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# **HISTORICAL ASPECTS AND ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE OLD TATAR NATION IN FORMATION OF ECOLOGICAL CULTURE OF THE YOUNG GENERATION**

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## **Abstract**

Tatar nation has passed a long way in its development. Old Tatar nation had ecological wisdom and feeling of unity with nature. They strictly observed the period of hunting, did not kill pregnant jennies and got the fowl as much as necessary to satisfy real needs. A cognitive process of environment constantly develops and deepens. The experience of previous nations serves for further understanding of native land and environment, joining on this basis with values of nature and upbringing of the young generation.

*Keywords:* history, ecology, culture, upbringing, schoolchildren

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## **1. Introduction**

The Tatars have passed a long way of ethnic development, and their ethnogenesis still stays a subject for discussions. Early period of their ethnic history is not so much enlightened in the written sources, complicating the study of ancient and medieval stages of ethnogenesis. The urgency of the problem is significantly explained by complication and ambiguousness of interpretation of medieval ethnic processes by the specialists of different sciences.

The history of scientific study of Tatar physical experience counts more than one hundred years, and its origin refers to 1870-1880 of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, when in 1869, the Community of Natural Philosophers was formed in the Kazan University. The initiator of these investigations was a famous scientist and teacher P.F. Lesgaft, who determined the importance to study the anthropologic composition of nations of the Middle Volga and Transurals to reveal the problems of their origin. Anthropologic study of population was accompanied by the collection of craniological and paleoanthropological material with its further use as a historical source for the ethnogenesis problems of local nations. The

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works of these researchers laid a foundation and determined main directions for future investigations in the sphere of ethnic Tatar anthropology [1].

Tatar ethnos has a complex internal structure. The ethnonym 'Tatars' appeared for the first time in Turkic and Mongolian tribes of the Central Asia in the VI-VII<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the opinion of V.A. Nikonov, the notion 'Tatars' was known in Russia and in Western Europe in the VI-VIII<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, at that times, this term did not denote one nation, but was collective, involving all nations of Asia [2]. Another researcher of Tatar ethnogenesis, V.V. Bartold had an opinion, that there existed several nations with the self-designation 'Tatars'. He understood the notion 'Tatar nation' as almost all groups of Tatars within the boundaries of the USSR [3]. Great activity of Turkic tribes took place in the epoch of Migration Period, and the initial ethnocultural and ethnoecological traditions began to expand on the vast territories of Eurasia. It is this period, when the rudiments of ecological culture, peculiar to all Turkic nations to any extent, began to appear. The initial pedagogical and ecological traditions began to form, when the optimal forms of economic activity, directly connected with nature, were determined. A complex of material culture - dwelling, clothes, means of transport, adornments - was formed. Spiritual culture, family organization, folk ethics, fine art and folklore gained familiar completeness. A proper system of writing and state tradition of mythologem and the ideas of sacral governance were elaborated. The sources of bases of ecological world outlook of Tatar nation are rooted in that epoch [4].

## **2. Method**

In the research, we used a theoretical, logical-historical, pedagogical and ecological analysis of different aspects of the studied problem; theoretical generalization of research results taking into consideration the main factors and specific conditions.

## **3. Type and ways of investigation**

During the study, we have revealed, substantiated, investigated and analyzed the philosophical, sociological, ethnophilosophical, ethnographic, ethnopedagogical, ethnoecological, ethnopsychological, linguistic, folklore literature and fiction on traditional pedagogical and ecological culture of Tatar nation and regional ethnic groups, cohabitating with them. As far as we know, Turkic Kaganate (551–603), in the period of top rise, had a vast territory - from Manchuria to Northern Black Sea region, from the headstream of Yenisei to the headstream of Amu-Darya [5].

The Turcomen deified all natural phenomena. The Old Turkic rituals anthemed the beauty and majesty of the surrounding world. At that time, people, more than ever later, were close to nature and felt like its harmonious part. During paganism, they worshiped numerous gods and spirits of air, water, forest, etc. The totemic views were strong. Each tribe or generation had its own animal

- protector. However, the most worshiped god was the god of heaven and the creator of all alive - Tengre [6]. Old Turcomen apotheosized blue heaven and everything, that is situated on it - the Sun, the stars, the Moon. That cardinal direction, where the Sun rose - the East - was especially respected. The heaven, worshiped by the Turcomen, was not that material heaven, but any spiritual heaven, belonged to Tengre.

