



The
Turkic Speaking Peoples

2,000 Years of Art and Culture from Inner Asia to the Balkans

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Concept and Photography

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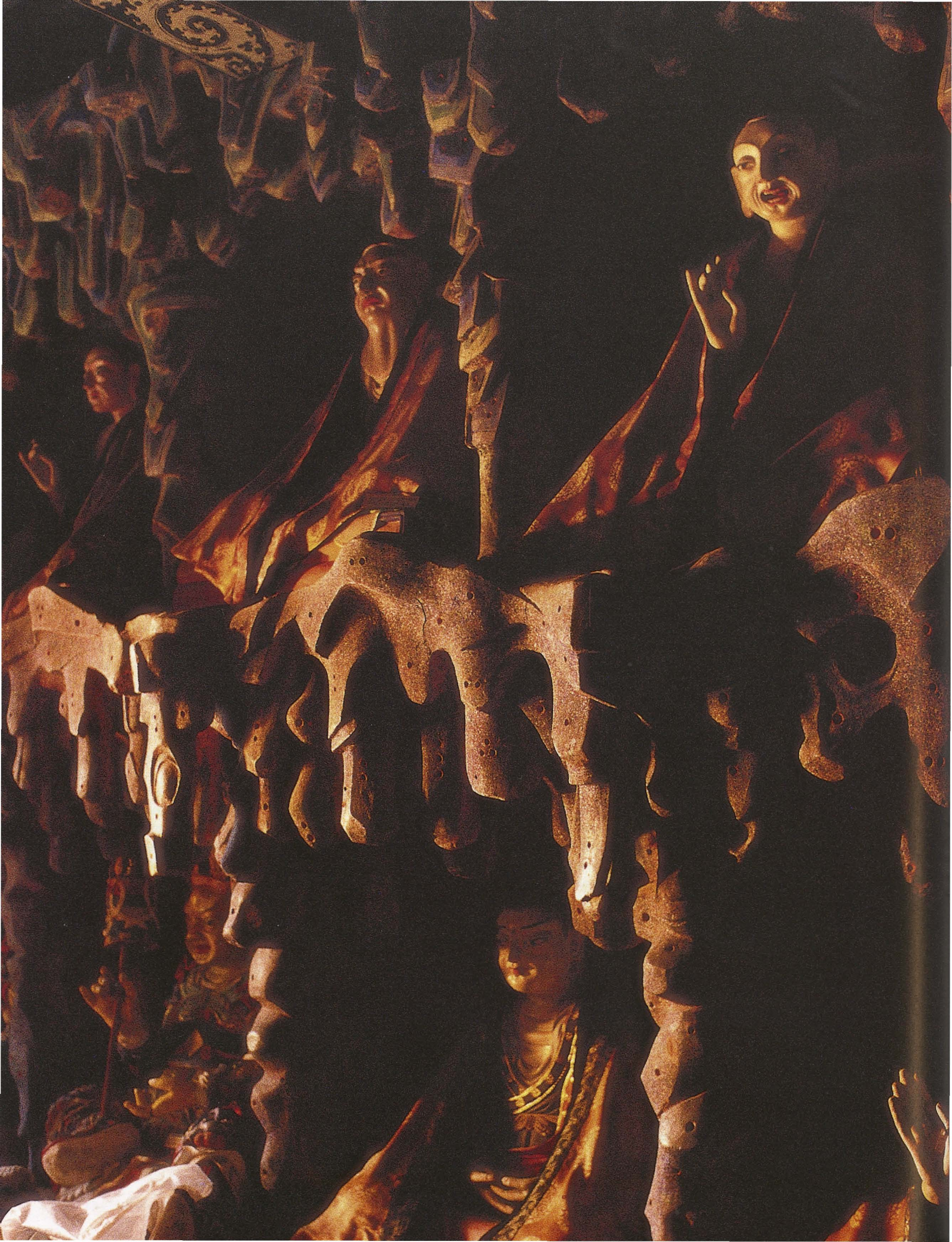
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Manichaeism and Buddhism among the Uighur Turks

JENS PETER LAUT

The famous Turcologist Wilhelm Radloff (1837-1918) declared in an important preface that nowhere in the world was any group of languages spread over as wide an area as the Turkic languages. Turkic-speaking communities could be found in areas extending from North Africa and European Turkey to southeast Russia, and from Asia Minor and Turan to upper Siberia and the Gobi Desert.

