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Introduction

This book describes the traditional ideas of Siberian peoples about the essence of the human being and his/her place in the

surrounding world. It examines human beliefs about three main concepts: the soul, life and death, and the native land. These concepts occupy a central place in the worldview of the peoples of Siberia. The study presents research on ten Ural-Altai languages spoken in Siberia: Old Turkic, seven modern Turkic languages (Altai, Chalkan, Khakas, Shor, Tuvan, Yakut, Baraba-Tatar), a Tungus-Manchurian language (Ulch) and a Finno-Ugric language (Khanty). A field study was also carried out to clarify the use of the studied vocabulary in modern speech.

The methodologies used in the book

This book was published by the Institute of Philology of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Институт филологии СО РАН). In describing the languages, the authors used all available lexicographic, ethnographic, and folklore sources, as well as published fictional works and field research conducted by the authors themselves. Due to sociolinguistic factors, four of the Siberian Turkic languages — Altai, Khakas, Tuvan and Yakut – are covered to a greater extent, because they are state languages in their republics, and there are dictionaries and extensive literature available. Shor is less represented in this work, because of the very limited number of textual sources for this language. As well as using textual sources, the authors also collected material in the field to help clarify the functioning of the lexicon under study in the speech of contemporary speakers. For such languages as Baraba-Tatar, Chalkan and the Telengit dialect of the Altai language, field work with native speakers served as the main source of material for the study.

A summary of the contents

The concept of the soul

Initially the book examines the notion of the soul in the languages of the peoples of Siberia. In Christian European

civilizations the soul is conceptualized as an immortal, non-material part of a human being. According to Russian culture and language, the notion of the soul carries greater importance in comparison to Christian European culture. The soul is considered the most important part of a person, a single, divine, immortal entity that opposes the sinful, mortal body. However, in the Siberian languages considered in this book, the soul is less of key concept than in the Russian worldview. In contrast to both the Christian European and Russian perspectives, in the worldview of many Siberian indigenous peoples the human soul is indivisible from nature and is endowed with various spiritual essences. According to the Siberian peoples' conceptions, a person has multiple souls, each of which with its own characteristics and functions. For example, some of these souls may leave the body temporarily or permanently, and some of them may be visible. They may return to the body, either on their own or with the help of a shaman. Thus, souls are understood to be a material substances, rather than being the opposite of material. Some researchers call them human doubles. A soul is not only a part of humans, but also of the world around us: animals, and in some cases plants and even objects, also have a soul.

Old Turkic — Kut and Üzüt

The Old Turkic language has numerous words and expressions referring to 'soul'. The two most common are 'kut', the soul of a living person, and 'üzüt', which refers to the soul of a dead person. Both are transcendental in nature.

Modern Turkic languages of Siberia

Often, in the Siberian Turkic languages, the lexeme 'sýne' is a generic term for the human soul, equally applicable to the soul of both the living and the deceased. Other terms are lifetime souls ('tín', 'kut', 'djula', 'sür'), souls with the power to leave a person while they are alive or unborn ('djaman körmös', 'djel-salqyn', 'üzüt') and souls that have been discarded ('djula', 'sür').

Lifetime Souls

One of the most frequently used terms in modern Turkic languages is 'kut'. This is the lifetime soul, the soul of the embryo, which is the original soul that is received for human life and becomes the life force of a person. In Yakut and Tuvan beliefs, a person has three 'kut'. In Khakas, under the influence of the Russian language and Christianity, there is a tendency to use 'kut' as a denotation of the main soul, the actual soul of a person connected with God. In Chalkan 'kut' also serves as the main term for the soul.

'Tin' is most often associated with life, and is the word for life, soul, breath, life-force, throat or other vital organs. 'Tin' is a property of all living things and can be attributed to plants and animals. This is unlike the Russian concept of soul, which is a specific attribute of a human being. In Altai myths, the deity of the underworld, Erlik, gave 'tin' to the creatures created by Kudai, the deity of the upper world, through the umbilical cord. Death causes the removal of the 'tin', which can also be appropriated by another person for themselves.

All these 'souls' are united by the fact that they are inherent to a person while he/she is alive. So, all lifetime souls are related to such characteristics of a living person as breathing, vision, strength, energy, and the ability to procreate. These souls act not only as guardians of a person, but also of his/her living space, lineage and people.

Boundary souls

According to the traditional perceptions of the Siberian Turks, some souls belong to both one's lifetime and afterlife. These are souls that 'cross over' the boundary of life and death and exist for a certain time between the two worlds. Such souls, which after death are on the border of the two worlds, are defined as 'boundary souls'. The soul's journey to the world of the dead is long and complex. In most cases, within forty days after death the deceased has already lost the basic signs of life, such as the visible bodily appearance, and finds him/herself in the area reserved for the dead. The moment of transition is

extremely difficult and dangerous both for the deceased (or rather, his/her posthumous souls) and for his/her relatives. Boundary souls include the terms 'sÿne' (found in Altai, Khakas, Tuvan and Tofalar) and 'sÿr'. Interpretations of these lexemes vary from language to language, but what is common is the idea that these 'souls' are separated from a person after their death.