The Tatars preserved that notion in later period, when the compellation to one god (Allah), appeared [7]. The rites and cultic actions of the Turcomen were devoted to it. They were held around idols, cut from the stone of tree. These depictions, being the Belief, the standards of morality and embodiment of aesthetic ideals, presented the pieces of art.

The ceremonies and rituals accompanied different stages of human life cycle: from birth to death. Appealing to the gods, the Turcomen believed that worshipping could cause rain and help to grow the heavy crop, to win a victory over the enemies, avert illnesses and move off the death, to appease the spirits. The great number of ceremonies was connected with the change of seasons, fertility cult. All numerous ritual and ceremonial games, dances were accompanied by music [8].

A cult of heaven wolf takes an important place in Turkic mythology. It became the general ancient Turkic totem. The history of the generation 'Ashyns' traces its roots to 'ten sons', born by the wolf. The word 'Ashyna' means 'the perfect wolf'. Some researchers connect the name of this glorious reigning generation with the word 'kuk' (blue).

The general Turkic cult of wolf traces its roots to ancient epochs. Wolf took a significant place in the life of nations, involved in nomadic cattle breeding. According to Chinese sources, the best parts of Turkic horse cavalry were named 'wolves'. Thus, for instance, a guard of Kagan was named 'wolves', and the banner was decorated by the golden wolf head [9]. The Old Turcomen used the word 'bure' (wolf) to form the names. It is especially typical of the upper classes.

'A white wolf' or the 'wolf' itself is a widespread image in mythology, folklore of the Tatars, Chuvash, Dunay Bulgars. Folklore and ethnographic materials of the Kazan Tatars show, that the White Wolf was their totemic animal. Legends and fairy-tales were devoted to it. One legend narrates, that, some time ago, in the old days, some nomad nation lost its way in bosky mountains and it was surrounded by the enemies. The White wolf saved this nation and became its protector; he led it from the encirclement along the secrete paths. Consequently, this plot has a definitely Turkic origin with some modifications.

In Tatar fairy-tale 'Ak bure' (The White Wolf), a magic skin walker is mentioned; he frequently changes his appearance, helps the hero and turns his enemies into stony idols. In Tatar folklore, a wolf is a highly powered and huge creature, reaching 60 m at length. Power and huge sizes of the wolf are metaphorically compared with the might of legendary Alyp - the general Turkic hero.

The Tatars considered the white wolf as a protector of folklore. It was prohibited to tell the fairy tales and to riddle during the daytime. Folk proverbs prove it: “Көндөз экият сөйлөгөн кешене ак бүре ашар” (The one, who tells fairy-tales during the daytime, will be eaten by the white wolf), “Табышмакны көндөз айтсән, бүре очрый имеш” (The one, who riddles during the daytime, would meet the white wolf).

The White Wolf is also mentioned both in the Chuvash folklore and in the beliefs as a head of the wolves. The legends tell about close contacts of the Turcomen with the nature and its components. Spiritual Turkic culture, judged by the whole range of sources, is presented as rather developed and complex. In the mental outlook of the Old Turcomen, the vertical world consisted of three layers: top, middle and bottom. Each layer was subject to the separate god.

Umay, a goddess of fertility and newborn babies, personifying the female principle, is in charge of sons birthing. The main god of the Medium world was ‘The Holy Land-Water’, patronizing the Turcomen. In spring, prior to the working year, and in autumn, after the work is finished, in acknowledgement of plentiful supply of food and human happiness, the Old Turcomen made a sacrifice to the god.

A cult of *Earth-Water* is connected with the worship to nature, ‘motherland - green cradle’, as a god. Mountains, different hills, lonely growing trees were also presented as a part of cult Earth-Water, they served as a link between the Heavens and Earth, between Tengre and a man.

