
RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF THE KIPCHAKS IN THE SYR DARYA AND THEIR PECULIARITIES FROM OTHER TURKS A MODERN APPROACH

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Abstract

The arrival of Islam in the Kazakh steppe caused new spiritual and cultural transformations. The conversion of Turkic tribes to Islam began in different ways. It was first realized as a result of trade routes through the Kazakh steppes, political alliances and activities of individuals. During the years when the Kipchaks gained great political power in the Eurasian region, the land of Desht-i-Kipchak became the centre of widespread of Islam. Of course, it was difficult for the Kipchaks to find any other religion in demand when their traditional religious faith prevails. However, the Kipchaks' attention to Islam and interest in it contributed to their becoming Muslims. The question of what character and specifics of Islam gained authority among the Kipchaks still requires new conclusions. Because many researchers associate the interest of the Kipchaks in Islam with political connotations. However, the problem of links and similarities between the traditional religious knowledge of the Kipchaks and Islam remains unnoticed. The purpose of the research is to identify the traditional religious knowledge of the Kipchaks in the Syr Darya and analyse its features with an assessment of its relationship with the Islamic religion. In the article, the problem of features of religious knowledge of the Kipchaks in the Syr Darya region is considered in detail based on historical data, and its own conclusions are drawn on this issue.

Keywords: Kipchak, Islam, religion, beliefs, system

1. Introduction

The Kipchaks are a tribe that is part of the ethnic composition of the Kazakh people. The history of the Kipchaks, who at various stages of history have established themselves as a major political force in the Eurasian region, is diverse and extensive. Among the topics that deserve special attention is the

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problem of religious knowledge of the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya. It is true that the differentiation of the spiritual history of any tribe or peoples, including religious knowledge, solves many questions. After all, the worldview and attitude to life undoubtedly determine the criteria of the religious faith of this people.

At first, the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya River was inextricably linked with the belief of Tengri, which is inherent in all Turkic tribes that lived in harmony with Nature. The belief in Tengri is the belief in one God who created the world. Therefore, the Kipchaks throughout the Syr Darya were close to monotheism. However, in everyday life, there were other types of beliefs among the Kipchaks. However, they did not have a mass character. It is known that Islam has come to recognize the Creator for the human race and worship Him flawlessly. When the area of distribution of this religion expanded and reached the Kazakh steppe, there were many Turkic tribes that recognized it as their religious orientation. The state of Karakhan raised Islam to the status of the state religion. And in some Turkic tribes, although Islam did not rise to the status of the state religion, it formed the basis of public relations as a religion that the vast majority chose. One of them was Kimaks, who had their own tradition of state administration on the Kazakh land. The fact that the Kimaks were part of the Kipchak Khanate over time also contributed to the spread of this religious attitude among the Kipchaks. Islam began to spread among the Kipchaks under the influence of not only the neighbouring of Karakhan state, which we have already mentioned, but also other Muslim countries. In particular, the political union and ties between the Kipchak-Khorezm people of various types also contributed to the formation of the religious consciousness of the Kipchaks. This fact alone makes it necessary for modern researchers to conduct a comprehensive research work.

The research work carried out within the framework of this topic does not cover the problem in a comprehensive way. It is limited only to the presentation of certain facts that determine the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks throughout the Syr Darya. And the work on the examination of possible facts or determining the directions that will serve as the basis for future research is not carried out. Therefore, this research work, with a comprehensive analysis of the problem, makes an effort to identify the facts that determine the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks throughout the Syr Darya. The main task of the research is to characterize the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks throughout the Syr Darya through the analysis of various historical facts and draw new conclusions on this issue.

2. Method

In the research work, the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks throughout the Syr Darya is multifaceted, and the process of forming its main characteristics included several stages. Therefore, in the course of our research, we first used the method of historical periodization. Undoubtedly, in order to accurately

determine the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks throughout the Syr Darya, we analysed a wide range of historical data and data from the main research works. Before using the information directly, we tried to find out the truth by comparing it with other historical data. At the same time, we actively used the historical and comparative method. First of all, according to the method of historical heuristics, we have classified the necessary data and research papers in order to accurately determine and maintain the consistency of the work. In the process of comparing the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks throughout the Syr Darya in different historical periods, we accurately determined the character of the leading thought in different periods according to the method of historical and restrospectivity.