Post-mortem souls

The only common name for posthumous souls in the Khakas, Altai, Chalkan and Shor languages is 'ÿzÿt'. It is the soul of a dead person. It is a material post-mortem substance that has already severed its connection with the human world, and can also be seen as an evil, dark soul that makes living people sick or causes them other harm.

The concept of the 'soul' in translated religious literature

The translations of religious literature into the languages of the peoples of Siberia use a variety of the traditional names of 'souls' as equivalents to the Christian concept of 'soul', despite the difference between their worldviews. At the same time, the Christian texts reflect some traces of the traditional division of 'souls' into the categories of lifetime and posthumous. Christianity has influenced the peculiarities of the use of the word 'kut' in modern Khakas and Chalkan.

The concepts of life and death

Next, the book examines the linguistic means by which the concepts of life and death are verbalized in a number of the Turkic languages of Siberia. The Turkic peoples view life as given only once, and therefore of infinite value. Life is endowed with the characteristics of 'bright', 'sacred' and 'beautiful'. Life in the Turkic worldview is metaphorically viewed as a long, complex road along which one walks, encountering various obstacles. This process is represented by a verb meaning 'to go, to live' in these languages: Altai 'jÿr', Chalkan 'tÿor', Khakas 'çör', Tuvan 'çor'. Overcoming obstacles and determining the

right life path is an indicator of the person's independence and experience. Life in the Turkic languages of Siberia is inextricably linked to the space in which a person lives. This is demonstrated the use of static verbs connected with verbs meaning 'to live' and nouns meaning 'life' (Altai 'djat'-. Shor 'čat'-. Chalk 'tiat'- 'to lie down', Altai 'otur'-. Khakas 'odir'-. Tuvan 'olur'-. Yakut 'olor'- 'to sit', Tuvan/Baraba Tatar 'tur'- 'to stand').

In the languages under consideration, life is closely connected with traditional nomadic cattle herding. This is most clearly manifested in the Tuvan language in verbs denoting a nomadic way of life in which people lead their cattle to seasonal pastures. A man 'lives' as he works day and night, being in his household and with his family. Children are an indispensable component of a happy life. In the Tuvan language, special attention is given to an independent life with one's family, as well as to a rich, prosperous, well-fed life. The living space is represented as a home with its own way of life, which must be maintained, otherwise misfortunes or death may occur. Altais and Tuvans associate wealth with cattle. In the Yakut language, a rich, abundant life is associated with the life of the heroes of the Olonkho epic. In the Altai language, life is described as an unlimited, wide space extending both horizontally and vertically. This space is ordered and harmonious, and a person should not violate this harmony, observing moderation in everything. In the Khakas language, the concept of life has anthropomorphic characteristics, where life is represented as a mother embracing a person in her 'bosom'. In Siberian Turkic languages, life is associated with light, the ability to see the bright, sunny world (e.g., čirĭk čer 'the bright land' in Tuvan). Life is associated with the fire of the home, the extinction of which means death. For example, one metaphor for dying in Tuvan is 'odaa karar', meaning 'to blacken one's hearth'.

Death is characterised in the languages under consideration sometimes negatively but sometimes positively, such as when a person has passed the entire life path granted by destiny, and his/her death was natural, quick, without prolonged illness.

The common Turkic lexeme 'ölüm' 'death' is combined with numerous adjectives naming different properties of death – its inevitability, unexpectedness and the ability to cause an emotional reaction. There are both universal and ethno-specific characteristics of death and its circumstances. The following are universal: 'easy', 'bad', 'terrible'. Ethno-specific elements include, for example, the description of death as 'black', which is characteristic only for the Tuvan language, or the description of death through gustatory qualities such as 'bitter' or 'poisonous' in the Altai language.

There are two main metaphors for death in these languages. Firstly, death is a personified predatory entity, hostile to man, capable of chasing him, seizing him, taking him away, etc. In Tuvan and Yakut, it has zoomorphic features (mouth and claws). A person struggles with this creature, tries to save himself and to defeat it. At the same time, he/she can wait, call for death, or ask for it, which creates a negative attitude in the people around him. Secondly, death appears in the languages under study as an enclosed space. It is possible to get a person out of this closed space, thereby saving him/her. A person can make his/her way to the 'other' world in different ways: to leave, to fly away (in the Khakas language this is used in reference to children) or to leave on horseback (Tuvan, Altai). This is most vividly expressed in the Altai language, where departure to 'that world' is defined as return 'to one's own Altai'.

The concepts of the native land and the motherland

Finally, the book considers the concept of 'native land' and 'motherland' in the languages of Siberian indigenous peoples. A central concept for both Turkic and Finno-Ugric linguistic cultures is the concept of 'native land' denoting the place where a person was born and grew up. In contrast to the Russian concept 'rodina', which combines the notions of both the nation-homeland and one's own local territory, in the Siberian languages these concepts are differentiated, including at the lexical level. In the Siberian languages, the set of attributes that

in the Russian system correlate to the nation-homeland is applied to the definition of one's own local territory – 'native land'.