In Old Turkic sources, the Turcomen proudly name their native lands ‘the Turkic lands-waters’. A Byzantine historian Theophylact Simokatta wrote about the Turcomen, that “they praise their land” [10]. Their magicians appeal to the land to give them power. Even now in Tatar colloquial speech, it is accepted to name the small motherland ‘zhir-su’ (land-water). In our speech, there is also one expression, denoting home-sickness: zhirsu. In modern Tatar, this word means ‘to be homesick strongly’. A connection of notion ‘zhirsu’ with the name of Old Turkic god Yer-Sub (Land-Water) does not cause any doubts. Worship of land continued to exist in customs of Tatar nation up to the latest times. Different rituals were devoted to the Land. It was mentioned in their swears. The expression ‘May the land swallow me!’ is also used at present to prove the firmness of your words.

Thus, prior to adoption of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, the Turcomen had their own, more ancient and original religion - *Tengriism*. This religion, differing from the other religions, created later by the prophets and their followers, emerged in natural, historical way based on national world outlook, embodying early mythological representations, connected with human relation to nature and its elemental forces. A typical feature of this religion is a kinship of a man and nature. It was caused by idolization of nature and ancestor worship. The Turcomen worshiped natural bodies and components not for fear of inconceivable and severe elemental forces, but due to the feeling of gratitude to nature, that, despite the blow-up of shrill anger, it is frequently tender and generous. They were able to perceive nature, as the animate creature. The belief

provided the Turcomen with ecological knowledge and skills, the possibility to feel the spirit of nature, to perceive yourself more sharply as its part, to live in harmony with it, to obey natural rhythm, to enjoy its endless inconstancy, to be glad at its multifaced beauty. They understood the interconnection of all components and phenomena of nature that is why they took good care of steppes, meadows, mountains, rivers, lakes, i.e. nature in whole, carrying the heavenly print. The relations of people with nature were considered as interdependence, rather than its exploitation. Such respect of natural world allowed the Turcomen to live on their land for thousands of years without negative effect on the environment. Religion, which was not written, was based on oral and visual basis, rather simple and small sacral fulfilment. Thanks to it, a doctrine of religion existed for several thousand years, at that, in one and the same stable forms of rituals and pragmatism.

Z.A. Khusainov writes: “Without knowing the previous life of the Turcomen, it is difficult to be oriented in the present of Tatar nation and it is impossible to foresee the future features. Tatar ancestors - the Turcomen - left the monuments of culture - ecological knowledge, the elements of pedagogical, philosophical and religious thought, art, literature, architecture, craft and science. It is impossible to understand the history of nations, if the inner world of ancestors and their relations with nature are not taken into consideration”. [11]

The archaeological monuments of the Old Turkic times in Central Asia and South Siberia, revealed and studied by the researchers, make up a complex ecological unity. Later, the ecological traditions of these tribes had a determining impact on the peculiarities of culture of practically all medieval nomadic Turkic nations of the Eurasian area. L.N. Gumilev wrote on this issue: “The formation of Great Turkic Kaganate in the VI<sup>th</sup> century ... became, to some extent, a crucial point in the history of humanity, because, Mediterranean and Far-Eastern cultures were still dissociated ... In this situation, the Turcomen not only played a role of mediators, but simultaneously developed their own culture, which, as they considered, could be opposed to the cultures of China, Iran, Byzantium and India. This special steppe culture had ancient traditions and deep roots.” [12]

The culture of each nation is not only the material way of life, pattern, folklore songs and dances, with which the process of ethnos revival is usually connected, but it is also the traditional and spiritual world view, involving the myths about origin of the Universe, man, everything alive in the world.

Traditional worldviews present an important sphere of human spiritual culture. They make up its core. Without studying this layer of ecological knowledge of the nation, it is impossible to understand not only spiritual, but also material, social life of previous epochs. That is why, this problem is also urgent in the study of history of Turcomen-Tatars and their ancestors.

Z.A. Khusainov writes: “When culture is not supported by the traditions, it loses its national specificity. If the peculiarities of traditional culture disappear, the nation, as ethnos, disappears as well”. [11] The notion spiritual culture involves different types of public consciousness: art and morality, right and

politics, ideology and religion, education and enlightenment, science and literature, manners and customs, folklore, mythology, language, etc. Alongside with that, the spiritual culture is not just a sum of one or another form of public consciousness.

