**Lecture 3**

**Nomads’ culture of Kazakhstan. Cultural heritage of the proto-Turkic people**

**1. Nomadism as a type of culture. The concept of nomadism. Classification and types of nomadism.**

**2. Ancient Turkic civilization and its features. Cosmogony and mythology of the ancient Turks. Ancestor cult. Tengrism.**

***1. Nomadism as a type of culture. The concept of nomadism. Classification and types of nomadism.***

*Nomadism* is a specific type of economic activity. It also appears to be a type of society, where a majority of people engage with that of extensive nomadic pastoralism.

In some cases, nomads are the ones who conduct a moving lifestyle (wandering hunter-gatherers), or migrating groups of people. It should be noted that not all cattleman are nomads.

It is important to define *nomadism* in terms of three essential characteristics: 1) extensive pastoralism as the prominent type of economic activity; 2) recurrent movements of a majority of the population and livestock; 3) peculiar material culture, the kind of society and the worldview of steppe dwellers.

Nomads inhabited dried steppes, semi-deserts or highlands, the places where pastoralism has been the most favourable type of economic activity. There are several various classifications of *nomadism*. There are: *nomadic* (the people are moving with its cattle and possessing no colonies as such); *semi-nomadic* (half of the time, mostly in winter, spend as settled); *semi-settled* (half of the people move with livestock) activity; *distant* (when half of the people stay moving with cattle), yaylak (from turkish «yaylag» - a summer highland pasture).

In other variables, there are more types of nomadic movement to be taken into consideration: vertical (mountains – flat areas), and horizontal, which can be latitudinal, meridional, circular, etc.

In terms of geography, we could talk about six large zones, where nomadism is prevalent:

1) Eurasian steppes, where «the five types of cattle» are bred (horse, cattle, sheep, goat and camel), however, the most basic animal is a horse (Turks, Mongols, Buryats, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, etc.). Nomads of this area had established influential steppe powers (Scythians, Xiongnu, Turks, Mongols, etc.;

2) Middle East, Iran, and Afghanistan, where nomads raise small cattle and use horses, camels and donkeys (Bakhtiari, Basseri, Pashtuns, etc.) as a transport;

3) The Arabian Desert and the Sahara, where camel breeders (Bedouins, Tuaregs, etc.) predominate;

4) East Africa and the savannahs south to the Sahara, people dwelling over there breed cattle (Nuer, Dinka, Masai, etc.);

5) High-mountain plateaus of Inner Asia (Tibet, Pamir) and South America (Andes), where the local population specializes in breeding animals such as yak, llama, alpaca, etc.;

6) Northern, mainly subarctic zones, where the community is engaged in reindeer husbandry (Sami, Chukchi, Evenki, etc.);

7) The Great Plains in North American interior plains, and the South American Pampa, whose inhabitants breed horses and are engaged in a horse hunting for ungulates.

It is established that the rise of nomadism is due to the origin of nomadic empires or nomadic confederations (the middle of the 1st millennium BC – the middle of the 2nd millennium AD). These empires had been appearing along with that of agricultural civilizations and depended upon the goods coming from them.

Appeared in a 6 Volume encyclopedia entitled **History of Civilizations of Central Asia** published by UNESCO data, it clearly states that nomads have contributed significantly into development of cultures and civilizations on their primordial territories as they have created an original lifestyle and cultural heritage. [History of Civilizations of Central Asia. Vol. II. The Development of Sedentary and Nomadic Civilizations. 700 BC to AD 250/J. Harmatta et al. (eds). - Paris: UNESCO, 1994. - 569, p.].

Nomads have played a crucial role in the history of humankind. Nomadism is a continually evolving, altering and renewing style of thinking. Moving from one place to another, nomads explore new territories, and while inspecting it, they try to put a new-found soil into production and use it. With the appearance of a nomadic lifestyle in the history of humankind, primary conditions for further division of labour and trade emerged.

In Eurasia, Mongol and Turk nomads have invented a wooden cart on wheels, and they put a wooden yurt on it. Nomads have grossly contributed to the production of tools and military weapons made of bronze and iron. As per historical investigations, nomads as well as Xiongnu, thanks to their bows and arrows, became almost unbeatable.