3. Results

The problem of religious knowledge of the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya is one of the problems that requires a multifaceted and complex examination. After all, the problems of political, economic, social, cultural and, most importantly, religious knowledge of the Kipchaks, who chose nomadic life according to their economic needs, were also formed in accordance with the peculiarities of their existence. During the period of independence and great political power in the region, the Kipchaks expressed interest in the problems of religious knowledge in neighbouring and settled countries, paying attention to the religious beliefs inherent in the Turks. It should be noted that the Kipchaks showed great interest in world religions and religious beliefs based on monotheistic beliefs. Therefore, the problem of religious knowledge of the Kipchaks throughout the Syr Darya can be divided into two conditional periods. While the first period is associated with the establishment of the dominant belief in Tengri, which is characteristic of the Turks, the second period is characterized by the beginning of the widespread spread of Islam among the Syrdarya Kipchaks.

Islam is not only a set of spiritual values, along with the world religions of Christianity and Judaism, but also a unique ethno-cultural phenomenon. It was able to form national consciousness and value orientations. It also ensures that the worldview of ethnic groups as a whole is based on special virtues. Of course, the question of how such a system of values spread among the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya River is one of the most important topics not only for historians, but also for Religious studies. However, there are no historical sources that clearly reflect the spread of Islam among the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya. But, the data that describe historical events and processes, as well as research papers written on the basis of them, provide an opportunity to describe the network of events. At the same time, the importance of archaeological sources is high in order to fully characterize and draw accurate conclusions about the level of spread of Islam among the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya.

At the beginning of the XIth century, the possessions of the Kimak Khaganate began to fall into the hands of the Kipchak nobility. In the East, it began with the Altai and Irtysh River, in the west-the Ural River, in the South-Lake Balkhash and in the north-the Kulyndy steppe became part of the Kipchak Khanate. The political strengthening of the Kipchak Khans continued to increase the territory of the Khanate. By displacing the Oghuz zhabgu, it took control of the Syrdarya, Aral Sea and the Caspian Sea, and took control of trade routes through the Urals, Ustyurt and Syrdarya. Undoubtedly, the ability to establish control over the regions, which are considered the most important, gave the Kipchaks economic advantages, created conditions for them to become political leaders and led to changes in the ethno-political situation of the region. From this point on, the concept of Desht-i-Kipchak appeared in historiography [1]. In this regard, after the establishment of the Kipchaks rule in the Syr Darya, along with the political and economic situation of the Kipchak tribes in this region, the definition of how spiritual life, religious knowledge and their features developed is among the additional issues in the history of Kazakhstan.

The definition of the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya, in turn, allows us to assess the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks as a whole. Until the middle of the XIIth century, only two major possessions of Desht-i-Kipchak were known. One of them is the Syganak property, the centre of which is Syganak. The second largest possession near the Aral Sea belongs to the Borili tribe [2].

3.1. Kipchaks in the Syr Darya and the tengrianism beliefs

The religious knowledge of the Kipchaks throughout the Syr Darya is, of course, closely related to Tengri. Tengrianism is a belief of the ancient Turks. Its historical origins date back to the second millennium BC. The main feature of this religious belief is faith in the Blue Tengri. L.N. Gumilyov gives information on this issue that “Belief in the Blue Tengri is preserved in the Orkhon inscriptions” [2, p. 71]. Of course, there was no theological doctrine of faith in the written form of faith. Therefore, there is every reason to believe that tengrianism as a religious belief is not institutional. The belief here is based on legends and myths that are passed down verbally from generation to generation. It is true that according to the Kipchak beliefs of the early Middle Ages, faith in Tengri was at the forefront. It is obvious that there is one common similarity between the tengrian belief of the Kipchaks and Islam. According to the turkologist N. Kelimbetov, the common understanding of two beliefs encourages one to believe only one Creator, and it refers to monotheism [1, p. 47]. In this regard, there is reason to believe that the form of adoption of Islam by the Kipchaks was not of an aggressive nature. The big difference between tengrianism and Islam is that it does not have a book of holy scripture and an institutional system of governance.

At the same time, the belief in Umai Ana was widespread among the Kipchaks. Umai ana was considered as a protector of children and mothers. However, the Tengri belief is a type of belief that is closely intertwined with other beliefs. Among them are submission to the mysterious forces of Nature, totemism, animism and much more. Among them, totemism can be distinguished. Among the Kipchaks of the early Middle Ages, the concept of special respect for the blue wolf was widespread. In their opinion, the blue wolf was not only a symbol of courage, but also a symbol of courage that fought to the end and did not know how to retreat. And the art of war, the properties of martial arts, the concepts of courage and heroism were common features inherent in all Turkic tribes. Even in those historical times, the countries of the world recognized the heroism of such Turkic tribes as Kipchak.