Although this observation is still valid, and the histories of the language, culture, and religion of the Turkic communities still preserve their complex character, they have never been the subject of adequate investigation and research. Before the conversion to Islam, a large number of Turkic communities may be said to have adopted universal religions such as Buddhism, Manichaeism, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism, while, besides these great religions, "shamanism" can be seen to have occupied an important place in the religious beliefs of the Turks of the Altai and Siberian regions. In the course of time, these religions assumed forms peculiar to the Turks, which makes it impossible to explain them on the basis of traditional Buddhist and Islamic religious doctrines. It is also very difficult to evaluate the interpretation of Islam in the modern Muslim Turkish world. An examination of the similarities and differences between the interpretation of Islam and general worldview of an Istanbul *efendi* and those of a Kazakh nomad would produce very interesting results.

It would be impossible to give even an approximate description of these differences in one short article. The preparation of lists comprising the dates of the reigns and dynasties of the sultans and their various religious systems would succeed in providing only the most general information. Nevertheless, emboldened by the lack of adequate investigation into several interesting and, it would appear, important features of the religions practiced by the Turkic communities, I have attempted, in this article, to provide some explanations.

Researchers in language and culture have always taken a particular interest in the earliest topics relating to their field of research. Unfortunately, the earliest sources connected with the Turkic language—namely, the inscriptions in the so-called runic alphabet, generally dating from the eighth century—contain no information regarding religion. There is thus no definite evidence to show whether the earliest Turkic communities were shamanist or were already approaching the level of monotheism.

The religion of the old Turkic steppe culture might very plausibly be defined as "Tengri religion." From the inscriptions, it would appear that this involved a belief in the sky (*Tengri/Tanrı*), the earth (*yer*), and man (*kişi*). In this connection, we may quote a famous sentence on the Kül-Tegin stele: "The blue sky was created above and the dark brown earth below, with man created in between." By order of "the Sky," the Turkish khagan was given the duty of ruling the world. This is clearly apparent in the title of "Bilge Khagan," who reigned 716 to 734 and is also described as "*töngri tög töngri yaratmış türk bilge kağan*"—"the heavenly placed by heaven with the people." The *kut*, the vital energy in the sky, though connected more particularly with the religious ruler, nevertheless is also closely connected with the life of every individual. When *kut* declines, man dies. To man has been given power over certain parts of the earth and water. There are gods identified with these. One of these is *Umay* (placenta), the goddess of childbirth and the guardian of children. Umay is still used as a female name in Turkey.

This is the only definite information that can be gleaned from the old Turkic inscriptions. We possess absolutely nothing of the dogmatic or eschatological doctrine that forms the characteristic basis of the other great religions. It is apparent that religious speculation occupied little place in the lives of the nomadic and warrior tribes that inhabited the steppes. The existence of the old Turkic "Tengri" religion has been gen-

Lining the walls of the Chojin Lama Temple Museum in Ulan Bator (Ulaanbaatar), Mongolia, are images depicting all stages of life as well as death.

erally accepted without question. We may say that “the spirit of the steppes” blows through a religion whose effectiveness derives directly from its simplicity. Even today, there are Turkish scholars and politicians who endeavor to prove that this, the oldest Turkish religion, was the one most in harmony with the Turkish spirit. In this connection, we may recall some of the chief names in Pan-Turkism, such as Ergenekon, Ötüken, and Bozkurt. It is now impossible to declare whether or not the “Tengri” religion was a purely Turkic creation. It is most likely that Chinese influences were at work.

In the following period, from the eighth century to the present day, Turkic/Turkish communities came under the influence of “outside” religions—i.e., religions that had not been founded in Turkic Central Asia. The following pages deal only with religions for which we have adequate sources, for there is no information whatsoever concerning the religious beliefs of several Turkic communities that inhabited distant regions (such as Siberia) during the Middle Ages. It would appear, however, that they had adopted shamanist beliefs—i.e., that services could be rendered to the community (the cure of the sick, the prolongation of life, etc.) by forming a connection with supernatural forces through an ecstatic trance.

