

TENGRIISM AND THE STAGES OF ITS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this article is to conduct an initial analysis of the meaning Tengriism is a system of religious beliefs of the ancient Turkic peoples. With the advent of Islam, this belief was greatly weakened in the Turkic world and almost disappeared completely. In the last 10-15 years, however, it has revived in the former post-Soviet countries. This phenomenon has aroused the interest of scholars. This article examines information about Tengriism, which has revived in Central Asia and Russia in recent years. In particular, it analyses the information about Tengriism and the history of its study. The history of research on this topic is divided into several main periods. In addition, this article focuses on the period when studies of the old Tengriism belief and the neo-Tengriism belief were conducted. A chronology of the research periods is established and analysed. In addition, the opinions of domestic and foreign scholars on Tengriism are analysed in detail and comprehensively. Methods such as scientific analysis, literature research and analytical observation are mainly used in the study.

Key words: Tengriism, Neo-Tengriism, Spirit, Ancestors, Tradition, Tengriism Research.

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Тәңіршілдік сенімі және оның зерттелуі кезеңдері

Аңдатпа. Тәңіршілдік сенімі — бұл түркі халықтарының ерте дәуірдегі діни сенім жүйесі. Бұл сенімі ислам дінінің келуімен түркі әлемінде қатты әлсіреп жойылып кеткендей болатын. Бірақ қазіргі соңғы 10-15 жылда бұрынғы постсоветтік мемлекеттерде қайта жаңғыру үстінде. Бұл феномен ғалымдардың қызығушылығын арттырған болатын. Бұл мақалада соңғы жылдары Орта Азия және Ресей аймағында қайта жаңғыра бастаған тәңіршілдік сеніміне қатысты ақпараттар зерттелетін болады. Нақты айтқанда тәңіршілдік сенімі және оның зерттелу тарихы туралы мәліметтерге талдау жасалынады. Бұл тақырыпқа қатысты зерттеулер тарихы негізгі бірнеше кезеңдерге бөліп қарастырылады. Сонымен қатар бұл мақалада ескі тәңіршілдік сенімі мен неотәңіршілдік сеніміне қатысты зерттеулердің қай кезеңде зерттелгендігіне мән беріледі. Зерттелу кезеңдерінің хронологиясы жасалып талданады. Сондай-ақ тәңіршілдік туралы отандық және шетелдік зерттеуші ғалымдардың айтқан пікірлері терең әрі жан-жақты талданатын болады. Зерттеуде негізінен ғылыми талдау, әдебиеттерге шолу, аналитикалық шолу сынды әдістер қолданылады.

Түйін сөздер: тәңіршілдік, неотәңіршілдік, аруақ, ата-баба, дәстүр, тәңіршілдік зерттеулер.

Тенгрианство и этапы ее изучения

Аннотация. Тенгрианство — система религиозных верований древних тюркских народов. Эта вера, по-видимому, значительно ослабла и даже исчезла в тюркском мире с приходом ислама. Однако в последние 10–15 лет он переживает возрождение в странах бывшего постсоветского пространства. Это явление привлекло внимание ученых. В данной статье будут рассмотрены сведения, связанные с верой тенгрианства, которая в последние годы начала возрождаться в Средней Азии и России. В частности, будут проанализированы сведения о вере Тенгри и истории ее изучения. История исследований этой темы делится на несколько основных периодов. В статье также рассматривается период, в который проводились исследования древнего тенгрианства и неотенгрианства. Создана и проанализирована хронология этапов исследования. Также будут глубоко и всесторонне проанализированы мнения, высказанные отечественными и зарубежными учеными о тенгрианстве. В исследовании в основном используются такие методы, как научный анализ, обзор литературы и аналитический обзор.

Ключевые слова: тенгрианство, неотенгрианство, дух, предок, традиция, исследование тенгрианства.

Introduction

The general concept of “Tengri” as the main creator god of the Turkic steppe emerged at the end of the 2nd millennium BC and the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, and its emergence first coincided with the time when the Turkic and Mongol tribes formed their national principles and created steppe empires in the 5th-6th centuries BC. “The original version of the words called Chenli (“sky”) by the Huns, Tian by the Chinese,

and Dingir (“sky”) by the Sumerians was called by the French researcher Jean-Paul Roux the general term “Tengriism”. The term Tengri means “sky”, “god”, “creator of the world”, “ruler” [1].

It is explained that the belief in Tengriism has developed from ancient times from a simple belief in the existence of some forces in nature to a belief in the gods. Historians have noted that the beliefs in gods were based on the idea that mountains, trees, water, stones, etc. in nature have spirits.

