

INFLUENCE OF TENGRIAN PHILOSOPHY ON THE KYRGYZ PEOPLE'S ETHNOCULTURAL CODE

INFLUÊNCIA DA FILOSOFIA TENGRIANA NO CÓDIGO ETNOCULTURAL DO POVO QUIRGUIZ

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fontes históricas e etnográficas, estudos antropológicos e o estudo de lendas, contos e parémiias para definir os principais aspectos culturais e as fronteiras do Tengrismo. A investigação demonstra que o tengrismo tem influência nas medidas da visão do mundo do povo quirguize e contribui para o desenvolvimento de características específicas nacionais no continuum linguístico. As convicções e práticas religiosas incorporadas no tengrismo são elementos-chave da identidade nacional. Os autores sublinham que o tengrismo não constitui apenas um sistema religioso, mas inclui também um método de pensamento, normas de ação universalmente reconhecidas e propriedades sociais dos povos de

Abstract: The purpose of the article is to analyze Tengrism and its influence on the ethnocultural code of the Kyrgyz people. The research methods employed include analysis of historical and ethnographic sources, anthropological studies, and the study of legends, tales, and paremias to define the key cultural aspects and borders with Tengrism. The research demonstrates that Tengrism has an influence on the measures of the worldview of the Kyrgyz people and contributes to the development of nationally specific features in the linguistic continuum. Religious convictions and practices incorporated into Tengrism are key elements of national identity. The authors stress that Tengrism not only constitutes a religious system but also includes a method of thinking, universally recognized standards of action, and social properties of Turkic-speaking peoples. Religious convictions encoded in legends and tales have become a consistent part of the consciousness of the Kyrgyz people, shaping their attitude toward nature and the surrounding world. Understanding Tengrism as a part of cultural heritage is a necessary step for the preservation and stability of the ethnic and religious identity of the Kyrgyz people. The study also points out the diversity of interpretations of Tengrism, which calls for a deeper investigation of this problem to understand the ancient phenomenon fully.

Keywords: Tengri. Kut. Nomadism. Mythology. Totem. Rituals. Beliefs. Paremias.

Resumo: O objetivo do artigo é analisar o Tengrismo e a sua influência no código etnocultural do povo quirguize. Os métodos de investigação utilizados incluem a análise de

língua turca. As convicções religiosas codificadas em lendas e contos tornaram-se uma parte consistente da consciência do povo quirguize, moldando a sua atitude em relação à natureza e ao mundo que o rodeia. Compreender o Tengrismo como parte do patrimônio cultural é um passo necessário para a preservação e estabilidade da identidade étnica e religiosa do povo quirguize. O estudo salienta igualmente a diversidade de interpretações do tengrismo, o que exige uma investigação mais aprofundada deste problema para compreender plenamente o fenômeno antigo.

Palavras-chave: Tengri. Kut. Nomadismo. Mitologia. Totem. Rituais. Crenças. Paremias.

1. Introduction

Tengrism, as an ancient Turkic religious tradition, has a multifaceted effect on the stereotypes of mentality, lifestyle, and cultural identity of the ethnic groups that inherited it. The influence of Tengrism on the cultural code is pertinent in finding a balance between the preservation of traditions and adaptation to the modern world. This determines the uniqueness of the cultural elements of bearers' societies and their evolution throughout time.

Traditionally, Tengrism has the most influence on the cultures and ethnicities inhabiting Central Asia and some regions of Siberia. The cultures and peoples most affected by Tengrism are the Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Buryats, Tuvans, Altaians, Khakas, and Shors (Grousset, 1965).

The beliefs and traditions of Tengrism play a prominent part in the culture and spiritual life of these peoples. Their cultures and ethnicities show various forms and levels of impact of Tengrism, manifesting in religious practices, folklore, art, social customs, and worldview. Notably, the modern world is seeing a revival of interest in the traditions of Tengrism, which contributes to the preservation and dissemination of these ancient teachings and customs not only among the above-listed peoples but among the public interested in spiritual practices and ethnic culture.

This study focuses on the influence of Tengrism on the ethno-cultural code of the Kyrgyz people. Analyzing the overall impact of Tengrism on the code of the Kyrgyz people not only broadens our understanding of ethnic and cultural history but also leads to a deeper understanding of contemporary trends in Kyrgyz culture.

