TRACES OF SHAMANISM AMONG THE KYRGYZ

The work of Sh. Walikhanov, in which he tried to reveal the essence and features of the influence of shamanic traditions on the culture and life of the Kazakhs. The text of the copy of this work was written by N.I. Veselovsky in a notebook in ink; editorial corrections were made in pencil. The copy contains many corruptions. The autograph was kept in the archives of P. P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky, but it was not found. The editor of the first edition of Walikhanov's works, prof. N.I. Veselovsky asked the academic secretary of the Geographical Society A. A. Dostoevsky to help him find the autograph of Walikhanov. He wrote: «The printing of Valikhanov's works is coming to an end, the last two articles have been typed, but there certainly will be a scandal about them. Their originals are kept by Pyotr Petrovich Semenov, and I have not seen them, and P. P. could not find them when I asked him... I kindly ask you to try to get two manuscripts by Valikhanov from Pyotr Petrovich. Perhaps, you will be luckier than me.»

The manuscript itself is not dated. But, judging by the notebook, it was written in the aul in 1862-1863. Some successful editorial corrections by N.I. Veselovsky have been preserved in the published text. The work was first published in the Works under the editorship of N. I. Veselovsky (NRGS DE, v. XXIX, SPb., 1904, pp. 8-36).

All writers and almost all geographical guides say that the Kyrgyz are Muslims, but they adhere to shamanic rituals or that they mix the Muslim rites with shamanic beliefs. It is right, but what is their shamanism? Unfortunately, no one has yet written about this in detail, although articles about Kyrgyz shamans, or backses, sometimes appeared in various periodicals\*.

In general, shamanism as a religion is not yet explored. The article by the late Banzarov about the «Black faith» is the only systematic and best study of this separate faith, which once dominated among all peoples of Western Asia. Despite the excellent advantages of this work, we believe that it is incomplete; it is incomplete exactly because, as the title says, it is the essay on shamanism among the Mongol Buddhists, who, as Banzarov says «...feel aversion to their old beliefs and consider them unsuitable for a literate person.» In our opinion, this circumstance is very important, especially since Banzarov borrowed most of the data for his article from shamanic prayers collected by the lamas in special books and assimilated by Buddhism\* in modified form, such as rituals and prayers during the construction of oboo2, prayer to the fire, fortune-telling with a sheep shoulder, etc., and, of course, changed according to the concepts of the new teaching, which is evidenced by the following words of Vardzhradark\*Mergen, the author of the work about the construction of oboo: «...although the mere fact of the preparation of such books is not only shameful\* (for their time has gone), even unpleasant for the wise men, it is impossible to resist those who want to construct oboo, etc.». Buddhism, with its broad mythology and more solemn rites, was soon to supersede the original shamanic spirits and most of the shamanic customs. In this regard, i. е. in relation to shamanic customs, and shamanic demonology4, the Kyrgyz, as it seems to me, are richer than the Mongols. I do not mean that Kyrgyz shamanism is purer that among the Mongols; on the contrary, among the Kyrgyz it was mixed with Muslim beliefs, and, having mixed, constituted one faith that was called Muslim, but [they] did not know Muhammad, believed in Allah and at the same time in the ongons5, offered sacrifices to Muslim saints at tombs, believed in shaman and respected Muslim khojas. They worshiped the fire, and the shamans called Muslim angels together with the ongons and praised Allah. Such contradictions did not interfere with each other at all, and the Kyrgyz believed in all this.

This way of things continued to this day, when Islam, together with the Russian civilization, penetrated the steppe, and literary children, educated by fanatic Tatars, disdainfully cast aside the customs of their ancestors and began to persecute and prohibit them wherever they noticed.

The examples given show that shamanism served as the basis of this mixed faith.