From very early times, the Turks of Central Asia had formed extraordinarily close relationships with other ethnic groups, the most important of these being the Chinese and the Iranians. As a result of close military and commercial contacts, the Central Asian Turks, and the Uighurs in particular, had learned and widely assimilated a number of foreign languages. The cultural complexity of this extraordinary environment is well demonstrated by the existence—in a geographical region that formed the “backbone” of the Silk Road—of documents in seventeen languages and twenty-five different alphabets.

The Turks felt the influence of other religions through the Sogdians, who were engaged in trade in the commercial colonies they had established along the Silk Road, especially in the seventh and eighth centuries. In a Chinese document belonging to this period, a high-ranking bureaucrat offers the emperor the following information: “The Turks are essentially a simple and naive people, and it would be quite easy to spread conflict among them. Unfortunately, they are being educated and led by a number of cunning, evil-intentioned Sogdians who live among them.”

This attempt to “educate and lead” the Turkish communities would appear to have been successful. In 762, Manichaeism, disseminated by the Sogdians, was adopted as the state religion by the Uighurs under the rule of Böğü Khagan; this was the first and last time that this universal religion, now completely erased from the pages of history, was honored in this way. The Uighur khagan must have been driven by purely political considerations to take a decision so diametrically opposed to the Tengri religion. It seems unlikely that Manichaeism was adopted by the mass of the Uighurs, and there is evidence of popular resistance. However, although Manichaeism survived as a state religion only until the middle of the ninth century, Manichaeist pockets could still be found in the region as late as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Manichaeist teaching, first expounded by a Parthian named Mani (216–76), the founder of the religion, is a good example of the short-lived nature of facile solutions to the mysteries of the world. This teaching was typically syncretistic in its fusion of great religions such as Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism. Manichaeism is based on the “dual principles” (*iki yıldız*) and the “three times” (*üç üd*). According to this doctrine, two great powers—one good and the other evil—have existed in conflict with each other since the creation. They are inextricably involved in the life of the world and will only be separated from it at the end of time. A characteristic feature of Manichaeism is the spiritual nature of the good principle and the material nature of the evil principle. A true Manichaeist is a strict vegetarian and opponent of all violence, one who despises the body and practices sexual moderation. This attitude must have appeared very strange to the Turks of that time. The following reference is made to this religion in a Karabalgasun inscription dated 832: “The people, who formerly ate meat, now eat rice. This country, in which murder was committed, is now a country in which goodness is preached.” The inscription—in Turkic, Sogdian, and Chinese—was found near Karabalgasun, on the shores of Mongolia’s Orkhon River. A number of extant manuscripts also prove that Uighur Manichaeist priests showed a keen interest in the ideas of this Near Eastern religion.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of Turkic-Manichaeist manuscripts were examined and published by Albert von Le Coq, one of the foremost scholars of the Turfan region. These manuscripts document the way of life that has been summarily described above. Let us examine a text dated to the eighth/ninth centuries displaying a typically Manichaeist outlook and compare it with the tenets of the Tengri religion, which gave the Turk a feeling of confidence in his position between the sky, the earth, and the temporal ruler. It also demonstrates in a very explicit and, indeed, loathsome manner the evil effects of alcohol and sexual desire.

Texts of this kind emphasize that all life ends in death and advise the reader to abandon worldly ways and choose the life of a recluse. Manichaeism is not, however, simply an ascetic doctrine in total opposition to the life of this world. The miniatures and literary writings in these Manichaeist manuscripts are works of very high quality produced by Turkic artists. Moreover, it is to the Manichaeist Uighurs that we owe the survival of a number of tales, stories, and fables.

A recently discovered story with a prince as its hero reflects the world of fancy characteristic of Turkic Central Asia. Three demons are quarreling over the ownership of three magic objects: a cap that makes its wearer invisible; sandals that will carry him to wherever he may wish to go; and a walking stick. The three demons appeal to the prince to help them in dividing the objects up among them. The cunning prince shoots three arrows in three different directions and tells the demons to go after them. He promises that the first to return with an arrow will receive the cap, the second the walking stick, and the third the sandals. As soon as the demons set off in pursuit of the arrows, the prince puts on the cap, thus becoming invisible, and runs off with the help of the sandals and the walking stick.