The objective of this study is to identify key elements, traits, and features of the Kyrgyz cultural code stemming from Tengrian beliefs and to learn how these aspects play out in contemporary cultural dynamics. The exploration of this topic allows for analogies and comparisons between different peoples to show the uniqueness and inimitability of each.

2. Methods

The primary research methods employed in the study are the theoretical, comparative, hermeneutic, and interdisciplinary methods.

The theoretical method was used in the systematization and analysis of the concepts of Tengrism and the development of approaches to its understanding in cultural code. This includes an analysis of the main doctrines of Tengrism, especially texts and philosophical treatises.

The comparative method was applied to analyze the various aspects of the cultural code of the Kyrgyz people in 20th-century Tengrism. Comparative analysis enables a comprehensive analysis of cultural elements, distinguishing shared and unique characteristics under the influence of Tengrism.

The hermeneutic method was utilized in the interpretation of texts containing information on Tengrism and cultural code. Literary and ethnographic sources were reviewed with consideration of the context, goals, and the presented authors.

The interdisciplinary approach was employed to combine knowledge from different spheres, such as history, ethnography, and religious studies. This method offers a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Tengrism on cultural code, providing a diversity of sources and methods.

The described comprehensive methodological approach has enabled a sufficient introduction to and a multifaceted study of professional Tengrism in the cultural code of the Kyrgyz people, providing a better understanding of this relationship.

3. Results and Discussion

Tengrism defined the worldview of the ancient Kyrgyz. This worldview system helped them feel the spirit of nature, act in harmony with it, obey the rhythm of nature, and enjoy its multivalent beauty. Everything without exception was interconnected, and the Kyrgyz people carefully treated steppes, meadows, hills, rivers, lakes, and nature bearing the sacred.

"Tengrism is a denomination built on a belief in a Creator that appeared before Christ (in the first millennium). It is identified with the Hunnu Chenli ('sky'), and there are much

more extensive comparisons with the Chinese word Tian, Sumerian Dingir, 'sky'" (Religiõ mira, 1996, p. 500).

This is the way modern researchers tend to characterize Tengrism. Yet there is no consensus on this issue. Some scholars believe that the doctrine of Tengri is conceptually complete. It is perceived as an ancient religious doctrine of Turkic peoples about a single deity, as a certain doctrine about the interconnection of the three worlds, while some connect this doctrine with mythology and demonology. It would be wrong to say that these opinions are wrong. Indeed, Tengrism had both demons and mythological characters, and the links between the peoples who practiced Tengrism were the most extensive.

On the other hand, according to the oldest manuscript primary source, around 165 BC. "The Turks already possessed a fully established religion with a well-developed canon" (Fedorova, 2007, p. 214).

Up until the advent of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, the Turks practiced their religion. This religion is based on the veneration of some cosmic deity called Tenre. Tenre was considered an object of worship for all Turks and Mongols of the Great Steppe (Bezertinov, 2006).

The term "tengri" means "sky", more precisely, the visible part of God's creation. For this reason, the Ancient Turkic Dictionary interprets this term as "god", "deity", "lord", "master", or "master spirit" (Drevnetiurkskii slovar, 1969). The key elements, traits, and features of the cultural code stemming from Tengrian beliefs include a deep connection to nature and the cosmos. Tengrism, as an ancient belief system, emphasizes the importance of harmony between humans and the world around them. This is expressed in respect for natural phenomena, animals, and plants.

One of the characteristic features is the pantheistic perception of the world, where nature and the divine are seen as one. Tengrism has a strong reverence for the heavens (Tengri) as the supreme deity, which is manifested in the cultural code through the symbolism of the sky and stars.

Another important element is the ancestral cult, expressed through respect and veneration of ancestors, their spirits, and heritage. This strengthens social ties and emphasizes the importance of family traditions and the transmission of knowledge through generations.

The cultural code emanating from Tengrian beliefs also includes ideas of justice and balance. This finds reflection in the desire for balance and harmony in personal life, social

relationships, and interaction with the environment. The understanding of justice and balance in Tengrism often translates into decision-making based on the pursuit of harmony and the avoidance of conflict.

Symbolism and rituals play a significant role in the cultural code derived from Tengrian beliefs. The use of symbols, such as the Tree of Life or totem animals, is a way of expressing a connection to nature and cosmic forces. Rituals and ceremonies including prayers, sacrifices, and celebrations help to preserve and pass on cultural traditions and values.

One of the basic Tengrian tenets holds that an individual is obliged to exist in harmony with the world around them – with nature and society. It is believed that Tengrism originated from the deification of nature and veneration of spirits.