Without mullahs, Islam could not take root among the illiterate people but remained a sound, a phrase under which the old shamanic concepts were hidden. That is why the name and words, but not the thought were changed. They started to call the ongon an arvakh\*, kuktengrib – Allah, or khuday, the spirit of the earth – devil, peri, divana\*, and jinn7, but the idea remained shamanic. Even in the beliefs, it had a shamanic image and personification. However, the foundations of shamanic faith were shaken by Muslim monotheism. The sky merged with the idea of ​​Allah, and the minor tengris, worshiped in personifications, and especially those that had images, for example, the idols of the gods of the earth, dzayagachi8, were completely forgotten, probably because they were more persecuted by the introduction of Islam as the idols so hated by the Muslims. But the sun, moon, stars, which were not personified, are still respected, and some of the rituals of their cult have been preserved among the people. All shamanic rites, concepts, and legends, so closely connected with nomadic life, have been preserved among the Kyrgyz in their entirety and represent rich material for the study of Central Asian antiquities.

In our opinion, in the main provisions concerning shamanism, Banzarov judges not quite correctly, or, to say better, does not cover the whole idea of shamanism.

On the one hand, shamanism is the veneration of nature in general and in particular. Humans live and act under the influence of nature. In this sense, shamanism is extreme materialism.

On the other hand, after dying, a person himself becomes a deity: this is extreme spiritualism. The idea is <not bad> and remarkable, especially because it has no mythological wrong beliefs and gives full freedom to social conditions and laws. «Worship is the greatest surprise,» Carlyle10, whose concept of the origin of paganism, in our opinion, fully explains shamanism. Nature and human, life and death were objects of the greatest surprise and were always full of unsearchable mystery. Nature and human! Tell me, what can be more wonderful and mysterious than nature and humans? The necessary need to know the Universe with its miracles, the question of life and death and human's attitude towards nature gave rise to shamanism, adoration of the Universe or the nature and spirit of the dead. So, the infant human was led to the worship of the sun, moon, stars, and everything endless, eternal, and diverse that we call nature, or the Universe. This is Carlyle's answer, which explains so well shamanic worship of the sky: «Perhaps, you remember the Plato's11 example of a human who, having grown up in a dark cave, was suddenly brought into the light so that... This green grass with flowers, trees, mountains, streams, the voiceful sea, this deep fathomless azure of the sky, flying winds, a swirling black cloud that belches fire, rain, and hail – what is it? And this is another sacrament – time; this is the greatest sacrament... this is the Universe ... oh, my God! This is some kind of unsearchable power. The root of all forces is a force that is not us.»

A shamanic human was surprised by the sun and worshiped it; he saw the moon and worshiped it too; he worshiped everything in nature, where he noticed the presence of this indescribable force, eternal as time, which he called the blue sky, kok-tangri. The origin of shamanism is the adoration of nature in general and in particular.

Another miracle is human. Isn't This soul, these abilities, this thinking and inquiring spirit an obvious presence of the God, that unsearchable eternal power? He worshiped the living spirit represented by a shaman, and the dead spirit, ongon. But the influence of nature on a human, especially an infant, in this life, is too strong and active, and he had to create the rules by which he was guided in the attitude towards the mysterious nature, what to do and what not to do. This is the origin of those customs and rituals that we now call shamanic superstition, and which then were true, undoubted, and living faith.

Thus, shamanism was originally a veneration of nature in general, in the idea of ​​the sky and, in particular, the sun, moon, rivers, and other miracles of nature and elements, and therefore it partly resembled fetishism12, although in theory it is far from this rough and petty adoration\*. There was no personification, and, later, of course, and the minor tengri, of course, appeared later, as evidenced by the very name tengri - the sky. The influence of Zoroastrism13, as fairly mentioned by Banzarov, penetrated later and expressed itself in the personification of heaven in Hormuzd14 and in the worship of fire, which, in our opinion, could exist in shamanism itself, but the religion of magicians15 made the worship of this deity more extensive and provided it with solemn rituals. What idea did shamanism have of heaven as a deity and its power in relation to humans? A dead human was a free deity himself, so the influence of heaven spread only to a living human. Therefore, the idea of ​​sin, in the Christian sense, did not exist; good and bad, good and evil, happiness and unhappiness during the mortal life, and grace and punishment immediately followed sin, in the shamanic sense.