These handsomely painted doors mark the entrance to the Bogd Khan Palace, the home of the last king of Mongolia, Jebtzun VIII—also known as the Bogdo Khan (“Holy King”)—in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. The two-story “winter palace,” built in 1905 and designed by a Russian architect under orders from Czar Nicholas II, is now a museum.



The motifs in this tale are the common property of the entire world of fable, but in Turkic Central Asia, they have been found only in this Manichaeist text. The beginnings of the various periods of Turkic literature are invariably connected with the transition to a great new religion, and in this period, too, can be observed an approach that remained valid in the religious and cultural histories of later Turkic communities. The Turks have always been “travelers between different worlds.” They have always been affected by foreign influences, but they have invariably adapted and modified these in accordance with their own needs and their own identity—although in certain cases, it may be said that they have lost something of their own particular culture in the course of this very difficult process. In examining modern Turkey, which now finds itself in the throes of an identity crisis created by the conflict between Westernization and traditional values, we may speak of a process that has been continuing in much the same way for a thousand years.

Although the Manichaeism that had been introduced into the Uighur khaganate by the aristocracy was to survive as the state religion for only eighty years, it constituted the first historically attested adoption of a great religion by the Turkic people. However, by that time, the broad mass of the Uighur people had already begun to take an interest in another universal religion—namely Buddhism, a religion of North Indian origin that probably first made its appearance here in the eighth century and would gain major importance thereafter.

At a time when one particular religion is accepted as the state religion, it is incompatible with Islamic or Christian principles to become a member of another religious group or to follow two or more religions at the same time. This is not, however, the case when it comes to Manichaeism and Buddhism. In Turkic Central Asia, in particular, there is evidence of strong mutual influences, or even a synthesis, between the two religions.

In examining Uighur religious literature, researchers sometimes find it difficult to decide whether a particular text is to be ascribed with certainty to Manichaeism or to Buddhism.

Manichaeism regarded Buddhism as a kind of preliminary stage in the development of Manichaeism and therefore felt justified in utilizing the legend of Buddha, while Buddhism similarly made use of religious and profane literary texts that already existed in the countries through which it spread.

The oldest Turkic Buddhist manuscripts still extant have been dated to the eighth century, but it seems probable that still older ones may exist. Manichaeist and Buddhist missionary activities began at about the same time—both, it is interesting to note, being transmitted through the medium of Iranian. With the passage of time, there was a steady increase in Chinese influence, a fact that can be attributed to the absorption of the Iranian element by the Turks. In the ninth and tenth centuries, the Sogdian language and the Sogdian community surrendered completely to Turkic influence. Even in present-day Iran, most of the villages that once were half-Turkish and half-Iranian now display distinctly Turkish characteristics. Nothing now remains of the Uighur script of Sogdian origin, but the Mongols still employ a version of this script that they once learned from Turkic Uighur.

Although the Uighur later came under Chinese influence, they never abandoned the Iranian and Indian traditions. A characteristic feature of the Turks in later periods was their interpretation and adoption of foreign languages and cultures, and this is already manifested in their thorough assimilation of Buddhism. Even the few documents still available demonstrate the extraordinary wealth of Uighur religious literature. The Uighur monks wrote and made copies—sometimes having them carried over distances of thousands of miles—and also undertook work from distant regions. The Uighur made a great contribution to the development of religion and commerce along the Silk Road.

Buddhism resembled Manichaeism in its contempt for material values and its call to transcend all worldly things. The attainment of Nirvana by spurning all worldly blessings can be achieved only by monks or nuns. Those on the path to Nirvana received financial support from many who were neither priests nor Buddhists. The monasteries could never have existed without help from the lay public, which supported them



Buddhist statues in the Central Zuu Temple at the Erdene Zuu Monastery, Karakorum—where Genghiz Khan once had his imperial capital. The monastery, built in 1586, had more than sixty temples in the late nineteenth century. Under Communist rule in the twentieth century, most of the buildings were destroyed, and hundreds of monks were killed, but restoration has been underway since the 1990s, and monks have returned to study here.

for specific reasons: The condition and quality of rebirth after death is linked to the quality of the thoughts and actions of beings who have already come into the world millions of times. To ensure one's future by gaining the support of Buddhist monks was a sound investment. A meeting with Buddha 600 million years later is related in very striking fashion in an old Turkic text. Addressing his pupil, Buddha declares:

In the transmigration of beings you have been born and died and suffered innumerable sorrows. Not the smallest spot of land remains on earth where you have not already been born and died. And there will remain in the world not a single being that you have not murdered and not a single being that has not murdered you.

