Central Asian Turkic Tribes: Karakitay Periodin Their Cultural and Ethnic History

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Abstract: Problems of ethno cultural and political history of Karachinese period’s Turkic tribes on the territory of Eurasian steppes are related with migration processes, when inter-tribal historical contacts have formed ethnic character of medieval people. In this respect, the article examines historical consequences of Kidan’s influence on the formation of Turkic tribes in the period preceding and following the invasion of Kidan in Eastern Turkestan and Semirechye (Seven rivers) region.

Key words: Central Asian • Great Silk Road • Tsubu • Nomadic tribes • Karakhanis • Kidan and Seldzuk states

INTRODUCTION

The period traditionally called “before Mongols” is characterized by such phenomenon as leaving sphere of Chinese influence which was also marked by sharp competition and integration of different ruling dynasties within the single territory. This period coincides with the strengthening of Karluk confederation position, “Kyrgyz great power” coming later, finally replaced by Karakhanid presence as dominant state in the region. Consequently, absence of clearly delineated borders between early state formations in Middle Ages was one of the characteristic features of the time. Some scholars are inclining to distinguish a period of XI-XII centuries as “special stage of Eurasian peoples community development” in Central Asian history due to “cross cultural contacts thickening” at abovementioned time [1]. In reverse, this period of world history is also associated with the emergence of “steppe”, “conquering” and “nomadic” empires epoch. No doubt, considerable role among these belonged to Karakhanis, Kidan and Seldzuk states.

Main Part: Talking of this “pre-Mongol” period of Central Asian history we have to assume the fact of comparatively small tribes and great confederations migration as part of natural processes. Close ethnic political and cultural ties of tribes did not represent some extraordinary phenomenon characterized system of interstate relations. Central Asia during IX – XII centuries was somewhat as a “melting pot” where various tribes and confederations had been mixing and forming new political units. The main reasons why majority of the these nomadic tribes preferred to seek new places to occupy and to be settled down there as independent peoples, were problems of seizing power over previously occupied territories by hostile strangers and thus inability to compete with them. In connection with previous statement modern scholarship is raising questions covering period of ethnic traditions foundation and later on how it was spread over vast masses of nomadic population. The strangers who had left their lands before and forced to settle down in the new territories, were put into some trouble conditions – to follow to the patterns of new traditions and behavior models had established long ago. With a reasonable safety we can suggest that sometimes those identities had been bearing the same names and meanwhile had had a very little in common, consequently represented the results and outcomes of the above discussed processes. All of these various groups were united by a system of values and traditions that had been formed as the results of historical contacts. The latter were preceded by migrations processes [2]. Precisely, the formation of many Central Asian Turkic tribes and also those which are called proto-Kazakh, were taking place under the strong influence of the processes discussed above.
Exactly saying in this certain period of time, migrations of nomadic tribes towards western direction were mainly connected with the movements of Kidan and Kipchakcon federations. Usually Central Asian peoples in early medieval ages had knowledge of two or more local languages, the argument which also provides some evidences in favor of integration approach. The curious detail concerning inter communication of Central Asian tribes is that not all the times, when people began to transfer to Turkic languages, they were being assimilated by Turks [2] If we come to Kara-Kitay dominance period in Central Asian region, it is necessary to accept the idea of Chinese ‘civilization image’ revival. The latter fact is to be explained by Western Asian tradition to see Kidans as Chinese, though their ethnic origin could not provide any ground to think so. Mainly due to this tradition, Seldzhuk armies defeat by Kara-Kitay in 1141 was seen not only as “shame” to Turks, (just meant to be defeated by “unfaithful”), but also as the start of Seldzhuk’s empire decline, which before the discussed events had been representing the leading political and military force of the Moslem world. In reality Si Layo state, unifying Turkic and non-Turkic tribes over its power represented somewhat like “buffer zone” between China and the other part of the Turkic world. For the majority of the Turkic tribes, who had been living to the east from Chu River and were just partially touched by Moslem influence, Kidan confederation (they were not called Kara-Kitay in any sources by the time), was seen as the representatives of akin nomadic people. Otherwise, the Turkic calls to them to get some military assistance as it happened in the case of Karakhanids would not be possible [3]. The traditions of relations between Turkic tribes and Kara-Kitay ones had along history. Precisely, during the political dominance of Layo state in the region, Tsibu tribe confederation consisted of Turkic and non-Tusikic tribes as Tatars had been subordinated to Kidans. In vast part of historical sources in X-XII c.c.all non-Chinese population of Central Asia was called “Tatars”, thus the name “Tatars” should not be accepted as ethnic. The widely known fact conferring region’s history is that Tatars in X century had regular trade with China and paid tribute to them. When Tsibu tribes had become part of Layo Empire, nomadic tribes had had paid tribute to Kidans. Sources contained the information that in 918 Tsibu provided 2,000 horses to emperor court [4]. The system of governing by steppe tribes was executed throughout three governorships had created on the Tsibu tribe’s territory. Central government consisted of the representatives of Kidan clans Elui and Sayo had been keeping control over local tribal chiefs, from the ranks of the latter usually was elected the ruler of the nomadic state. Also, on this territory were stationed the military forces composed from the other different tribes. So, we can say that the system of governing was double-sided quite effective [4]. There had existed several groups of Tatar tribes on the discussed territories. One part of them, who had migrated in IX century to the mountain region Inshan and thus lived in neighborhood with Turks-Shato, were subordinated to Kidan state when the latter had been dominated over the region. Exactly, this group of Tatars were known as Toguz-Tatars, mentioned by Rashid ad-Din and called Shivey(southern Shivey) in “Layo – shi”. They part of Kidan nation [5]. Kidan people rise was mainly connected with their ability to involve in their trading relations majority of neighboring states. No doubt those Kidan rulers themselves paid much attention to the problems of regional trade. Thus, no surprise they established a state monopoly for salt and iron trade. Source as “Layo-shi” (ch. 22, 7a) states: “In month 11 [6th year of ruling era Syan-yun] day i-mayo (2/1 1071) was prohibited to sell crude and ready iron on the border with Uigurs and Tsibu” [6, 72]. “Tsibu tribes are constantly counted among those tribes who were obliged to pay especially heavy tribute...In 984-984 according to “Layo-shi” Kidan army, had sent to the west, defeated Tsibu confederation. In this battle the ruler of Tsibus was killed who had a title of Dalai-khan. The Chinese historian Fen Shen-shun thought they were (western Tsibu) Naimans, northern Tsibu – Kereits and eastern Tsibu – Jalairs and Tatars.