Although the belief in Tengriism, one of the ancient beliefs of the Turkic peoples, is among the old beliefs, we cannot deny that there are still remnants in some of the customs and traditions and culture of the modern Turkic peoples. After the Turkic peoples had adopted Islam, however, this belief largely disappeared. After gaining independence, there was a revival of religions, traditions and cultures in the countries of Central Asia. The issue of Tengriism was also raised as part of this revitalisation. Especially in the last 10-15 years, when interest in the topic of "Tengriism" increased significantly in Central Asia, new directions of shamanism and shamanistic ideas from earlier centuries began to re-emerge. Even several groups of new Tengriism have emerged. If in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Karakalpakstan, Tatarstan, etc., neo-Tengriism and shamanism manifest themselves in a syncretic form (fused, mixed) with the principles of Islam, then in Buryatia, Altai and Tuva, Tengriism manifests itself in a syncretic form in connection with Lamaism.

In this regard, the importance of explaining the concept of Tengri from a scientific, objective, and philosophical perspective is increasing among the general public. Understanding the issue of Tengriism from a scientific, objective, and philosophical perspective allows not only to take its historical place in the system of ancient world-views, but also to consider it from a modern scientific perspective.

The resurgent Tengriism has aroused the interest of scholars conducting research in the fields of religion, history, and Turkology. The phenomenon of the revival of Tengriism has made this topic relevant in the regions of Central Asia. Various studies have appeared on this topic.

In general, the first studies on the topic of Tengriism began with medieval Turkic thinkers such as Mahmud Kashgari and Zhusup Balasaguni, and continued with the works of ethnographers and historians such as V.V. Bartold, S.E. Malov, V.V. Radlov, A.I. Levshin, Sh. Ualikhanov and D. Banzarov, and A. Divaev in the 19th and 20th centuries. There are several scholars who are currently working on the phenomenon of Tengriism. Among them are often the works of indigenous religious scholars. In particular, these include the studies of scholars such as N. Ayupov, A. A. Ryskiewa, A. Qurbanbek [2], M. Isakhan, A. Altaykyzy [3] on the subject of Tengriism. Of course, these studies themselves can be divided into different directions. We will discuss them in the main part.

Methodology

The wide range of methods used to study the Tengriism belief includes various scientific approaches and methodological foundations. They constitute the most important methods on this topic, from traditional historical research methods to cultural and anthropological, phenom-

enological approaches. The study mainly uses the method of scientific analysis. To identify data related to research on the topic of Tengriism, methods such as literature review and analytical review were used. In addition, manifestations of neo-Tengriism were identified through comparative analysis methods.

Main part

Many scholars have expressed their thoughts and opinions regarding the concept of "Tengri". Domestic and foreign scholars have tried to define this concept in their works. With regard to the term "Tengri", O. Suleimenov writes in his work "Language Writing" on the oldest religions of mankind and the errors of the expert on the mysteries of the Bible, Erich Zehren, that Tengriism is a "solar religion" that has developed over several dozen millennia [4]. A similar source is provided by the mediaeval Albanian historian Musa Kalankatuklu (7th century): "The Huns, Khazars and other Turkic tribes, such as the Massagetes, believed in the gods of the sun, moon and Tanra Khan and sacrificed horses, sometimes to water and fire, to the god of the road and even to all phenomena that seemed miraculous to them like the birth of the moon" [5]. According to these views, the idea of God is connected to the forces of nature such as the sun and the moon and can be seen as originating from there.

Scholars who hold the following view say that the Turkic-speaking peoples used the word "Tengri" ("Tanir", "Tanry"), as a synonym for the modern term "God, Allah". They assume that it was used in a monotheistic religious sense. The famous Azerbaijani researcher F. Agasiyoglu, for example, explained: "The ancient Turks called God "Tanir". In addition, they used names such as Tengri, Dingir, Kut, etc. [6]. The following researcher Ziya Bunyadov: In his commentary on the terms "Tengri" and "Göktürk", he wrote that "Tengri" means God and "Gök" means sky in most modern Central Asian Turkic dialects. In his opinion, this word is used in today's language of the modern Turkic peoples only in the meaning of "Allah" [7]. And the Uzbek scientist Karimov B.R. wrote in his article on "Tengriism": "The cult of the god Tengri (Tengri, Khan Tengri, Kok Tengri) occupies an important place in the ancient beliefs of all Turkic peoples. The origin of this cult has not yet been sufficiently researched." [8] There are also indigenous scholars who regard Tengriism as a philosophical world view. For example, the researcher Sabetkazi Akatay, who uses the Kazakh translation of the term "Tanirshildik" instead of "Tengriism", comes to the conclusion that "Tengriism" is "the result of the natural synthesis of the historical syncretic (combining different beliefs) philosophical thoughts of the peoples of Central Asia" [9]. The famous scholar Garifolla Yesim, who analyses the old Turkish legends, points out: "In the world view of the Turks, Tengri is an