Of course, the transition of the Kipchaks to the monotheistic religion was a difficult process, which for many years dominated the belief in God, as well as beliefs that arose in connection with other views. It was a conditioned phenomenon. At first, the transition of the Kipchaks to Islam along the Syr Darya took place in a superficial atmosphere. It is closely related to the fact that at first the Kipchaks did not want to lose their beliefs, which had dominated until then. It became known as a result of archaeological excavations of burial sites after the active introduction of Islam into the Kipchak land. At the time of the introduction of Islam, signs of Tengri belief are often found in the burial sites of the Kipchaks. The truth is that the belief of Tengri is a type of belief that is more flexible for the Islamic religion. In particular, elements of respect for holy places are circumstances that do not contradict both beliefs. The Creator of the world is indicated as Allah or God, while the belief in Tengri recognizes the Creator as Tengri. In the pre-Kipchak period, the inscription of Kultegin writes: "When Kok Tengri is at the top, and the Earth is at the bottom, a human being is wounded between them" [2, p. 73]. The historical lines "My ancestors Bumyn Kagan and Istemi Kagan ruled over mankind" determine the omnipotence of Tengri [1, p. 51].

In this regard, the researcher, noting the peculiarities of the faith of Tengri, attaches importance to its monotheistic character and draws attention to the fact that it tends to assimilate with any world religions. The researchers conclude that such beliefs as shamanism are characteristic of tribes with underdeveloped social structures and Tengrianism is characteristic of peoples who have managed to create a centralized administrative apparatus, dating back to the Saks and Sarmatians [3]. The cult of Tengri, which dominated the Kipchaks, is noteworthy. After all, according to the belief of Tengri, Tengri is the beginning of all good. It is explained that he created the Earth, the sky and all the good things. According to Tengri beliefs, the Khan's power is transferred by Tengri. In turn, the ruler is the driver on the free land of God. In her work 'Islam in the Golden Horde: traditions of religious experience', G. Guliakhmetova, analysing the specifics of Tengri belief and its similarity to Islam, notes that Tengri formed the main prerequisite for the full establishment of Islam among the Turkic tribes [4]. After all, thanks to the belief in One

Creator, the Turkic tribes did not express great dissatisfaction with the replacement of the concept of Tengri with the word Allah. The belief in the solitude of the Lord easily established the concept of at-Tawhid, which refutes polytheism among the Turkic tribes [4, p. 112].

3.2. *The place of Islam in the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya*

In general, the religious problems of the Kipchaks living in the Syr Darya region are multifaceted and complex. Its complexity is characterized by the fact that the Kipchaks did not write down information about their religious beliefs. Therefore, the problem of religious faith is very little studied compared to the political history of the Kipchaks who lived along the Syr Darya. When the Kipchaks became politically independent, they did not accept a particular religion *en masse*. In comparison, the process of mass conversion to Islam can be traced in other neighbouring Turkic tribes. Among them, we can mention the Karluks and Yagma tribes. It should be borne in mind that these tribes were part of the state of Karakhan. In 960, after the head of the state of Karakhan Musa Khan declared Islam the state religion, 200 families turned to this religion [5].

Among them are the Karluks and Yagma tribes, who lived in close proximity to the Kipchaks, which we mentioned above. And it is difficult to trace such a mass process of conversion of Islam from the Kipchaks. However, Y.A. Evstigneev, in his article 'Kipchaks: Ethnos and its name', expresses the opinion that the Kipchaks of the Syr Darya near Khorezm began to convert to Islam *en masse* after the active intervention of the khorezmians [6]. In general, the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya were able to have military power that could compete equally with the Khorezm state. Therefore, since the khorezmians could not conquer the Kipchaks militarily, they intended to establish dominance by turning to Islam. Missionaries arrived among the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya on a special mission and began deep propaganda of the values of the Islamic religion. According to this period, the Kipchaks, who converted to Islam, began to become reliable employees of the Khorezm state. However, before the Mongol invasion, almost all Kipchaks did not convert to Islam. In this case, Golden noted that "the religion of leaders does not imply the religion of peoples and tribes. If the head of state thinks about turning to monotheism, his subordinates prefer polytheism" [7]. However, the scientist's opinion is quite reasonable.

