

THE CULTURE OF THE TURKS: THE INITIAL INNER ASIAN PHASE

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1 – THE HERITAGE OF ANCIENT NORTHERN EURASIA

The cradle of Turkish culture was the heart of the vast Eurasian continent. Chinese sources, the earliest on the Turks, locate, in the last centuries of the First pre-Christian millenary, some clans who were to appear as turcophones on the scene of history, on a background extending from the north of China, westwards, to the valley of the Jaxartes (The Basml, the Uyğur), the Qırğız and the tribes, called successively, Ting-ling and T'ieh-lè by the Chinese).¹ The earliest turcophones were thus within the northern Eurasian expanses inhabited by pastoral rider-hunters of varied ethnical groups (Mongolids and Europids), who had produced the so-called culture and art of the steppe.² Initially, the northern Eurasians had lived as isolated agricultural communities, in what seems to have been a matriarchal social order.³ An invasion at the turn of the Second to First millenary B.C., presumably that of the Aryans, had caused an upheaval from which emerged a new mode of existence. The new way of life was subsistence through hunting and pastoralism. Most of the northern Eurasians, particularly in Inner-Asia, became shepherds with large herds of cattle. The winter season was spent in fortified quarters, while in the estival season, with tents pitched on carts, the clans and their herds moved to mountain pastures. The tribal seal, called tamğa⁴ in Turkish and branded on the beasts, was to become a distinctive feature of northern Inner-Asian and Turkish culture and art.

¹ See sources in E. Esin, *A History of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Turkish culture* (Istanbul, 1980), note 1/10.

² *Ibid.*, First Chapter. General description of the culture: K. Jettmar, *Die Frühen Steppenvölker* (Baden-Baden, 1964).

³ A.D. Grach, *Drevnie Kochevniki v zentre Azii* (Moscow, 1980).

⁴ For this and all cited early Turkish words, see G. Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of pre-Thirteenth Century Turkish* (Oxford, 1972).

The hazards and perils on the ways of transhumance caused a change in social order, giving precedence to the male warrior. The figure of the hero, in Turkish *er, alp* came, to the fore. Hierarchic bonds of allegiance between warriors, the origin of the armies, were concluded in formal meals, during which oaths of fidelity (in Turkish, *and*) were sworn over the cup and blade. The sword, symbol of a god of war, was invoked as a witness.⁵ The hero's emblems were the military belt, to which his blade and weapons were suspended and his cup attached.

The social change only slightly affected women, who together with the care of the family, continued to be conditioned to the hardship of transhumance and, when needed, of combat. The reminiscences of matriarchy appear to have subsisted in the cult of the mother-goddess, or goddess of the hearth.⁶

The artifacts found within the graves on the northern Inner-Asian belt reflect the consequences of transhumance and are portable objects.⁷ Such are the carpets, which in some groups could take a ritual significance; the equipment of the tent, spreads and covers, which were lavishly embroidered. The clothes were designed for riding and consisted of hose and boots, tunics, coats, hats, to protect from cold as well as glare. The metallic or bone plaques, sometimes studded with gems and decorated with figurative motifs, were used for adornment as well as saddlery. Men, except those of princely rank, dressed more simply than women, but wore nevertheless earrings and torques, or embroidered collars (a sign of rank in the early historical Turkish period).⁸ Feminine figures are distinguished by a longer robe and a tiara.⁹ The armours and weapons are in great variety; blades and knives, arrows which the rider-hunters shot so dexterously, aiming both forward and backward, while galloping on

⁵ On the early Turkish military rites, see E. Esin, "Kur-Kurshak", *Central Asiatic Journal* XXIV/3-4 (Wiesbaden, 1980).

⁶ See Grach, cited in note 3, pp. 49-56, 67-68.

⁷ See sources cited in notes 2 and 3. On carpets, see note 44 *infra*.

⁸ Grach, *op. cit.*, in note 3, p. 67.

⁹ The early Kök-Türk period: N. Ser-Odjav, *Ertmij Turequud, VI-VIII zuun, Ulan-Baatar*, 1970), fig. 5. Later Turks: E. Esin, "Ay-bitig", *Central Asiatic Journal* XIV/1-3 (Wiesbaden, 1970), p. 114.

horseback. The Turks reserved a honorific ornament, the double-feather worn on the headgear, to such excellent archers.¹⁰

The life, close to nature, of the Inner-Asian pastoral rider and hunter clans had brought about, according to Chinese and early Turkish sources,¹¹ cosmographic and religious notions, inspired by the spatial appearance of the universe and the sequence of day and night. Like the sun, the moon and the constellations, thought to move with the turn of the Ecliptic wheel (*chiğri*, in Turkish),¹² around a plane terrestrial surface, the living beings also were viewed in cyclic evolution. Life on earth, under the bright heavenly cupola, was succeeded by death and a plunge into the dark subterranean depths. The mountain, an axis between the poles of heaven and earth, was sometimes viewed as a meeting place of celestial spirits and of the souls of the heroes and monarchs.¹³

The human body and soul¹⁴ formed a dichotomy, parallel to that of earth and heaven. The lot of human beings depended on the charisma bestowed by heaven, earth and other manifestations of nature (*qut*, in Turkish). The celestial essence dominated in men, while earth was the substratum of women.

The written evidence, dating from the early Turkish period, tends to show that since anciently, the domed cylindrical tent of northern Eurasia was considered a symbol of the universe.¹⁵ Oriented along the cardinal directions and astral conventions, the tent's trunk represented the earth, or an axial mountain, while its dome corresponded to heaven. The eminent Japanese Turcologist, Prof. Mori, translated (into Turkish) thus, a hymn sung by the early Turkish clan called successively Ting-ling, Ch'ih-lê and T'ieh-lê by the Chinese.¹⁶

¹⁰ On Turkish headgears and honorific headgear ornaments, see E. Esin, "Bedük Börk", *Communications to the Ninth meeting of the Permanent international Altaistic Conference* (Naples, 1970).

