

# THE NATURE AND SPACE COMBINATION IN TRADITIONAL KAZAKH CULTURE

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One of the main conditions of defining the peculiarities of the culture of Kazakh people is connected with identifying its international role. However, cultural area is not just a blank slate, but internal unity with cultural identity revealed in one's view. Here, the idea of the combination and the harmony of macro and micro space that found in elements of an ancient philosophy plays a great role. It can be found in the developing area of environment and humanitarian world culture. The researchers of the culture of Kazakh people and other nomads pay great attention to describing this place. We are not going to discuss about space science now. Our aim is connected with showing the view of nature and space in a definite culture.

As M. Orynbekov wrote, the closeness of Kazakh people's nature to their origin, ancestors can be seen in their awareness and acceptance of their inner world and the origin of existence.<sup>1</sup> If for western civilization the space and nature is the object of actions that directly refer to humanistic purposes, then this is just an active participant for nomads. The space is not only a cold and infinite area, but an eternal guarantee of people's world. A human being cannot be indifferent to his nature, as he is a part of space. According to the wisdom of ancient people the world is thought to be only one and the mankind – a particle of the nature.

The problem of overcoming the infinity is the motive which came from the times of “The poem about Gilgamesh”. The first thing the nomad saw in steppe was a big circle – a horizon. It was covered with a blue dome. It is not so easy to understand the notion of infinity, as it really seems. It is a kind of something supernatural, obscure and dark. We need a constant direction to reclaim the infinity. Temirkazyk, Zhetikarakshy, Sholpan and Urker were as compasses, by the help of these stars warriors, travelers and shepherds could easily find their ways even at night time.

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1 M. Orynbekov. *Yezhelgi Kazaktyn Dunietanymy* (Almaty: 1996), 87.

According to the mythology of Turkic people the structure of space is described as the following: the Land consisting of seven Layers such as Koktobe (Green Hill) on it, and there is kokterek (aspen) which is so high, that is close to the Sky. This view is similar to the structure of the Kiyz ui (Jurt).

One of the impressive views of Kazakh conception of the universe is – the giant Bayterek (White poplar). This World Tree is the symbol of the growth and the close connection between the Earth and the Sky. The heroes could climb up to the sky by this tall poplar. Also, this world tree connects upper and middle world with the third - lower world. The world of living creatures in which people exist must never lose its connection with history and world of ancestors' spirits.

The aspen root is set underground. Green plants take energy and nourishment from the ground. Similarly, in Kazakh spiritual culture venerating the Sky as Creator is one of the main peculiarities of this culture. Raising high the Sky as the Creator doesn't mean to be in fear of Him, but it is known as peculiarities of ancient myths and religions in the field of science.

The main God of ancient Turkic people is – the Creator of the Sky. The kagans who ruled the people by His kindness were called “Those who were born on the Sky and illuminated with the Sun and Moon”. In Turkic writings all of nomads' victories were connected with the Creator. One of the main important marks of all people in Turkic civilization was regard to the Sky and its rays. For example, according to the poem “Ogyzname” Ogyz kagan gave his sons names as Kok Kun (Sun), Ay (Moon), Zhuldyz (Star), Tau (Mountain), Teniz (Sea).

We cannot understand the regard of natural power as belief in many Gods. It's not true that Turkic people didn't have a term as “God” before Islam. Because nomads understood the Creator of the Sky as the only creator, later Creator and Allah became synonyms in Turkic people's vocabulary. Shokhan Valikhanov wrote about a philosophical idea of the Sky and Earth:

There are people who live in the Sky. They have a belt round their neck. We are in the middle, and our belt is round our body; and underground people who have sun, moon and stars tighten the belt to their feet. The rainbow (a rich old woman) is situated between Sky and Land. (It is similar to the lifestyle of Sky inhabitants, because it is Kazakh fancy).<sup>2</sup>

The mythical space was created by the up-and-down order. For example, mythical character mainly controlled the situation underground, but Zhoyamergen married underground snack king. Even if there were characters like elf, devil, the hero of myth mainly met them on the ground. In ancient poems, terms related to the Sky world are limited with notions like giant Bayterek (White poplar), a dragon with seven heads.

With the introduction of Muslim religion into Eurasian Steppe, a nomad understanding about the space has been changed. The old heritage did not disappear; it united with Islam. According to these notions, there are two types of world – temporary (*fani*) (obscurity) and eternity (*baki*). In accordance with this the human's life is infinite. The transition from Fani to Baki, leaving this world means the change of soul from one type to another type, transformation into the light.