Even in the daily life of the inhabitants of any Turkic states in the Eurasian region, who have converted to Islam, you can see the remnants of such beliefs as shamanism. In general, shamanism occupies a special place in the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks in the Syr Darya. However, shamanic beliefs have never been able to rise to the status of a state religion. This type of belief, which does not have a specific place of worship and does not have a written doctrine, existed only in parallel with certain world religions and was transformed in Kipchak society. It is clear that shamanic beliefs are one of the

hallmarks of Kipchak society. In our opinion, the problem of mass conversion of peoples who inhabited any land of Kazakhstan to a certain religion is conditional. A. Khazanov, who conducted his research on the problem of nomadic society and its features, expressed in his work that religious innovations were promoted on the principle of top-down and raises the question that the influence of the new religion was primarily influenced by a group of people close to the authorities [6]. It is clear that it is easier to manage society by attracting people who are involved in political power.

The conversion of the Kipchaks to Islam is not a process carried out at a certain historical time. It represents a set of religious and cultural relations spanning several centuries. In general, the transition of the Kipchaks to Islam was very active in the era of the Golden Horde [8]. It is not a mistake to say that only individual facts of the transition of Kipchaks to Islam along the Syr Darya were recorded in the pre-period. For example, in the 40s of the XIth century, the head of the Kipchaks passed to the Seljuk ruler Chagri Bek and converted to Islam [4, p. 76]. At the same time, the beginning of the conversion of certain groups of Kipchaks to Islam was caused by ties with the neighbouring state of Khorezm-Shah [8]. For example, the mother of Muhammad Khorezmshah, the wife of Tekesh Khan, Turhan was a Kipchak, and many of her relatives joined the service of khorezmians and converted to Islam. One of them was the head of Otyrar Kair Khan [9]. In his work, S.M. Akhinzhanov, describing the complex relations between the Kipchaks and khorezmdecs, notes that the influence of the khorezmians was high, and under their influence the religion of Islam was actively spread among the Kipchaks [2, p. 95]. As proof of this, information is given about the existence of two names of Kipchak Khans in the Syr Darya. In the Syganak city, Kipchak Khan Ikran had a Muslim additional name Kadyr Khan, and the head of Otyrar Alyp Derek was called Kair Khan in historical sources [2, p. 94]. Among the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya in the late Middle Ages, Islam also became widespread. Of course, in the early days, Islam did not become the mass religion of the Kipchaks. We have already noted that the Kipchaks began to show interest in Islam as a result of contact with the Khorezmians.

4. Discussion

Of course, the level of study of the problem of Kipchaks is very high. In addition to the political history of the Kipchaks, conclusions were drawn on such important topics as their economy and social construction. However, the topic of religious knowledge of the Kipchaks, including the Kipchaks who lived along the Syr Darya, requires a comprehensive research work of researchers. After all, in all fundamental works, this question is given only indirectly and is not specified. However, a number of studies on this issue can be noted.

4.1. Historical data

Of course, any research work is not carried out without historical data. In the course of our research work, there were presented works of individual authors like Al-Juzjani's 'Al-Dzhuzdzhani. Tabakat i-nasiri' [10], Plano Karpini, along with the works of Ala-ad-Din Ata-Melik Juwaini [11], Beybars Rukneddin's 'Slivki razmyshleniya po chasti letopisaniya gidzhry' [12]. We can also note the information of the data collection 'Istoriya Kazahstana v persidskih istochnikah' [13].

4.2. Kazakhstan researches

The problem of political history and public relations of the Kipchaks is presented in the fundamental works of S.M. Akhinzhanov 'Kypchaki v istorii srednevekovogo Kazahstana' [2]. Also it was revealed as deeply as possible in B.E. Kumekov's research works 'O triade etnopoliticheskikh ob'edinenij Kypchaksogo mira po musul'manskim istochnikam' [14] and 'Kipchakovedenie – konceptual'noe nauchnoe napravlenie Evrazijskogo masshtaba' [15]. Among the works that provide indirect information about the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks and analyse the political history of the Kipchaks as much as possible, we can mention the work of A.S. Kadyrbayev 'Vojny i voennaya organizaciya narodov drevnego i srednevekovogo Kazahstan (II tysyachiletiya do n.e – XIV vek do n.e.)' [16].

In the course of this research, the problem of religious knowledge of the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya River was indirectly mentioned. The problems of pre-Islamic religious knowledge of the Kipchaks throughout the Syrdarya region are reflected in N. Kelimbetov's work 'Istoriya i literatura drevnego Kazahstana' [1]. This was especially successfully applied in the process of defining the monotheistic positions of the Kipchaks. And the problem of students who came from the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya and became famous in the Muslim world was successfully revealed in a large-scale article by A. Derbisali 'Mysliteli iz Seihundarii' [17].

