p. 72]. Most Turkologists are inclined to the general opinion that initially in the ancient Turkic language, deaf consonants prevailed at the beginning: “p, t, k, s, h, y”. As the Turkic runic inscriptions show, later a phonetic variant appeared with a voiced beginning “bar-”, which is characteristic of modern Turkic languages.

Unfortunately, until now, scientists do not have a single opinion on any of the issues of Turkic ethnogenesis. “Scientists have put forward more than ten regions as the ancestral home of the Turks: Altai, Northern and Northwestern China, the region of the Tien Shan Mountains, Western Asia, Western Asia, Central Asia, Northwestern Siberia, the Baikal region, the Irtysh and Ural interfluves, the Ural–Volga region, Eastern Europe” [3, p. 87].

Comparing different opinions about the ancestral home of the Turks, scientists came to the conclusion that the most unfortunate and erroneous is the opinion about the Altai ancestral home, it appeared as a result of mixing the people themselves with their name.

The name “Turk” was spread only during the reign of two Turkic Khaganates (VI–VIII centuries AD), and Turkic-speaking tribes under other names left their mark as early as the 5th-4th centuries BC. But if we take into account that traces of the formed Turkic language are observed in some languages of the American Indians, whose ancestors came to the American mainland about 20 thousand years ago, then we have to admit the failure of all existing theories about the place and time of the original ancestral home of the Turks [7, p. 72].

According to B.B. Ovchinnikova, “even before the advent of productive labor, in the period of the absence of states and their borders, various Turkic-speaking tribes spread throughout Eurasia in search of natural food and lived interspersed with other tribes. The mixing process also contributed to their biological survival. Somewhere the Turks were assimilated by other tribes, as a result of which they became part of the population of non-Turkic regions; somewhere they themselves assimilated others, forming Turkic regions [8, p. 80].

According to A.K. Narymbaeva, “the ancient Turks, long before certain Turkic peoples (Huns, Yuezhi, Usuns, Uighurs–Kotons, Saks) moved from their historical ancestral homeland to the east and reached the Chinese border, before that, for more than four millennia, they lived in portable yurts (halachugs) and perfectly mastered metallurgy and widely used items made of gold, silver and iron in everyday life” [2, p. 675]. This statement of the Kazakh scientist is confirmed by the finds of archaeologists, which proves that the ancient Turks had the ability to make various metal products.

According to the Kazakh historian H.M. Abzhanova, “the state of the ancient Turks – the Turkic Khaganate was formed in 552. This polyethnic state near the southern borders of present-day Russia was created by the Turks (Turkyuts) headed by rulers from the Ashina clan. Its first ruler was Bumyn. After him, Istemi, Mukan, Bilge and others sat on the kagan throne” [9, p. 8]. During its heyday, the Turkic Khaganate controlled the territories of Manchuria, Mongolia, Altai, Central Asia, as well as the Crimea and the North Caucasus.

The Turks and Sogdians, who were under the rule of the Khaganate, were interested in direct trade relations with Byzantium. Iran prevented this. In this regard, in 568, Istemi–Kagan sent an embassy led by the Sogdian merchant Maniah to Constantinople. “As a result of negotiations with the Byzantine emperor Justin II, a trade agreement and a military treaty against Iran were signed. After the conclusion of the Byzantine–Turkic alliance, Iran undertook to pay tribute to the Khaganate in the amount of 40 thousand gold dinars annually and not interfere with trade” [4, p. 15].

The state of the ancient Kyrgyz on the Yenisei also became dependent on the Turkic Khaganates. The ancient Turks controlled the section of the Great Silk Road from the borders of China to Iran and the trade routes leading to Southern and Western Siberia. After the conquest of Central Asia, the Turks became the masters of a significant part of the trade route from China to the countries of the Mediterranean [10, p. 45].

In 581, the weakening of the Turkic Khaganate was observed, the main reasons for which were the intensification of internecine wars, the aggravation of social contradictions, China's offensive on the borders of the Khaganate, and wars with neighboring countries. In 603, the Turkic Khaganate broke up into the Western Turkic Khaganate and the Eastern Turkic Khaganate [11, p. 167].

In the Western Turkic Khaganate, there was a process of class formation and a relatively rapid formation of early feudal social relations. The military–political resources of the central government of

the Western Turkic Khaganate turned out to be insufficient to keep the peoples and tribes in obedience. In the Khaganate, there were continuous civil strife, frequent changes of rulers, accompanied by the inevitable strengthening of centrifugal forces [12, p. 13].

The Eastern Turkic Khaganate also has a history since the collapse in 603 of the unified Turkic Khaganate. The Khaganate had common extended borders with China and waged frequent wars here. Several major battles in which the Khaganate won victories took place at the end of the 7th century and in the first half of the 8th century. After the defeat in 745 in the battle with the Uyghurs under the leadership of Khan Moyun–Chur, the Uighur Khaganate arose on the lands of the Eastern Khaganate, which existed from 745 to 840.