Arvakhs, or ongons, the spirits of the dead ancestors

"The outer world is nature, the inner world is the spirit of man, and the manifestations of both were the source of the black faith," says Banzarov. The outer world - the sun, moon, stars, and earth, are the first deities; the veneration of the whole should have led to the veneration of its parts: mountains, rivers, hills, etc.

Thus, shamanism deified nature. The sky, tengri, although later it was personified, it was never a god. A human attributed power over himself to the sky, the sun, and the moon, the influence of which cannot be denied, but they influenced him only in this world from birth to death. He could be born under the special protection of nature, miraculously, and die of anger, but upon death, the power of nature over him ceased, he became an arvakh, an ongon, a free deity. His well-being in the afterworld depended on how his relatives performed the funeral rites. If they were correct, he was satisfied and patronized all his relatives, otherwise, he became an enemy and could harm. Thus, the sky was impartial, like a deity, and not jealous. The shamanic peoples had no sins, in the Christian sense; the human was afraid to be dishonest since his herds reduced; to step on fire, as he will get sick. In short, shamanic superstitions entailed kesr16 – misfortune, loss of livestock, disease. The punishment immediately followed the violation of the rite. Upon death, he was exempt from all punishments, and the spirit was free.

The great and strong people became omnipotent and almighty ongons, and small persons even after the death became insignificant spirits, who could neither fairly love, nor hate>. After his death, Genghis Khan was worshiped like a god. Among the Kyrgyz, the veneration of the arvakhs is still in full force. In difficult moments of life they call on the name of their ancestors, as Muslims call their saints. Any success is attributed to the protection of the arvakhs (see Rychkov's statement17).

In honor of the arvakhs, various animals are sacrificed, and sometimes they purposely go for worship to their graves and, making a sacrifice, ask them for something, for example, the childless asks for a son. When offering a sacrifice to an arvakh, the Kyrgyz say: || ...\* In ancient times, the graves of noble and great people were hidden or forbidden [tabooed], probably, so that they could not be violated by the enemies. (Alaric18 of the Goths19, Scythians20... Darius21). The modern Kyrgyz consider it an essential duty of the children to build a great mound or monument, and these graves serve them instead of oboo. They are the only holy sites of the Kyrgyzs.

Chinese writers have preserved for us some of the customs observed during the burial of kings by the Huns, Khitans22, and other shamanic nomads. The European travelers who went to the Mongols23 speak of similar customs among the Komans and Mongols. If we compare them to the Kyrgyz ones, we will notice a remarkable unity of ideas and even the similarity of rituals.

The shamans were revered as people patronized by heaven and spirits. The shaman is a person gifted with magic and knowledge, higher than others; he is a poet, musician, foreteller, and, at the same, time, a doctor. The Kyrgyz call a shaman bakhshi, which in Mongolian means the teacher; the Uyghurs call their literate people bakhsha; the Turkmen gave this name to their singers. The Komans called a shaman kam, and now the Siberian Tatars use this name.

We will not discuss the origin of this word, which is sufficiently explained by Banzarov, nor will we disprove the opinions that the shamans were and are just charlatans. We will just repeat the words of Carlyle: «I am sad even to suppose that charlatanism could give rise to faith, even in a savage man.» And not everybody can be a shaman among the Kyrgyz, just like not every one of us can be a poet.

Em\*. The diseases, according to the shaman, are caused not by physical reasons, but by the will of deities and spirits, or by the disrespect – kiel, so the diseases were treated by the shamans, people close to spirits, and therefore familiar with the well-known rites, or, as the Kyrgyz themselves call them, em. Some diseases have an owner: iye, iyeli avru, i.e. its spirit.

The Kyrgyz divided all diseases into two categories:

1. Uchuk\*, uchunmak, any insignificant disease accompanied by headache, nausea, or fever. According to the Kyrgyz, uchuk is caused by food. Taking into account that they do not eat or drink outside a nomad tent, and do not leave it uncovered for a night, we should think that they do it being afraid of damage made by evil spirits. Uchuk is treated with the help of a rite, which is also called uchuk (uchuktamak\* – to treat uchuk).