4.3. Russian researchers

Of course, among the researchers who conducted their fundamental research on the Kipchaks were V.V. Barthold's multi-volume 'Sochineniya' [8] and 'Dvenadcat' lekcij po istorii tureckih narodov Srednej Azii' [9] and N.Y. Bichurin's 'Sorbranie svedenij o narodah, obitavshih v Srednej Azii v drevnie veka' [18]. And also B.D. Grekov and A.Y. Yakubovsky's works 'Zolotaya Orda i ee padenie' contain information about the problem of religious knowledge in the era of the Mongol invasion of the Kipchaks along the Syr Darya [11]. Among the current Russian researchers who provide little information on the social structure and religious knowledge of the Kipchaks are G. Guliakhmetova's 'Islam v Zolotoj Orde: tradicii religioznogo opyta' [4], V.A.

Mogilnikov's 'Kurgany s syrcovyimi vykladkami na yuge Zapadnoj Sibiri' [19], Y. Pilipchuk's 'Katolicizm u kypchakov' [20], A.K. Salmin's works 'Islamizaciya tyurkov Povolzh'ya' can be shown [21]. However, it should be noted that in these works the problem of religious knowledge of the Kipchaks is presented only indirectly.

4.4. Foreign researchers

The problem of Kipchak studies has also been the subject of research by foreign scholars. Among them are P.B. Golden's 'Religiya Kypchakov srednevekovoj Evrazii' [7] and A. Rona-Tas's work 'Materialien zur alten Religion der Türken' was widely used in the research work [3].

4.5. Uzbekistan researches

On the problem of Kipchak studies, we can note the work of K.S. Shaniyazov 'K etnicheskoj istorii uzbekskogo naroda (Istoriko-etnograficheskoe issledovanie na materialah kipchakskogo komponenta)', which corresponds to the form of our research work [22]. Although this work does not specifically address the problem of religious knowledge of the Kipchaks, there is a lot of indirect information. Undoubtedly, indirect data contributed to the formation of a systematic holistic history.

5. Complementing earlier studies

In the early Middle Ages, the belief in one god prevailed among the Kipchaks who lived in the Syr Darya. The belief of Tengri formed a full-fledged historical basis for the conversion of Kipchaks in the Syr Darya to Islam. The view that there is a belief in One Allah and that everyday life develops only by the will of Allah is found in the faith of Tengri, which was held by the Kipchak and Turkic tribes. These similarities became a decisive factor in determining the religious knowledge of the Kipchaks. The Kipchaks in the Syr Darya were able to become true Muslims not only in words, but at first in practice. Of course, such a religious attitude has been formed over the years. At the same time, the influence of the Muslim community on the formation of religious knowledge of the Kipchaks was high. In the Syr Darya region, traditional Tengri beliefs and other religious movements along with basic Islam were widely distributed among the Kipchaks. Although it was especially distributed through various trade routes, it could not settle among the Kipchaks. One of the main reasons is the inconsistency of other religious movements with traditional Tengri beliefs. Throughout the Syr Darya, the Kipchaks gave many advantages to the monotheistic faith.

6. Conclusions

The origin of the Kipchaks and their place in the Muslim world is primarily an indicator of the importance of the religion of Islam in their religious knowledge. This religious knowledge united the Kipchak society into one common idea. The principle of 'Muslim is a brother to Muslim' is actually aimed at uniting members of society on common principles. This trend was also observed in Kipchak society. Although the process of formation of religious knowledge of Kipchaks was diverse and complex, but its purpose and results were clear. As a result of the research, we will see that the religious worldview of the Syrdarya Kipchaks experienced difficult historical periods. That is, their religious consciousness was confronted with the appeals of various internal and external beliefs. According to the wording of our research work, the process of accepting Islam into the consciousness of the Kipchaks differs significantly from the level of perception of other Muslim peoples. This is due to the fact that Islam has established its principles in the lives of other peoples of Iran, the Middle East and Central Asia in a short time. The trend of conscious recognition of Islam by the Kipchaks and other Turkic-Mongolian peoples continued until the XV-XVIth centuries. This was due to the difficulties of the process of formation in a nomadic society of such institutions as mosques, madrassas, which were engaged in explaining or promoting the principles of Islam. And the process of formation and development of religious teachers leading these religious institutions is a separate issue.

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