At the beginning of XI century the center of International System relations had moved to the territory of Karakhanid state. During this period of time Karakhanid Empire was divided into several provinces. The main sources of the discussed issues are works of Ibn an-Nasir and at-Utbi. In 1012-13 Tugan-khan was a ruler of Semirechir region. One of the main directions of the Karakhanid foreign policy had become the conquest of “unfaithful”. In the military campaign participated all subordinated to Karakhanid tribes confederations. It is known fact form the sources that in 1017-18 hostile nomadic tribes among which we also see Kitay had made an attempt to conquer and plunder Semirechir region, but they were defeated by Tugan-khan troops 8 days far from Balasagun. Ibn al-Asir in his work described this event as: Tugan khan “gathered military forces and wrote to the other Moslem regions appealing for the assistance. And about 120,000 volunteers came to him. When the news of his recovery, gathering of the troops and numerous
armies had reached the Turks, they came back to the country. He had been followed them about three months and Turks felt themselves in safe relying on far distance factor, while reached and defeated Turkic forces. Tugan-khan army killed over 200,000 warriors, imprisoned about 100,000 and got as plunder myriads of horses, tents and except this, also gold and silver from China. The amount of his plunder exceeds all imagination and after he came back to Balasagun [7].

The 80-s years of XI century was marked by Tsubu tribes uprising against Layo Empire. This uprising spread over the territory of Kereits (central part of Tsubu) and Tatar tribes in the eastern part of empire. Naimans, who were closest neighbors of Kereits in the west and consisted of the northern-western group of Tsubu, were to participate in this uprising. We are inclining to accept this idea though historical sources did not contain any information concerning these events. The reasons to insist on previous statement are following: as Kereits, Naimans were Christians and they also borrowed a lot of things from Kidans and Uigurs. This uprising had been lasting about three years and finally was suppressed by Kidans in 1087. Daodzun script informs exactly about this uprising [8].