Apart from this, nomads have developed a technology of production of clothes made of animal's skin, wool and fluff. They started riding horses and camels and eventually discovered Great Silk Road, which links Asia and Europe. The Silk Road has become the bridge connecting the nomads with the people of settled civilization on two continents and opening the path for the development of cultural exchange between West and East.

The notion of *digital nomad* has appeared relatively recently. The given term implies professionals or entrepreneurs of a particular field who are not tied to a specific physical place in their work. They usually work via the Internet. The utmost privilege of *nomadic lifestyle* is that they live wherever they want. The *digital nomad* projects the phenomenon of nomadism in terms of a modern metaphor which sounds as follows: *freedom without limitations*.

As a fact, the term represents certain edifice and purpose; the modern urban nomadic lifestyle is believed to be possessing a certain approval in earlier concepts and phenomena of social life. Back in the 60s and 70s, Herbert Marshall McLuhan had imagined that modern nomads would scurry everywhere at a great speed, and handle everything they need while roaming around, and without the need for a permanent home at all. In the 80s, Jacques Attali used this term to predict a new era. In there, the rich and the representatives of the elite will not be attached to their homelands and will fly around the world in search of an entertainment and new opportunities whereas the poor will migrate in search of a better life. Later on, he suggested considering *modern nomadism* not as a subculture only, but as a way of life of the third millennium’s individual. He also expressed an idea that the future nomads are not just travellers who do not possess a definite place of stay, but they are people who will have no ties with institutions such as the state, nation and family. [Attali, Jacques. On the threshold of a new millennium. - Moscow: «International Relations», 1993.].

In the 90s, Tsugio Makimoto and David Manners wrote a book entitled **Digital Nomad** enriching the concept of modern nomadism, which, to some extent, depicts unique possibilities of the latest technological advances [Makimoto, Manners. Digital Nomad, New York, 1997.].

Manuel Castells presents another concept of nomadism. Castells presumed that the mobility of nomads could be both virtual (in the space of the Internet) and global (physical movement) [Castells M. Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society. - Yekaterinburg, 2004. - 328, p.].

Irina Kuzheleva-Sagan believes that digital nomadism is a socio-cultural phenomenon which conceptually belongs exclusively to the modern information and communications technologies; as a matter of fact, it evolved primarily due to the development of the Internet, the emergence of the latest digital and mobile technologies, as well as the widespread use of wireless communications. The main traits of digital nomads are their mobility and constant connection to the Network [I. Kuzheleva-Sagan, Business communications in the context of digital nomadism / Strategic communications in business and politics: theses of the International. Scientific. Conf. April 23-24, 2015 / resp. ed. Yu.V. Taranova. - SPbSU, 2015. Electronic collection.].

***2. Ancient Turkic civilization and its features. Cosmogony and mythology of the ancient Turks. Ancestor cult. Tengrism.***

Ancient Turkic mythology includes universal stories and themes, motives and images, sacred symbols, existential meanings and social norms which have been part of any mythological culture. However, these universal values, standards, etc., appeared in a particular, peculiar form. One of the characteristic features of Turkic mythology was its syncretism. Researchers of the history of Russian culture and the origins of the peculiarity of the *Steppe Knowledge* had traced the prominent footprints of penetration of *Zoroastrianism, Mithraism* and *Buddhism, Manichaeism* and *Nestorianism, Abrahamic religions* into Altai and East Turkestan - and identified the forms of their assimilation with the Turkic world.

In the 8th – 9th centuries, Turks were insignificantly enthusiastic (Auezkhan Kodar, Kazakh writer and cultural anthropologist) about *Manichaeism* and *Buddhism*. They also have been unmistakably orientated in the geopolitical conjuncture, and eventually accepted Islam, which the *Karakhanids* proclaimed as the state religion of the *Kaganate*. Presumably, in the middle of the 10th century, the process of Islamization in Eurasian steppe had come to its end. From this time on, the beliefs, cult systems and religious rituals of the Turks, as Kodar notes, perfectly fit into the religious dogma and sacred history of the Abrahamic religions. Apparently, into Islamic culture, presumably, up to the point where the Turks began to build their genealogy to the Old Testament patriarch Noah’s son, to Japheth.