An important historical significance of the existence of the Turkic Khaganates was the creation of numerous states on the territory of Eurasia, which were headed by the Turkic–speaking peoples.

Professor K.T. Laipanov noted that Central Asia, the birthplace of Turkism, was still a refuge for the largest Turkish masses. If the Turkic history from ancient times to the present day is considered as a whole, then the future of the Turks, who left Central Asia to the west and chose the northern route to the Caspian Sea, was not very bright from the point of view of Turkism. Those who ensured the succession of the Turkic tribe were those who continued to live in Central Asia and those who followed the road to the south of the Caspian Sea and moved west [13, p. 87].

According to B.B. Ovchinnikova, the homeland of the Turks is the endless steppes of Central Asia. The ancient Turks worshiped the “God of Heaven”, whom they considered eternal. Having a warlike character, the Turks took good care of horses and used them well in wars [8, p. 139].

Historian R.T. Ganiev noted that in world history it is impossible to show the people who founded as many states as the Turks. Some of the Turkic states were created at home in Central Asia, and some abroad. Among the many Turkish states that have come and gone, the importance and influence of the Huns, Gok Turks, Seljuks and Ottomans in Asia surpasses that of other Turkish states both in terms of national and general history. These Turkish states, which influenced the currents of world history, also attract attention for their greatness among the world empires that have come and gone [14, p. 89].

The influence of the Turks on the peoples of Siberia and Central Asia is so significant that archaeologists and historians call the period of domination of the Western and Eastern Khaganates “Turkic time”.

The Turks, who flooded their homeland and migrated to the west, followed to the north and south of the Caspian Sea. Since the Sassanid state in Iran closed the southern route to the Caspian for centuries, the Turks always followed the northern route of the Caspian until the Sassanid state collapsed and advanced into southern Russia, the Balkans and Central Europe. Since those who followed this path failed to establish a population density among the Christian elements, spreading over the wide lands, they eventually lost their nationality and disappeared among them. However, the fate of those who followed the southern path was different, and this allowed the Turkish people to found a new homeland.

In this regard, the Seljuks, who led the great advance to the south and gave Turkism a new homeland, and led to the creation of the longest–lived and glorious Turkic state outside of Central Asia, are certainly worthy of respect. It can be said that the phase of national history for Turkishness abroad was opened by the Seljuks.

The Seljuk Empire is one of the empires that had a significant impact on world history and contributed to the creation of the Ottoman state. If the Great Seljuk Empire had not been created, Anatolia would not have been Turkified, and the Ottoman state would not have been created among some large and small Turkish states in this second homeland [15, p. 137].

The nomadic way of life was the main feature in the various Turkic states that existed before the arrival of the Seljuks, and this feature remained beyond the Seljuk Pale of Settlement. Among the Anatolian Seljuks and the Ottomans who came after him, the nomadic character was erased throughout the state and gave way to a sedentary character [5, p. 68].

The Oguzes, who founded the Seljuk state, went through the preparatory stages that preceded the stage of founding this great state, in Maverannahr. With the victory in the Dandanakan field battle in 1040, when the Seljuk state suddenly arose and manifested itself, the central burden of the state was concentrated in Iran. After the victory of Manzikert over the Byzantines in 1071, the fate of Turkism was lost to Anatolia, and these lands were tied to them for centuries.

Since Alp Aslan, one of the great rulers of the Seljuks, having defeated the Byzantine emperor Roman Diogon in the battle of Manzikert (August 26, 1071), opened the way for the Turks to Anatolia, the Turks poured into Anatolia in large masses. As the Anatolian lands were conquered as far as the Aegean and Marmara Seas, the Turks came and settled in Anatolia. Thus, Anatolia quickly became the Turkish homeland.

Starting from the early years of the thirteenth century, when the Seljuk state reached its age of perfection, Anatolian roads, hospitals, mosques, tombs, madrasahs, libraries, hotels, caravanserais, baths, fountains, bridges were built, and Turkish culture was fully established and developed on these lands. The people enjoyed peace and prosperity.

However, the Mongol threat, which arose shortly after the death of the First Alaeddin Keykubat, led to the fact that the luster of the Seljuk state dimmed. When the army under the leadership of the Seljuk Sultan Giyaseddin Keyhusrev II was defeated by the Mongols at the Battle of Kösedag in 1243, the state of the Anatolian Seljuks came under the patronage of the Mongols. After this date, the Seljuks could no longer straighten their backs and regain their former self. The patronage of the Ilkhanids continued until the complete destruction of the state in 1308 [7, p. 97].

The struggle for the throne of the Seljuk family led to great destruction and killing of people in Anatolia. Despite all this, the Ilkhanid areas of influence in Anatolia remained exclusive to Eastern and Central Anatolia. The Turkmen rulers, taking advantage of this, founded several small states in the Karaman region and in Western Anatolia. Thus the “period of principalities” opened in Anatolia, and the political unity of Anatolia was broken until the Ottomans gathered it under a flag.