incomprehensible mystery. The worship of the Tengri heaven, the thirst for heights drives people to adhere to a sublime, incomprehensible, heroic philosophy..." [10]. Auezkhan Kodar explained in his philosophical analysis that "the idea of God is the first idea about the reality of the world. It went through a path of development from animism, totemism, through the stages of henotheism to monotheism. However, when it reached the stage of monotheism, it merged with Manichaeism beliefs and was then (partly) influenced by the idea of "Allah" in the Islamic faith and (partly) by the philosophical ideas of Buddhism" [11].

Another view of Tengriism is the view of scholars who explain it in the context of the concepts of "shamanism". As proof of this, the researcher A.Yu. Nikonov in his work "Altun Bitig Tengriantstvo" conceptually adheres to the stereotype of presenting Tengriism as shamanism and explains the concepts of Tengriism on the basis of the myths of the ancient Turks, which are preserved in the oral and written traditions of the Turkic peoples [12].

In addition, we note that the concept of Tengriism also occupies a special place in the work of Sh. Valikhanov. In his article "Tengri (God)" he comprehensively describes the customs and principles of Tengriism, the belief in spirits and ghosts. The duality of Sh. Valikhanov's view of Tengriism is explained by the historical and ideological background of the era in which he lived. On the one hand, he recognises Tengri as God and says that Tengriism is a "monotheistic belief in God", and on the other hand, Tengriism is explained as the concept of spirits, souls, fairies, demons and evil shamanic spirits [13].

As we can see, the opinions of scholars have developed in several directions. In this regard, contradictory views arise. Currently, there are different views and conclusions about Tengriism:

First, according to Eurocentric scholars, Tengriism is associated with shamanism, considers it a form of paganism, and draws attention to its animistic foundations. According to them, Tengriism is a nature religion. Representatives of this trend, relying on information from Western travelers such as Plano Carpini and Wilhelm Rubruck, described the life, customs, beliefs and customs of medieval Turkic society as a phenomenon of a pagan society.

The second is the view that belief in God underwent many changes during contact with other religions and went through a developmental phase from a polytheistic concept to a monotheistic belief. Proponents of this view, referring to the works of medieval Turkic thinkers such as Mahmud Kashkari and Yusuf Balasaguni, believe that "the Turks developed a common idea as they passed through the stages of the development of the imperial state from a separate tribal period." If shamanic polydaemonism was characteristic of the early tribal period, the heyday of the Turkic khaganate was characterised by a monotheistic

concept of God. This means that the Turks at this time understood Tengri as the only creator of everything. It is assumed that this attitude had a positive effect on the acceptance of Islam by the Turkic peoples and the rapid spread of Islam in the area of Turkic culture. N. Ayupov expressed the opinion that Tengriism should be regarded as a universally open worldview [14].

There are also several problems with the phenomenon of Tengriism that is developing in the post-Soviet countries today. There are several groups with different views on Tengriism. They are currently developing, albeit slowly, in the regions of Central Asia and Russia. Now, let's dwell on the Tengriism groups that are active in Kazakhstan. Neo-Tengriism groups in Kazakhstan: These can be divided into several groups:

Representatives of the first group. Representatives of the group that call themselves defenders of the "Kazakh worldview" and "Kazakh tradition", who are guided by myths and legends widespread among the people.

Representatives of the second group. Political racist direction called Tengriists or adherents of the Kazakh worldview.

The concept of the Tengri. According to the belief of Tengriists, "Tengri" is not a name for God, but adheres to natural philosophical principles such as "Tengri is in the body – protein", "Kazakh tribes – acids and organic substances contained in protein", "The spirits of ancestors are in the human body". However, other neo-Tengrist groups and researchers of the Tengrist worldview completely disagree with the position taken by this group that "Tengri" is not a name for God. This is because Shokan Ualikhanov explains in his article "Tengri (God)" that Tengriism arose on the basis of customs and principles, the belief in spirits and ghosts. On the one hand, he introduces Tengri as a god and says that Tengriism is "monotheistic belief in Tengri", on the other hand, he argues that the concepts of "spirits, souls, fairies, diyus and evil shamanic spirits" had not yet disappeared in his time [15]. According to the above-mentioned neo-theistic groups, the position that "God is not the name of God" is "directed against theism" and "the slogan of groups that want to destroy theism".