A peculiar and quite interesting source for historical interpretation, as is known, is folklore. It fancifully reflects the everyday life and culture, social-economic, political views of the nation.

Z.A. Khusainov writes: “The myths, having appeared in high antiquity and having reflected the worldview of the ancient man, were a necessary step in the process of surrounding world cognition. It is the understanding of life and death, time, space, genealogic legends, tradition, ceremonies, which existed in the past in those tribes and nations.” [11] For instance, the Turcomen had two meanings for the notion ‘Yer-sub’. The first one is a great god, the other one is an obvious world, in the image of Motherland. They presented the god in the image of a plump, beautiful woman, and it patronized Motherland, where the Turcomen lived. Nature and everything alive, apart from man, were subject to it. Their proper Land-Water was not just the developed space, but the copy of the world in whole. Consequently, for each generation of Turcomen, there was their own land - a middle of the world, a centre of Earth, a heart of order and harmony. Their own native land is not only a geographical notion: it is a space, perceived emotionally, the land of their ancestors, fathers, the place where they were born and brought up. That is why, the Land-Water, the Motherland could not be sold or given, but it was protected, one could die in a battle for it, as the exiled nation did not have any god protection in a foreign land. Thus, traditional Turkic worldview considered that the essence of life is in preservation of nature and your place in it.

With decay of Old Turkic states, with loss of state centralization, with splitting into tribal and territorial divisions, the ceremonies of god worship began to be held in narrower territorial and local forms. People worshiped land and water as the creators of harvest and fertility, as a source of treasury, providing a man with material happiness.

By the middle of the VII<sup>th</sup> century, in Western Eurasia in Black Sea steppes, the state Great Bulgaria, headed by Cubrat, appeared. The Bulgarian tribes, living along the right bank of the middle Don, migrated to the banks of Volga and Kama at the end of the VII<sup>th</sup> century and turned out to be surrounded by ethnically close Turkic population.

The official adoption of Islam (900-920) played a great role in consolidation of Bulgarian ethnos. From the late of X<sup>th</sup> century, Volga Bulgaria became a country of ‘classic Islam’, where many leading scientists and theologians lived and worked. Schools and madrasah existed in all large communities inside the country. Islam, penetrating into the spiritual culture of society, changed Turkic traditions and pushed aside pagan cults to the sphere of prejudices. The adoption of the unified Islam culture in the whole territory of the country contributed to gradual origin of new ecological traditions. However, in our opinion, from the viewpoint of ecological upbringing of young generation

and moral-ethical aspect, the limitation of ancient form of religion - totemism and spirit worship was a negative phenomenon.

### **3.1. Geographic views**

Geographic views of Old Turcomen were quite vast. The ancestors of Turkic nations - the Huns, population of the Turkic Kaganate - Turkuts, Kipchaks, Uigurs, Tatars, Oguz, Pechenegs, etc. inhabited vast spaces of the Great steppe. The empires, created by them, joined two continents, turning them into Eurasia. There were the times, when the Hun Empire extended almost from one ocean to another, to be more precise, from Tatar Strait in the East up to modern Italy and France in the West. The boundaries of Turkic Kaganate extended from the Otukensk lowland in the East up to Shantungsk plain and to the lane Buzgala, named by the Turcomen 'Iron Gates', in the Central Asia and in the West. The world, which was interrelated with it, was very vast in geographical relation including China, North India, Iran, Afghanistan, Byzantium, etc. Thus, the Old Turcomen, thanks to vast habitation areas, connection with different states, knew many regions of Eurasia.

L.N. Gumilev mentioned that the geographical openings of the Old Turcomen have the universal importance [10]. It is known, the Huns had a map of their lands, they had their own map-makers.

The Turcomen were the patriots of their land, Motherland. Moreover, they considered their land sacred. After them, in Turkic history, such relation, raised to cult, was observed not any other state.