2. Kagyndy – diseases accompanied by stronger symptoms and treated by the rites called kakmak. In both cases, they are meant to scare a demon. During uchuk, they sprinkle three times with cold water and boiling water, and by kagyndy, they beat the sick person with lungs taken from various animals.

The Kyrgyz call rheumatism tyoz arvakh; it is caused by careless walking in the places of old migrations\*. A sure remedy to treat rheumatism is considered to wear ...\* on the sore area, which must be tied by a wildstone Kyrgyz.

For not to give birth to children, a woman should urinate on an ant hill.

Em against hydrophobia: the patient is forced to bite the ears of the cauldrons in forty nomad tents, <hence, of forty cauldrons>. The Kazan Tatars collect pieces of bread from forty huts.

Fire. The veneration of fire, as Banzarov fairly believes, was borrowed by the shamanic peoples from the Persians24, like Hormuzd, the god of the sky. We completely agree with him on this issue, but we believe that the borrowing was more extensive than Banzarov thinks. In our opinion, shamanism initially consisted in a rough veneration of the world, in the idea of the sky in general, and all of its elements in particular, i. е., the sun, the moon, the earth, also with particulars: mountains, rivers, wonderful stones, trees, etc. The idea of good and evil tangris, the cult of fire, perhaps the very art of shamans (but not shamanism) is borrowed from the Persians, even the dualism of the sky as matter - kok and as a god - eternal. Among the Kyrgyz, the worship of fire has the greatest power of all shamanic worships. The Kyrgyz call the fire avliye25, and the same name is given to the Muslim saints. Just like the Mongols, the Kyrgyz, out of respect, call the fire "mother". The fire has purifying properties\*. Purification is performed by passing between two fires. The Kyrgyz call the purification rite "alasta"26. Leaving their winter camps, they pass between two fires. A person who takes a public oath shall also be cleaned by fire.

The fire was the patron of houses, a home sanctuary, so a Kyrgyz bride, when entering a new family, had to bow to the fire in a large house27. This custom exists among the Mongols and replaces the wedding. Among the Kyrgyz, it has obviously ost a lot of details compared to the Mongolian one. The women lead the bride entering a new family into the yurt of her father-in-law\*. At the door, she makes the usual kneeling\*, after which she is sat at the fire on the dressed calfskin so that the bride was soft like a skin\*..., then they pour fat into the fire\*, and she prostrates herself several times, saying: mother-fire and mother-fat, bless me with mercy!..\* At this time, women, warming their palms at the fire, pass their hands over the bride's face. We should assume that this prayer was originally not so short (see this prayer among the Mongols). Similarly, when a child is born, they offer a sacrifice to the fire saying... In general, the Kyrgyz show great respect to fire; you can't spit into the fire, you can't pass through the fire, even through a place where it was once made...\* The Kyrgyz call the wildest person...\*. Worshiping the fire, they were afraid of its anger, and therefore they swore by the anger of fire...\*Мany diseases were considered to be caused by the anger of fire, and therefore very many of them were treated with fire. The diseases treated with fire include rheumatism - pain in the legs, which, according to the Kyrgyz, is caused by careless walking in the places of old nomad camps. The Mongols thought the same because they had a legend that the khonkirat tribe suffered from leg pain because it left Irgene-khon28 and threw the well-being of the other tribes under feet.

As a sacrifice for the fire, the Kyrgyz use fat. The white sacrificial candles, or lamps, chrak, were made of cotton wool or white daba, and the blue ones - of nankeen, soaked with fat and wrapped around a thin stem\* of cheegrass. The chrak should be one cubit long. The cotton wool ones are burnt for the dead person within the first four days; each day they burn ten of them, forty in total. During treatment by shamans, white and blue chraks are used for some diseases, from three to seven and nine in total.

About the sacrificed animals

Animals of all species can be sacrificed, mainly camels, horses, rams, and rarely bulls, but always males and with well-known signs. «Let's take,» the wife says to her husband in the poem «Chora», from camels – a male, from horses – a stallion, from cows – a bull and from sheep – a ram, and et's go ask for a son.»