Sacred cults: Ak (wight) - sacred cell. Aruak – Aru (young girl) cell. Aruak- pregnancy regulator. Only ARUAK- SPIRIT knows the answer to all questions that arise in the living world. God himself, who created Ak - Aruak as his body. Tan-Ir-Body Protein. Tan-Ir- Immunity Protein. However, other neo-theistic groups do not agree with the position that this group promotes that "Aruak is a cell" and consider such a belief to be a concept "alien to theism." According to the beliefs of the other neo-theistic groups mentioned above, they believe that "Aruak is not a cell at all. Aruak are ancestors who have already passed away." On this basis, there are mutual disagreements among representatives of the neo-Islamic movement.

Terminology: Mysyman - a person who is firm in his faith. Fasting - sharing the hard-earned income with others. Ablution - a diet. Takarat - going out into nature, swimming, sunbathing. Taking medicinal herbs to regulate the internal organs. Bata - chromosome organics. Alty Alash - Kuymchak, Takyl, Kundyk, Kokey, Mandai, Tobe. Alty Alash - a form of worship in the style of Hinduism, sitting in meditation. As we have seen, the terminology of this direction is presented in syncretism with the concepts of Islamic faith.

In addition to Islam, the neo-theosophical movement also has concepts and rituals that are very similar to those of other religions. Syncretistic types of worship: Alty Alash is a type of worship that expresses a deep immersion of consciousness in its own content, similar to Hindu meditation.

Omin is a combination of the syllables om and in, which serves as a link. Om is the supreme being, the universal spirit in the understanding of Hinduism. Om is the path leading to the god Savitar [16].

Another "occultism" that this Tengriist direction promotes is called "Rebirth" (Reincarnation). However, there is a noticeable difference between "Rebirth" and reincarnation. Reincarnation means the transfer of souls from body to body (any body). "Rebirth" in Neo-Tengrists means the rebirth of ancestors into their own generation (the concept of becoming parents to your ancestors again).

Representatives of the third group. A group of citizens who call themselves «agnostic Tengrists» and «atheist Tengrists». Some active members of this group are known for denouncing Islam as a phenomenon that threatens humanity, discriminating against Muslim citizens, presenting religion and science as a contradiction and disseminating information that describes religion as an obstacle to social development.

The main work of the group's representatives was «The Great Paradox, or Two Handwritings in the Quran» (Samir Aleskerov), which was written to criticise the verses of the Quran. This work contains information about the connection between the verses of the Quran and terrorist events that have taken place in the world.

It is clear that one of the main reasons they call themselves «atheists» is their hatred of «religions». As to why they call themselves «Tengrists», they explain: «Every nation has its own tradition, and the Kazakh tradition is Tengriism. Tengriism means nationalist.» Although the representatives of this current describe themselves as «atheists», they do not know much about the principles of atheism.

The phenomenon of several neo-Tengri groups, mentioned above, is observed in Kazakh society. The activity of these groups requires re-study of this topic. It is observed that among the neo-Tengrists there are also their own «scholars» who are trying to study this topic, and books

by these scholars are also being published. In this regard, the importance of research will undoubtedly increase. Now it is important to consider the research conducted on this topic by periods. Because the researcher of each period could conduct research in accordance with the requirements of that era. The history of the study of the topic of Tengriism can be generally divided into several periods:

1. The first studies include the works of medieval Turkic thinkers. These studies contain information about Tengriism that can be found in the works of scholars such as Mahmud Kashgari and Zhusip Balasaguni. The importance of these works stems from the fact that the authors themselves were deeply immersed in the spirituality of the people and described the artefacts they directly witnessed [17].

2. Studies on «Tengri» during the period of colonisation of the Kazakh territories by Tsarist Russia. The first studies on «Tengri» and «Tengriism» were carried out by the colonising country: They travelled to Central Asia in the 18th and 19th centuries, studied the history, literature, culture and religious beliefs of the local population and left records. For example: V.V. Barthold, J.H. Gumilev, G.N. Potanin, N. Aristov, S.G. Klyashtorny, N.Ya. Bichurin, L.S., U. Thomsen, A.I. Levshin, A.N. Bernshtam, V.V. Radlov, etc. Among the local residents, Sh. Ualikhanov and D. Banzarov (author of the book *Chernaya Vera*) were led by G.N. Potanin (D. Banzarov's work was edited, an electronic version is available on the Internet). Sh. Ualikhanov called Tengriism and shamanism together. This can be seen from his article «Traces of Shamanism among the Kyrgyz»: «In general, shamanism as a religion is a subject that has not yet been studied.» On December 15, 1893, Wilhelm Thomsen, a professor at the Department of Comparative Linguistics at the University of Copenhagen, read the word «Tengri» from a stone inscription collected by archaeologists. After reading the text in full, it was determined that «Tengri» worshiped the same sky, the creator of the sky [18]. Thus, a new subject of study, the topic «Tengirism», «Tengirism», appeared.