The idea of Kazakh culture is the eternity of soul. According to al-Farabi and Kozha Akhmet Yassau, Abai and Magzhan, and other Eastern philosophers, the meaning of human's life is described by eternity of his soul. Because the human's life meaning would guide people, human being's mind is not enough to understand; it requires accepting it from the bottom of his heart.

If a human being would be alone with the Universe, he would feel dependency and could lose connection with its Land. That is why people's world knowledge accepts the space not as outside power, but as nature's obligation to them. The spiritual culture of Kazakhs used different methods of world learning: to draw it like infinity convenient for existence (Bukhar Zhyrau), to glorify it like something which is able to raise people's spirits (Kaztugan), to define sound waves of world parts (al-Farabi).

The culture of nomads found its place in the World. In infinite space a human could have a conversation with the nature, alone. He felt by heart and soul that he is really close to nature. The activity of human being in the nature is also different. There is no term like – to be in hurry, but you have to abide laws of nature. It was thought as rudeness if wayfarers greeted each other in hurry, and went on their own way. The most important thing for them was human apprehension through asking about his health, life, etc. As K. Nurlanova said, the national idea of Kazakhs is to have a way with people, and it can be achieved through good relationships.<sup>3</sup>

In the culture of Turkic people, not only the Sky, but also its appearances were sacred as God. It means that the role of the Sun is special. Giving names such as Kunsuly (the Sun

2 Shokhan Valikhanov. *Tandamaly* (Almaty: 1984), 99–101.

3 K. Nurlanova. *Chelovek i Mir, Kazakhs National Idea* (Almaty: 1994), 5.

Beauty), Kun astindagy Kunekey (Beauty under the Sun) for characters of fairytales, myths had a great meaning. We can call this solar culture. Archeological and ethnological facts show close connection between the Sun and Human being. For instance, scientists found drawings of people and Gods with the head of sun shape in Saimaly-Tash, Tamgaly, Eshki olmes caves. Drawings of circles as sun rays were engraved on the stone. Imaging the Sun as God is the phenomenon of Eastern civilization. Solar things which were found in Kazakhstan are similar to the drawings of Akhura-Mazda and Mitra in Bekhustin Mountain in Iran. According to the science there were anthropomorphic images of star sky shaped heads in the Asian culture during the Shumer civilization. In Altyntobe, in the South Kazakhstan along the river Arys were found drawings of many “golden heads (altynbasty)”. Later this image became a base of Sky God – Creator. From ancient period these gods were used for magical purposes. In describing people with sun-heads their priorities will be in the first place:

- 1) The sun is the origin of nature;
- 2) When you look at the *yurt* (kyiz ui) of nomads from above it will seem to be like the sun;
- 3) Structural isomorphism between cartwheel and sun;
- 4) The eye and sun are important for human being, that is why they call them – light (“my ray” – means a warm attitude);
- 5) The most important and deep feeling for human being is called – “true love”. In the headgear of Kazakhstan’s symbol - “Altyn Adam (Golden Man)”, drawn Sunshine.

In the Asian civilization not only the sun, but also moon was one of the main heavenly bodies. In the ancient Turkic culture the moon was a deputy of sun, the icon of beauty, and in many heritages it was respected as a Gog-Woman. The moon also, was important for nomads. By observing sunrise and sunset, steppe herders were making a conclusion of seasons changing. They knew that moon size gets smaller with each day, and after it, there will be – “olara” (a time period between the end of the previous lunar month and the beginning of the next lunar month). It is a time when the weather has changes, scientifically, there are more cyclones. People knew about effect of the moon on climate.

It is one of the most important ideas when the moon and sun are becoming equal. The moon is religious symbol in Muslim world. There is one thing which has to be mentioned: the symbol of moon is closely connected with cultural homogenous tradition. It is the sign of continuation of ancestor’s spirit. Drawing the icon of moon on the Muslims’ graves shows

the connection of traditions and generation. The role of star sky, which wondered by I. Kant is special in Kazakh cultural tradition. According to writings, if shining space appeared because of fight between chaos (disarrangement) and harmony (correspondence), then the breach of this order (the order stars position) will cause a great unhappiness.

Every star that is the mark of constancy and order is directly related to people’s destiny. Fallen star meant extinguished fire, a dead person. Similarly, the culture without any hesitation could add its peculiarities to human world. The idea of correspondence of macro and micro space is not restricted with cultural place. The reclamation of space by nomads is the one of mankind’s spiritual movement directions. While viewing identical bases of this culture, we have to mention its space aspect.