Because the state of the Anatolian Seljuks was a part and continuation of the Great Seljuks in Anatolia, they continued and developed the Great Seljuk system in terms of state organization. The great Seljuks, who established the unity of Islam in countries stretching from the Seikhun tribes to the coast of the Aegean, from the Hijaz to the Caucasus, adopted Sunnism among the Islamic sects and played the greatest role in spreading Islam and Turkism in Anatolia [16, p. 90].

The Anatolian Seljuks, on the other hand, made Anatolia the eternal homeland of the Turks, pushed back Byzantine dominance to the shores of the Sea of Marmara, and adorned Anatolia with Turkish people and culture.

The main strategic threat to the Turks was the Fatimid Caliphate based in Egypt. The Fatimids were Ismaili Shiites and ruled Jerusalem and Mecca at the time, while the Turks supported Sunni Islam.

The Sunni caliph in Baghdad was their puppet. By this time, the caliph had ceased to play any political role while the Seljuk sultans were in power. As with many empires, many problems arose from conflicts between nomadic rulers and the settled population [17, p. 28].

Thus, many Turkic tribes under the Seljuks actually presented a problem for the Seljuks as they were restless and sometimes raided the settled population which was ruled by the Seljuks. As a result, many Turkic tribes and families were placed on the borders of the Seljuk Empire, including on the border of the Byzantine Empire. Turkish raids began in Asia Minor, which greatly irritated the Byzantines.

The Seljuk Turks did not want to be at enmity with the Byzantines. Their state apparatus was directed against Egypt; raids on the Byzantines were carried out only by those tribes that were barely under the central control of the Seljuks. Romanos IV Diogenes, the Byzantine emperor, created a previously non-existent threat to the Seljuks by moving about 40,000 soldiers to his eastern border, thus alerting the Seljuk sultan Alp-Arslan of the threat from Asia Minor. Thus, the Byzantines, diverting the attention of the Turks from Egypt, brought a Turkic army from Persia and Central Asia to Asia Minor.

The Seljuk and Byzantine armies met at Manzikert in eastern Turkey, where the Byzantines were routed. This is perhaps one of the most decisive battles in history, as it led to the final establishment of Turkish power in Asia Minor.

Turks began to settle in Anatolia during the period of the Great Seljuk Empire at the beginning of the 11th century, after the 1071 victory over the Byzantines in the vicinity of Malazgirt. Over time, the Turks conquered most of Anatolia and established the Anatolian Seljuk State as part of the Great Seljuk Empire (1075–1318), the first Turkish empire in Anatolia [18].

The Seljuks left Turkey with a rich cultural heritage. The Anatolian state of the Seljuks enriched the country with monumental mosques, madrasahs, hospitals, fortresses, tombs and caravanserais, often covered with the finest stone carvings and tiles [15, p. 136].

Although the state of the Anatolian Seljuks broke up into petty principalities for both internal and external reasons, this aforementioned infrastructural power made it possible to regroup around the strongest of these divided structures with the strength of culture and Islamic faith. As a result, the Ottoman Empire was born.

The Ottoman Empire was born as a Ghazi state at the intersection of two rival monotheistic religions and civilizations. The origin in question gave the Ottomans unique features and led to the emergence of a certain political culture. In the Ottoman Empire, the state was built on the idea of conquest.

The Turks expanded to the detriment of Byzantium in the west and other Muslim countries in the east and created their own states. Thus, the military element played an important role in the creation of the Ottoman state. Even when the Ottomans were at the height of their power, they faced strong enemies from all sides. This situation required the Ottoman armies to be ready for war.

Of course, there is no doubt that behind a perfectly functioning military system there is a very organized social, economic and cultural life.

Conclusions

Thus, despite the large number of theories about the origin of the Turks and their place of residence in ancient times, archaeologists were able to prove that the ancient Turks were the creators of a unique kurgan culture (rock paintings, royal mounds, stone pens), which, as the ancient Turks mastered

new lands, spread throughout Eurasia. Scientists have proven that the ancient Turks had the technology of making iron, which is confirmed by the finds of iron-smelting furnaces in the places of residence of the Turkic peoples. The ability to melt iron and make various metal products contributed to the manufacture of various weapons and a well-armed army by the ancient Turks.

Modern Turkic peoples have preserved a common language and a common culture, inherited from their common ancestors.

The ancient Turkic peoples created a large number of states in Europe and Asia, which had a significant impact on the course of world history. The Turkic world was indeed the bridge that connected the two great cultures of East and West.

History knows many Turkic empires and other large state formations, and all of them were characterized by loyalty to the conquered peoples, the virtual absence of colonial policy in its generally recognized sense.

By creating huge empires, the Turks solved the problems of organizing, managing and controlling the conquered peoples, that is, they created and improved their system of state and administrative management.

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