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THE CIVILIZATION OF CENTRAL ASIA: THE CIVILIZATION OF NOMADS AND SETTLED PEASANTS

Abstract. The article considers Central Asia as a unique historical, cultural and civilizational region formed at the intersection of the most important trade, migration and spiritual routes of Eurasia. The article analyzes the evolution of the concept of «civilization» and its application to understanding the Central Asian space, where nomadic and settled civilizations have interacted for thousands of years. Special attention is paid to the role of the Great Silk Road as a key factor in economic, cultural and intercivilizational exchange between East and West. The influence of world religions, ethnocultural diversity and traditions of tolerance on the formation of a sustainable model of regional development is revealed. The article also examines the modern significance of the historical experience of Central Asia in the context of globalization, as well as its role in the dialogue of civilizations and international cooperation. It is concluded that the region's civilizational heritage is an important resource for strengthening security, integration and sustainable development of the Central Asian states.

Keywords: *Central Asia, civilization, symbiosis, diversity, nomadic and sedentary cultures, the Great Silk Road, Inter-civilization interaction.*

Аида Апышова

ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯ ӨРКЕНИЕТІ: КӨШПЕНДІЛЕР МЕН ОТЫРЫҚШЫ ШАРУАЛАРДЫҢ ӨРКЕНИЕТІ

Аңдатпа. Мақалада Орталық Азия Еуразияның маңызды сауда, көші-қон және рухани жолдарының қиылысында қалыптасқан бірегей тарихи-мәдени және өркениетті аймақ ретінде қарастырылады. «Өркениет» ұғымының эволюциясы және оның мыңдаған жылдар бойы

көшпелі және отырықшы өркениеттер өзара әрекеттескен Орталық Азия кеңістігін түсінуге қолданылуы талданады. Ұлы Жібек жолының шығыс пен Батыс арасындағы экономикалық, мәдени және өркениетаралық алмасудың негізгі факторы ретіндегі рөліне ерекше назар аударылды. Әлемдік діндердің, этномәдени әртүрліліктің және толеранттылық дәстүрлерінің өңірлік дамудың тұрақты моделін қалыптастыруға әсері ашылады. Мақалада сонымен қатар жаһандану жағдайындағы Орталық Азияның тарихи тәжірибесінің қазіргі маңызы, сондай-ақ оның Өркениеттер диалогы мен халықаралық ынтымақтастықтағы рөлі қарастырылады. Өңірдің өркениеттік мұрасы Орталық Азия мемлекеттерінің қауіпсіздігін, интеграциясын және орнықты дамуын нығайту үшін маңызды ресурс болып табылады деген қорытындыға келді.

Түйін сөздер: Орталық Азия, өркениет, симбиоз, әртүрлілік, көшпелі және отырықшы мәдениеттер, Ұлы Жібек жолы, өркениетаралық өзара іс-қимыл.

Аида Апышова

ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИЯ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ: ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИЯ КОЧЕВНИКОВ И ОСЕДЛЫХ ЗЕМЛЕДЕЛЬЦЕВ

В статье рассматривается Центральная Азия как уникальный историко-культурный и цивилизационный регион, сформировавшийся на пересечении важнейших торговых, миграционных и духовных путей Евразии. Анализируется эволюция понятия «цивилизация» и его применение к осмыслению центральноазиатского пространства, где на протяжении тысячелетий взаимодействовали кочевая и оседлая цивилизации. Особое внимание уделяется роли Великого шелкового пути как ключевого фактора экономического, культурного и междивизиационного обмена между Востоком и Западом. Раскрывается влияние мировых религий, этнокультурного многообразия и традиций толерантности на формирование устойчивой модели регионального развития. В статье также рассматривается современное значение исторического опыта Центральной Азии в условиях глобализации, а также ее роль в диалоге цивилизаций и международном сотрудничестве. Делается вывод о том, что цивилизационное наследие региона является важным ресурсом для укрепления безопасности, интеграции и устойчивого развития государств Центральной Азии.

Ключевые слова: Центральная Азия, цивилизация, симбиоз, многообразие, кочевая и оседлая культуры, Великий шелковый путь, междивизиационное взаимодействие.

INTRODUCTION

Central Asia is commonly understood to comprise Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. These states are the main historical and cultural areas of this region.

In 1992, at the Central Asian summit, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed to abandon the concept of «Central Asia and Kazakhstan» in favor of the concept of «Central Asia». UNESCO has given a different definition to the concept of «Central Asia». In accordance with this, there is an opinion that in addition to the mentioned countries, Central Asia should include such states as Mongolia, part of China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and some areas of Iran. This definition is also used in geographical sciences.