¹¹ See sources in E. Esin, "Bengü-tash", *Studia Turcologica, Memoriae Alexii Bombacii dicata* (Naples, 1982).

¹² See sources given in Clauson, *op. cit.* in note, 4, entry "Çiğri".

¹³ See sources in E. Esin, "Altun-yış", *Journal of Turkish Studies*, IV (Harvard, 1980).

¹⁴ See note 11 *supra*.

¹⁵ See sources cited in Esin, *A History...*, *op. cit.* in note 1, index, "Kerekü".

¹⁶ Masao Mori, "Çin kaynaklarında Türk, veya Türk adı", *A Handbook of Turkish culture*, 11nd series, vol. 1/b (Istanbul, 1978), p. IX.

"The steppe of the Ch'ih-lé, beneath the Yin mountain, under the tent-like heaven."

Within the hibernal circumvallations, alongside the tents, huts of similar form were built.¹⁷ The Qırğız Turks had emulated the Chinese style of kiosk already in the last pre-Christian century.¹⁸ The temples were constructed according astrologic, or cosmographic concepts.¹⁹ The funerary monuments considered an abode where the soul could manifest itself, were built to the image of the dwelling, as a tent-like canopied tumulus, or, in the case of Turkish princes, as an elevated palatial circumvallation, compared to a mountain, where the effigies of the deceased and of his retinue were placed.²⁰ The commemorative steles, with semi-figurative features, appear to have been substituted for the effigy of the dead, when the talents of a sculptor were not available. The inferior souls, such as the enemies killed in battle, figured also in Turkish graves, yet only as rocks or rudely carved dummies (in Turkish *balbal*).

The combat, as well as the hunt, was viewed in the light of an ordeal. It was agreed that the deity's judgment had endowed the winner with charisma and dedicated the loser to be a faithful vassal, in life and death.²¹ Not only the enemy killed in battle, but also the beasts, hunted and sacrificed in the funerary ceremony, were expected to resuscitate, to be of use to the soul of their overlord.

The subjection of the hunted beast, as well as a fateful encounter with an animal, brought a communion which led to the identification of man and beast, hence to heraldic emblems and to totemic concepts which also had astrologic connections (the heraldic beast was associated to a constellation as in the case of the star with lupine name, the auguries of which were linked, in China, to the Inner-Asian pastoral clans).²²

¹⁷ See note 15 supra.

¹⁸ See sources given in E. Esin, "Balıq and Ordu", *Central Asiatic Journal*, XXVII/3-4 (Wiesbaden, 1983), pp. 173, 175-77.

¹⁹ Early temples: see Grach, pp. 62-64. Turkish temples: Esin, "Balıq and Ordu", cited in note 18 supra, pp. 173, 183, 90.

²⁰ See sources in Esin, "Bengü-tash," cited in note 11 supra.

²¹ See sources in Esin, *A History...*, p. 41 and index, entries "Balbal", "Eğmek", "Kut".

²² See E. Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-Ma-Ts'ien* (Paris, 1967), index, entry "Lang".

The semantic content of the scenes of contest and hunt between men, men and beasts and between animals, on the metallic plaques of Inner - Asian pastoral rider-hunters, with such realism and expressionist vigour, yet also with supernatural elements, such as composite limbs, may thus find more than one explanation. It is generally thought that the fantastic figures, often represented on metal-work, funerary steles and carpets, with composite anthropomorphic and zoomorphic limbs, depict spirits, identified with their heraldic, or totemic, or other emblematic bestiary. The effigies of protective spirits, in various human zoomorphic, or composite aspects, were raised on poles and carried as banners (in Turkish, *töz*).²³ The tail-standard (in Turkish, *tuğ*) was, on the other hand, a cynegetic trophy, or token of a sacrifice.

The contact with the spiritual world, whether in conjuration or exorcism, was attempted by men and women shamans (in Turkish *qam* and *qam-qatun*), to the sound of drums, with ecstatic incantations and rhythmic movements as described in sources on early Turks.²⁴

II - CENTRAL ASIA, IN AND AFTER THE AGE OF THE KÖK-TÜRK EMPIRE (550-745)

The centrally situated Inner-Asian repartition of the early Turkish tribes brought them in relation with several alien cultures. The Turkish world reached eastern Europea in the north-west; Manchuria and China in the east. Northern China had anciently been the common home of the Chinese and of non-Chinese Inner-Asians, among whom some of the ancestors of the Turks.²⁵ In the south and south-west, the Turks neighboured with the populations of Tibet, of the Indian subcontinent and with Iranians. The cultural exchanges with China had been particularly intense, when China had been ruled by non-Chinese dynasties of northern Inner-Asian, or Turkish stock. Such had been the Chou, in the First millenary B.C., the turcophone Tabğach (T'opa-Wei: 385-556) and others.²⁶ The links

²³ See sources in Esin, *A History...*, pp. 40-41 and index, entries "Töz", "Kam".

²⁴ Ibid, index, entry "Kam".

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 34-42, 50-78.

²⁶ On the Chou, see W. Eberhard, *Çin Tarihi* (Ankara, 1947), pp. 19, 33. On the Tabğach, see idem, *Das Toba Reich Nordchinas* (Leyden, 1941).

of Turkish culture with eastern Asian countries, with China, Korea, Japan, seem to have been born in the formative phase of eastern Turks.