The basis of the theory of Tengrism is the individual, society in full, created by Tengri the Creator for happiness "in creation and self-realization" (Grigorii, 2014).

"The Creator of the universe and people Tengri the Creator, the Beneficent Heavenly Light, breathes into a human being a spirit-spark (kut) at his birth, so that the individual created and spiritualized by him, as well as his authorized representative, determines the sacred order on our planet, creates by self-realization, and at the end of his holy earthly life his kut flies up to his azure abode to unite with Tengri the Creator. For this purpose, the sacred responsibility for the order is imposed by Tengri the Creator on ancestors, chiefs of families and tribes" (Grigorii, 2014).

There is no doubt that with such a long period of existence, Tengrism could not but leave a trace on the people who practiced it. This is evident in the customs and traditions of these people and the cultural attachments of the Turks. First, it was strengthened in the language, in the forms that distinguish a civilization, allowing the people to find their individuality and find their niche in the world community. This is exactly what today is called the cultural code of a nation. A nation is defined as an independent group of people with its objects of worship.

The ancient Kyrgyz were distinguished by a totemic worldview. Tribes believed in their mystical connection with a certain object – the totem of a group or clan, connected with a kind of animal or plant. A particular group accepted some object of nature as its totem, which symbolized and connected them with their forebears. Connection with the totem was usually expressed in the prohibition to kill the depicted animal and consume it as food, in the

belief in the origin of the group or clan from its totem, in magical rituals of influence on it, etc.

In the Kyrgyz, the notions of an inseparable connection of a totem with a particular clan by blood are transferred to the people. This can be observed in people with a developed tribal order. A vivid example of the manifestation of tribal totemism can be seen in the belief that the large Bugu tribe originated from a deer or a horned mother. Another echo of the totemic worldview of the Kyrgyz in the past is the name of another tribe, genealogically close to the Bugu, Sarybagysh (yellow elk). Certain branches of Kyrgyz tribes had similar names, such as kiyik-nayman and kuran-nayman, undoubtedly reflecting totemistic views associated with the kiyiks. The kiyik or kaiyp (ibex, mountain goat, mountain lamb, and roe deer had the same name) was considered a sacred animal.

The renowned ethnographer S. Abramzon listed Zhagalmai (small feathered predator) and Beryu (wolf) among the Kyrgyz ethnonyms associated with totems. For example, one of the two subdivisions of the Mungush tribe bears the name Zhagalmai. One of the subdivisions of the Adigine tribe is called Beryu, and the Kushchu and Solto tribes have clan divisions by the name of Aksak-beryu (lame wolf).

4. Conclusions

Our exploration of the influence of Tengrism on the code of the Kyrgyz people uncovered the deep roots of this ancient religious system in Turkic-Mongolian traditions. Tengrians, being open to the majesty of nature, worshiped not out of fear but out of gratitude to the life force manifested in its tenderness and bounty. At the core of the teaching lies Tengrism, a form of monotheism in which the single Creator, Tengri, symbolizes light, uniting all aspects of living nature.

Religious texts and epics are evidence of this unique belief system, where Tengri deities bear multiple images and functions, reflecting the diversity of Tengri the Creator's work. Light, as the infinite beginning, becomes central to the perception of Tengri, reflected in the symbolism of Tengrian culture. Tengrism thus epitomizes harmony with nature, deep respect for it, and the desire to live in harmony with its laws. This unique religious teaching has left an indelible mark on the cultural and spiritual code of the Kyrgyz people, underlining the importance of balance and gratitude in relationships with the surrounding world.

Tengrian values and teachings can be integrated into educational programs, fostering respect for nature, history, and cultural heritage in the education of youth.

In some cases, Tengrism principles can influence political and social movements aiming to protect national interests, cultural values, and the natural environment. The principles of harmony with nature inherent in Tengrism can assist in promoting sustainable development by emphasizing the importance of preserving natural resources for future generations.

Tengrian values such as harmony, respect for living nature, and spiritual development can influence the personal development of an individual, building a holistic and balanced approach to life. Thus, Tengrism, as an integral part of the ethno-cultural code, has a diverse and multifaceted influence on modern society, enriching it in a spiritual, cultural, and social sense. This influence manifests itself not only in the preservation of traditions and customs but also in the formation of new approaches to interaction with the world, which contributes to the development of more harmonious and sustainable social structures.

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