RESEARCH METHODS

The article uses general scientific and special research methods. The main one is the historical and analytical method, which allowed us to consider the process of formation and development of the Central Asian civilization. The comparative civilizational method was used to identify the features of interaction between nomadic and sedentary cultures, as well as the mutual influence of Central Asia with other civilizations. Systematic and socio-cultural approaches are used to analyze the region as an integral historical and cultural space. The analysis and generalization of scientific sources, including the works of domestic and foreign researchers, was also applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Civilization (Latin Civitas) - comes from the concept of «city, civil society, state». The term «civilization» was first used in French in the second half of the eighteenth century. In the works of such thinkers as Montesquieu, Voltaire, Turgot, Condorcet, this concept implied a reasonable society based on a cart, reasonable legality and justice, moral and intellectual height (Mezhdunarodnyi simpozium 2014).

At the beginning of the 19th century, an «ethnographic concept of civilization» was being formed in Europe. He attaches great importance to the diversity of human culture and asserts that «every nation has its own civilization». Gradually, various theories and concepts of civilization appeared in philosophy. Here's how we can highlight the main ones:

1. Civilization is a post-barbaric stage of human history. It is caused by the formation of classes, states, the emergence of cities (urbanization), and the use of writing.
2. Civilization is important for culture. Both express the growth and

development of society, man-made values, ideals, norms, and ways of social existence.

3. Civilization is a special aspect, a level of social life. It is characterized by the presence of «technical support», living conditions («comfort»), and «desire».

4. Civilization means the unity of mankind, the integrity of a multifaceted culture, and a system of values common to all mankind.

5. Civilization is the end, the «aging», the «fading» stage, the time of any culture.

The concept of «civilization» has a definition of a certain «world», that is, a spatiotemporal cultural and economic continuum with its own ideas, values, etc. «Every culture, according to Oswald Spengler, has its own civilization» (Shpengler 1993).

The Central Asian civilization combined two components - the civilizations of nomads and sedentary farmers. For three millennia, the two civilizations - nomadic and sedentary - maintained relative internal autonomy, developed side by side, mutually contributing to the further enrichment of each other, forming a single universal civilization. For socio-economic, climatic, geographical and historical reasons, the civilizations of nomadic and settled peoples had their own characteristics inherent in each of them individually.

It is believed that nomadic peoples represented a triad of signs of civilization: monumental culture, cities and writing. In ancient times, the ideology was based on ethnocentrism – the opposition of one ethnic group to the outside, that is, to another ethnic environment. On the other hand, the nomadic state formations of Central Asia had strictly centralized political and military power. At its head was the supreme ruler, the Kagan, «appointed by heaven».

The highest state authority could control ethnic groups, ensuring the integrity and stability of allied relations.

The Middle East (Babylon, Hellenism, etc.) and Asian civilizations (Chinese, Indian, Arab), the countries of Central Asia were able to actively integrate the best aspects of these cultures.

Turks, Arabs, Slavs, Chinese, Iranians, Mongols and Indians are the tribes and people who crossed their way through this region. History has left a large layer of cultural heritage for modern Central Asia, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Chinese culture has influenced this region since ancient times with its architecture, religion, and aesthetic system (Stavitskii 1974). At the present stage, Central Asia and the People's Republic of China are increasingly interacting at the economic level.

Since ancient times, the region's exposition has determined its transit

character. The Great Silk Road ran through this region, creating a connection between China and Europe. There was an exchange of goods, inventions, and art. This determined the special role of economic and cultural ties in inter-civilizational relations at the time.

It can be said that on the pages of history it is important that the Great Silk Road was the only trade route that was formed during at least the twentieth century, connecting East and West in political, diplomatic, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian relations since ancient times. All five sections of the Great Silk Road, departing from the Northern Caravan Route, were considered a cable car connecting the people of the states of the East and West, closely connecting nomadic and settled peoples in the territory of modern Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia (Sukhareva 1976). One of its examples is the Great Silk Road, which, expanding the boundaries of trade and economic cooperation, strengthening the spiritual unity of East and West, continuously flowed through the Eurasian spaces, where goods, property, science, knowledge, and cultural values flourished.

On the other hand, the Great Silk Road played the role of a transformer and integrator of Eastern and Western cultures. For this reason, the international community is working to restore the routes connecting Uzbekistan with China and Central Asia through Afghanistan to the ports of the Indian Ocean (Kadyrov 2015).

Within the framework of the China-Central Asia summit, which took place on May 18-19, 2023 in the Chinese city of Xi'an, a trilateral memorandum was signed on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway construction project (a strip on the territory of Kyrgyzstan).

The implementation of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project is important not only for the Kyrgyz Republic, but also for the entire Central Asian region. The project will ensure an increase in the competitiveness of the participating countries in the international transit market by reducing the time and intervals of cargo delivery.

This can be defined as an indicator of practical importance from the point of view of using historical experience at the present stage.

It can be said that these universal traditions have brought Central Asia into the orbit of world civilization, absorbing philosophical ideas about man, the world and the universe, tolerance, openness, honesty, proximity to nature, along with values and ideas. History shows that no civilization has emerged separately from other cultures; they have always complemented each other throughout all epochs of development.