The Kök-Türk Empire (550-745) ruled, in its period of magnitude, the entity of Inner-Asia, from the charismatic peak of Ötüken (in present Mongolia) and the land of the turcophone Sabir (Siberia) in the north, to the Indus in the south; from the borders of China and Tibet in the east, to those of Byzantium, of Sasanid Persia, to the coasts of the Black-Sea and of the Caspian, in the west.²⁷ The name Turkistân (Land of the Turks) had been given by Iranians to the Central Asian area, to the north of the source of the Oxus.²⁸ Yet, the Central Asian provinces to the south of that frontier, Tokharistan and Khorasan were also, down to Marv, under Kök-Türk suzerainty and often governed by Turkish dynasties.²⁹ The southwards expansion of the Kök-Türk empire was the start of the Turks advance towards the Near-east.

The culture of the Turks in the Kök-Türk period, expressed on the steles raised by the qağans (monarchs of major rank, in Turkish) and in manuscripts in an alphabet peculiar to Turkish; manifested in works of architecture, of sculpture and on petroglyphs, is more accessible to the student than that of early Inner-Asia. They further facilitate the interpretation of earlier Inner-Asian culture, as already repeatedly done, in this essay. It may be said that the ancient culture of the rider peoples of northern Eurasia was, in the Kök-Türk age, amalgamated with that of Central Asia, a traditionally cosmopolitan area crossed by the caravan routes, transporting goods between the Far and Near-east. Central Asia had known before, the Huns and the Kushans as "Lord of the horse". Now, the link between the northern Eurasian and Central Asian cultures were the Turks, who had already evolved from tribal divisions to a national conscience, as expressed by the term "Turks people" on Bilge Qağan's stele.³⁰

²⁷ L. N. Gumilev, *Drevnie Turki* (Moscow, 1967). Eastern Turks: Liu Mau-Tsai, *Die Chinesischen Nachrichten zur Geschichte der Ost-Türken* (Wiesbaden, 1958). Western Turks: E. Chavannes, *Documents sur les Turcs Occidentaux* (St. Petersburg, 1903). Other sources: see Esin, *A History*... , pp. 92-127.

²⁸ See sources in Esin, *A History*... , pp. 129-56.

²⁹ Ibid, see index, entries, "Khorasan", "Tokharistan".

³⁰ See T. Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic* (Indiana, 1968), index, entries "Türk", "Türük". On the term "Lord of the Horse", see Esin, *A History*... , index, entries "Asvapati" and "Yelme Kağan".

One of the major contributions of the Turks to Central Asia was an epic style, a manifestation of the Turkish appreciation of heroic actions and of knightly behaviour. The historical sources note that the Turks considered a rule of chivalry not to shoot an unarmed enemy. The honoured individual virtues were those which served to preserve the national tradition (Törü, in Turkish) and the integrity of the state.³¹ Those who best achieved this purpose, or were expected to do so, were given the titles of *alp* (hero) and *bilge* (wise). Women³² kept up their secondary, but active function. The title Bilge was extended also to *qatûns* (queens). They were given honorific titles and enthroned, like their spouses, and could act as regent (*terken*). The *qaġan* represented the celestial deity and the eponym ancestor Türk, while the *qatûn*, as in the case of the queen who raised the warrior prince Kök Tigin (died 732), was compared to the mother-goddess Umay.³³ Some *qatûns* had regiments of women rider-archers. In certain groups,³⁴ a bride could only be won if defeated by the would-be groom in a horse-race, a confrontation of skill in arrow-shooting and a wrestling contest.³⁵ When the Turks began, in the Kök-Türk period, to adhere to religions which condemned war, Buddhism and Manicheism, the word *er*, *eren* which indicated a warrior, was applied to the saints (the Buddhist *vira*). But the Turkish warrior's northern Eurasian attributes, the military belt (*qur*, in Turkish) and weapons, armours, the shapes of the Turkish golden and silver cups, their carpets, used as a seat or throne, became propagated in Central Asia.³⁶ The hierarchic order of precedence (*quram*, in Turkish) and the epics of the ancestors of Turkish dynasties and their totem (the wolf) and heraldry, the formal meals in which allegiance was sworn with the cup and sword (*and*, in Turkish)³⁷ were

³¹ See Tekin, *op. cit.* in note 30 *supra*, index, the cited words.

³² See sources in Esin, *A History...*, pp. 112-13 and index, entries, "Katun," "Terken".

³³ See Tekin, index, entry "Umay".

³⁴ Mahmûd Kâshgârî, *A'd-Divân-u Luġât'it-Türk*, B. Atalay edition (Ankara 1941-43), vol. 1 ,p. 474 and M. Ergin, *Dede Korkut Kitabı* (Ankara, 1958), ms D, lines 780-791.

³⁵ See sources in Esin, *A History...*, index, entry "Eren".

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 149-53.

³⁷ See note 5 *supra*.

represented on the murals and sculpture of palaces built by Turkish princes.³⁸ The totemic wolf's mask, hoisted together with a draconine felt effigy, the Turkish banner, appeared in depictions of Buddhist guardian gods.³⁹ The guardian gods brandished also the *tuğ* (the tail-standard and trophy). The composite limbed, half man, half beast spirits of northern Asia influenced the Central Asian styles of guardian deities and demons.⁴⁰ These new figures gradually erased the earlier iconography of Central Asian Buddhism and Manicheism, with its idealized, bucolic and at times sensual aspects. The Turks established expressionism and also realism, introducing to Central Asia the art of portraiture.⁴¹

The drums, bells and bugles of the Turkish military music⁴² now resounded daily on the ramparts of the citadels of Turkish princes. The "subtle" courtly music (*yingche oyun*, in Turkish), was performed with five instruments of the string and wind variety. The number five suggests pentatonic Chinese tradition, but courtly Turkish music had seemed alien, although seductive, to a Chinese traveller. Turkish music was introduced to China in the retinue of a princess who, in 568, married a Chinese emperor. Whirling Turkish dances and cosmologic pantomimes were also appreciated in China.