The natural environment of their habitation was varied and unique. Volga-Kama Bulgaria was situated in forest-steppe zone, on comparatively flat bottom land, and it covered mainly black-earth area. In the initial period, its lands were limited to small territory, a confluence region of the Kama and the Volga. From the XI<sup>th</sup> century and especially in the XII<sup>th</sup> century, the main demesnes of the country significantly expanded, the Bulgars started to inhabit intensively the new territories. Central lands of the country were located at the confluence of the Kama and the Volga, on the one of important trade ways of Asia and Europe. The Volga Bulgaria, from the X<sup>th</sup> century, turns into one of the most important trade stations on the Volga-Baltic way, which joined the Central Asia, Iran and the whole Arabian East, Russia, the Baltic States, Northland and Central Europe.

The location of Volga Bulgaria in convenient geographical region, where the important trade ways were crossed, as well as rather high level of cultural-economical development of the state contributed to close economic, cultural, political connections both with neighbouring nations, and with far countries. All this contributed to enrichment of geographical views of the Bulgars. The knowledge of geodesy helped them to determine the geographical coordinates, azimuth positions, etc.

The Islam religion also contributed to the development of geographical knowledge. In Islam religion and Koran, much attention is paid to voyages. It is not wonder that one of the months of Muslim calendar is called 'sefer' - 'voyage'.

The voyages, travels promoted the religion, opening of new ways, that is why they were considered to be a successful affair.

Geographical views found the reflection in poems of Mukhammedyar, where the notions ‘mashrik-magrib’ (east-west), ‘zhide iklim’ (seven climates, or seven parts of world) are traditionally considered to be the synonyms of the Universe.

These views were not subject to significant changes in the period of Kazan Khanate. It was considered, that the territory of Kazan Khanate (‘Bulgarian vilayet’) is located on the seventh iklim from the existing seven, and refers to the Moon, i.e. under the auspices of the Moon. Due to the fact, that the Moon was considered to be the protector of Kazan, Kazan was perceived as an almost holy city in the Islam world. The same as in the period of Volga Bulgaria, the Kazan Muslims were especially respected by their co-brothers, because Kazan, staying far from Islam vilayets, had boundaries with the non-Islamic states. There was nowhere to wait for help, apart from the God of worlds and help of angels. It is interesting to note, that in that period, the geographical data were studied not by Geography, but, for instance, by Mathematics (riaziyat).

Thus, the Turko-Tatars, from the ancient times, were familiar with different countries. Studying even only their country, the Turko-Tatars could have rather vast geographical knowledge. Close connections of Islam countries with each other also enriched the geographical horizon of the Turko-Bulgar-Tatars. The scientists of these countries made an invaluable contribution to the Geography of that period.

### **3.2. History**

People from ancient times were interested in the history of their generation, tribe. The most ancient forms of historical knowledge had the totemic character. It also refers to the ancient ancestors of Tatar nation.

It was considered that the animal, totem was a founder of many Turkic tribes. Gradually, purely totemic legends became more complicated. The ancestor of any generation was considered a man, born from the mix of totem and human ancestors.

The formation of Turkic Kaganate provoked deep changes in historical way of thinking, when the state ideology, based on historical knowledge, was required. The main purpose of official Old Turkic ideology was to preserve the Turkic ethnos and its state. For the sake of this aim, it was necessary to prove the godlike, sacred, celestial character of their emergence. It was especially important to present this nation as an extraordinary ethnos, predominant in all parameters, as a subcelestial state. The official history of the state, first of all, had to serve to it, and it actually met all the vital requirements. The history of Turkic Kaganate was recorded in runic books, on boards and especially epitaphs of glorious Kagans, their commanders and state figures.

The Old Turcomen idealized their past, history, Kagans, ruling in the antiquity, state figures and commanders. They recollected the deceased ancestors with great respect, tried to cleave to their ideals. The idealization always takes away from the real history, adding it a mythological shade. It is especially typical of historical presentations of more ancient period.

They, with close contacts with neighbouring and other nations, opened the way to learning of cultural achievements of many nations. In Bulgarian agriculture of Gold Horde-era, the traditions, laid in pre-Mongolian times, continued to develop. Bulgaria was the most important cultivated area in Gold Horde.