The Turks could freely jump from believing to one religion to another (for instance, from *Zoroastrianism* to *Buddhism*, from *Buddhism* to *Nestorianism*, etc.). It, somewhat, testifies that naturally, traditional worldview has been dynamic which, in turn, emerged from that of spiritual independence, self-rule, known autarky (with the clauses made above) of the Turkic culture, and as well as its superior sensitivity to other ethnic, cultural impulses. In Kazakh spirituality, Kodar believes, we will not find «neither a religious idea nor a harmonious, deployed mythology; there are legends and epics, proverbs and sayings, fairy tales and bylichki, the poetry of zhyrau» [Kodar 2002, 73]. Along with it, at the deepest level of this kind of thinking (at the level of archetypes of ethnic mentality), certain fundamental ontological and semantic structures, basic values of world relations, and unshakable spiritual, moral foundations of personal and social life have been preserved in the poetry of zhyrau as creators, interpreters and retranslators of mythopoetic tradition.

The fundamental structure of Kazakh traditional world attitude is the idea of the *unity of the world*, isomorphism of the micro and macrocosm, sacred and profane. This structure is manifested in the ancient cult of the universal supreme deity - Tengri. In the traditional worldview, Bud-Tengri is connected with the origin of the Turkic divine ancestors (mythical ancestors), with the formation of the ancient Turkic state, and with the activities of both real historical figures and mythological characters. As Alkey Margulan notes (archeologist and historian, art historian and folklorist of the ancient architectural monument of the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age), the Huns deified their leaders, calling them Tengri.

The text of the “Big Inscription” on the stele from the Kosho-Tsaidam tract begins with the words: “When the blue sky [Tengri] above and the brown earth below were created, between them a human being was created. Over the human beings, my ancestors Bumin Kagan and Istemi Kagan ruled. They ruled people by Turkish laws, they led them and succeeded” [Kasimzhanov 2001, 276]. Heaven, Earth, Man as the son of Heaven and Earth - this, according to the definition of Rene Guenon, is the *Great Triad* (*Deus - Homo - Natura*) of the traditional world view [Guenon 2000, 79]. Thus, in our opinion, an attempt of M. Aji and N. Ospanuly to qualify Tengri as a monotheistic God, anticipating the God of world monotheistic religions, is not entirely correct.

As M. Orynbekov, Kazakh philosopher, wrote, “The main teachings of early Kazakhstan in the religious and philosophical aspect are the concepts of *Tengri, Zher-Su, Umai, shamanism and paganism, the cult of Mithra, Buddhism, Manichaeism, Christianity (Nestorianism and Yakovism), Zoroastrianism* generation. The diversity and variety of religious beliefs suggest the cultural richness and variance of Kazakhstan inhabitants, the difference in worldview orientations, which is reflected in the various philosophical foundations of the universe” [2].

Among Kazakh people, the cult of the fire has been developed quite well. Metaphysical properties were attributed to fire, which was used in the so-called purification from *evil spirits*, providing patronage or protection, etc. As it was established, the fire was the patron saint of dwellings, a home sanctuary. It is also believed that when entering a new family, a newcomer bride had to bow fire in a big house. Kazakhs also cleansed houses and baby cradles with fire, driving out evil spirits and diseases. Such rituals are still preserved, and in some families, they are being performed without any fail.

One of the essential rituals was the *veneration of the dead*, or ancestor worship. An individual had believed that the sky, the sun and the moon had power over him. This influence had impacted him from birth to death in this world only. It is believed that after death, the power of nature over him had to cease, and in the end, he became an aruach. It should be noted that the veneration of the dead existed and still exists in some religions such as *Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shintoism*.

Kazakh people treated the tombs with respect. They repented at the graves and took an oath. To the traveller, who happens to be in the steppe during the nighttime, the custom recommended spending the night near the tombs, for here no one would dare to commit violence against him.

*Respect for the dead* has reached the point where regular visits to burial sites were compulsory. As an example, we can cite the Chakpak-ata cave, the grave of Baidabek-ata batyr, and his wise wife Domalak-ana in South Kazakhstan; the Mausoleum of Khoja Akhmet Yassaui, Arystan bab, the tomb of Yassaui’s daughter Gaukhar-ana in Turkestan, etc. Moreover, we can witness it in the everyday life of Kazakhs. In religion, the belief in spirits is called animism.