When Tsubu uprising was suppressed – some scholars suggest, in Kereit domain was founded one of the centers of Kidan culture, which communicated with Turks and Sogd cultures and thus was created a very special mixture of western and eastern cultural traditions [8]. So, happened a very gradual but steady process of Kidan settlement on the territories of subordinated from them peoples. Then, later, precisely at the court of Kereit and Naiman rulers as well as Kidan kinsmen who had moved to the west earlier (XI c.) escaping Chschurchchen threat, Layo Emperors would try to find an asylum. Layo Empire was splitted into several domains in the first half of the XII century. Summarizing all said above we can say that for the comparatively long period of time since the very foundation of the Kidan state, the Naiman tribes on par with the other Turkic tribes as Kereits, Onguts and others had been subordinating to Kidan while also assumed many elements of their state traditions and culture.

In the XII century the course of relations between Turkic tribes of the eastern part of Asia with Kara-Kitay from one side and with the other states on the territory of China from the other side, were marked by speed intensification. Economic contacts were interrupted by periods of intense military conflicts. “A lot of troubles came to Kara-Kidans by numerous nomadic tribes on the northern borders of the empire. Uigur peoples who had reached Chschurchen territories in 1175, shared the information of Gurkhan needed to send military forces of 50,000 solders and officers under command of his son-in-law A-Ben-sy against them”. “He was unable to defeat them and came back without victory. And up to now we are not seeing the end of the military conflicts”.

These Uigurs who came to Chschurchen emperor were sent to settle in Southern Manchuria near Ho-bin-fu. The same year 30,000 tents of nan-ba-en and kan-li tribes had been subordinated to Tzin dynasty. Probably, they were Naiman tribes”. [9].

It is well known fact that Van-khan of Kereits for certain time acknowledged Chinese power due to his title of van was granted by Chinese government. Except this, Tangut state having been situated close to Chinese borders, permanently was serving as asylum for Kereit rulers in time of conflicts with Chinese government. With the reasonable safety, we can suggest that some part of Naimans in the last quarter of XII century owned the dominance of Chschurchen. “Chronicles on Syn dynasty history” really contain the following information. “This year (529) Sa-li-ya (531) – chiefs of Nan-ba-en tribes (532) on par with his vassal Bo-gu (533) from Kan-li tribe (534) with more than 30,000 families asked a kind permission to join to [Tzin state], they also asked to take their seal and label granted by Da-shi and, in reverse, to get seal and label from Tzin [court] [6]. As it’s known, the further destinies of Naiman confederations were connected with Kara-Kitays that in its turn defined the close interconnection of two confederations. The greatest groups among Naimans later had gone to Syr-Dariariver and participated in the foundation of some Turkic peoples. R.G. Kuzeev, well-known scholar in sphere of ethnic history of Bashkir people wrote that history of Bashir Kara-Kitay could be explained and make clear in the light of the history of relations between medieval Kara-Kitays and Naimans. He especially stressed the moment of active intercommunication and ethnic blending of these tribes: as part of Turkic peoples both confederations are “equal parts of such units as Uzbeks as well asKyrgyz, Nogays or Naiman confederation as in case of Kazakhs. We have to acknowledge – as author says further, - the Naiman-Ktayis tribal ties in different nation’s compositions, similarity of the labels, unity of genealogy and historical traditions united by common origin, which are bearing up to present days the early medieval interconnections of these tribal confederations [10]. Somewhat like a reflection of Kidansettlements areal have become the existing toponymths and ethnonyms.
They very often are combining with “Naiman” toponyms: Ktay-Naiman, Kara-Naiman, Naiman, Ongar-Naiman [11]. Medieval sources are containing data covering period of Turkic and Turkic-Mongol presence in various state in the eastern part of Central Asia, which also includes information concerning their relations with Chinese empire of Syn dynasty period. These data inform about main political events, happened among Naimans, Kereits, Onguts, their ethnic ties with Kidans, who had come before the Mongol invasion to the territory of Semirechier and Maverannahr. The history of Kara-Kitay dominance still exists in Kazakh tribal toponymics which is witnessing how influential was Kidan presence here on the course of ethnic processes in this region of Kazakhstan.