Turkish customs had become fashionable in China and a poet celebrated the Kök-Türk tent, covered with azure felt carpets:⁴³

"It is tainted with the fresh blue of the northern (sky)".
 "So it was made, in the north, by warriors."
 "And came with the foreigners to the south."

ooo

"It has a ciel with a peak at the summit"
 "It has no corners and is round, towards all four directions."
 "There is at the side (east) a large entrance"
 "Inside, it is comfortable and warm."

³⁸ See note 36 supra.

³⁹ On early Turkish flags and insignia, see sources in E. Esin, "Tös and Mon-cuk", *Central Asiatic Journal*, XV/1, (Wiesbaden, 1972).

⁴⁰ See note 36 supra.

⁴¹ See sources in Esin, *A History...*, p. 122.

⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 107-109.

⁴³ Liu Mau-tsal, *op. cit.* in note 27, p. 470.

“There lie everywhere soft, wam felt wraps”
 “Here are also the sonorous instruments”

ooo

“On one side is a low seat, for the vocalist”
 “The dancing mat is flat”
 “The lamp on the iron pole is moved aside”
 “High above is suspended the tent-herd”.
 “In its depths flicker the flames, as morning orchids”
 “Secretly gathers therein the smoke, that nocturnal incense”

ooo

“The inkstone is warmed up and the frozen ink melts”
 “The warmth now enchants the bottle and it summons a vernal
 fount”

ooo

“The orchideous drapery itself waves to beckon the hermit”

ooo

The symbolism of the tent as image of the universe, manifested in the Turkish monarch's entronement ceremony, made it also a dynastic emblem. Like the ancient Chou and the Tabğach, the Turkish *qağan* was enthroned on a carpet,⁴⁴ which, levitated by his vassals, was circumambulated around the royal tent. The *qağan* became, thus, a solar monarch, whose radiation illumined the universe. The dynastic significance, attributed to the cylindrical Turkish tent, with its canopied cupola, determined the shape of the Turkish throne room for all times. The tent's (*kerekü*, in Turkish) form and centrally situated herd, with a chimney aperture at the summit of the dome, became a distinctive sign of Turkish architecture,⁴⁵ propagated throughout the climes where the Turks were dispersed.

The fortified winter circumvallations (in Turkish, *balıq*) of the northern Eurasians, in which tents and tent-shaped huts took place, were common also in Central Asia, particularly Turkistān. The Turkish princely and military citadel, the *ordu*, had a cosmographic

⁴⁴ See sources in E. Esin, “Le Theme de l'intronisation dans les inscriptions et la littérature turques du VIIIe au XIe siècles”, *Journal Asiatique*, CCLXIX, (Paris, 1983), p. 306.

⁴⁵ See note 17 supra.

disposition, derived from the tradition of the ancient Chou.⁴⁶ The *ordu* castles, elevated on mountain peaks, rose in multiple princely residences of Central Asia, beside the older mercantile cities on the Silk Road, thereby simultaneously assuring the safety of caravans and the prosperity of the provinces. The *ordu*, surrounded by a row of concentric circumvallations for sedentary populations, became the *ordu-balıq*, the capital cities of Turkish monarchs. The double circumvallation of the *ordu-balıq*, of the temple of heaven and of Turkish princely funerary monuments,⁴⁷ was to influence the architecture of the Turkish Buddhist temple.⁴⁸

While Turkish culture transformed northern Central Asia into Turkistān, the eclectic cities of Central Asia began to lead Turkish culture into a new channel, that of sedentary life and of international religions. The Turks were converted, most often to Buddhism, but also to Iranian faiths (Manicheism, the religion of the Magi) and to Christianity, introduced by Nestorian refugees banished from Byzantium.⁴⁹ Buddhism and the Iranian religions, however, took among Turks, monist and pantheist forms, not unlike the initial Turkish universalist cult of heaven and of ancestors. Taspar (died 580), the Turkish *qağan* who was devoted to Buddhism to the point of proclaiming it a state religion, had however not forsaken the cult of ancestors.⁵⁰ He seems to have been instrumental in the adoption of the leonine heraldry by Turkish kings (Arslan, in Turkish). The lion, unknown in Inner-Asia, had been introduced by Buddhism,⁵¹ in emblematic guise. Among the funerary statues of Turkish *qağans* and *qatuns* of the Sixth and Seventh centuries, found in the Gobi desertic area, one, holding a rosary in hand, is tentatively identified as the Buddhist Taspar.⁵² Taspar had constructed Buddhist monu-

⁴⁶ See Esin, "Balıq and Ordu".

⁴⁷ See notes 18 and 19 supra.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See sources in Esin, *A History...*, Fourth chapter.

⁵⁰ S. G. Klyashtorniy-V.A. Livshitz "Sogdiskaya nadpis,' iz Buguta", *Strani i Narodi Vostoka*, X (Leningrad, 1971), p. 133.

⁵¹ See sources in Esin, *A History...*, index, entry "Arslan".