In Uighur culture, Buddhism rests on a complex but rationally constructed system. As early as the eighth/ninth centuries, there existed a religious elite among the Turks characterized by a highly developed intellectual approach to birth, illness, and death, and religions such as Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Christianity produced representatives of sophisticated worldviews among the nomadic and warrior communities. For example, Buddhist Uighur literature contains works that do not exist in Buddhist literature in any other language, and scholars are of the opinion that Uighur art has features that distinguish it from the more formal Buddhist arts of Central Asia.

The Uighur made translations into Turkic languages from a number of foreign languages and, in doing so, succeeded in finding Turkic equivalents for the foreign terms employed in religious literature in languages such as Sanskrit, Tokharian, Sogdian, and Chinese. We might even describe this as the first language reform in Turkish history. The manner in which these Turkic/Turkish terms would later evolve offers an interesting line of research. For example, the Turkic *küveç* is the equivalent found by the Turks for the Buddhist begging-bowl, and the use of the word *güveç* in present-day Turkey to refer to a dish consisting of meat and vegetables cooked in a pottery bowl reveals the working of an interesting linguistic mecha-

nism—with the form of the bowl and the mixed nature of its contents seeming to point back to its original meaning. Indeed, although Turkish speakers may not be aware of it, there are a number of “Buddhist relics” in their language today. For example, the phrase *güneş tutulması* (seizure of the sun) is used in modern Turkish to refer to an eclipse, and similar terms with the same connotation can be found in other present-day Turkic languages—as, for example, *koyaş totılış* in Tatar and *kün tutuluş* in Uighur. An explanation of these terms entails recourse to the oldest written sources. Although, in an important work on Turkish languages, Mahmud of Kashgar (eleventh century) used the term *kün tutundu*, the origin of this term cannot be ascribed to Mahmud's era, and its derivation must be sought among the pre-Islamic Turks of Central Asia. The old Turkic *Altın Işıklı Sutra* would seem to offer a solution to this problem. The text runs as follows:

“. . . the sun was seized and its brightness disappeared [*kün . . . tutunup yaroklari yeme yitlinür*].” In Buddhist Indian mythology, the eclipse of the sun is caused by the sky djinn Rahu seizing and swallowing the celestial body. Similarly, in Sanskrit, an eclipse of the sun is described as *satvagraha*, namely the seizure of the sun in the hand. In old Turkish Buddhist literature, we encounter the Indian and Chinese literary concepts in a Turkish form. It is necessary, as has very often been the practice of Turcologists, to search for the origin in non-Turkish Buddhist writings.

The ancient Indian myth of the seizure of the sun has thus proceeded by devious paths into Middle Turkic, *Osmanlıca*, several new Turkic languages, and into the Turkish of modern Turkey. With the conversion of the Turks to Islam, the term *güneş tutulması* lost its original meaning, and the etymological explanation of the term has only emerged from research carried out by Turcologists into old Turkic texts and old Turkic roots. Meanwhile, in northern Turkic languages, such as *Çuvaşça*, *Yakutça*, and *Dolganca*, the term “eclipse of the sun” cannot be explained using Indian mythology. By the sixth century, these peoples had already left the Central Asian Turkic community and the Central Asian cultural envi-

ronment. In *Yakutça*, “sunset” is expressed as *kün ölüte* (death of the sun).

All the various Buddhist schools were represented in Uighur territory, and apparently they all lived in peace with one another. We also find the cult of the future Buddha and the worship of a “Buddha of infinite light,” which is still of great significance in modern Japan. There is also evidence of the mystery of the tantric Buddha with its esoteric-erotic rites as practiced in contemporary Tibet, as well as evidence to show that Manichaeists and Buddhists lived together in the same monasteries and were in official oral communication with one another. It would also appear that although Christianity never attained the importance of the other two religions, Christians were able to practice their religion quite freely. Some important Christian texts, such as the story of “The Three Wise Men from the East,” have survived in Turkish.