There are lexemes expressing the meaning 'native land, motherland, homeland' in all Siberian Turkic languages. ('djer' ~ 'tjer' ~ 'čer' ~ 'čir' ~ 'sir' — 'land, motherland'), and verbalisations represented in a small group of languages such as 'čurt' 'country, homeland, region, camp' (Tuvan, Khakas and Shor) or 'el' ~ 'il' 'motherland, fatherland, people' (Shor and Siberian Tatar). In addition, there are borrowings from Mongolian (e.g., Yakut 'doidu', Tuvan 'oran-čurt', 'tangdi -oran', where 'oran' is Mongolian).

The Siberian languages are united by such markers of the 'native land' as land and water. This is a common Turkic feature, preserved since ancient times. It is especially marked in the Khakas and Shor languages, where 'to have land' (Khakas 'čir-lig' / Shor 'čerlig') or 'to have water' (Khakas 'suglig' / Shor 'suglug') implies 'to have a homeland'. Water as a marker of the native land is especially significant for speakers of Khanty, as the surrounding landscape is a flat marshy plain, with many large and small rivers flowing through it.

The Altai people associate their native land with mountains, cedars, healing springs and juniper; the Tuvans with a high mountain which 'first of all meets the dawn'; in Yakut, the primary association is with warm breath, or the warmth of the native land as a place suitable for living. Chalkans associate their native land with the old parental house, relatives, rivers, mountains, taiga, cedar and the young green grass of their native land. For the Khanty people it is water and forests that give a person sustenance. The native land is sacred, and it is guarded by spirits and deities. This is especially vividly expressed in the linguistic worldview of the Altai people, whose native land is deified and is an object of special veneration. The idea of native land extends to a person's 'own' space, which a person has mastered for living and farming, where he and his relatives have travelled (Altai, Chalkan, Yakut, Khanty).

In contrast to the Russian linguistic worldview, in which the concept of the foreign land (чужбина) has a distinct nega-

tive connotation, in Siberian languages there are no vivid negative characteristics to denote a foreign land. The linguistic cultures of the Turkic peoples of Siberia nevertheless emphasise the importance of ending one's days in one's native land. This is also reflected in the belief that the soul 'sÿne' ~ 'sÿnezin' goes round the native land after a person's death before leaving forever for the next world. The Khakas have a special name for the posthumous soul of a person who died far away from his/her native land.

The personification of the homeland is noted in all the languages under consideration. The native land may have a face, eyes, back, liver, chest, etc. According to the Khakas, the native land has breath and a soul, with which the soul of the people is connected. In the Altai language, Altai 'opens its armpits', getting angry when people violate the harmony of the world order established by their ancestors. In many cultures, the image of the native land is associated with the image of the mother. Specifically, there is the notion of human connection with the native land through the mother's umbilical cord. In Turkic languages the native land can be associated with both parents. In Khanty culture, the native land is associated only with a maternal image.

Whereas in Russian the root of the word homeland ('rodina') points to a social community of people united by kinship relations ('rod'), in Siberian languages this concept is mainly represented by words with the general meaning of 'land', emphasising the connection with the physical space in which a person lives. The concept 'native land' establishes links with such concepts as home family and nature, the realisation of which primarily involves the physical sphere.

The strengths of the book

This extensive research has been done effectively and thoroughly, with many relevant examples from the modern Turkic Siberian languages. The authors have shown how the key concepts of soul, life and death and the native land can be

traced back to the Old Turkic languages and then outlined how they have evolved and changed in the modern languages. The comparison of the languages enables the authors to find the universal stable characteristics of these concepts and also those which are ethnically distinctive. The book is extremely useful because these concepts of soul, life and death, and the native land, differ significantly from Russian or Western European concepts. It is necessary to know these differences in order to understand the Siberian languages and the cultures in which they operate, and in order to accurately translate these concepts.

The weaknesses of the book

The description in the book of the concept of soul in European civilisation is not entirely complete. European civilizations have a variety of understandings of the concept of soul, some of which are biblical (Hebraic), while others are grounded in the Greek/Platonic heritage. The authors of the book describe the latter. However, the biblical understanding of soul does not place it in dichotomy to the body. In the Christian understanding the body and soul will be raised together after death.

I would also have appreciated more in-depth research on how the concept of 'soul' has been translated into modern religious literature.

Conclusions

I have lived in Siberia for the past twenty years and am familiar with the Siberian Turkic languages and have spent time living among the Chalkan, Shor, Altai, Khakas, Tuvan and Siberian-Tatar peoples. I recommend this book highly. It should be of particular interest to specialists in the languages and culture of the peoples of Siberia, ethnologists, linguo-culturologists, and ethnographers, as well as to a wide range of readers.