⁵² The effigy has been published by V. A. Kazakevich, "Namogil'nie statui v Darigange", *Akademiyā Nauk, Komissiya po issledovaniya Mongol'skoy i Tannu-Tuvinskoy Narodnix Respublik i Buryat - Mongol'skoy ASSR, Materiall*, 1., (Leningard, 1930), p. 1 XI.

ments, in the "centre" of the empire. The Buddhist monastery of Qum-tura where stood a yet undeciphered Turkish inscription in Brahmi letters and the murals of which are classified as the "Early Turkish period" of the Buddhist art of Turkistân, could be dated from Taspar's reign.⁵³

The Uyğur Turks⁵⁴ had replaced the Kök-Türk dynasty in the charismatic land of Ötüken in 745, becoming thereby the primate Turkish state. Superseded, in their turn at Ötüken in 840 by their Qırğız congeners, the Uyğurs founded states in eastern Turkistân and Kansu. While Uyğur power in Kansu lasted only until the first half of the Eleventh century, their civilization in eastern Turkistân was to flourish for six centuries in the same, mainly Buddhist and Manichean character. The monumental ruins of their cities, temples, pagodas, palaces still stand in the Turfan area (Qocho, Yar-khoto) and at Besh-balıq, in the north. The sculptures, the mural paintings which almost entirely covered the walls of edifices, the countless manuscripts in which a momentous phase of Turkish literature is enclosed, are now distributed in many museums of the world, in Tokyo, Kyoto, Korea, Delhi, Leningrad, Berlin, Paris. The Uyğurs had learnt xylography and the manufacture of paper from China. In their turn, they invented, at the end of the Twelfth century, monotype printing, composed of Turkish syllables and letters in the alphabet developed by them, carved in hard wood.

The image of the Uyğur world is reflected in their literature, which transposed the universalist, pantheist tendencies of the Turks, to the cult of the Buddha, or of the celestial deity, Zurvân as successor of the god or heaven; in the expression of the Turk's ardent soul and epic tradition, in profound religious devotion, zeal in asceticism,

⁵³ See sources in Esin, *History...*, index, entries "Karashahr", "Kumtura".

⁵⁴ The northern Asian period: C. Mackerras, *The Uighur Empire*, (Canberra, 1968). Eastern Turkistan: A. von Gabain, *Das Uigurische Königreich von Chotscho* (Berlin, 1961). Eastern Turkistan and Kansu: J. R. Hamilton, *Les Ouighours à l'époque des Cinq Dynasties* (Paris, 1955). E. Pinks, *Die Uiguren von Kan-chou* (Wiesbaden 1968). Other sources: see Esin, *History...*, index, entry "Uyğur".

Literature: A. von Gabain, "Die Alttürkische Literatur", *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, 11 (Frankfurt, 1964), pp. 220-40. Sources on Uyğur xylography and monotype printing: Esin, *History...*, p. 153-54, Uyğur art: A. von le Coq, *Chotscho* (Berlin, 1913). E. Esin, *Buddhist and Manichean Turkish art* (İstanbul, 1967).

admiration for the heroic aspects of the bodhisattvas trials; in the attribution of Turkish military hierarchy and titles to the lokapalas and their retinue. The effigies, portraits of the donors and artists, holding a flower or the artist's brush, or a musical instrument in hand, powerfully outlined and brilliantly coloured in opalescent, often crimson hues, evoke a culture which radiated, both to eastern Asia and to the Near-eastern Turks.

III – THE GENESIS AND RISE OF ISLAMIC TURKISH CIVILIZATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

Islam was to bring major changes in Turkish culture and social life. From an ideological point of view, the pantheist-monist phase attained in the cult of heaven, earth and ancestors, as well as the influences of Near-Eastern religions, had prepared the Turks for monotheism. But Islam⁵⁵ proposed a yet unreached degree of abstraction, that of a Unique and Ineffable God, source of all the ethic aspirations of the human soul, but beyond imagery or imagination. Islam also conceived worship as a spiritual dialogue between God and the supplicator, without the mediation of priesthood. A parallel reform, on the social plane, was the abolition of hereditary aristocracy. The consequences, both ideological and social, were the development of individualism, however within the bounds of the collective conscience, and momentous changes, in material culture.

The most southern and western Turks came into touch with Islam already in the beginning of the Eighth century, on the shores of the Caspian sea and in the Caucasus, in the lands of the "Şûl" (arabicized form of the Turkish Chöl) Turks and on the borders of the Khazar state, which extended from the Caucasus to the northern coast of the Black-Sea.⁵⁶ When, in the same century, Khorasan, Tokharistan and the western part of Turkistân (Transoxiana) were gradually won to Islam, the capitals of Muslim Turkish principalities became the earliest centres of Islamic Turkish civilization (Ispidjab-Sayram, Tashkend, Üzkend).⁵⁷ The first half of the

⁵⁵ Sources in E. Esin, "The Hijra and its cultural consequences", *Cultures*, VII/4, (UNESCO Press, 1980).

⁵⁶ See sources in Esin, *History...*, index, entries "Şûl", "Khazar".

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, index, entries "Sayram", "Tashkend", "Üzkend".

Tenth century witnessed the rise to magnitude of Islam among Turks. The most north-western Turks, the proto-Bulğars on the Volga (in Turkish Etil) ⁵⁸ and the imperial dynasty of the Turks, the "Khaqanî Türk" (the Khaqanids, or Qara-Khanids) adhered to Islam. The civilization founded by the Khaqanid Turks, in regions of Turkistân, extending from Kashgar and Khotan, westwards, was to continue until the Mongol invasion in 1220 and to form the aspect of Turkish Islam. ⁵⁹ Transmitted to all Muslim Turks, including the Seldjuqids and Ottomans, Khaqanid culture became Turkey's heritage.