In modern Turkey, most people are quite oblivious to the existence of a pluralistic attitude toward religion, and very few scholars are conducting research on the pre-Islamic periods. In fact, there is often a hostile attitude toward these early texts—even a tendency to deny them altogether. I realized this while working with a Turkish Turcology student on the Uighur-Christian text of “The Three Wise Men.” At one point in the text, the Jesus child declares: “*Tanrı oğli ärür män*” (I am the Son of God). The student, a staunch Muslim, translated the sentence and then declared, quite angrily, “He never said such a thing!” The tolerance displayed by the old Turkish community does not exist in contemporary Islam.

But now to return to Buddhism . . .

The Uighur were devout Buddhists who attached great importance to the confession of sins. The communal prayers for the absolution of sins can be regarded as a tradition stemming from Christian practice, but the reciprocal influences exerted by the religious systems of Central Asia and the complex nature of the religious environment in the Uighur world has not yet received the interest and attention it deserves. The

following example may shed some light on the subject. Two colleagues and I were once working on an old Turkish Christian text from northeast China dated to the year 1317. It was the tombstone of a young woman by the name of Elizabeth (*Alişbä*). On the upper section of the tombstone were carved angels closely resembling Buddhist mermaids; they were depicted flying around a cross standing on a typical Buddhist lotus blossom. The inscription is in Chinese and old Turkish, written in Syriac script. The content of the inscription displays possible Buddhist features, but we know too little of the typically Turkic form of Christianity. On the other hand, we have ample information regarding Turkic Buddhism and the popularity of confession. As in the medieval Catholic tradition, this was very carefully composed so that it might serve to cover sins that might be committed in the future. Extant Buddhist confessional texts (laymen probably had their sins written down by a monk in return for a fee) mention the millions of forms of identity assumed by the sinners and of beings past, present, and future. “If I ever caused harm to any living thing in this or in my previous incarnations, if I never harbored good thoughts for the good of others, I feel truly repentant and pray that my sins will be forgiven.”

I regard this degeneration in Buddhism—which is found nowhere in the original doctrine—as one of the reasons for the extraordinarily rapid and overwhelming success of Islam in the conversion of the Turks of Central Asia. It is true that Islam was not accepted in the Turfan oasis until the fifteenth century, but the Turks in Western Turkestan had already answered the call of the Islamic Prophet in the tenth to twelfth centuries. Nevertheless, Turkic Buddhist manuscripts as recent as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have been found in these regions, and traces of the Buddhist Uighur still remain in modern China.

During the Middle Ages, the religions previously accepted by the Turks were swept away by Islam. Unfortunately, this destruction of a cultural heritage regarded as heathen-

Sufi dervishes of the Mevlevi order twirl slowly to accompanying soft religious music in the Galata Mevlevihane, Istanbul. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, dervish lodges and their sema ceremonies were banned as being a threat to the secular government, and the Galata lodge was converted to a museum. Now, however, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism sanctions weekly sema “performances”—designed more for cultural tourism than for religion.





Дэвчиннариана
Хүрэнгийн дэвчиннариана

A nineteenth-century gilded brass statue is one of the many artifacts in the Chojin Lama Temple Museum, in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. This onetime monastery, built in the early twentieth century, was shut down in 1938 and converted to a museum, which it has remained. Among the museum's exhibits are masks, embroidery, thankas (religious scroll paintings), statues, and more.

ish is quite a common phenomenon. The change in religious attitude is clearly reflected in the change in connotation undergone by the Sanskrit term *but*. Originally employed in old Turkish to refer reverentially to the Buddha, in Muslim Turkish it came to refer to an idol worshipped by heathens, and those worshipping such idols came to be known as *putperest*. Nevertheless, certain pre-Islamic traditions of Turkic Central Asia survived, though in an altered form, throughout the Islamic epoch. This continuity is more clearly visible in the periods during which the Turks first accepted Islam.

Two Turkic nations accepted Islam during the tenth century at the latest—namely, the Karakhanids from southwestern Turkestan and the Seljuks, who subjugated Iran and Anatolia in the course of the eleventh century. Although they lost Iran in the twelfth century, they retained their hegemony over Anatolia for a considerable period, until overcome by the Ottomans, a people with the same language and the same origins.