All cults mentioned above, rituals and beliefs are the basis of *Tengrianity*. *Tengrianity*, as one of the earliest religions, has played a significant role in shaping the worldview and ideology of humankind.

Along with Tengri, there are other objects of worship. Our ancestors had believed in *Zher (Earth), Su (Water)*, which, presumably contributed to the preservation of tribes and the salvation of people. Hence, they were endowed with divine features. In Kazakh legends, an understanding of *Zher-Su* emerges from the time when Proto-Turks's departure from the Altai Highlands took place. As a result of their withdrawal, there is still some esteem for Altai (white Altai, askar Altai), which was considered to be a meeting point for *Zher-Su* with that of the spirits of the ancestors of tribes, who traditionally divided the Kazakhs' land among themselves. It is evidenced by the stories about *Lake Milk in Altai (Sut-kul)*, at the top of which there is *Altyn Baiterek* (sacred golden poplar), which serves as a guide to the middle world and the sky, which sounds like *Zher Taniri kindigi* (umbilical cord of the Earth and Heaven). *Zher-Su* possessed *Kyzyl-kul lake (Red Lake)*, where the famous fish *Ker balyk* lived. It is believed that the fish contains the prototypes of all kinds of people and livestock and supports the mountains of all *Zher-Su*. *Ker balyk* passed on to *Zher-Su* those embryos, whereas *Zher-Su* endows them with the patron spirits of tribes, who already realized them at their discretion. Thus, Orynbekov notes that *the emergence of the cults of Heaven (Tengri) and Earth-Water (Zher-Su) was associated with the instinct of human gratitude, his constant desire to thank the good gods, and patronizing creatures who save during hard times from hunger and various disasters*.

One cannot agree with the proclaimed between incepted in the Hellenic-Roman era (where the notions nomads or Huns was synonymous with the word barbarians), and many modern researchers homology on the *civilization* (culture) - *barbarism* (savagery) issue, as well as the notions of the *settled* and *nomadic* lifestyle.

B. Nurzhanov formulates the thesis as follows: “civilization requires settling as its opportunity, it excludes nomadism as something dangerous, threatening itself” [Nurzhanov 1994, 12]

Some Western cultural anthropologists (F. Nietzsche, A. Toynbee, O. Spengler, and others) foreshadowed the general decay of western civilization, and diagnosed exhaustion of its vital, cultural potentiality. Arnold Toynbee does not associate civilization exclusively with urban culture and settled life. According to him, *civilization is a movement, not a state, a journey, not a refuge*. Society attempts to rise to a higher level of spiritual life [Toynbee 2003, 300–301]. It would seem that with such an understanding of the essence of *civilization*, there are no grounds and reasons to exclude nomads from the history of civilization or place them on the marginal lines of history.

In this regard, Toynbee criticizes the Eurocentric approach to the cultural and historical process. Toynbee wrote: “In the modern world, various nationalist-minded agents of Western culture tend to distinguish between Civilization with a capital letter and the barbarians or savages whom the West has favoured in different parts of the globe” [Toynbee 1991, 588-589].

The difference between sedentary and nomadic cultures is a difference caused by various living conditions. First of all, economic life in different natural and geographical environments. These differences predetermine the features of the development and historical fate of two types of civilization.

Herodotus, while describing the life and customs of the Saka nomads, was guided by the idea of the opposition between the natural, morally pure life of nomadic tribes, and the moral depravity of settled civilization. In the Germanic epic, the great leader of the Huns - Attila – also was known as the kind and just king Etzel. The following characteristics as confronting the noble artlessness, naturalness, freedom, simplicity of lifestyle and purity of the customs of nomadic people has become a common topic of romanticism. Other traits such as artificiality, the unnaturalness of human life in the conditions of European civilization has been on the hook of romanticists as well. The images of noble Indians in the novels of Fenimore Cooper or Mein Reed, or the idea of Pushkin's Aleko as the embodiment of natural freedom, the gipsy freedom for which a city dweller yearns can be explicit examples.