Islam allows sacrifice from herds only in commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice, but in case of the slightest misfortune, the Kyrgyz kill an animal in the name of the God...\* or in the name of arvakhs and offer sacrifices not at the oboo, but at the graves of the ancestors. They call such sacrifices "kurbandyk" and "sadaka," and by doing this, they somehow soften their pagan meaning.

A camel shows the extreme importance of the reason for the sacrifice. The camel should be white. The saying «the stomach of a white camel was cut open»\* is used in extremely joyful cases, for example, when the loved ones return from a dangerous campaign or a long journey when an heir of the people who have been waiting for it for a long time is born, and, obviously, has a sacrificial origin. In case of such joy, to show all their significance and sincerity, I guess, they cut open a camel's stomach, although nowadays camels are rarely sacrificed.

A ram should be white with a yellow head...\*or white with a bald head...\* Usually, when offering a sacrifice, a Kyrgyz describes in a prayer the signs of the sacrificed animal. «Hey, arvakh, for you I name the moon-horned, split-hoofed one with the smell of musk, or with ears ... looking like baursaks\*, or with split ears, with two teeth»...\*, etc. They also sacrifice the first-borns of the flock, if they have none of the specified signs. In the prayer to the fire, the Mongols also mention a white ram with a yellow head.

The Kyrgyz, in case of trouble, often name horses or livestock for some reason precious for them and sacrifice the other one, less precious. To do this, they spread some saliva of the named animal on the mouth of the animal to be sacrificed29.

Cosmological concepts of the Kyrgyz

Here it is difficult to understand, which one of the survived legends is of more ancient origin, and under the influence of which cult they appeared, especially since different concepts exist about the same subject at the same time.

The stars, according to some Kyrgyz, are nothing more than large mountains of gems, located so far from our planet that they look like small dots. The Kyrgyz also believe in the influence of a star on human happiness, as the common folk says, in fate. According to others, each star corresponds to the soul of some person on earth, and when a person dies, the star also falls to the earth. When the Kyrgyz see a falling star, they say...\* (my star is above!) or smack their lips several times. A happy person, patronized by fate, is called «a person with a star.»

According to a shamanic legend, the Mongols offer sacrifices to the stars and, like the Kyrgyz, lay special emphasis on the stars regarding their power to bring happiness, wealth, cattle, etc. to a person.

The Kyrgyz know and distinguish by name very few stars.

1. North Star – Temir Kazyk\*, the Kyrgyz travelers use it to navigate at night. The name "iron stake" is probably given due to the apparent immobility, therefore, two close atars moving around it, which is similar to the movement of horses tied with a rope to a stake, are called «two white horses»\*.

2. Great Bear is called by the Kyrgyz "Seven Thieves", Jety karakchi: these are the souls of seven robbers who were stealing during the day and were repenting their sins at night, so they were turned into seven stars after death. The seven thieves have the kidnapped daughter of the Pleiades\*.

3. The Pleiades – urker. The Kyrgyz have noticed the forward motion of the Pleiades towards the Great Bear and think that it is hunting seven thieves to help its daughter. With the help of the Pleiades, the Kyrgyz learn time at night and the seasons.

4. Venus – Shepherd's star. Upon the rise of this planet, the Kyrgyz shepherds drive the rams to the aul, to the corral.

5. Morning star - Chulpan-julduz.

The Kyrgyz know the zodiac signs and their constellations under Arabic, but a bit corrupted names. However, nobody knows their location. The Kyrgyz have their own names for the months.

The Milky Way (Кush jol\*) – is a bird's way because migratory birds fly along the Milky Way.

The moon was probably a deity. When seeing the new moon, the Kyrgyz bow to the ground, and in summer, they take some grass from the place where the bowed, and, having come home, throw this grass into the fire. The Kyrgyz say that there is an old woman on the moon (perhaps, due to the round shape and spots that seem to be parts of the face). The Kyrgyzs do not look at the moon for a long time, fearing that the old woman will not count her eyelashes, and if it happens, this person will die. When easing themselves, they do not face the moon. Actually, they talk about the moon with respect.