Of great importance in connection with our study is the close relationship that existed, from the very beginning of Ottoman rule, with the mystic and dervish forms of Islam. Indeed, the legitimacy of the royal dynasty in Ottoman tradition is linked to the dervish Sheikh Edebali, who interpreted the shamanistic dream of Osman as a promise of world dominion.

One night, while in deep slumber, Osman had a dream in which he saw a moon rise from the breast of Sheikh Edebali and enter his own. A tree then began to rise from his navel right up to the sky and the branches of the tree covered the whole earth As soon as he awoke from his dream, he hastened to Sheikh Edebali, told him his dream, and asked him to interpret it After a short spell of meditation, the Sheikh declared, "God has promised the Sultanate to you and your descendants."

What exactly is a dervish? Dervishes might be defined briefly as men who approached God not through theological learning, but rather through a certain vital power. They believed that by means of certain modes of activity (dance, music, song, and meditation), physical functions could be reduced to a minimum and they could attain what would be described in modern-day terminology as esoteric knowledge. These dervishes could be of either gender, and they lived by begging, without any definite form of organization, their sole aim being to achieve union with God. This way of life, which reflected the "religious spirit" of Turkish Islam, continued until quite recent times. During the Ottoman Empire, even the strictest Sunni-Muslim rule proved unable to prohibit practices that they regarded as heretical. The origins of the practices of the Turkish dervishes should undoubtedly be sought in Buddhist Central Asia, whence dervishes arrived in Anatolia and beyond in the course of the migration to the West.

The Turkic communities, in their transition to Islam, adopted several features of Arab-Iranian culture, a phenomenon that is most clearly apparent in the language. The result was that very little connection remained between Turkish and the language known as *fasih türkçe*, employed in court circles. On the other hand, popular religious literature of dervish origin carried on a genuine Turkish tradition. The function of

"traveler and intermediary" once performed by Turks in Central Asia was continued during the Islamic period. The Islam known to Europe was the Islam of the Turks, and it was against this Islam that Christian theologians such as Martin Luther wrote. It was also this Turkish form of Islam that, in German literature of more recent times, the distinguished writer Karl May (d. 1912) used as the background to his novels.

In modern Turkey, the religious environment does not present a homogeneous picture of a monotheistic Islam. As we all know, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk put an end to Islam's role as the Turkish state religion, closed down the dervish lodges, and embarked upon a comprehensive process of secularization and Westernization. However we judge the effects of these measures, there can be no doubt that they are intimately connected with the identity conflict in which the Turks find themselves today. The feeling of self-confidence afforded by the illustrious history of the Ottoman Empire and the membership of a religious community has now dissipated. At the same time, the West appears none too eager to accept this altered form of the Turkish way of life. In light of this, there would appear to be nothing surprising about the strengthening of Islam in the post-Atatürk period. The reformers have succeeded in demolishing the organizational framework of Turkish Islam, but it has proved impossible to introduce, in the course of this reform period, a widespread cultural system of the same power and efficacy. Nor can the attempts to consolidate Turkish identity by a Panturkist or nationalist Turkish historical approach oriented toward Central Asia be regarded as truly successful. Greater success was displayed by the neo-Islamic groups that emerged in the post-Kemalist period. Each of these groups, which are all in continuous rivalry with each other, claims to be the representative of the one true Islam. There is the Islam supported by the Turkish government's Directorate of Religious Affairs, there are the Shiite-oriented Alevis, and there are a number of smaller groups. The religious structure of modern Turkey that exists under the general heading of Islam therefore is fairly complex, and even though the large majority of the population accepts a Kemalist point of view, the people still persist in their personal religious devotion.

To the Western observer, the modern Turkish way of life, with its Islamic and Western features, may well appear anachronistic. Nowhere else in the Islamic world could one find a newspaper stand displaying copies of the *Qur'an* side by side with copies of the Turkish edition of *Playboy*. With its Western lifestyle and its new exploration of Islam, Turkey, the only democratic country besides Israel in the Middle East, finds itself in a state of transition. It is impossible at the moment to state definitely whether or not Turkey now stands at a crossroads and whether it sees itself as an Islamic or a Western country. From the point of view of state administration, it gives the impression of making certain compromises with the Kemalist approach while at the same time seeking a third way between Islam and the West. From the historical point of view, Turkey is now once again performing the role that we have referred to above—acting as a bridge between Iran and China on the one hand and the Arab World and Europe on the other.

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