As a result of Mongolian conquest, the Bulgarian population, leaving the inhabited lands, mainly with black earth soil, started to go to forest-steppe and forest regions with mainly podsolich and loamy soils. It motivated to pass to the farming pattern, based on three-course system and winter crops. Alongside with that, the fertile soils of South regions of Middle Volga were preserved, up to the rivers Samara, Usa and Syzranka, where the land rotation and spring crops were traditional.

Agricultural instruments were subject to improvement. Alongside with wooden plough, the ploughs, appeared in Bulgaria only at the turn of XII-XII<sup>th</sup> centuries and came into use. Ploughshare were updated and modified, they became more convenient for overturning or dumping of fallow land layers.

The Bulgars in Horde-era mainly continued to sow wheat, oat, barley, including the special one, also grown in South regions. Sowing rye is also indicative; it is a culture, mainly typical of multifield agricultural engineering. They continued to grow bean cultures (pea, lens, vetch) and technical ones - hemp and flax. The discoveries of cucumber and apple seeds tell about the development of gardening.

Herds of cattle and small ruminants predominated in the regions of the Bulgars habitation. As they used lambs for meat since olden times, they had more lambs, than the neighbouring nations. Many people had goats, if the cow was inaccessible: goat milk was considered to be curative with good reason. Horses, first of all, had the drawing power, but the horsemeat was also used for food.

The Bulgars were also involved in hunting and fishing. Among the osteologic materials from the Bulgarian settlements, the bones of animals are also found: in Bulgar - hare, beaver, marten, roe, elk; in Urmat settlement - bear, wolf; in Mukhsh-Narovchat - beaver and elk. Gathering, especially bee-keeping, took an important place.

The inclusion of Bulgaria into the Golden Horde left a deep imprint in the development of Bulgarian culture. In Bulgaria and Bulgarian cities, there were mektebe - elementary schools and madrasahs. The outstanding scientists, teachers, theologians and writers of Bulgaria gave lessons there, including the descents from famous centres of Islam culture. A teacher, Makhmud Bolgary, wrote a book about upbringing of children, which found itself among the best books on pedagogy of the XIV<sup>th</sup> century, which was mentioned in the

bibliography of Muslim scientists, compiled in Bagdad. Its author was written under the name of Makhmud ibn Fattakhaas-Saray. He gave lessons of Islam law, Rhetoric and Philosophy, not only in educational institutions of Bulgaria and Saray, but also in Egypt, Syria and other countries.

An outstanding writer and theologian was a representative of Sufi order Al-Kubrawiya Makhmud ibn Gali bin Sheik of Bulgaria-Saray. He created the work 'Nakhdzhel-Faradis', which became quite popular among the Bulgars, and later - among the Tatars. The author included 40 moral tales (baits) in it, where he presented in popular form the pedagogical forms of behaviour, standards of family and ecological life, public and social being. The following works were widely accepted among the Bulgars and their descendants: the dastans 'Dzhyamdzhymiya Sultan' by Khisam Kyatib (1370), 'Gyulistan' by Saif Saray (1331), 'Kisekbashkitaby' by Gali, etc. The abovementioned pieces promoted the outspread of pedagogics and ecological knowledge in Bulgaria of the XIII-XIV<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Bulgarian pedagogics and ecological knowledge in the XIII-XIV<sup>th</sup> centuries were influenced by not only West, at that, not only the cultures of Russia and Armenia, but also the ones of Italy, France, Spain. The merchants and missionaries from France (Gylom de Rubruk), Italy (Plano Karpiny and Marco Polo), Hungary (brother Yulian), visiting Bulgaria, were not astonished at the development of culture and Science. They characterize Bulgaria as the European country and, alongside with that, the Islamic country. In Bulgaria, at the confluence of East and West, such sciences, as Mathematics, Chemistry, Medicine, Astronomy, were developed on the original local basis with rich traditions on pedagogy.

A pass from pagan polytheism to Islamic monotheism has a stage-by-stage character. The changes gradually took place in public consciousness. New relations (adat), regulated by Shariat, appeared. Koran and Shariat determined the formation of national pedagogics and requirements to the way of life.

The pedagogics of upbringing was also changed. In the families of Bulgars-pagans, the child was brought up not by father and mother, but by maternal grandfather, who grew the child until the majority age. The sons did not come into estate of parents after the father's death. It went on to the father's brother. A new order was established with Islam: children were brought up by parents, and the paternal inheritance was received by the eldest son. Father was responsible for the upbringing of children. Such approach in the process of upbringing had positive tendencies.

