
OBRUSÁNSZKY, Borbála

Tsyrenzorzhiev Readings — 2012 —

**Tibetan Civilization and Nomadic Peoples of Eurasia:
Cross-Cultural Contacts**

Between 23 and 26 May 2012 the Fifth International Scientific Conference commemorating Rabdan Tsyrendorzhiev (May 19, 1923 – April 15, 1999), the founder of the Buryat Culture Society in Ukraine was held in Ukraine, Kiev. The conference title was *“Tsyrendorzhiev Readings – 2012 - Tibetan Civilization and Nomadic Peoples of Eurasia: Cross-Cultural Contacts”*.

The conference was organized by the Buryat Culture Society, the A. Krymsky Institute of Oriental Studies of The National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the G. Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, and the Bohdan and Varvara Hanenko National Arts Museum.

As can be seen from the title, this academic forum was centered on three main topics: Tibetology, Mongolian Studies and Ancient History of Steppe Civilization. In the first part the audience could listen to some interesting papers on Buddhism and Shamanistic beliefs. One of the most interesting papers was presented by Volodymyr Jachenko, entitled "Philosophical and Anthropological Dimensions of the Study of Shamanism ". In contrary to most scholars of Religious Studies who wish to travel to the Far East or Central Asia in order to get more research on Shamanism, he discovered some common ancient elements among Eastern-European traditions. According to him the Ukrainian folklore texts, e.g. tales, preserved many magical elements. He emphasized that he so-called Shamanistic belief has not disappeared from present-day Ukraine; several documents remained in use mainly in the Transcarpathian region, next to the city of Beregszász, where the so-called "Morifars" lived and practiced magical healing in the course of the 20th century. Their activities and practices reminded Russian and Ukrainian scholars of the practices of the Siberian Shamans. Morifars were native Hungarians and they preserved their ancient Shamanistic beliefs as in other places of former Hungarian Kingdom. The practices of Shamanism together with its symbolism can be found in the Ukrainian folk tales, too. The presented examples reminded me of the Hungarian folk tales, which is quite understandable, because we can find these elements among modern Ukrainian as well Turkic people in the Caucasus and Eastern-Europe. It is quite possible that all these people inherited the ancient Scythian and Hun elements, their ancestors who lived on the vast Eurasian steppeland.

Results of archaeology

The other interesting topic of the conference was dedicated to Eurasian steppe history. There were several outstanding reports on new archaeological excavations on the Eastern-European Plain. Vladimir Ivanov from Bashkiria presented a paper entitled "Archaeological Evidence of the Central Asian Nomads' Presence in Eastern Europe, 13-14th Century ", in which he analyzed archaeological findings on the Pechenegs, Cumans and Mongols (Golden Horde), and drew their centers of dominance. According to him and a growing number of his colleagues the Pechenegs and the Cumans did not come from the East, but they emerged from Eastern Europe. The area was rather peaceful, only in the course of the 11th century came a great wave of Oguz Turkic alliance, who wanted to enter even the Hungarian Kingdom. One prominent warrior, who fought against them, was the Hungarian King St. Ladislaus (1077-1095).

In Ivanov's presentation the Pechenegs and the Ghuzz settled down at the northern shores of the Black Sea, and stretched their dominance up to Western Ukraine and as far as Moldova. Most steppe people intended to occupy territories of the Middle Volga and the pass between the Ural Mountain and the Caspian Sea, a stretch of more than 100 miles, which was rich in mineral sources. In his opinion the so-called "ethnic separation" theory is not a right method to identify an archaeological finding and determine peoples and tribe alliances in the vast territory of the steppe, because emerging tribes used the same objects as the declined ones, so they do not give a precise statement of the ethnic groups' living realms. According to him statistics is a more precise way of identifying steppe tribes.

He mentioned the so-called "Finno-Ugric" nations too, but he has not used this old linguistics term, he split them into Finnish and Ugrian branches. He explained that the Ufa Science Center Department of Biochemistry and Cytology Laboratory carried out genetic tests and the results showed that the "Finno-Ugric" peoples' origin lead us to Turkic people, who migrated from the south to northward direction. The brand new Natural History result confirmed the old results of Hungarian linguists of the 19th century (József Thúry and Gábor Bálint), who declared already in the second half of the 19th century that the so-called "Finno-Ugric" languages had strong influence of the Turkic and Tatar languages.

Yaroslav Pulupcsuk presented a paper entitled "Kimaks, qay and qun: Turks or Protomongolians?" He has found according to the relevant historical sources, who lived in the Kimak Khaganate. In particular, he used works of Arabic geographers, who had detailed accounts of the peoples living in Central Asia. They recorded that Kuns or Cumans were descendants of the Huns, Kay was a part of the Kitay tribe, who moved westward.

Irina Chen presented a paper on the origin of a musical instrument with the following title: "The Cultural Diffusion in the Traditional Instrumental Music of China and Mongolia". She found that early Chinese sources from the Han-period mentioned such instruments, which can be seen nowadays in Mongolia. She opines that the Chinese learned its usage during the Yuan-dynasty. Although there are some additional sources to that, before the Mongols, Huns already had a great impact on Chinese musical instruments.

Andrei Sabasov collected Russian names, which derived from the Mongolian languages. He listed such names, which are preserved in the early Russian chronicles. It turned out that there were lots of Russian noble families which were wearing Mongolian names, and won privileges through military service from the later imperial Tzarist Court. He mentioned the dynasty of Kadan, who took part in the Mongol invasion of Hungary. We had only scattered information on him. Probably he had not returned to Central Asia, but settled down in present-day Ukraine. The famous warlord was Ögödej Khan's sixth son and he was one of Batu's best friends.

Mikhail Svecov claimed that not only branches of Christianity, but also Buddhism appeared on the Eastern European steppe between the 6-14th centuries. Mainly Bulgarian archaeological findings refer to that. According to him, one of the most serious evidences of a Buddha statue and mandalas were found. These findings are certainly not derived from the Mongolian period, but from an earlier period, because Khans of the Golden Horde had not practiced Buddhism; in their courts Nestorians, later Muslim priests were in service.

Towards the end of the conference, in a round table setting, the phenomenon of Kurgans was considered in Eurasian cultural context. Attention was paid to such countries as Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Japan, and Russia. Participants noted the numerous presences of Kurgans in the modern cultural landscape of many countries (both European and Asian). J. Terasawa, the famous Buddhist monk from Japan, suggested that Kurgans are an important ancient symbol that unites Europe and Asia for many millennia.