The sun. Of course, if the moon was a deity, the sun certainly must be the same; besides, we do not see any traces of respect of the Kyrgyz to this celestial body. Banzarov says the same about the Mongols. It's strange. Could it be that the infant human prioritized the moon for the same reason, as a simpleton said in the joke: «The moon is better than the sun because it is light during the day without the sun». The Kyrgyz do not face the sun when the ease themselves: this is the only tribute that we still know30.

The sky is the greatest deity in shamanism. Kok-tengri – the Blue Sky. In the Kyrgy language, the first adjective "kok" means "visible, objective", and the noun (tengri) is turned to a synonym ...\* (of Allah) and kuday (khuda.) However, in the distant steppe areas, for example, in the Wildstone horde, the phrase "kuke-tyangri" is still used as a pious exclamation or invocation. Already in the times of Genghis Khan, the Muslims translated the word "tengri" as "Allah", and the Europeans - as "dеus", since in shamanism it was close to the concept of an almighty being, and in Lesser Bukharia, the Chinese word tyan is still translated with the Persian word "khuda" – god.

The sky was free in its actions, rewarded and punished. The well-being of people and nations depended on its will. The expressions «tengri-jarylkasyn» (jarylkamak) – "may the heavens bless you"; «kok-sukkan» – cursed by the heavens, and «kuk-sukkyr» – may the sky disappear31, show their shamanic origin. Jarylkamak has an obvious similarity with jarlyk32 (Mongolian dzarlik), an expression of will, and with Mongolian dzayaga - the will of heaven, fate.

There are inhabitants in the sky - people. They wear a belt under the throat; we live in the middle, on the earth, and wear a belt in the middle of the body, while underground people, who also have their own sun, moon, and stars \*, wear a belt on their feet. Among the sky Kyrgyz, there is a very rich old woman (the sky people have a Kyrgyz lifestyle, and it could not be otherwise, since these elements are a flight of Kyrgyz fantasy).

Rainbow – kempirden kosagy, i. е. the old woman's kosag. A kosag is a tie of sheep on two sides with loops to a rope stretched on the ground. We already know the old woman mentioned here. The rainbow is her kosag of colorful sheep, which are usually milked by the old woman after the rain.

Air phenomena

Thunder. The Mongols, as Rashiddin says, were terribly afraid of thunder, considering it to be the anger of the sky. The Kyrgyz really say that thunder is the angry voice of the God, and lightning is arrows with which it shoots the devils, but it is difficult to understand whether this angry god is Allah or the sky and whether the devils whom he shoots are of Muslim or shamanic origin. In this regard, the Muslim legends are quite close to the Kyrgyz ones. They say that thunder is the cry of one terrible angel, and lightning is the arrows with which it shoots the demons, but, for Muslims, it is indecent to attribute this act to God. It must be assumed that the dominant idea here is shamanic, especially since the Buddhists - Mongols, who could not be influenced by the Muslim legend, also consider the lightning to be the heavenly arrows against the evil spirits.

We also heard about the first thunder the [well-known formula] that «the sky stallion neighs ...\*». The Kyrgyz also have the following rite: The host of the yurt runs out with a ladle, hits his camp tent with it, running around it, saying: «There is a lot of milk, not enough coal,»\* and then, having come home, he sticks the ladle at the door in the kerege\*. They also say that they pour milk at the door\*. It seems that all this is done not out of fear, but it is just a king wish of an abundance of milk, therefore, of an increase in the herdsд.

He have not heard of a dragon as a thunder maker. In general, Islam does not tolerate personifications.

A whirlwind, probably, was personified as one of the tengris of elemental origin, because the Kyrgyzs, facing a whirlwind, spit three times «tfu, tfu, tfu». Mr. Vasilyev34 tells about the similar habit among the Khitans.

About the fascinating natural forces.

Abu al-Ghazi says that the Turks\* had a stone called yada or jada, with the help of which they could make rain, thunder, and lightning\*. The Kyrgyz call this stone jaytasy.