The study of Koran and Shariat canons by the Tatars contributed to the change of ecological traditions in the society. New customs, traditions, rituals appeared. The views on world structure and human relations were changed. Islam gradually became a dominant religion, at that; it accepted some customs from the religious practice of previous paganism.

A shift of Turko-Bulgarian population to crop farming reduced considerably the required individual feeding area and brought food consumption up to the level of net primary production of cultivated plants of primitive

agrocenosis. ('Agrocenosis', from the Greek agros - field, caynos - general, is a biotic community of plants, animals, mushrooms and microorganisms, created to get the agricultural products and regularly supported by a man). Settled lifestyle, creation of settlements with labour division means the appearance of stable material culture and ecological knowledge, marking the uprising of civilization. From the ecological viewpoint, it was a random phenomenon to some extent, as it required random coincidence of the set of conditions: relatively large density of population on fertile black soils of the Volga region.

The consumption of agrocenosis products by the Bulgars excluded the possibility of natural recovery of plant biomass and soil fertility. The Bulgars-Tatars had to take the reproduction function upon themselves, annually cultivating, fertilizing and scattering the fields with seeds. Distributing farm cropping and animal breeding resulted in reclamation of considerable territories of the Volga region and to the increase of population number. It determined territorially the ecological niches of large population of the Bulgars-Tatars. Inside them, thanks to the increasing productivity of crop farming and deepening of labour division, there appeared the conditions to develop craft, trade and concentration of people in cities. A set of conditions created new ecological relations.

At the same time, the changes in human mental world, in the system of knowledge about nature, in social structural communities also took place. The changes also covered natural environment. The Bulgars had the ecological wisdom and feeling of solidarity with nature. They strictly observed the period of hunting, did not kill pregnant jennies, got the fowl as much as necessary to satisfy real needs. The peculiar conservations - peculiar streams, lakes, hills, forest lands, where hunting and fishing were prohibited - contributed to protection of hunting resources to a great extent. It was also encouraged by the widespread cult of animals, totemism - a complex of believes and rituals, remained from the primitive society, connected with the views about kinship between groups of people and so called totems - types of animals and plants. It was prohibited to kill and eat them. Sometimes, a 'taboo' was superposed on gathering of mushrooms, berries, nuts, fruits, cereals up to definite date.

The rules of ecological ethics provided the inhabitants of the Volga Bilgaria with the opportunity to stay in harmonious unity with the surrounding nature for centuries, not causing its essential deterioration. A man assimilates the world not only materially, but also mentally, in the process of interaction with environment, elaborates his views about nature, trying to understand its essence. Based on spiritual culture, the ecological culture of personality appears.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Thus, the interconnection between material and spiritual, including the ecological cultures is implemented. Our ancestors preserved and passed from generation to generation the natural power of observation. It is necessary, as many civilizations died not only because the economy decayed, but also due to

exhaustion of spiritual powers. The main reasons of ecological crisis are rooted in the lack of ecological culture of nations. However, the recovery of ecological culture becomes complicated by the crisis in the spiritual sphere. A man, unlike any other living beings, is unable to life fully without social, moral, ecological and other spiritual values. The formation of ecological culture of nations requires the rise of spirituality, morality of the society, that is established from the kindergartens, schools, gymnasiums, liceums and, later, in the higher educational institutions.

A cognitive process of environment constantly develops and deepens. The lessons of previous nations serve for further understanding of native land and environment, joining, on this basis, with values of nature and upbringing of young generation.

The dialectics of learning of nature and practical influence is typical of the nations of the region. Each of them, living on the territory of the region, from the early childhood acquaints the younger generation with the humanistic interrelations with nature, forms the bases for ecological culture. Different nations have much in common in this relation. However, they inhabit the definite territory, differing by its own, natural-geographical peculiarities, that is why ecological knowledge of nations has regional character. Consequently, the birth of ecological culture of the Tatar ethnos is connected with its historical, geographical, social-economical activity, religion and culture.

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