A symbiosis of religions is emerging in Central Asia: Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and others. Since ancient times, all these religions have taken root along with various cults of nomadic peoples.

According to statistics, at the present stage, the Muslim population prevails in this region (Kazakhstan – 70.19%, Kyrgyzstan – 80%, Tajikistan – 90%, Turkmenistan – 89%, Uzbekistan – 93%). Christianity ranks second in terms of prevalence (Kazakhstan – 26.17%, Kyrgyzstan – 16%, Turkmenistan – 8%, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – less than 5%).

Buddhism exists in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The Jewish religion is less widespread. Despite this, all these states are secular, meaning the population has the right to choose their religion. Islam had a significant civilizational influence on the culture of the peoples of Central Asia.

The abundance of languages spoken in the area attests to the multiculturalism of the area. Despite the fact that the Soviet Union had a significant cultural impact, although the USSR pursued a policy of Russification on the territory of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for almost 70 years, this had no impact on the culture and identity of the peoples of the region. The renewal of the world system of the Central Asian countries has been a tradition for many centuries, starting with a process of balancing between countries.

Looking at Central Asia through the prism of a separate region of the world, rather than as part of the USSR, gives a clear picture of interethnic interaction between the countries.

A special feature of Central Asia is its interfaith and interethnic tolerance. Turkic ethnic groups are united by the unity of language, historical memory and archetypes of spiritual experience. The intellectual elite and scientific communities can help preserve the region's historical and cultural heritage through regeneration and research.

In the context of current globalization, Central Asia is located at the junction of the Islamic, Orthodox, Chinese and Western civilizations of the world. His position determines his unique role in the inter-civilizational dialogue and the exchange of cultural values (Abaev and Homushku 2011). This role marks the diversity of the processes of intercultural interaction inherent in it over the centuries.

In order to protect the national interests and security of the Central Asian States, it is necessary to develop cooperation with the international community. This is achieved through cooperation with neighboring countries in the region, as well as with international organizations.

In modern conditions, the importance of the historical and civilizational experience of Central Asia as a basis for building a sustainable model of regional development is increasing. The centuries-old practice of coexistence of various ethnic groups, religions and cultures has formed a unique tradition of dialogue and mutual respect in the region, which can serve as an example

for other multinational spaces. This experience is becoming particularly relevant in the context of increasing global challenges related to conflicts of identities and civilizational values.

An important factor in the further development of Central Asia is the comprehension and reassessment of its role in world history not only as a transit space, but also as an independent center of civilization. The strengthening of scientific research, the preservation of historical and cultural heritage monuments, as well as the development of cultural diplomacy contribute to the formation of a holistic view of the region and enhance its importance in the global cultural and intellectual space.

Thus, Central Asia continues to act as a space of active intercivilizational interaction, where the past and the present complement each other. The combination of rich historical heritage and modern integration processes creates prerequisites for the sustainable development of the region, strengthening its security and expanding cooperation with the international community based on mutual respect and equal partnership.

CONCLUSION

Summing up the results of the study, it can be noted that Central Asia is a unique historical, cultural and civilizational region formed at the intersection of the most important trade, migration and spiritual routes of Eurasia. For thousands of years, there has been close interaction between nomadic and sedentary civilizations, each of which had its own socio-economic, political and cultural characteristics. Their mutual coexistence and complementarity contributed to the formation of a stable and multifaceted Central Asian civilization.

A special role in the development of the region was played by the Great Silk Road, which acted not only as a trade and economic artery, but also as a powerful channel for intercultural and intercivilizational exchange. Through him, knowledge, technology, religious ideas, artistic and philosophical values spread, which contributed to the integration of Central Asia into the global civilizational space. As a result, the region has become an important link between East and West, accumulating and transforming the cultural heritage of various peoples and civilizations.

The history of Central Asia also demonstrates a high level of religious and ethnic tolerance. The coexistence of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and traditional beliefs of nomadic peoples has formed a unique model of interfaith interaction, which remains relevant in modern conditions. The multilingualism and cultural diversity of the region are evidence of its openness to dialogue and mutual cultural enrichment.

In the post-Soviet period, the Central Asian countries had the opportunity to rethink their identity, considering the region not only as part of the former USSR, but also as an independent subject of world history and politics. This allowed us to take a fresh look at the processes of interethnic interaction, cultural development and regional integration. Modern infrastructure and transport projects, including the development of transit corridors between China, Central Asia and other regions of the world, testify to the revival of the historical role of the region as a key hub of international communications.

In the context of globalization, Central Asia continues to be a space of intersection of Islamic, Orthodox, Chinese and Western civilizations, which gives it special importance in the system of international relations. The preservation of cultural heritage, the strengthening of interstate cooperation and the development of a dialogue of civilizations are important factors in ensuring the sustainable development and security of the States of the region. Thus, the historical experience of Central Asia and its civilizational diversity are not only a valuable legacy of the past, but also an important resource for shaping a harmonious future in a changing world.

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