As for the problems of foreign trade of SynEmpire, their movements towards West were blocked by considerable degree by Uigurs, Tibet and Tangut states. The main subjects of trade from Chinese territory were silver, gold, coins made of copper, silk and porcelain. Export to China mainly consisted of various medicine, spices and others. Customs taxes were sources of enormous profits to the imperial treasury. “Tzin-shi” in 1126 informs: In winter, month 9th from Sha-zcheu region, dukedom Hoi-hu, Halasan-khan sent to the Tzin empire an embassy with tribute. UlindaTay-yui at Tzi-zcheu defeated the troops under command of Syn general Li-chscha and finally conquered Zchao-Zcheu city. Medieval authors also inform us about the existence of trading routs from Samarkand to Balh, from Bakh through Badahchan, from Yarkend to Kashgar, from Gerat to Samarkand, from Samarkand through Ispidzhab, Taraz and Balasagun and then to the east throughout Khotan and China. So, we can say that handicraft goods of Tzin and Syn periods were well known in Balasagun and Samarkand. The eastern gates of Samarkand were known as “Kidan”. As “Tzin-shi” informs, Moslem merchants from Kara-Kitay territories not regularly, but from time to time appeared at these markets. Maybe, due to this fact Kara-Kitays were often seen as Turks who were not converted into Islam. HafisAbru described the first Gurkhan as a Turk. Dzhuzdzhani left very interesting phrase in his work – “The Turks from Kara-Kitay” [12]. The Kidans conquered eastern part of Karakhanid state in 1128. During this period of time Naimans as well as Uigurs had been still paying tribute to Kidans. With the foundation of their state in Semirechier they began to be called Kara-Kitay. The Kidan military forces also included Turk’s detachments. When Elui-Dashi decided to restore the empire of Kidans he was forced to leave their territory and moved to the west. Here was founded a new state of Kara-Kitays, which also included territories of Eastern Turkestan, Semirechier and Maverannahr. But before the foundation of the state EluiDashi made an appeal for military assistance to the Turkic tribes (18 tribes from 7 districts), who long before the described events had owned suzerainty of Kidans and thus was able to concentrate as much as 10,000 forces and declared himself as Gurkhan [3].

Meanwhile EluiDashi was invited by Uiguridikut, he also was provided by cattle for the military needs by Naiman chiefs [13]. Among those 18 tribes who’s princes were invited by EluiDashi to participate in his military campaign, also was mentioned the tribe called Kitay (hi-ti). Its well known idea that for long period of time “under different ethnonyms around descendents of the older nuclear tribe are usually uniting ethnic elements of different origin”, but evidences of the long lasting keeping the same tribal names within the various nations witness for their ancient historical and ethnic cultural ties [14]. We can illustrate this statement by example of Kete tribe, part of the Kazakh tribal confederation Alymuly. When the ruler of Kara-KitaysEluiDashi had reached Ilmil river valley he decided to stop here for some time. Other akin tribes, who had settled in the valley long before Kara-Kitays, joined his army and then other Turkic tribes appeared. Very interesting information contains Ibn al-Asir work [7]. The eastern Karakhanids also information could be found in the essays of Al-Karshi who in details gives list of the rulers [15]. The main part of Kidans was settled in Chu, Talas valleys and also in Issyk-Kul region. As it is seen from different sources, Kara-Kitays did not interfere into affairs of the local population limiting their presence by tribute and use methods of suppression in cases of separatism. With the foundation of Layo empire also had changed the ethnic composition of the tribes who inhabited Central Asian territory. The new wave of migration to the west under the pressure of Kidans began in the XI century. Due to the description of these movements, we got information about Kanly who were during these period neighbors of Naimans. Abylgazy wrote that Oguz (Turmens) were driven from the places of their settlements under pressure of Kidans, Naimans and Kanly [16]. In 1137 Kara-kitays moved to Maverannahr situated in the western part of Karakhanids state to conquer it, but failed to fulfill this task. Their power in Semirechier and western Tyan-Shan is described as following. N. Aristov gave a figure of 84,500 families consisted of population of western Tayan -Shan, from Ili River p to SyrDaria, who paid taxes. Meanwhile the
The number of Kara-kitay themselves did not exceed 100,000 people. Half of this population were nomads (250,000 approximately), as for the other (150,000) people, they were mainly settled citizens [17].