The obligation of attendance to the congregational prayer at the cathedral mosques had meant for the Turks an acceleration of the tendency to sedentary existence. Around the mosque, which now constituted the focal point of the Turkish Muslim city, the various professions, arts and crafts were gathered, either in distinct quarters, or in separate neighbouring circumvallations. ⁶⁰ The professional groups, in tribal aspects, had existed in northern Asia and among Turks (the Kök - Türk were a tribe of ironmongers). The concept of the "Virtuous city," where diverse talents could draw benefit from each other, was expressed by the Turkish Muslim philosopher, Fârâbî (Muhammed, son of Tarkhan, son of Uzluğ, surnamed the Turk: ca. 870-950), in a work which has sometimes been compared to Plato's Ideal Republic, but which is closer to the concept of the city, established by the Prophet of Islam, in Madina (Fârâbî's Virtuous city is under a Prophet's rule, not that of a philosopher, as in Plato's prototype). ⁶¹ The formation of professional groups (in Turkish, *qutu*) ⁶² is attested in Turkish literature of the Eleventh century. The tradition of the Virtuous City and of professional groups developed, in Anatolian Turkey, into the Akhî, para-religious professional guilds who assumed the education of young generations and, occasionally, the administration of cities. This stage had probably not been reached in Turkistân, In general, the Kha-

⁵⁸ Z. V. Togan, *Ibn Fadlân's Reisebericht* (Leipzig, 1939). Other sources: Esin, *History...*, pp. 178-79.

⁵⁹ Sources in Esin, *History...*, Sixth chapter.

⁶⁰ See sources in Esin, "Baliq and Ordu", pp. 191-94.

⁶¹ See sources and comments on Fârâbî's *Arâ-u ahl' il-Madîbât' il-fâdîla* in Esin, *History...*, p. 175.

⁶² Some sources are given in Clauson, s. v.

qanid *waqfs* (acts of charitable foundations which are among the first known in Islam) provided for hospitals, hospices, institutions of learning, which not only educated scholars, but also people of all age.⁶³ The formation of a warrior, ready to sacrifice his life for his faith, was achieved in *ribâts*, frontier fortifications where lived armed contingents and theologians.⁶⁴

The development of the individual, within an ethic system, is commented as a combined Turkish-Islamic ideal in *Qutadğu-bilig*, a versified Turkish allegory written by Yûsuf Khaşş Hâdjib, in 1067.⁶⁵ The philosopher-poet named, in Turkish, *kishilik*, a humane attitude which reflected the "Törü" (tradition of the Turks) of chivalrous magnanimity, in the light of the Islamic concept of the repentant and reformed Adam, as representative of God's justice and mercy on earth.⁶⁶

The allegory discloses also the existence of early Islamic mysticism. The immediate perception by the Turkish mind of the Islamic concept of the Abstract Deity becomes apparent in an invocation, attributed to Dede Qorqut, a bard of the Eighth to Ninth centuries:⁶⁷

"Thou who art Exalted above all"

"None knoweth Thine essence"

ooo

"The ignorant search Three in heaven, or earth"

"But Thou art in the heart of the believer"

The Buddhist Turkish mystic had sought communion with Buddhahood, termed "the soul of existence" and seen as the only reality in an illusive world.⁶⁸ The same impulse towards the ideal inspired the Muslim Turk, although he knew that his Transcendent Deity was, in principle, ineffable, unattainable. Yûsuf Khâşş Hâdjib

⁶³ M. Khadr, "Deux actes de *waqf* de d'un Qarakhanide d'Asie Centrale", *Journal Asiatique*, CCLV/3-4 (Paris, 1967), pp. 307, 325. On hospices, see note 82 infra.

⁶⁴ See sources in Esin, *History...* index, entry "Ribât".

⁶⁵ Yûsuf Khâşş Hâdjib, *Qutadğu-bilig*, R. Arat edition (İstanbul, 1947). Translation by R. Dankoff, *Wisdom of royal glory* (Chicago, 1983). Commentary on *kishilik*: Esin, *History...*, pp. 190-95.

⁶⁶ Coran, 11/30, XXXVIII/26.

⁶⁷ The quotation is translated from Ergin, op. cit. in note 34, ms D, lines 161-69.

⁶⁸ Sources on Uyğur mysticism: see Esin, *History...*, p. 143.

had expressed this hopeless, yet unceasing impellent which was to be the principal theme of Turkish Islamic mysticism:⁶⁹

“He, only He is absolute purity, without immixture”

“He creates existence from the void and returns existence to the void”

.....
 “He hath called me since eternity. I now call Him unto death”

The initiator to mysticism of the western Turks, including the Oğuz, the forefathers of the Turks of Turkey, was to be another saintly poet, Ahmed Yesevî⁷⁰ (died 1160), whose shrine, in the valley of the Jaxartes, is to our day, one of the two holiest poles of Turkistân (the other is the tomb of Satuq Buğra Khan, the Khaqanid prince, who in the beginning of the Eleventh century, when still a child, was converted to Islam and led to the conversion of large groups of the Turks).⁷¹

Islamic mysticism, like other manifestations of culture, had grown on a ground already prepared, for many centuries, in the discipline of other faiths, whose terminology and practises, such as religious music, hymns, ecstatic gyrations, rites of mediation (posture, control of breath) were to survive.⁷² On the other hand, the exchanges of cultural currents went on, with the Turks who had remained in the fold of older faiths, with the Uyğurs, who were Buddhist and Manichean, for many more centuries⁷³ (Fifteenth century in the case of Buddhism); the northern Asians who continued to worship heaven, earth and ancestors. The results were varieties of syncretisms, most apparent in heterodox dervish orders.⁷⁴

Similar processes of amalgamation between Islam and Turkish usages were observed in the field of material culture.⁷⁵ A momentous revolution introduced by Islam was the banishment, as evocations of worldly concerns, of all varieties of figurative art from sacred architecture. It brought about the gradual transformation of figures,

⁶⁹ Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥādījib, op. cit., in note 65, distich 4767.

⁷⁰ See sources in Esin, *History...*, p. 195-202.

⁷¹ Ibid, pp. 181-82.

⁷² Ibid, pp. 184-90.