3. The end of the Soviet era and the time of independent Kazakhstan. Since the 70s of the 20th century, well-known scientists of our country, S. Akatay, A.I. Artemyev, K.A. Abishev, N.Zh. Beitenova, R. Berdybay, A.B. Derbisali, G. Yesim, T.Kh. Gabitov, M.Z. Izotov, A.K. Kasabek, B.K. Kudaibergenov, A. Margulan, S. Mukanov, A.N. Nyсанbayev, M.S. Orynbekov, G.K. Shalabaeva, K.Sh. Shulembayev, N. Ayupov researched religious beliefs that influenced the formation of Kazakh philosophy, in particular the influence of Tengriism, Zoroastrianism, Totemism, Shamanism, Christianity and Islam.

4. The time after independence. The philosophical and cultural heritage of ancient Turkic culture has developed to such an extent that it is necessary to evaluate it from a historical per-

spective and determine its cultural context. The main objective was to determine the intellectual culture of Turkic-speaking peoples through the monuments of ancient Turkic writing, the creativity of ancient and mediaeval thinkers. The independence of the Turkic states in Central Asia allows us to take a new look at a number of questions concerning the history and culture of the Turkic peoples. Researchers who considered Tengriism as a philosophical phenomenon of ancient Turkic culture, such as Olzhas Suleimenov, Sabetkazy Akatay, Garifolla Yesim, Nurlan Ospanuly, A. Kodar, Aron Atabek, A.Yu. Nikonov (Kazakhstan), Murat Adzhi (Russia), Bezertinov R.N. (Tatarstan), Karimov B.R. (Uzbekistan), Dastan Sarygulov (Kyrgyzstan), Choyun Omuraliev (Kyrgyzstan) and others, have tried to reveal new facets of the concept of «Tengri».

The common opinion of the scholars is that "Tengriism gradually evolved from simple totemism to monotheism" (which refutes the position of modern neo-Tengriists that "Tengriism has remained unchanged from antiquity to the present day"). Furthermore, the researchers believe that "the establishment of the Qarakhanid state and the adoption of Islam as the state religion marginalised Tengriism. Tengriism not only moved to the periphery, but also degraded to a certain extent and gradually blended with the culture of the Tungusic-Manchurian tribes, and a natural interaction between Tengriism and shamanism occurred. Shamanic elements began to penetrate into the belief in Tengriism of the Turkic peoples of the Altai and Siberia."

5. The current period. In the last 10-15 years in particular, interest in the subject of "Tengriism" has grown considerably in Central Asia, and a group of scholars has emerged who are studying this subject in new ways. This group of scholars can be described as scholars who are mainly engaged in the study of the newly emerging neo-Tengriists. They include the already mentioned scientists A. A. Ryskiewa, A. Quranbek, T. Abylov, M. Isakhan, A. Altaykyzy, etc. The subject of Tengriism was differentiated according to its periods, also on the basis of the political and ideological issues that arose in these periods.

Conclusion

Tengriism is an ancient belief and worldview of the Turkic peoples that forms the basis of their spiritual culture. The concept of Tengriism aims to understand the most important values and rules of human life, the laws of society and nature. When studying Tengriism, it is very important to consider its origin, history and development, its spread among peoples and its interaction with and influence on the Islamic religion. Nowadays, interest in Tengriism is growing and it is known to influence culture, philosophy, politics and religion. Therefore, its study is an important and necessary direction for modern science and society.

The lack of basic written sources on Tengriism, the transformation of Tengriism through customs and the advent of Islam have led to the emergence of different views and ideas, debates and contradictions. Research into Tengriism itself was also carried out in the context of the political ideologies of the time, depending on the historical period. As a result, discussions on this topic have continued to grow. Moreover, the phenomenon of neo-Tengriists that is currently emerging has further complicated this issue. It is well known that such religious beliefs and the emergence of inter-faith conflicts have a negative impact on the stability of society. Therefore, extensive scientific research has yet to be conducted on Tengriist beliefs. It can be concluded that this scientific problem can be solved by conducting large-scale research, especially within the framework of the project, and publishing several volumes of books.

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