In Chu valley was also situated the residence of Kara-KidanGurkhan – Balasagun city [18]. Among Kazakh tribal confederation Bayuly we can see the tribe Maskar. The history of this tribe in XII century is eventually connected with Kara-Kitays by this period had penetrated into Semirechier region. It is known that Maskar tribe was part of 7 Hoton tribes (Turkic by origin). Which in its turn was part of Dorbet confederation [19]. This tribe had been living on the territory of Western Mongolia [20]. Scholar suggested the concept that Maskar and Hotons had left to the west and later became part of Kazakh and Karakalpak peoples [21, 22]. In the middle of XI century when nomadic Oguz had left the basin of SyrDaria River the latter was settled by Kipchak tribes. In this tribal confederation was included considerable part of Kanly tribes inhabited SyrDaria steppes and Chu and Ili valleys. “Karlyk, Oguz and kipchak components as well as tribes composed these confederations at different levels participated also in the ethnogenesis processes of Turkmen, Kyrgyz, Karakalpak and other peoples. In spite of their nations formation at different periods, their history and ethnogenetthis are closely connected with those ethnic cultural phenomena, which had been happening in the vast Middle Asian- Kazakhstan region. The same ancient and medieval ethnic groups participated in the foundation of nearly all Turkic-speaking nations of the region. Due to these processes, we are witnessing similar traditions and features in material, spiritual and economic life of these peoples [23].

During this period of time Kipchak society was experiencing very important changes, in XI-XII c.c. they were divided into two large groups – western and eastern ones. The eastern part of Kipchaks included those tribes who later participated in Kazakh ethnogenesis processes – Kanly, Karlyks, Kara-Kitay and many others. Part of the Kipchak western tribes, composed of more ancient tribes of Oguz, Bashkirs, Pechenegs and other Turkic tribes, without any doubt also participated in the process of ethnic foundation of Kazakh Junior Zhuz. Kipchak contacts with Ktayis, who were identified as Kidans (Kara-Kitay), could be possibly established in XII century.

By 1209 the eastern regions of Kara-KitayEmpire were plundered by nomadic tribes. In 1208 Naimans and Merkits were defeated at Irtysh River by Chengis-khan and remnants of defeated Naimans (led by Kuchluk) fled from enemies to Semirechier. By this time Kara-Kitay state experienced the period of decline and new nomads coming to the region had strengthened the disappointment by Kidans among the locals. Mainly, due to these factors, Naimans were so successful to get support of local population against Kara-Kitay rulers. Short time before the Mongols invasion Kara-Kitay troops were defeated by Mahhamed, shah of Quarazm [24]. The story of Shihab ad-Din was devoted mainly to the events had happened after defeat of Naimans and Merkits from Mongols. Kuchluk was forced to run up to Koyalyk and Almalyk. Here the Karlu ruler Mamdu-khan concluded an agreement with him concerning the mutual assistance and began to convince Kuchluk to take off power from Gurkhan [7]. Kuchluk, in order to strengthen his throne had to rely not only upon the Naiman elite but also to get the support from the side of Kidan ruling circles. Due to the latter needs he began to put on Kidan traditional garment, accepted their traditions and religion” [25]. The political dominance of Kara-Kitay in Semirechier was ended with coming to the region of Mongols and by Kuchlukdeath.Ibn al-Nasir referred this event to 1219-20, as for an-Nisavi he pointed out the other date – 1215-16.

CONCLUSIONS

So, the main characteristic of Kara-Kitay period was more intense intercommunication of Central Asian peoples as in ethnopolitical and cultural spheres as well as in economic one in comparison with the previous time. It is necessary to point out the special role of Turkic element in all major political, cultural and ethnic processes of the researched time. This tendency is seen in the processes of foundation of multiethnic states co-existed within the certain territory, strengthening of Turkic element in ethnic processes, formation of the syncretic by essence culture due to intermixing some (Chinese (Kidan), Mongol, Turkic) cultural trends. Simultaneously, we see the rise of the Moslem factor in the life of the above discussed peoples along with worsening of trading relations between them due to the Great Silk Road decline.

REFERENCES