⁷³ See note 54 supra.

⁷⁴ See sources in E. Esin, “Muhammed Sihāh-qalam and the Inner-Asian Turkish tradition”, *Islamic Art*, 1 (New York, 1983).

⁷⁵ See note 72 supra.

into decorative scrolls and geometry, in the ornaments of religious edifices. The heraldry of the Khaqanid princes, the lion the dragon, the wolf, the birds of prey and some astrologic figures, although the latter highly disapproved in Islam,⁷⁶ survived and the heraldry was emulated by subsequent Muslim Turkish dynasties, including the Seldjuqids of Turkey.

The arts of the book, which Islam had endowed with dignity, in the initial revelation, "Read, in the name of thy Lord!",⁷⁷ were to progress through the introduction of the manufacture of paper to the Islamic world. This service is attributed, in one report, to the Uyğur Turkish captives, brought to Samarqand, in the Eighth century.⁷⁸ Another report credits the Chinese. The non-Muslim Turkish lands and China were often confused in the early Islamic annals.⁷⁹ The Uyğur version seems preferable, through the additional information that the same prisoners taught metal-work, particularly the fabrication and ornamentation of swords, art in which the Uyğurs excelled (they imported swords to China).⁸⁰ When paper became available, calligraphy and book-painting developed in manuscripts with Arabic script. The Turks were already expert in book painting and calligraphy in Manichean and Buddhist works and could turn their talents to the books in Arabic script.⁸¹ Book-painting was in use in historiography and cosmography, also in other manuscripts. Printing remained reserved to Buddhist works.

The Turks had also long practised calligraphy in epigraphy, starting with the commemorative steles of the Turkish monarchs of the Eighth century, signed by princely calligraphers. To the art of calligraphy in the Kök-Türk (the early Turkish alphabet) and Uyğur scripts, Arabic script was added. Eminent Muslim Turkish calligraphers are mentioned in Arabic biographical works on learned men.

⁷⁶ Mehmet 'Ârif, *Binbir Hadîth-i sherif sherhi*, (Cairo, H. 1319), Prophetic recommendations nos 77 and 798.

⁷⁷ Coran, XCV/1.

⁷⁸ See sources in Esin, *History...*, pp. 171-72.

⁷⁹ P. Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo* (Paris, 1959), entry "Çin".

⁸⁰ Pinks, op. cit. in note 54 supra, pp. 98-110.

⁸¹ On Ismâ'îl, son of Hammâd'al-Djawharî of Fârâb, an exceptionally gifted calligrapher of the Xth century, "from Turkish lands", see Yâqût, *Irshâd'al-arîb ila ma'rifat'il-adîb*, Margoliouth edition, (Cairo, 1923), s.v.

In architecture,⁸² the closed mosque, a necessity in cold climates, was evolved in Central Asia in domed shapes, inspired from the temples of older religions, particularly the temples of heaven and of Buddhism. The Central Asian and Turkish minaret in cylindrical form, seem equally influenced by the similarly shaped, column-like Central Asian variety of reliquary tower (ediz-ev, in Turkish). The first monumental minarets of Turkistân were constructed by the Khaqanid Turks. The Khaqanid Turks, again, introduced glazed architectonic tiles, long known in eastern Turkistân, but not to the Islamic world before their period.

IV – THE TRANSPLANTATION OF TURKISH CULTURE TO THE NEAR - EAST

The relations between Persia and the Turks, including cultural ones, had always been extant, along the common borders in Khorasan, in Merv in particular, on the shores of the Caspian sea and in the Caucasus. The only Turk attested to have reached Makkah, possibly in the Prophet's lifetime, was to be the father of the musician Ibn Suraydj,⁸³ one of the founders of Arab music and of the performance of the luth. Suraydj, whose celebrated son was born around 634-43, had been a captive of the lineage of the Prophet's uncle, probably sold by the Persians to Arabia.

In the early centuries of Islam, the expatriation to the Near-East of the Turks began on a personal level. The Turks came as war prisoners, or voluntarily, as converts. They were sometimes significant bearers of Turkish, or in general, Central Asian culture.⁸⁴

The most celebrated was to be the scholar of universal scope, Fârâbî, already noted in connection with his work on the ideal of the "Virtuous city". Fârâbî had come first to Merv, imbued with the tradition of his native north-western Turkistân,⁸⁵ a land where the

⁸² See notes 72 and 75 supra.

⁸³ See Faradj'ul-İşfahâni, *Kitâb'al-Aghâni*, (Cairo, H. 1345) Vol. 1, p. 250 and index, s.v.

⁸⁴ Sources in Esin, *History...*, pp. 165-67, 177-78.

⁸⁵ Fârâbî's biography: Ibn-u Abî Uşaybi'a, *'Uyun'al-anbâ fî Tabaqat'il-utabâ* (Beirut, 1965), pp. 603-609: On his cultural background in Turkistan, see sources in E. Esin, "Fârâbî'yi yetiştiren Kengeres kültür çevresi", *İslam tedkikleri Enstitüsü dergisi*, VII (Istanbul, 1977). On his aspects as theoretician of music and architecture, see M. S. Bulatov, *Geometricheskaya garmonizatsiya v arxitekture Sredney Azii* (Moscow, 1978), pp. 25-28, citing these two works: *Kitâb'al-mûsiqi al-kabîr* and *Hudjat'al-'amal fî şina' at'ır-ramal wa'ti taqwim'il-ashkâl*.

universalist cult of heaven and earth of the Turks encountered Buddhism and the Iranian religions, as well as Near-eastern influxes, in the aspect of Nestorian Christianity. In his native city of Keñgü-Tarban (also called Otrar) and in adjoining cities, Fârâbî had seen the monuments of all these cultures and become familiar with the local ancient school of music. In three aspects, as cosmologist and theoretician of architecture and music, he was to leave his mark in the culture of Islam. In Merv, then reputed to be only city where Greek philosophy was taught, Fârâbî could acquire the foundations of his achievement in transmitting the Hellenic philosophical thought to the world of Islam. Fârâbî died in the Near-East in 950.

In the Ninth and Tenth centuries, the Turks were already a part of the social and cultural life of the Islamic Near-East.⁸⁶ Some Turks, Ahmed son of Tolun and Muhammed, son of Toğuch, a scion of the Turkish princely dynasty of Farğana in Turkistân, had even founded states in Egypt. Other Turkish families had provided the Islamic Caliphate with statesmen, generals, scholars, theologians, historians, poets, bibliophiles, such as the lineages of Şûl Tigin and of Artudj, Son of the Khaqan. This prince had summoned to Samarra the group called "Turk'al-'Adjam" (the non-assimilated, or non-converted Turks), who secluded from all, built for "the Son of the Khaqan" the renowned Djawsaq'al-Khâqânî in the styles of western Turkistân.⁸⁷ In the same Ninth century, the sons of the Turkish statesman Amadjur contributed to Islamic astronomy and the son of a "Turk of Khuttal", (south-eastern Turkistân) outlined the foundations of algebra.⁸⁸

The reputed encyclopedists of the Eleventh century, Maḥmûd of Kâshğar (eastern Turkistân) and 'Omar of Zamakhshar wrote dictionaries from Turkish to Arabic and from Arabic to the Oğuz dialect of Turkish (and to the Khvarazmian Iranian dialect).⁸⁹

⁸⁶ See sources in Esin, *History...*, pp. 160-65.

⁸⁷ See sources in E. Esin, "The Turk'al-'Adjam of Samarra", *Kunst des Orients*, IX/1-2 (Wiesbaden, 1975).

⁸⁸ A. Sayılı, *The Observatory in Islam* (Ankara, 1970), index, "Amadjur". Idem, "'Abd'al-Hamîd b. Wâsi' Ibn Turk", *Altıncı Türk Tarih Kongresi bildirileri* (Ankara, 1967), pp. 95-100.

⁸⁹ On Maḥmûd of Kâshğar, see note 34 supra. On 'Omar of Zamakhshar, see Z. V. Togan, "Über die Sprache und Kultur der alten Chwarezmier", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft*, XC, pp. 27-30.

Maḥmūd of Kāshġar had pointed to the establishment of Turkish as one of the major languages of the Islamic world, as a consequence of the foundation of the Seldjuqid empire.⁹⁰ The Seldjuqids had laid the basis of their state a century before, in Khorasan, the traditional bridge between Inner-Asia and the Near-East, on the southern border of the Khaqanid realm in Turkistān. The sources of their culture were in their native country of northwestern Turkestan and the Khaqanid capitals, in particular Bukhārā. The influences of the Islamic civilization of Khorasan, formerly under the equally Turkish Ghaznavid dynasty, were also felt by the Seldjuqids. In this conjunction of cultures, Merv became, in the Seldjuqid period, one of the centres of Islamic civilization, a focus which drew, to its institutions of culture and to its libraries, scholars from all regions. Several distinguished Turkish theologians in the Seldjuqid period, such as Tamīm, son of Muḥammed, son of Tamġach⁹¹ (died 1166) had newly settled in Merv, in addition to those in the Turkish district of the city, called Turkān,⁹² where Turkish students found their masters. Merv was then rebuilt⁹³ and acquired its landmark, the funerary monument and foundation of the Seldjuqid monarch Sandjar (died 1157), built by the Turkish architect Muhammed, son of Atsiz of Sarakhs (Khorasan).⁹⁴

From Khorasan, the Seldjuqids had already in the Eleventh century advanced to the Near - East, to the rescue of the Islamic Caliphate, then in internal difficulties and at war with Byzantium. The Seldjuqid Turks stopped at Malazgerd, in 1071, a thrust of the Byzantine army, which endangered the centres of the Caliphate. This victory opened to the Turks the gate of Anatolia, a country contested since the Seventh century both by Byzantium and the Caliphate. The Turks who as northerners felt uneasy in the warm climates of Persia and Arabia,⁹⁵ apparently found the Anatolian

⁹⁰ Kāshġari, folios 2-3.

⁹¹ Yāqūt, *Mu'djam'al-buldān*, (Beyrut, 1955), entry "Tūs" (where this scholar had long resided).

⁹² Sam'anī, *Al-Ansāb*, (Hyderabad, 1962-82), entry "Turkānī".

⁹³ Yāqūt, *Mu'djam*, op. cit. in note 91, entry "Merv".

⁹⁴ G. A. Pugachenkova, *Iskusstvo Turkmenistana*, (Moscow, 1967), pp. 212-222.

⁹⁵ The remark of a Seldjuqid prince who said: "I am a Turk, a hot climate does not suit my nature" has been recorded by Muhammad, son of İbrāhīm, *Seldjuqiyān wa Ghuzz dar Kirmān*, Parizi ediyion, (Tehran, 1343), p. 6.

highlands evocative of Inner Asia. The massive Turkish migrations to the Near-East, in sequence of the general displacement caused by two successive invasions in Inner-Asia,⁹⁶ were directed towards Anatolia. The extensive Turkish population of Anatolia brought about the rise of the Seldjuqid and Ottoman empires, in this land. Thus, Turkey was founded, nine hundred years ago, when the Seldjuqid Turks transplanted to Anatolia a shoot of their ancient Inner-Asian culture.

⁹⁶ On the successive Qara-Khitay and Mongol invasions of Turkistan see sources cited in Esin, *History...* p. 194.